

Clients of God

Exploring how hierarchical religious bonds shape political behaviour

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To my sons Kabir & Rayhan

Abstract

One of the perennial questions of political science is how people decide which candidate to vote for. In the context of developing democracies one dominant explanation is clientelism, where clients sell their votes in exchange for a material good to the highest bidder. In short, citizens are understood to be motivated by material benefits when casting their votes. What remains largely absent from the contemporary political science scholarship is a theory of clientelism that can explain why client-voters may be swayed by nonmaterial goods when they cast their vote – that is an understanding that goes beyond the economic lens of the material exchange, but an exchange that is simultaneously economic, political, ritual, and moral.

This dissertation expands our understanding of clientelism to include the exchange of nonmaterial goods, via religion. It does so by exploring how religion shapes clientelism. The project is set up in two parts. The first part develops an inductive theory of religious clientelism. Here the exchange takes place between voters and politicians both of whom play dual roles: patrons are both living saint and politician, and clients are both followers of and voters for these patrons. The exchange is centred on nonmaterial incentives. Unlike the marketised model of clientelism, religious clientelism allows the inclusion of context and social identities of citizens as part of their calculus when casting their vote. The theory is undergirded by data collected through semi-structured interviews with voters in the Pakistani provinces of Punjab and Sindh. I argue that voters who share religious hierarchical bonds with candidates prefer nonmaterial religious rewards in the clientelistic exchange with their patrons. This is rooted in the dual role that religion plays for clients – both as a social identity and individual belief system. The theory argues that when hierarchical clientelistic bonds are rooted in religion clients are driven by the believer’s rationality, which finds utility in nonmaterial religious goods. It is this role of religion that enables nonmaterial goods to be part of their calculus in the political sphere. The findings highlight the hierarchical religious bond as the driver of voters’ political behaviour in terms of voting and partisanship, where clients vote for the patron-saint and follow them across partisan lines if the patron were to change political party.

The second part of the project substantiates the theory with an in-depth case study of Sufi saint-politicians and their disciple-voters in Pakistan. I provide a bottom-up analysis of voter preferences, with the original contribution of *nonmaterial religious goods* to the clientelism scholarship. I also provide a top-down analysis of the political behaviour of patron-saints. I illustrate how the religious position of patrons provides them advantages in the political sphere relative to non-saint politicians, and how this reinforces their positions as powerholders. These advantages include their access to a steady votebank, organisational infrastructure, and access to nonmaterial goods. I tease out the mechanisms that undergird the political behaviour of both actors, illustrating the multifaceted role of religion as both social identity and belief system. Combining insights from an original database of Sufi saint-politicians in the National and Provincial Assemblies and fieldwork (including semi-structured and elite interviews, and participant observation), this study is the first to gather original empirical data on this subset of voters.

Sammanfattning på svenska

En av de ständigt återkommande frågorna inom statsvetenskap är hur människor bestämmer vilken kandidat de ska rösta på. I utvecklingsländers sammanhang anges klientelism vara en av de dominanta förklaringarna för väljarnas politiska beteende, där väljare säljer sina röster i utbyte mot en materiell vara till högstbjudande. Kort sagt, medborgare förstås motiveras av materiella incitament när de deltar i val. Det som saknas inom statsvetenskap är en teori av klientelism som kan förklara varför väljares politiska beteende kan styras av icke-materiella incitament – en förklaring utöver den ekonomiska uppfattningen, där utbytet är samtidigt är ekonomiskt, politiskt, rituellt och moraliskt. Den här avhandlingen utökar vår förståelse av klientelism till att inkludera utbyte av icke-materiella varor, via religion. Det gör det genom att utforska hur religion påverkar klientelism. Avhandlingen är uppbyggd i två delar. Den första delen utvecklar en induktiv teori om religiös klientelism. Här sker utbytet mellan väljare och politiker som båda spelar dubbla roller: kandidaten är både levande helgon och politiker, och väljare är både anhängare av och väljare för dessa kandidater. Utbytet är centrerat på icke-materiella incitament. Till skillnad från den marknadsförda modellen för klientelism tillåter religiös klientelism att inkludera medborgarnas context och sociala identiteter som en del av deras övervägningar när de lägger sin röst. Teorin bygger på data som samlats in genom fältarbete och semistrukturerade intervjuer med väljare i de pakistanska provinserna Punjab och Sindh. Avhandlingens framför argumentet att väljare som delar religiösa hierarkiska band med politiska kandidater föredrar icke-materiella religiösa belöningar i deras klientelistiska utbyten med sina religiösa ledare. Detta bottenar i den dubbla roll som religion spelar för väljarna – både som social identitet och som individuellt trossystem. Teorin hävdar att när hierarkiska klientelistiska band är rotade i religion drivs klienter av den troendes rationalitet som finner nytta i icke-materiella religiösa incitament. Det är religions roll som gör det möjligt för icke-materiella incitament att vara en del av väljarnas övervägande inom den politiska sfären. Avhandlingens resultat lyfter fram det hierarkiska religiösa bandet som drivkraften bakom väljarnas politiska beteende när det gäller röstning och partiskhet, där klienter röstar på sin religiösa ledare och följer dem över partiska gränser om denna skulle byta politiskt parti. Den andra delen av projektet underbygger teorin med en djupgående fallstudie av sufiitiska helgonpolitiker och deras lärjungeväljare i Pakistan. Jag bidrar med en bottom-up-analys av väljarpreferenser, med centrala bidraget av icke-materiella religiösa incitament till forskningen av klientelism. Jag ger också en top-down-analys av religiösa ledarnas politiska beteende. Jag illustrerar hur helgonpolitikernas religiösa ställning ger dem fördelar i den politiska sfären i förhållande till icke-helgonpolitiker, och hur detta förstärker deras positioner som makthavare. Dessa föredelarna inkluderar tillgång till försäkrade röster, infrastruktur och tillgång till ikkemateriella incitament. Jag pekar ut de mekanismer som ligger till grund för båda aktörernas politiska beteende, vilket illustrerar religionens mångfacetterade roll som både social identitet och trossystem. Genom att kombinera insikter från en originaldatabas med sufi-helgonpolitiker i national- och provinsför-samlingarna och fältarbete (inklusive semi-strukturerade intervjuer och elitintervjuer och deltagarobservationer), är denna studie den första som samlar in original empiriska data om denna grupp av väljare.

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1

Introduction

Clientelist networks, built on the combination of religious authority coupled with political power, span over much of the developing world, such as the Sufi *pir-murid* in the Indian Sub-continent (Ansari 1992, Mayer 1967, Varraich 2011, Hydén 2006), as well as the developed world, in the form of the evangelist movement in North America (Lindsay 2007). This aspect of clientelism, that combines religion and political power, is largely absent from the political science literature. Much too much of the political science literature assumes that the clientelistic exchange is a straightforward quid pro quo, the proffering of material benefits in exchange for a vote, where deeper social structures such as context, traditions and expectations are left out of the equation.

Unlike other relational clientelistic bonds, religion brings in an aspect of the supernatural.¹ This supernatural quality of religion has the potential to affect the type of rationality at play in the actors' political behaviour, the type of goods exchanged between patron and actor (both in terms of what clients demand and what patrons supply) as well as some fundamental assumptions of clientelism found in political science such as the direction of flow of goods and monitoring. Due to the special nature of religion and its potential consequences in how it shapes the fundamental characteristics and assumptions of clientelism, it is important to theorise this type of clientelistic politics. This is especially imperative because this form of relational clientelism continues to influence the political behaviour of citizens across the Muslim world. Furthermore, this type of clientelism currently defies our predictions of what clientelist politics look like, as well as our less developed understanding of how religion affects political behaviour outside of programmatic contexts. This study intends to address this gap in the political science literature. I now turn to empirical examples of this relationship at play.

On my way back from fieldwork in Pakistan, I found myself watching a Hindi film – *Singham returns*. There is one scene in the film that stands out because it encapsulates the thrust of my dissertation's argument. At a large gather the religious leader, Babaji, who has thousands of religious followers, has just announced his intention to contest elections. For this, he asks for his followers' blessing and support. The crowd responds by chanting "We are with you!!!" This is followed by a

¹ Relational clientelistic bonds rooted in religion and politics may have similarities to other relational bonds, but what other bonds lack and cannot automatically assume is the supernatural nature religion possesses.

quick succession of scenes showing his followers removing valuables from themselves (gold chains, earrings, cash) and depositing these in baskets being passed around. This is followed by scenes of the same followers voting for him. As I sat there, I felt giddy. Here was yet another example of how political behaviour is affected when voters share a hierarchical religious bond with a candidate. I had seen many examples in my fieldwork as well. Let us look at one empirical example of a Sufi disciple that follows a Sufi saint-politician.²

It is election time in Pakistan and in the village of Sanghar, Shahid, a spiritual disciple of Ma-khdoom Amin Fahim, has just set out to cast his vote for the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) – the party to which his spiritual leader and politician belongs. However, Sanghar is the stronghold of the *Pir* Pagaro – another Sufi saint, who heads the rival political party the Pakistan Muslim League Functional (PML-F). Once at the voting booth, Shahid is approached by members of the PML-F, who offer him 10,000 rupees in exchange for his vote³. Shahid refuses their offer and still votes for his Sain (a term of endearment for one's spiritual leader). The offer of exchanges is not limited to attempted bribes but extend to physical violence ranging from being 'beaten up', to 'guns being fired'. Yet, Shahid refuses to vote for anyone other than his spiritual leader, explaining "...It is Sain's orders, therefore no voting elsewhere. We are with our Sain all the way...If Sain changes political party, then I will join the party that Sain joins. We're only with the PPP because Sain is there. So, wherever he goes, we will follow."

Interview R12, Sindh, December 2015

These above scenarios, one fiction and the other a real-world example, challenge the prevailing political science view of clientelistic politics. Specifically, it challenges the notion of the *type* of goods exchanged between patron and client. In much of the political science scholarship on clientelism the exchange is centred on material benefits flowing from patron to client, where material benefits are assumed to steer the political decisions of voters. The two above examples point to a different type of clientelism, where the exchange of material goods is not central to their political behaviour, instead the religious following appears to be steering their political behaviour. Another important distinction pertains to *who* is gaining in the relationship. Often the assumption is that clients gain more in terms of material benefits than do patrons. In clientelism based on religion and politics the arrow is reversed. Instead of material benefits flowing from patron to client, material benefits often flow from client to patron (in the above examples the religious followers of Babaji gave him their jewelry and valuables, while Shahid gave up the potential of a substantial monetary award of 10,000 rupees). In sum the client's political choices appear to be driven by their long-term religious bond (i.e., relational clientelism). The above example of Shahid highlights the importance of the religious bond shared between him and his spiritual leader Amin Fahim – where Shahid not only votes for him, but

2 The Sufi *pir-murid* relationship is a dyadic, hierarchical relationship where the client swears a life-long religious allegiance to the Sufi saint with the conviction of the relationship being central to their salvation. It is an exchange relationship largely centred on the exchange of nonmaterial religious rewards.

3 R12 works as a security guard in Karachi, where his monthly salary is circa 10,000 PKR in 2015 (a substantial amount in the village). The refusal of a month salary is quite a high amount to refuse.

is willing to change political parties, and refuse a monetary compensation for his vote, all for the sake of the bond he shares with his patron. The story is useful because it illustrates how current explanations, on their own, cannot fully account for Shahid's political behaviour. These explanations include clientelism, religious voting, and ethnic identity.

The first and primary scholarship I contribute to is clientelism. Shahid's experience breaks the image of citizens in developing contexts as vote sellers – a depiction regularly conveyed by the contemporary political science literature. This consequently affects basic assumptions of the dominant theories based on this premise – the commitment problem, monitoring, and enforcement. The understanding of citizens selling their vote to the highest bidder, is one of the foundations of what clientelism is understood to be in political science today – a contingent quid pro quo exchange relationship between patron and client. This is also implicit in the canonical definitions of clientelism: “giving material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you/will you support me?” (Stokes, 2009), or “the distribution of particularistic or private material benefits with the expectation of political support” (Kramon 2009, 4) as well as “[of-fered] goods to specific individuals before an election in exchange for their votes” (Finan and Schechter 2012, 864).⁴ These definitions assume material benefits to be the main driving factor of clients' political behaviour. In our desire to understand the political behaviour of citizens, with a few exceptions (Auyero 2000, Björkman 2014, Chauchard 2018, Kramon 2016), a large majority of today's scholarship has adopted an economic outlook of the client, where the rational actor model is applied and political behaviour is analysed through the lens of cost-benefit analysis, where most often utility is understood as material gain (see Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Piattoni 2001). In this model the central tenet of the exchange, or rather the ‘price’ of a vote, is a material benefit. Examples of material benefits include, but are not limited to, an array of items such as pasta, silverware, TVs, or simply cash payments (Hicken 2011, Aspinall and Berenschot 2011, Chauchard 2018).

Contrary to the predominant vote-seller thesis in political science, Shahid has refused a short-term material gain of ten thousand rupees – an amount equivalent to his monthly salary as a private security guard, withstood the threat of physical violence, and refused to alter his political behaviour for the money offered. Instead, his political behaviour, including his intended vote choice and partisanship, appear to be driven by loyalty to his spiritual leader (Amin Fahim) with whom he shares a long-term religious bond of Sufi *pir-murid*. In this relationship, the client swears a life-long allegiance to a Sufi saint as their spiritual leader, with the conviction that their salvation is dependent on the Sufi leader's intercession. Their relationship is largely centred on the exchange of diffuse nonmaterial religious goods – such as prayers, blessings, and spiritual guidance. This is akin to the type of long-term bonds found in the ethnographic scholarship on clientelism, where different types of bonds elicit

⁴ This understanding of clientelism and clients as vote sellers is also implicit from book titles such as Daniel Corstange's *The Price of a Vote in the Middle East Clientelism and Communal Politics in Lebanon and Yemen*. Cambridge University Press; 2016.

different types of preferences including nonmaterial gain (Schmidt et al 1977, Springborg 1979, Foster 1963, Warren et. al 2004:354).

Furthermore, this type of relational clientelism rooted in a long-term religious bond also displaces many of our prevailing assumptions about clientelism. This includes the importance of contingency, the quid pro quo nature of clientelism, the two-way material exchange, the aspect of trust and loyalty between the actors, and the direction of the flow of material goods. Understanding what motivates Shahid, from his perspective, is crucial if we want better understandings of the complexity of decision-making that citizens face. There is an emerging literature that considers the limitations of the extant clientelism scholarship (Hicken and Nathan 2020) and highlights the importance of revising our existing models to include social structures, context, traditions, and expectations in order to gain a holistic understanding of the client and their consequential political behaviour. One such plea is from Yildirim and Kitschelt that asks us to “tone down the strong emphasis on vote buying in clientelism studies and return to an older tradition....to focus on relational forms of clientelism (2020:37). In a similar vein, Berenschot and Aspinall underscore the continued underdevelopment of “different forms of clientelistic politics” (2020:2). I join this school of scholars and introduce a relational clientelism rooted in religion and politics, a different type of clientelist politics, found across much of the Muslim world – the hierarchical Sufi *pir-murid* relationship.

The second explanation that potentially can explain Shahids political behaviour, but currently remains incomplete, is religious voting. Shahid’s story also suggests that religion is informing his political decision-making. In political science religious voting is often expressed as citizens voting for conservative policy positions that form political parties’ agendas (Raymond 2011, Gomez 2021, Kurzman and Naqvi 2010), where the variation centres on secular versus non-secular policy platforms of political parties (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2018). Shahid, however, does not appear to be casting his vote due to the policy platform of the PPP. Instead, his religious bond to the candidate appears to be driving his political behaviour – i.e., religion is playing a role outside of programmatic politics. In fact, even Shahid’s partisanship appears to be steered by his religious following. As Shahid pointed out

If Sain changes political party, then I will join the party that Sain joins. We’re only with the PPP because Sain is there. So, wherever he goes, we will follow. (R12, Sindh, December 2015).

Following his religious leader from one party to another could entail joining a political party with a different political programme, one that may be 180 degrees different to the policy platform of the original party. One illustrative example is the case of former Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi. He is a hereditary Sufi saint-politician and heads one of the oldest congregations in Pakistan. He switched from left leaning Pakistan People’s Party, to the right leaning conservative Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf. His followers followed him out of their religious attachment and not necessarily the partisanship of their religious leader (see Chapter 5 for discussion). This brings into question our current understanding of what exactly constitutes religious voting. Our contemporary understanding of religious voting, specifically

how it affects individual political behaviour, is intimately tied with programmatic politics, informed largely by data derived from the Western context (Esmer and Petterson 2007). Much of the data on religious voting for the Muslim world is taken from the Arabic speaking Middle East (e.g., Arab barometer). Although this data has helped extend our knowledge of Islam and the political behaviour of a subsection of Muslims, it is limited because it is not reflective of a majority of the world's Muslim population and thus not generalisable outside the Arab context (Tepe and Demirkaya 2011).⁵ The largest population of Muslims are found in Asia – in Indonesia and Pakistan (Pew Research 2013).⁶ Therefore, in the context of developing countries, where party platforms tend to be weakly institutionalised, and politics are contested based on 'strong men', or a combination thereof, the current understanding of religious voting falls short in explaining Shahid's behaviour.

The third literature that can help explain how religion affects individual political behaviour in contexts of developing countries with weak political parties is the scholarship on ethnic identity. When using ethnic identity scholarship to explain the role of religion in citizens' political behaviour, what complicates our understanding is that how religion is treated. Oftentimes religion as a category is subsumed under the umbrella term of ethnic identity. Simply put, ethnic identity is often defined broadly, to include not only ethnicity per se, but also religion, language, race, caste, and tribe (Horowitz 1985, Varshney 2002, Chandra 2004, Wilkinson 2004, Posner 2005). The main argument is that ethnicity functions as an information shortcut for citizens, where a shared ethnic identity between voter and candidate carries with it an implicit expectation that voting for one's co-ethnic candidate will result in receiving preferential treatment in the shape of material gains and policies that will benefit their group (Chandra 2007). It is an explanation that overlaps with the clientelist explanation of gaining material benefits, but here ethnic identity is the additional information cue used by voters to understand where they can gain materially. The ethnic identity argument can apply to Shahid but this central explanation (Corstange 2013, Bratton and Kimenyi 2008, Chandra 2006, Chandra 2004) falls short because of two reasons. First, there is a lack of differentiation between the different identity types – in this case religion is included in the umbrella term ethnicity. With a handful of exceptions (Baysu and Swyngedouw 2020, Koter 2016, McCauley 2014, Sachs 2009), the scholarship generally treats identities on par with each other, where the political consequences of each identity are often not differentiated. Simply, current explanations forwarded by the ethnic identity scholarship assume different social identities to have similar outcomes on political behaviour. This potentially leaves out understandings of how one identity may elicit certain preferences versus another (McCauley 2014, McCauley 2017). Second, like the scholarship on clientelism, ethnic identity explanations also focus on material gains. Effectively, it does not explain why Shahid refuses a material gain equivalent of a month's salary, to uphold his loyalty to his religious leader and still votes him.

⁵ One exception is the *Oxford Handbook of Politics in the Muslim World* edited by Melanie Cammett and Pauline Jones, however it should be noted this volume only came out in 2022, perhaps an attempt to fill this data gap.

⁶ The largest Muslim population is to be found in Indonesia, Pakistan, and India (CIA World Fact book 2023).

Each scholarship, on its own, is unable to explain fully what is driving Shahid's political behaviour. In fact, it raises several important questions. First, how is Shahid's religious bond affecting his overall political behaviour (vote, partisanship)? How are Shahid's political preferences affected by his religious bond? What *type* of goods are central to this exchange, does it activate a set of goods not generally considered in the clientelism literature? Do religious clients differentiate between non-material religious goods and material goods that are offered to them? Why would Shahid vote for his spiritual leader when he has been offered a solid monetary compensation for his vote? And finally, what key functional aspects of this religious bond cause him to "follow" his spiritual leader/politician across party lines. To address these overall questions and provide a deeper understanding of individual political behaviour, I draw on these three literatures to theorise a relational clientelism rooted in religion and politics that can better explain the political behaviour of client-voters in the context of weak political parties.

1.1 The Question

How does religion shape political behaviour? This dissertation takes up this overarching question using Sufi Islam in South Asia as its empirical base to *explore how hierarchical religious bonds shared by voter and candidate, shape clientelism*. My aim is twofold: first to expand clientelism theory to include religion – i.e., to provide a sub-type of clientelism – a relational clientelism rooted in long-term bonds provided by religion between patron and client, where the exchange is centred on nonmaterial religious rewards. My second aim is to expand our understanding of client preferences to include nonmaterial religious benefits. Clientelistic bonds rooted in religion remain under-researched, especially in terms of the effect such bonds have on the political choices of actors involved. To pursue this aim, the dissertation is set up in two stages.

Religion → Clientelism → Political behaviour

The first question of the dissertation is **how do hierarchical religious bonds shared by patron and client shape clientelism?** This question is the first stage of the inductive theory building process. It allows me to address the main aim of expanding contemporary clientelism theory by introducing a subtype of clientelism – a type of relational clientelism that combines religion and politics to our modern study. I draw on empirical data gathered through extensive fieldwork carried out in 2015 and 2019 in Pakistan to inform *how a hierarchical religious bond affects core characteristics of clientelism*.⁷ In theorising this sub-type, I pay attention to the following three core aspects: the exchange (the type of goods exchanged between pa-

⁷ There is general agreement that the core characteristics of clientelism to be dyadic relationships, contingency, hierarchy, and iteration (Hicken 2011). Authors agree that clientelism at its core as an interest-maximising exchange, with core characteristics at play – longevity, diffuseness, face to face contact (same as iteration) and inequality (hierarchy) (Roiniger 2004, Hilgers 2011).

tron and client, the regularity of exchange, and reciprocity), loyalty, and trust. Thus, in the first stage of the dissertation I present an inductive theory of clientelism rooted in religion and politics – what I term religious clientelism. The theory presented in Chapter 3 addresses the first question of how religion shapes clientelism.

The second stage of the inquiry addresses the political consequences of religious clientelism. Therefore, the second question of the dissertation is **how does religious clientelism affect individual political behaviour?** This question addresses the second overall aim of the dissertation – to understand client preferences. Specifically, how preferences from the religious clientelistic bond spill over to their choices in the political arena. To further our understanding of client preferences I analyse whether religion activates a set of goods generally not considered in the political science literature, what *type* of goods undergird the exchange, and what value (or lack thereof) client-voters assign these goods, and ultimately to their political behaviour (vote and partisanship) in relation to this shared religious bond? Although my primary interest is the client-voter, because of the dyadic nature of clientelism, I also explicate the patron-politician side to effectively illustrate the action sets available to both actors in the political arena in relation to the religious bond they share.

The primary focus in relation to the client-voter's preferences is on the *type* of goods exchanged between client and patron. This helps move beyond material incentives, to include psychological goods of religious incentives and an understanding of how these affect clients' individual political behaviour. Because clientelism at its core is a contingent exchange relationship, whether material or nonmaterial religious goods are preferred by client-voters informs us about the value citizens assign different types of goods in relation to the socio-religious bond shared with their patron and how it steers their political choices. Thus, I provide an analysis of how the hierarchical religious bond first shapes their preferences, and how these in turn affect the political behaviour of client voters – in terms of partisanship and vote choice. Once again because of the dyadic nature of clientelism, I also provide an analysis of the political behaviour of patron-politicians. I do so in terms of their access to patronage resources, political strategies of campaigning, building alliances and ticket negotiation (i.e., desired political tickets to contest from). This helps underscore the complexity of political decision-making for the patron – where patrons continue to use their position as religious leaders and the advantages gained from this type of clientelism as a strategic tool in their political toolbox when running for office. I illustrate the political consequences of religious clientelism for clients in Chapter 5 and for patrons in Chapter 6. I do so through a case study of Sufi Islam in Pakistan.

1.2 Relevance of puzzle

This type of linkage, built on the combination of religious authority and political power, has been found across time and space. It existed in early Christianity (see *Cult of Saints* by Peter Brown, 2009) and was, until recently, pervasive in European Malta – where Catholic priests steered the education system and remained an active part of Maltese politics (Boissevain 1984). Today, this type of relationship, where an

individual's religious linkage influences their political actions, can be seen across the globe. Ranging from the power exerted by Evangelical pastors over their congregants in the American South,⁸ to the power of Sufi Saints across the Muslim world.⁹ In fact, these types of relationships, built on hierarchical religious bonds, have been on the rise. Werenfels elaborates on the reappearance of Sufi orders in Maghrebi politics and highlights their importance in delivering vote banks. Werenfels details "in Algeria Bouteflika ostentatiously embraced Sufi actors, employing Sufi sheikhs in grassroots campaigns for his national reconciliation initiatives and in his presidential campaigns with the goal of gaining votes and enlarging his personal power base and legitimacy" (Werenfels 2014:278, Werenfels 2007:146–148). In the context of Senegal, local religious leaders such as the Sufi marabout, had the power to make or break government projects (e.g., Cruise O'Brien 1971, 1975). Today the Sufi marabouts are an active part of the political landscape and known for their power to mobilise voters and delivering the vote, acting as brokers between politicians and voters (Koter 2016).

Religious actors have not been side-lined by the increase in education, economic growth, urbanization, and globalization. Instead, their political presence and participation has increased. For example, in Indonesia "urbanisation, globalisation, economic growth and the education revolution" instead of resulting in the marginalisation of religious actors in the political sphere, has in fact led to their "increased social and political prominence" (van Bruinessen 2007:111). Unlike mainstream clientelism, this scholarship highlights that clients are not limited to the poor citizen of rural areas. In fact, in Indonesia "...far from being a phenomenon of the poor voter, this type of clientelism [built on religion and politics] [...] well-educated, white-collar citizens have come within the fold of these types of relationships, where religious and political exist at one and the same time (Howell 2010, Aspinall and Berenschot 2011). This contrasts with the portrayal of clients in political science literature, where clients are often portrayed as vote-sellers and tend to be limited to the poor voter (Munoz 2014, Corstange 2018).

Furthermore, the significance of this type of religious bond in the political sphere, and its far-reaching political consequences are best illustrated by the failed coup in Turkey in 2016. The main perpetrators of the attempted coup were said to be members of the Gülen movement, whose leader Fetullah Gülen, lives in exile in the woods of Pennsylvania, USA. His followers, who accept Gülen as a living saint and spiritual leader, were said to have been implicitly activated by his religious sermons to initiate the takeover of the Turkish government (Filkins, 2016, McClendon and Reidl 2020).¹⁰

8 In the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the question of getting vaccinated has become a contentious political issue separating Republicans and Democrats, religious leaders across the US (particularly Evangelical pastors) have used their spiritual sway to either encourage or discourage their congregants taking the Covid19 vaccination.
<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2021/08/this-former-pastor-is-changing-evangelicals-minds-on-covid-vaccines/>

9 From the North African countries of Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco; the West African coast (Senegal), to Indonesia) and in pundits India.

10 The importance of religious sermons as signalling devices for political ends forms part of an emerging literature within the religion and politics scholarship. A prominent example is McClendon and Riedl (2019). They explore the importance of religious sermons and their role as metaphysical instruction and demonstrate how religious teachings

In Pakistan, the empirical site for this dissertation, this religio-political relationship is often forwarded both as an explanation for why followers of these politicians vote the way they do and as an advantage for politicians that are living saints (Mehmood and Seror 2022). Religious leaders such as Shahid's spiritual leader Amin Fahim (Sufi saints with large followings) are found across all political parties, and in key political positions. Currently, Sufi saints make up a substantial 16% of the Pakistani National Assembly, 27% of the Provincial Assembly of Sindh and 7% of the Punjab Provincial Assembly. Former Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi,¹¹ and many federal ministers including Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiar¹² and Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan¹³ are examples of Sufi saints in Pakistani politics. If citizens are voting based on relational clientelistic bonds and not on the policy programmes these politicians represent, this brings into question the consolidation of developing democracies, where the standard model of democracy rests on electoral politics being contested through formal parties and their policy platforms. In other words, the standard model of electoral democracy where the central tenet of one man, one vote is displaced (Varraich 2021). Put simply, instead of voting for policy platforms, citizens have their political behaviour shaped by their religious linkage.¹⁴

1.3 Argument in brief

Based on the empirical evidence gathered during fieldwork, I argue when two actors share a hierarchical religious bond, in the context of weak personalised politics, if/when the religious leader runs for office, their followers vote for them. Importantly, the exchange between the two actors is dominated by nonmaterial religious goods unavailable outside of the religious bond. The mechanism behind this political behaviour is rooted in two functions that the religious bond serves for the client. First, at the collective level religion serves as a social identity (*pehchaan*). When the religious leader runs for office, the client's religious identity is made salient as are the preferences associated it. The second function of the religious bond is as at the individual level, where it serves as a belief system (*aqeeda*). It is through this that the believer's preferences are affected. The religious client's rationality seeks utility in the form of ideational nonmaterial religious goods – such as prayers,

communicated in sermons can influence both the degree and the form of citizens' political participation in their book *From Pews to Politics*.

11 Shah Mehmood Qureshi is the *sajjida nashin* of the shrines of Shah Rukhn e Alam and Bahauddin Zakaria in Multan, Punjab.

12 Belongs to the family who are custodians of Mau Mubarak and other shrines of the families of Mianwali Qureshian <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics-electables/political-turncoats-boost-imran-khans-prospects-in-pakistan-poll-idUSKBN1K120Y>

13 He belongs to the shrine of Sultan Bahu in Pakpattan, Punjab.

14 This may be a result of how religion is measured. The current World Values Survey as well as other popular measures of religiosity, are rooted in specific Christian traditions, limiting the ability of these measures to capture religiosity, as experienced and expressed, by other religions, such as followers of Islam. One simple example is the question of "how often do you go to Church/mosque?" This question would directly leave out the entirety of the Muslim female population that generally does not go to the mosque, but still may identify as religious or pious. (For a full discussion on the lack of applicability of current religiosity measures see Verghase 2020)

blessings, peace of mind and the promise of salvation. It is important to note that the rationality of the religious believer is based on having experienced the benefits of nonmaterial religious goods in this life, and not some far away promise of salvation in life after death. They have already experienced the benefits of psychological goods such as their prayers being answered, and peace of mind gained through following prescribed rituals that have helped reinforce their beliefs and created a conviction in the value provided by these nonmaterial religious goods.¹⁵ Thus, when the patron who is also their religious leader, runs for office the client shows an overarching preference for nonmaterial spiritual benefits in their exchanges with their patron. The causal mechanism for their preferences in the political sphere is their spiritual bond. This activation of preferences for nonmaterial religious goods is present prior to the religious leader contesting political office. The political ramifications of this religious bond for the patron contesting office effectively provides the patron with a permanent vote bank, where the religious and political coalesce.

The role of religion in clientelistic relationships must be taken seriously because it distorts many of the canonical assumptions held by the contemporary scholarship. This includes the contingency of the exchange, the need to monitor the client, and the implications of clients' preference for material goods as central in the clientelistic exchange. Relatedly, this also feeds into the discussion of the costs of clientelism, where a patron of religious clientelism would not have to make the same type of investment into provision of material resources to the client because the clients demand nonmaterial religious rewards.

Religion's effective provision of nonmaterial religious goods as part of the clientelistic exchange further unravels much of the indirect understanding of clients' preferences, where the contemporary political science literature focuses on voters preferring goods with material utility. In religious clientelism, both patron and client exercise dual roles (patron is both religious leader and politician and client is both religious follower and voter). Clients cast their vote for their patron, based on a combination of loyalty stemming from religion as identity and belief system in one, where the belief system's central aspect is rooted in an exchange of goods where nonmaterial religious goods hold sway (both nonmaterial and material). These are provided through the religious bond, without necessarily a quid pro quo exchange of material goods. Finally, monitoring of the client is not necessary because of the nature of the relationship where monitoring is self-enforced because of the all-seeing creator – God. My findings suggest that patrons in religious clientelism gain more in terms of material goods than do clients. One example is tithes in the form of cash or sometimes even land, both of which are donated by the patron's followers. Effectively the patron gains politically (vote), materially (monetary donations in the form of tithes, property titles), and socially (the more followers a Sufi *pir* has the more respect he has in society as it reaffirms his religio-social position).¹⁶

15 Many respondents repeated the term *aqeeda* (creed) and gave examples of how their prayers had been answered – one mentioning her marriage as the result of her being granted her prayers, another mentioning the birth of their son as proof of their prayers being answered.

16 These can range from miniscule amounts of rupees to larger more extravagant sums, as well as donations of title deeds representing acres of land. This is like estates being left to a Church.

These findings have important implications. First, they highlight the importance of nonmaterial ideational goods such as religious rewards. This speaks to one of our core assumptions related to understanding individual client-voter political behaviour, where material benefit is not at the forefront of their preferences. Second, it suggests that clientelism is not as expensive a political strategy for patrons as previously assumed. Instead, patrons exercising both religious and political roles have access to an infinite supply of nonmaterial religious rewards, and thus can forego the investment of resources typically assumed to be associated with clientelism as a viable strategy. Finally, it provides potential insights into clientelism's continued presence.

The theory presented in this dissertation is applicable in contexts of weak political parties and where politics are personalised. One example is the Sufi saint and follower relationship, and another is the relationship between Roman Catholicism's priest and congregant's relationship (Isacco and Songy 2022). Specifically, where religion functions as an embedded part of day-to-day life and forms the basis of a relational clientelistic relationship, that can be activated as electoral clientelism (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019).

1.4 Contribution

This dissertation makes two overarching contributions to the clientelism literature. The first contribution is that I introduce a sub-type of relational clientelism that combines religion and politics to our modern study. The Sufi *pir-murid* relationship is a dyadic, hierarchical relationship where the client swears a life-long religious allegiance to the Sufi saint with the conviction of the relationship being central to their salvation. It is an exchange relationship largely centred on the exchange of nonmaterial religious rewards, i.e., the relationship is not contingent on a two-way material exchange which is typically found in political science. Instead, there is a vertical power exchange in terms of religious following (where the patron is higher in status and client lower) that results in an exchange of material and nonmaterial goods between patron and client. Thus, this study goes beyond the strict confines that define the core characteristics of clientelism (Nathan and Hicken 2020). Instead, it returns to the classical roots developed by anthropologists and sociologists, where overall nuance of the relationship (i.e., family resemblance) matters more than precise characteristics being fulfilled. It adds to the recent scholarship that focuses on providing typologies of clientelism (Nichter 2018, Pellicer et al 2020, Yildirim and Kitschelt 2020), where the main types are vote-buying, relational and collective – differentiated along their dimensions of verticality or horizontality (Pellicer et al 2022). The Sufi *pir-murid* relationship is one that is relational (it is long-term, dyadic, and iterative), vertical in its power exchange (there is a marked hierarchy between the actors, where one can provide goods valued by the other), and some aspects of traditional clientelism (where the fear of exclusion and social ostracization also governs behaviour) all in one. It is a form of relational clientelism present across much of the Muslim world today and therefore highly relevant to any study of political behaviour in these settings.

The theoretical implication of my contribution is that I refine and expand the contemporary theory of clientelism through an inductive approach using empirical data. I illustrate the spill over of clientelistic reciprocities from one field of activity to another. In this case the clientelistic reciprocity emanates from the patron-client's religious bond and is reciprocated in the political sphere when the Sufi saint runs for office (in terms of partisanship and vote).

The second contribution of the dissertation is the introduction of nonmaterial religious benefits as central to clients' preferences. My project expands our understanding of client preferences to include nonmaterial religious benefits. It effectively recasts our understanding of clients, from our now-standard view of clients as valuing short-term, material benefits, to one where nonmaterial religious inducements, such as prayers and peace of mind, form a central part of the long-term considerations of the client. This helps reinvigorate the ethnographic scholarship developed by anthropologists and sociologists outside of electoral competitive elections, where ideational goods such as honour and status were included (Foster 1963, Boissevain 1984, Schmidt et al 1977, Geertz 2002). Furthermore, this contribution expands on recent work that delves into understanding clientelism from the client's perspective (Pellicer et al 2020, Pellicer et al 2014) beyond material benefits in exchange for the vote (Stokes 2005, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). These include nonmaterial goods such as protection/insurance (Pellicer et al 2020) and local public goods such as schools (Wantchekon 2003).

This second contribution of nonmaterial religious goods as part of client preferences has implications for how we analyse the political behaviour of both voters and politicians. In our modern scholarship on clientelism there is an assumption that voters are willing to sell their vote to the highest bidder (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Thus, clientelism as a political strategy for patrons is assumed to be expensive and unsustainable, and only viable to a certain limit because it is resource intensive, and resources are finite (Bergman 2019).¹⁷ However, my findings suggest that scarcity may not to be an acute concern for patrons that are both religious leaders and politicians. This is because nonmaterial religious goods that clients demand are tied in with the personhood of the patron. As such, the main source of these nonmaterial religious goods (such as blessings, prayers, intercession) is the patron himself. This results in a resource base that is infinite, and therefore translates to a strategy that is not expensive for the saint-politician. Furthermore, this quality is also exclusive, and not available to politicians who are not religious leaders. The underlying logic of nonmaterial religious goods as part of clients' preferences (and of my findings) is similar those forwarded by Solaz et al. (2019) which suggest that voters are willing to sacrifice material payoffs if they share a group identity with the patron, where the driving mechanism is an ingroup loyalty. In case of *murids*, they hold a religious conviction that their salvation is dependent on the intercession of their religious leader, but they also share a group identity with their religious leader/politician.

¹⁷ This ties in with the overt focus that much of the clientelism literature has on the poor voter as its target segment of the population.

Finally, one of the most surprising implications of my findings is that clients may not be gaining the most out of the exchange in material terms. Despite many exchanges being instrumental for clients (*murids* get social standing, jobs etc from the relationship) in case of material benefits, the arrow of flow of goods is in the opposite direction from modern standard clientelism. In religious clientelism majority of material benefits flow not from patron to client, but from client to patron. Simply, the patron gains more in material terms than do clients. Examples include cash (tithes and monetary donations) land (donations), food (typically donated to the soup kitchen of the shrines) and power.

Empirically, I provide an account of the micro-foundations of a relational clientelism in Pakistan, and how it operates on the ground in contexts of weak political parties. Both actors exercise two roles simultaneously (religious leader-politician and religious follower-voter). The patron in this context is the individual candidate and not the political party, and the client is the individual religious disciple. It illustrates a type of client to the political science literature that is not shopping around for a ‘better deal’ in terms of material gain (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007), but one that is more loyal. My findings suggest that this loyalty is undergirded by a meso trust rooted in the spiritual affiliation between both actors. This loyalty stems from religion’s function as both social identity (collective level) and belief system (individual level) at once. The introduction of meso level trust is a novel contribution of the inductive theory because it merges two types of trust – general trust and individual. It creates a category not currently present in the literature. It is important because it is stickier than either social or political trust on their own. Focusing on the client’s preferences adds to our understanding of the negotiation process that clients grapple with, underscoring the complexity of clients’ decision-making. My contribution as part of an emerging literature brings deep social relationships of the classical school in conversation with the contemporary scholarship’s focus on political behaviour and provides a more nuanced understanding of the actors and the relationship.

Furthermore, I provide first-hand data from the client side of how religion affects the political behaviour of citizens, i.e., the mechanisms through which clientelism operates. I argue that religion serves a dual function as both social identity and belief system at once. Based on empirical data presented in Chapter 5, I distinguish religion from the umbrella of ethnic identity and provide an identity model where religion, when expressed as hierarchical bonds between patron and client, acts as a higher-ranking identity relative to other identities whenever the patron runs for office. Thus, adding to the emerging literature that differentiates religion as an identity separate from the umbrella of ethnicity (McCauley 2014). I illustrate how voters’ ranking of identities affects their preferences and, in turn, the type of goods they demand. I thus add empirical data to the social identity theory that relates saliency of identity to variation in preferences in terms of the type of good preferred by clients (McCauley 2014). Simply put, I provide empirical evidence to illuminate the mechanisms of *how* and *where* religion matters to political behaviour of voter-clients. Although the importance of religion as a variable in analyses of political behaviour is not new, the novel contribution of this dissertation is the use of clientelism as a framework to analyse a religious relationship and its effects on political behaviour in

terms of preferences and voting behaviour, thus addressing a gap that has tended to treat religion as a side-lying subject within the study of politics (Gill 2001, Wald et al. 2005, Philpott 2009, Tepe and Demirkaya 2011).

Additionally, this study expands our understanding of political Islam to include Sufi Islam. Much of the work on political Islam focuses on Islamism within the framework of political parties, or through the securitization lens that focuses on Islam and terrorism. The brunt of research agendas focuses on nonstate actors such as Islamic state and Al-Qaeda (Jadoon and Mines 2023), leaving out Sufi Islam as a political form. Although much work has been carried out on Sufi religious leaders (Ansari 1992, Koter 2022, Malik and Mirza 2018, Werenfels 2014) this work does not explicitly express Sufi Islam as part of political Islam. Instead, the focus is generally on Sufi leaders' role as clientelistic brokers or as religious elites (Koter 2016, Malik and Mirza 2015, Malik and Malik 2022). I empirically show how Islamism of political parties can be insignificant in voters' calculus relative to the affectation provided by Sufi Islam between its actors especially in relation to political behaviour of citizens (Chapters 4 and 5). Chapter 4 illustrates the insignificance of Islamism of political parties with the poor showing of Islamist parties at the polls. This is contrasted with Chapter 5 which illustrates the role the religious bond provided by Sufi Islam plays for client-voters, from the clients' perspective. It is a useful distinction in our analyses of Muslim societies because it lends a nuanced understanding of how religion affects politics outside the confines of political parties, especially in relation to citizens' political behaviour. It better represents the far reach of how Islam operates in the political sphere beyond the confines of conservative political parties or their conservative policy programmes.

1.5 Pakistan – Case context and brief history

To provide empirical data, I have carried out “an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units” (Gerring, 2004:342). I use Sufi Islam's *pir-murid* (single unit) relationship to provide a deeper understanding of clientelism (larger class) and how a clientelistic relationship operates in the day-to-day lives of the actors. This sheds light on the nuances of the exchange relationship and the types of exchanges undertaken between patron and client. With the overarching aim of theory development, an in-depth qualitative case analysis was suitable because of its exploratory nature, especially as the *murid*-voter and their political behaviour remains underexplored. Following Ragin (1992) in “casing,” I make my case based on “the interaction between ideas and evidence,” with an aim of progressive refinement of the case conceived as a theory construct” (Ragin 1992;10). Inspired by grounded theory, I use an inductive approach to theory development, where observed empirical evidence from real life settings, helps inform and refine existing clientelism theory (Brodin 2017).

The use of methods such as qualitative in-depth interviews and participant observation as part of the case study analysis, helps add to an emerging scholarship on clientelism that uses these methods to highlight and “contextualise political behav-

iours and beliefs and examine the processes through which they are shaped and expressed in real life settings” (Brodkin 2017:131). Building on the interplay between evidence and theory this case has the potential to “contribute to the construction and validation of theoretical propositions” raised by the empirical observation of voters being affected by religious hierarchical bonds shared by themselves and their religious leader/candidate (Levy 2008:2).

Pakistan serves as a ripe empirical setting for the purposes of this study. Religious hierarchical bonds, characteristic of the Sufi master-disciple (*pir-murid*) relationship, are found across the country (Gilmartin 1988), and has the potential to provide rich informative content of the case. In fact, Pakistan has one of the highest concentrations of holy Sufi Muslim shrines in South Asia, where Sufi saints are known as pirs and their followers as *murids* (Malik and Mirza 2015, Malik and Malik 2019). It is a hierarchical exchange relationship where the follower swears spiritual allegiance to the saint, in pursuit of religious enlightenment.

I use the presence of holy Sufi shrines as a proxy for the presence of the Sufi *pir-murid* relationship. I focused on Punjab and Sindh because the two provinces collectively provide the highest percentage of registered voters and holy shrines. This effectively provides me leverage to access *murids* of *pir*-politicians. Punjab has a total of 598 shrines, of which 64 are active in politics (Malik and Mirza 2014:15).¹⁸ Sindh is home to the second largest concentration of holy Muslim shrines, with 200 mapped shrines of which many are politically active, specifically, where these religious leaders contest political office.¹⁹ Prominent *pir*-politicians in Sindh include Makhdoom Jamil Uz Zaman; currently serving as a member of parliament, and *Pir* Pagaro (the president of the Pakistan Muslim League (F). In Punjab fieldwork took place in the cities of Islamabad, Lahore, and Multan,²⁰ and in Sindh in Hala and Karachi.

Experts estimate 60 percent of Pakistani Muslims to regard themselves as Sufi followers (Hayes 2022, Rodrigues 2011, Schmidle 2008). Further evidence of the prevalence of this relationship is echoed by one of the pirs who heads one of the holiest and oldest Sufi Muslim shrines in Sindh. During our interview I asked him how spread out the phenomenon of the *pir-murid* relationship is in Pakistan and he replied “every 7 people out of 10 people in Pakistan” have a Sufi *pir* whom they follow.²¹ Thus, stressing the exploratory inference of the empirical site in making a conceptual contribution that can be applicable to cases within the universe where religious clientelism comes into play in the political arena. Pakistan is located in South Asia and has a population of 220 million people, making it is the 5th most

18 Malik and Mirza (2014) developed a shrine database that maps the shrines across the Punjab, detailing the ones that are active in electoral politics through matching the names of *pir* families to the electoral database.

19 <http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/usharzakaat/sehwan.htm>

20 Multan is also known as the city of Saints – a title it shares with the Turkish city of Konya.

21 R5, Sindh. This statistic is drawn from my interview with one of the Sufi saints who heads one of the largest and holiest shrines in Sindh. As the head of such an influential shrine he is in possession of fine-tuned data provided to him by his network of khalifas, data unavailable outside of these circles. I was also able to triangulate this statistic with my own data, where a spread of followers was accessed through sampling at a local medical clinic. This *pir* is educated in the US and is in his early 50s. He recently took over his father’s position as the head of the congregation and shrine, and does not contest political office, he is a non-political *pir*. During this interview, the non-political *pir* also detailed the indirect political power they exercise, by indicating to their followers which candidate to support.

populous country in the world. It is also the second largest Muslim-majority country in the world (World Population Review, 2020). As a young electoral democracy, founded as a homeland for the Muslims of India, Pakistan has regularly had to find ways for religion and politics to operate in symbiosis, where no clear separation exists.

On the political divide between the two provinces, both have remained electoral strongholds of the two main political parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N). Sindh has remained the stronghold of the PPP and the province of Punjab has traditionally been the stronghold of the PML (N). In 2018 this stronghold loosened with the entry of a third political party at the national stage, the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI). All three political parties have *pir*-politicians in them. Shah Mehmood Qureshi in PTI, Jamil uz Zaman in PPP and Javed Hashmi²² in PML-N to name a few (Gilmartin 1980, Ansari 1992, Talbot 1982, Malik and Mirza 2015).

1.6 Methodology and data collection

The analysis presented in this dissertation is based on empirical evidence derived from semi-structured interviews, an original *pir*-politician database (including shrine mapping), participant observation and primary and secondary sources (newspapers and existing scholarly work). This was collected during two rounds of fieldwork. The first round took place between September to December of 2015, where I interviewed *murids*. The second round took place during April and May 2019 during which I interviewed *pirs*. These included *pirs* who are politically active (*pir*-politicians) and *pirs* who do not contest political office. The interviews took place in Multan, Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Hala.

1.6.1 Interviews

My choice to use interviews as the primary method of data collection stems from the desire to understand the clientelistic relationship from the perspective of the actors. Interviews helped gain insight into the actors' subjective logic that drives their preferences and political choices. Thus, the thrust of my analysis is based on empirical evidence gathered through in-depth interviews with both clients and patrons. In-depth interviews are a suitable method because it takes account of actors' subjective reality and provides us insights into how their subjective logic is expressed. Masooda Bano underscores the use of in-depth interviews succinctly

...People are always forward-looking and utility maximising, but they value different things in different contexts; this is because they have different propensities and historically shaped preferences. Unless the researcher engages with people's own explanations of why they act the way they do – combining this with field observations – she runs the risk of attributing an alien logic to any correlations she is to establish. And the risk is high when one proceeds entirely based on pre-coded questionnaires... (2012:13)

22 <https://dailytimes.com.pk/238741/javed-hashmi-returns-to-pml-n/>

In-depth interviews provided a way of capturing clients' own explanations for what matters to them i.e., what their preferences are and how these drive their political behaviour. Due to the dyadic nature of clientelism I interviewed both clients and patrons, and because of the different types of information wanted from voters and candidates, I designed and implemented two separate interview guides (see appendices A and B). The interviews with *murid*-clients were largely carried out in Urdu and Punjabi, and interviews with *pirs* were held in both Urdu and English.

First round – interviewing murids

In pursuit of the theoretical interest, to develop an understanding of the meanings assigned by voters who find themselves in these religious relationships and how these linkages influence their political behaviour (both voting and preferences), I conducted in-depth interviews with 44 self-identified *murids* across separate congregations (of these, 3 congregations are led by *pirs* active in politics).²³ When contacting the interviewees, I relied on purposive sampling (Campbell et al 2020) in conjunction with snowball sampling (Bernard 2006:191, Parker et al 2019). Purposive sampling was 'used to select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information' (Kelly, 2010: 317) and to ensure effective use of the limited resources at hand (Palinkas et al., 2015). Snowball sampling was used because of the difficulty in locating the population of interest. I stopped contacting interviewees when repeated patterns, i.e., saturation, were discerned in their responses, because my intention was not to gain an interview count but to gain depth alongside a range of perceptions and opinions on the matter of interest (O'Reilly and Parker 2012). To the best of my knowledge this subset of voters has not previously been the subject of an intense analysis. This is the first study to explore and provide micro data on voters that find themselves in *pir-murid* relationships.

Initially, to immerse myself in the jargon and to get a handle on the general mindset and understanding of how *murids* view their relationship to their spiritual leaders, the first set of interviews were held at a clinic in a village outside of Multan. I chose this clinic as a site because it is visited by people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds and provides access to both men and women. Furthermore, it is located on a highway, and used by villages dotted along the way as well as by people from the city of Multan. Only people that self-identified as *murids* were interviewed. The sampling strategy was then narrowed to focus on *murids* of active *pir*-politicians.

My first point of contact, where I assumed to be able to capture the population of interest, was at shrines. I narrowed this down to three Sufi congregations headed by known *pir*-politicians – the Ghausia jamaat of Bahauddin Zakaria (led by former Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf), the Sarwari jamaat of Hazrat Nuh of Hala (led by Member of Provincial Assembly Jamil uz Zaman, of the Pakistan People's Party) and the Hur jamaat of *Pir*

²³ Every area has its associated Sufi saint and shrine. In Sindh, the largest congregations are *Pir* Pagaro, Sarwari jamaat and the Jilanis of Ranipur. The congregation of Makhdoom Jamil uz Zaman, (the Sarwari jamaat) is renowned as the nou lakkha gaddi (nine lakh follower congregation). This number is said to be larger today and closer to having a congregation of 1 million followers.

Pagaro (led by *Pir* Pagaro, leader of Pakistan Muslim League Functional). The shrine of Bahauddin Zakaria is in Multan, the shrine of Hazrat Nuh is in Hala and the shrine of *Pir* Pagaro is in Sanghar. I corroborated the selection of these specific shrines with newspaper coverage about their custodians (the *pir* that heads the shrines) and their political linkages (Abrar 2018).

I began my fieldwork in Multan, at the shrine of Hazrat Bahauddin Zakaria. I would arrive in the morning hours at the shrine complex and spend 4-6 hours per day, five days a week at the site and ask random attendees if I could interview them.²⁴ This strategy proved unsuccessful, because the shrines are attended by both a congregations' own *murids*, *murids* of other congregations, and tourists and other non-followers. The first week I managed to interview only 4 *murids* of Shah Mehmood Qureshi. However, after more than a week of attending and spending my day at the shrine of Hazrat Bahauddin Zakaria, I got a lead about the Ghausia congregation hosting their *murids* at a travel lodge nearby, where there were at least 100 *murids*.²⁵ I interviewed 10 individuals over a span of two days and stopped when responses began to saturate. Following this, I asked around in my personal network to connect me to any *murids* they knew that follow any of the three *pir*-politicians of interest. As such, I was able to talk to people of different backgrounds (both socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds) – a useful variation on the dimensions of theoretical interest (Seawright and Gerring 2008:296).²⁶ The other interviewees were captured through snowball sampling where one interviewee would connect me to others. One example is my interview with a follower of Amin Fahim. After our interview his spiritual leader passed away. He informed me about the funeral taking place in Hala, which would be followed by a *soyem* ceremony (three-day death anniversary) where the new custodian will be inducted in a turban tying ceremony and said that he could help arrange more interviews. Thus, I travelled to Hala and attended the *soyem* and *dastarbandi* ceremony and consequently interviewed additional followers of Amin Fahim/Jamil uz Zaman.²⁷

Most of the interviews were carried out with only the respondent and me present in the room, ensuring data quality (Matthew and Miles 1994). The exception to this was the interviews held at the guest lodge in Multan, where the interviews took place in a large assembly room. I and the respondent were placed in a corner of the

24 There are more than 4 shrines within this one complex. The shrine complex was under heightened security measures, with armed police rangers driving around in open roof jeeps, and every shrine requiring walking through metal detectors and physical pat downs by security personnel to ensure the absence of explosives. These heightened measures are a result of the clash between Orthodox Islamists and Sufi ideology, which manifest in regular attacks on Sufi shrines by extremists. These measures were strictly enforced during this time due to the approaching month of Moharram (the first month of the Islamic calendar, dedicated to the remembrance of the first Islamic civil war) as well.

25 An employee of the World Health Organisation who was carrying out a polio drive at the shrine had noticed my daily attendance and had asked me what I was doing at the shrine every day. When I introduced myself and the purpose of my visit, he informed me that the Ghausia congregation has a guest house where all traveling *murids* of Shah Mehmood Qureshi come and stay.

26 *Murids* interviewed included day labourers, landlords, former civil servants, and bankers, to mention a few. The sample is however skewed in relation to gender – where the overwhelming respondents are male. This is not necessarily the result of less female *murids*, but more to do with being able to talk to women in public spaces in settings outside of the main urban centres in Pakistan.

27 Ceremony at which turban is tied on the head of person succeeding to a position or title (Ansari 1991).

hall, at a distance from other respondents who congregated and conversed while awaiting their turn. There was also a constant flow of people who came in and out of the hall. Although my interviews were secluded, they were not completely private. The lodge's caretaker and khalifa was also present in the room, which may have enhanced the social desirability aspect of the data gained from these specific interviews. I complemented these with participant observation, where I would arrive at the shrine complex early every morning and spend at least 4 hours there, allowing me to observe the rituals performed, and immerse myself in the conversations being held around me as I am fluent in both Punjabi and Urdu (the regional and national languages spoken in Multan).

For establishing trust between myself and the respondents, at the start of each interview I read a statement explaining my purpose in interviewing them and underscored that their individual characteristics would not be used – i.e., the interviews would be coded.²⁸ Where permitted, I used a Dictaphone to record the interviews. If the interviewee would feel uncomfortable, I handed the recorder to them, showing them the stop button and thus allowing them to be in charge of what gets recorded (Barnard 2006). However, most interviews were carried out without a recording device. In these situations, I took handwritten notes. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. To keep pace with the interview I used shorthand abbreviations and when the respondent would say something I wanted to quote, I would ask them to repeat themselves. I did so for me to note down what was said verbatim. After every interview I would flesh out my notes in my field diary and transcribed the interviews at the end of the day to ensure I capture all relevant details. All interviews are coded detailing respondent number, date, gender, age, and province (for example R1-12202015-M-53-Sindh) to ensure anonymity.

The conversations were structured around the general themes of loyalty, exchange and vote choice. The descriptive questions helped in providing details of how the relationship functions, detailing expectations of both the client and patron. More analytical questions pertain to political behaviour – specifically vote choice and partisanship. One question focused on following the *pir*-politician across partisan divides. The respondents were ostensibly open and forthcoming with their answers, providing detailed accounts of their past political choices. They also detailed expectations including dilemmas of spiritual rewards versus worldly rewards, and what matters more in the exchange.

I asked a total of fourteen questions that cover thematic areas of allegiance (how and why follow a *pir*, can you follow more than one *pir*, can anyone become a *pir*), exchange (what matters more to you, spiritual or worldly rewards, what duties do you have towards the *pir* and their expectations from *pir*, what do you get from your *pir*, political behaviour (is your *pir* politically active, would you vote for your *pir*, if your *pir* decided to switch political party would you still vote for them, can you vote

28 Salam, my name is Kanval and I am a researcher from University of Gothenburg in Sweden. In my research I want to understand the *pir*-murid relationship from the murids perspective and would like to interview you. In my research I will not use any of your unique characteristics that may lead to you being identified. To ensure this, I will code my data, ensuring that you remain anonymous in my write up.

for someone else if your *pir* is running for office) (see appendix I and II for interview guides).²⁹

Second round – interviewing pirs

Although the overarching aim of the thesis is to provide deeper understandings of clients' preferences and the relationship from a bottom-up view, I found it imperative to develop an understanding of both patron and client, especially because the expectations fostered between the two actors work in symbiosis, where one reacts to the other. Therefore, I also interviewed *pirs* to gain an understanding of how patrons view the *pir-murid* bond, and how they use their religious position for political gain. These included *pir*-politicians from three separate congregations (Ghausia jamaat, Sarwaari jamaat, and the head of Musa Pak congregation), who head shrines with large followings. I also interviewed *pirs* that headed large congregations but were not politically active (Bhittai congregation of Sindh). Finally, I interviewed relatives of *pir*-politicians (including brothers, sons, and female cousins).

When contacting these individuals, I used purposive sampling, complemented by snowball sampling. Due to the influential positions of these *pir*-politicians, gaining access for interviews was not easy. Therefore, I went through numerous channels. First, I called the numbers provided on their profile pages online of either National or Provincial Assemblies. Except for one number, none of the phone numbers were answered. The number that was answered was not answered by the *pir*-politician himself but by their secretary, who said they would call me back, but never did. I then randomly started asking around in my personal local contact networks in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, to see if anyone had contact with these individuals and through this venue found access to *pir*-politicians. The interviews took place at government offices, the homes of the *pir*-politicians and on Skype. All interviews were held privately, in Urdu and English, with only me and the interviewee present in the room. Most interviews lasted an hour and a half (except for one interview that lasted 2 hours). As most of them were used to being interviewed I used a Dictaphone to record the interviews and complemented with notes, specifically to add any impressions not captured by the recording itself, such as body language, intonations, and gesticulation to ensure I have material in case the batteries failed.

In total fifteen questions were posed. They were divided into two overarching areas – religious tie and political behaviour. The questions regarding the relationship were to corroborate and differentiate between the expectations that *murids* have from their spiritual leaders versus what the *pirs* understand their role to be. These included, “what are your duties towards your *murids*” “what type of goods do you provide?”, “what are your expectations from your followers”, “how often do you interact with them?” and “Can you stop being a *pir* – i.e., give up your spiritual seat?” To dig deeper into the political implications of the religious tie between *pir*

²⁹ The interview guide's formulation changed after the first few interviews. Initially, I asked, “what does your *pir* do for you” and “what do you do for your *pir*” – this phrasing didn't elicit any elaborate answers. However, when I rephrased it to “what are your duties toward your *pir*” and “what is your *pir*'s duties towards you” *murids* in subsequent interviews provided detailed lists of what is owed by each actor, detailing the duties in relation to the hierarchical position.

and follower, I asked straightforward questions – “do you actively seek out your *murids*’ vote?” and “In the last election how did you decide on where to campaign?”, “Is the focus on consolidating your voter base you already have or gaining new ones?” I also wanted to understand who the *pir*-politicians view as their competition in the political field, therefore included this question “Do *pir*-politicians or other non-*pir* politicians running for office affect your vote share? If so, how?” To understand how the *pir*-politician calculates the trade-offs when joining a party, I asked the following question “do you see your role as a broker for your political party? If so, can you lower your own costs and then also lower the costs of your political party?”

1.6.2 A note on coding

Following the inductive approach of grounded theory, I coded the interview data in a two-stage process – line by line coding and conceptual coding. Prior to completing the fieldwork, I had overarching conceptual categories that were part of the interview guide. These were tested during the first stage of coding – using gerunds, where each piece of data was interrogated for what was happening within the data itself (Charmaz 2006). The second stage of coding, thematic coding, helps verify if the initial themes hold, by testing them against the larger data gathered. The codes that do not hold against the larger data can then be dropped and new themes are allowed forward, all grounded in the data itself (Glaser 2001). This approach ensures that preconceived notions are not forced onto the evidence. These themes were then used to organise the findings and analysis to detail how *murids* see the relationship, the autonomy/lack thereof they exercise in their political behaviour, and how the clients themselves experience the relationship.

This two-stage coding is helpful because it allows theory to meet data, but also helps alleviate “imposition” of the researchers’ pre-set ideas onto the data itself. Furthermore, the two-stage coding assists to corroborate themes across interviews, where *in vivo* codes between *murid* and *pir*-politician interview data were also checked to corroborate and ensure strong data (Charmaz 2014). One example is “matter of the heart”, an *in vivo* code used by both *murids* and *pir*-politicians. This exact phrase was used by both actors when describing the religious relationship to me. The phrase stood out because it is not a phrase typically used in normal Urdu parlance. I only first heard this during fieldwork within the realm of interviews, participant observations and immersion at shrines. The fact that *murids* and *pirs* were interviewed independently of each other, and still used the same phrase to describe the relationship led me to conclude the *in vivo* code to be important. It suggests that both actors share a similar understanding of the overall religious bond as beyond a social relationship and give weight to it at a deeper level. As my interest is to understand the meanings that actors associate to the relationship, grounded theory’s *in-vivo* coding was well suited because of its emphasis on the actual words used by the participants themselves.³⁰ Apart from the *in-vivo* code “matter of the heart” another example of an *in-vivo* code that held up against the larger data was “*duni-*

³⁰ This is a term that comes from grounded theory research and means that words or terms used by the interviewees are so remarkable that they should be taken as codes in the coding process

yawi (worldly/material) and *rouhani* (spiritual/supernatural/nonmaterial)” in how the actors categorized the different types of exchanges. When I asked *murids* to explain their relationship to their *pir*, this would be their initial response – they would categorise their relationship as a “rouhani” one and all other bonds as “duniyawi”. Simply put, coding provides the critical link between the data itself and their explanation of meaning (Charmaz 2001).

1.6.3 *Pir*-politician database

Finally, to substantiate the influence of *pir*-politicians in the political arena and capture patterns of consolidation in different areas, I compiled a unique dataset mapping *pir*-politicians contesting elections at both national and provincial levels across 11 election waves (from the first national election held in 1970 till the latest held in 2018).³¹ The database details constituency, polled votes, candidate vote share and partisan affiliation, and winner. It also includes candidates who did not win, to help illustrate the vote share margins and active competition between *pir*-politicians in areas where this may take place. The principal sources used for electoral results for parliamentary (National Assembly) elections and Provincial Assembly elections (1970-1988) were obtained from the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), and the website of the Election Commission of Pakistan. This was then cross-checked with Colin Cookman’s election dataset.³²

To capture the *pir*-politicians in the electoral data I follow Malik and Mirza (2015). In many constituencies, *pir*-politicians register their electoral candidacy with honorifics such as “*pir*” or “Makhdoom” (due to variations in spellings, peer, Makhdoom, and Makhdum were also searched) attached to their names. The sample captured by this coding process is a conservative estimate because it leaves out *pir*-politicians who do not use these honorifics. To counter this limitation, I also include Syed as a code – an honorific denoting descent from Prophet Mohammad – a claim many pirs make. One example of this is Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani – the former Prime Minister, who also is a known *pir* heading the shrine of Musa Pak Shahid in Multan. Although he holds a religious role, he does not use the honorific in his candidacy registration. This does not mean that people in general are unaware of his dual power position, and also adds to an underestimation of how many politicians are actually both religious leaders and politicians. I corroborated my dataset with sociology professor Umair Javed (Lahore University of Management and Social Sciences) and complemented this by consulting newspaper coverage of elections and known *pir*-politicians in the largest English language national newspapers (including DAWN and The Tribune).

A final crosscheck, to ensure maximum capture of *pir*-politicians across time in the election data, was with Malik and Mirza (2015) who have an up-to-date dataset on shrines across Punjab. Their list is limited to Punjab, thus, I complement their data with the addition of data from Sindh and cross reference this with the list of

31 The following elections were included 1970, 1977, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2002, 2008, 2013 and 2018.

32 Cookman is an expert on South Asia at the United States Institute of Peace where he is a senior researcher. https://github.com/colincookman/pakistan_elections

shrines obtained from the Auqaf Department of Sindh, the department of religious affairs responsible for maintenance of many shrines. I then used this collated data as an estimate of the geographic presence of *pir*-politicians across Punjab and Sindh.

1.6.4 Dealing with social desirability

Using interview data there is always the danger of the data being laced by social desirability effects, where respondents try to appease the interviewer and give answers that they think the interviewer wants to hear. To minimize these likely possibilities there are two conditions that need to be satisfied. First is an awareness of what is considered desirable (which is context dependent) and second is how questions have been posed alongside the types of questions asked during the interview process (Bernard 2006:250).

In the context of Pakistan what is desirable varies. Overall, Pakistan is a conservative society where religion plays a part in almost every aspect of everyday life. However, religion is not a topic publicly criticised, openly discussed or debated, unless it adheres to the prevalent narrative of the country. This narrative refers to the different understandings of what the proper version of Islam is. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, there is a divide between those that follow Sufi Islamic practices, versus those that do not. A large majority of orthodox Sunnis consider Sufi practices as un-Islamic and at times, heretic. Because my interviews were focused on *murids*, the social desirability effect here would be limited to what interviewees assume I want to hear, or perhaps what the *pir* wants to hear. To counter this, in my introduction to the *murids*, I explained that I am a researcher from Sweden, trying to understand what the relationship between *pir-murid* is from the perspective of the actors themselves. Also, the interview guide (see appendix I) has a range of questions that span 5 overarching areas, making it difficult for respondents to separate what areas matter more, i.e., providing an indication of what may be desirable or what I as a researcher am after. Furthermore, to ensure minimal social desirability bias, the data collected is from *murids* of different socio-economic make up (ranging from farmers to professionals and landlords) different ethnicities (Punjabi and Sindhi), and followers of different *pir*-politicians (where each *pir*-politician belongs to a different political party). This triangulation of data, with respondents from a variety of backgrounds, help minimise the prevalence of social desirability in the data.

The second condition to be satisfied in ensuring minimal social desirability bias relates to how the questions were posed, and the types of questions asked. As Bernard points out, the way a question is asked can help in limiting the social desirability effect elicited in the data gathered (2006:250). One such example from my fieldwork pertains to the expectations *murids* have of their spiritual leader. At the start of fieldwork, I asked *murids* “what are your expectations from your *pir*?” to understand what they get from the relationship. This did not garner any detailed answers. However, when I changed the wording of the question to “what are your duties towards your *pir*” and “what are your *pirs* duties towards you” it yielded a list of shared expectations between the actors, including the type of goods exchanged between both actors. Furthermore, to remain cognizant of the satisficing effect I treated the interview guide as a constantly evolving tool, where I revised questions, by tweak-

ing them to reflect similar language that *murids* themselves were using – a skill gained through fieldwork itself.

A final check to ensure good data with minimal effect of social desirability bias was the coding process. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the data was coded in a two-stage process: line by line coding (using gerunds to understand what is happening in the data) and thematic coding. This coding schema further helps reduce both confirmation bias as well as social desirability bias because it interrogates the data on its own basis – where a constant question posed is “what is happening in the data”. One good example of this is the unexpected finding that emerged from the code ‘ranking’ (see chapter 5). In the data, *murids* would speak of their different social identities and relationships in relation to each other. They compared their religious identity as *murids*, to the one they share with their kinsmen and how the former mattered more to them. The first code that appeared here was the in-vivo code of the gerund “ranking”.³³ Similarly, in relation to the types of goods exchanged between the two actors and *murids*’ expectations, *murids* would speak about worldly (*duniyawī*) and spiritual (*rouhani*) goods and exchanges in reference to the other. This code was compared across the larger interview data and was also used as a thematic code that became part of the empirical analysis. “Ranking” was a unique part of the dissertation’s discovery process because it was not a theme I expected. It also helps reinforce the importance of the inductive design of the project, where there is a constant interplay between the data gathered and existing theory (Charmaz 2007). Importantly, this highlights that no single explanation can be categorically ruled out with complex social processes, of which political behaviour is a part. Instead, multiple factors likely relate to the political behaviour of actors, especially how *murids* negotiate their interaction with their patron. That said, in the following pages, I evaluate the aggregate evidence (the political *pir*-politician database, my interview data, field diary and overall fieldwork) and consider how it stacks up with my theory of religious clientelism and existing explanations that analyse the role of religion in the political behaviour of citizens (Gade 2020:9).

1.6.5 Reflecting positionality

In the process of conducting fieldwork aspects of my position affected facets of the research – such as access, depth of information shared and the establishment of trust between myself and the respondents. These aspects include the insider/outsider dilemma, my position as a woman in a patriarchal society, and ethical dilemmas pertaining to representation of self.

The first issue to reflect over is my position as insider/outsider in the field. I am an insider because of my family background, linguistic skills as a native speaker of Urdu and fluency in Punjabi. I have developed a deep familiarity with Pakistani culture through regular visits over the past two decades and experience living in Pakistan. I both look and speak the part of the local population. Having lived and interacted in Pakistani society facilitated my understanding of the cultural, symbolic,

³³ In-vivo is a term that comes from grounded theory research and means that words or terms used by the interviewees are so remarkable that they should be taken as codes in the coding process.

and concrete meanings of words and the use of body language in communication, as well as social codes. One example is when interviewing elderly men, I would refer to them by fictive kinship terms such as ‘uncle’ as a sign of respect and a way to establish trust with my respondents. This is common practice to show respect to elders in Pakistan. Furthermore, the knowledge of how to interact with the opposite gender in a society where gender segregation and patriarchy are commonly practiced is essential (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt 2008). Male respondents would greet me by putting their right hand over their heart, which I would respond to by reciprocating the gesture. This is common practice in rural Pakistan, where men refrain from shaking women’s hands because of religious reasons, and many times also avoid looking straight into a woman’s eyes. Another example is the awareness of how to greet people that are older than yourself. In these cases, after interviewing elderly men, I would thank them by stretching forward my head, and they would reach out their hand to touch the top of my head as a form of blessing. This is a common cultural exchange showing respect for those that are older than oneself.

I was seen as an outsider because of my professional and personal affiliation with Sweden, and due to my status as a non-*murid*. The introduction of me being a Swedish researcher and a non-*murid* had advantages. It underscored my credentials as someone to be taken seriously because Western countries are perceived as places where merit carries people forward, and thus classed me as someone “outside of the system” both professionally and religiously (i.e., as a non-*murid*). To be perceived as an outsider was important because of *murids*’ awareness of them being seen in a negative light by some parts of Pakistani society. The negative perceptions of *murids* became apparent during my fieldwork when speaking to non-*murids*, who would refer to them as “grave worshippers”, or “performers of shirk”.³⁴ Thus, my “outsider” status helped in people’s willingness of having open and frank conversations with me because they did not see me as part of the system, and as such any divulgence of information was not seen as dangerous and they did not see me as carrying preconceived notions about them. This latter point, of not being seen as a threat, went hand in hand with how women in general are perceived in Pakistan.

My position as a young woman conducting fieldwork in Pakistan posed certain challenges and advantages. One of the foremost challenges is being seen as a child who has not yet assumed real responsibility, and to not be perceived as a professional. However, this also has its advantage. The combination of being young and a woman resulted in me not being perceived as a threat, and as such, not someone capable of being able to make trouble. This was expressed in comments such as “she’s a child” and “what does she know”. Despite patronising comments from male respondents (especially the *pir*-politicians) meant to infantilise me, I tried to use these to my advantage, by using their perception of me as “unaware” to further probe my respondents to elaborate on contradictory points they raised. For example, in one of my elite interviews with a *pir*-politician, who has held several cabinet positions in various governments, the respondent had just claimed he had never belonged to a political party apart from the Pakistan People’s Party. I interjected and

³⁴ Shirk is the practice of worshipping or equating anyone to God. It is one of the cardinal sins in Islam because it goes against the core belief of the oneness of God, which is propagated by Islam.

said, “that is not entirely accurate, you first sought office on a Pakistan Muslim League ticket” to which the respondent replied, “it looks like you have done your homework” (Lahore, May 2019).

The main disadvantage of conducting research as a woman in Pakistan relates to physical security. Being able to roam freely, going in and out of public spaces without raising suspicion or putting myself in trouble are not unusual nor a problem in urban areas such as Multan, Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi. “Dress the part and act the part” and apply common-sense, is the main advice in these settings, like in any metropolis.³⁵ When interviewing at shrines I ensured to have my arms, legs and head always covered (despite summer heat) as a sign of respect. It also functioned as a way for establishing trust with respondents. However, the main problem arises when trying to access areas such as smaller towns and cities, like Hala in Sindh, or if moving about alone at night (both in rural and urban areas). Because of my host family’s distrust of shrines and shrine-goers, I had a male chaperone when traveling to and from shrines. To ensure I could carry out my work in an unobtrusive manner, I asked my chaperone not to enter the shrine areas with me and stay at a distance so I could move around freely and connect with others in the surroundings independently. Importantly, he was not allowed to be present when I conducted interviews. Finally, the biggest advantage of being a woman conducting research in a conservative society like Pakistan is the access to women-only areas. This includes, but is not limited to, shrines and people’s homes, an area inaccessible to male researchers (Al-Makhamreh and Lewando-Hundt 2008).

Religion as a topic of research can be difficult in settings like Pakistan. Much of the Pakistani population, especially its youth, identify as religious (PEW 2018). The default understanding of Islam is that of Sunni Orthodox Islam, despite the prevalence and practice of Sufi Islam. The taboo of going against the norm is highlighted by instances where people that do not identify as religious, or as “believing in God” would never say so in public. In fact, public discussion or criticism of religion or the religious establishment in Pakistan is avoided by people in general. This may stem from the prevalent and loosely applied blasphemy laws which are often used as a form of retaliation against people one may have animosities with (Adeed 2021).³⁶

Furthermore, Sufi Islam is negatively viewed by the ulema establishment (that follow and propagate orthodox Sunni Islam) because of its association with shrines.³⁷ This outlook has resulted in several attacks on shrines including but not limited to detonation of explosives during festivals such as shrines’ annual urs (Dwyer 2017).³⁸ Therefore, researching Sufi Islam in Pakistan tends to be contentious, especially in relation to Muslim Holy Shrines. The negative perception of Sufi Islam is exemplified by descriptions used by non-*murids*, such as “waste of time”

35 Karachi is home 20 million people, Lahore is 12 million, Multan 2 million and Islamabad 1.2 million (Census 2020, Pakistan Census Bureau).

36 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1664535>

37 Many staunch Sunnis hold that visiting shrines is a form of shirk, resulting in murids (followers of saints) are labelled as “grave worshippers” that try to compare dead saints to God Almighty.

38 <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/02/16/515598245/suicide-bomber-kills-at-least-70-people-at-sufi-shrine-in-pakistan>

(such as my host family with whom I stayed for the duration of fieldwork carried out in Multan) – and “not a subject to be taken seriously”.³⁹ This is reinforced by comments that highlight how non-*murids* perceive *murids* in questions posed to me “why are you researching those grave worshippers? You know most of them are just hashish smokers and beg for a living?” (Fieldnotes Oct. 2015). Another example of the contentious nature of researching Sufi Islam is the cancellation of a workshop at Punjab University in 2015. The university had arranged a cross-disciplinary workshop on Sufi Islam, which was to be attended by scholars from around the world. However, one week prior to the event taking place the university abruptly cancelled the event at the orders of the Punjab government, which had suffered intense criticism from the country’s clerics. Upon learning that a workshop on Sufism was to be held at a public university, local ulema denounced the staff of Punjab University as corrupting the young minds of the country’s future generations (private communication). To stave off uninvited attention I navigated this sensitive topic, by providing a “grand tour question” (Barnard 2006) to curious intermediaries who wanted to know more about my research.

The final dilemma I faced was how to introduce myself. The first moments of an interview can help establish trust between interviewer and respondent, and the foundation of this is honesty and transparency. I had to decide about what name to use when introducing myself. Most shrines have followers from various sects and due to the prevalent disagreements between Orthodox Sunni Islam and Sufi Islam in Pakistan, my name – Aiysha – can immediately associate me with being Sunni. This could have implications for how much interviewees of Shia backgrounds chose to tell me and could have influenced the time it takes to establish a base level of trust between myself and the respondent.⁴⁰ Therefore, I chose to go by my middle name, Kanval. This name does not have any religious connotations and means lotus flower, thus reducing the possibility of low trust situations and ensured I was being honest with my respondents.⁴¹

1.7 Roadmap to dissertation

In this chapter I have introduced the overall puzzle of the dissertation, its relevance across developing countries and the Muslim world and briefly presented my argument. Specifically, I argue that in the context of religious clientelism, voters ‘preferences will centre on nonmaterial religious goods relative to material goods in exchange for their vote, if and when their religious leader runs for political office.

39 My host is a former World Bank economist and served as a staff member of the organization for 35 years. Upon retirement he returned to his village to continue his ancestral profession as a farmer and agriculturalist, and to manage his family lands and orchards.

40 In Islamic history, after the Prophet’s passing there was a battle over who would take control of the new Islamic nation, beginning a succession crisis. One central tenet of this was the civil war, pitting its founder’s controversial wife Aisha against his son-in-law Ali (Hazelton 2010, Nasr 2007). Because of this, in general Shias (also known as Shia-tul-Ali, the members of Ali’s side who consider Ali the rightful heir to the position of caliph and known as the followers of Ali) do not name their daughters Aisha.

41 This finer detail about backgrounds of religious names was made apparent to me by anthropologist Omar Kasmani at Freie University in Berlin.

The sub-type of religious clientelism highlights the dual nature of religion as social identity and belief system in one. This is made salient if one's religious leader runs for political office. Through religion's function as a belief system, the client is governed by the rationality of the religious believer, where utility is sought through ideational goods – in this case nonmaterial religious goods. It is through this mechanism that clients' preference for nonmaterial religious goods is highlighted. Using extensive fieldwork and in-depth interviews I explore both clients' and patrons' rationales for their political behaviour in elections. The remaining dissertation proceeds as follows.

Chapter 2 Following the two-stage structure of the dissertation's inquiry, the literature review is also divided up in two stages. Chapter 2 first reviews the clientelism scholarship. It begins with a brief background of the evolution of the concept, how political science adopted it and the critique that followed. I then illustrate the main assumptions of the scholarship and which of these have not held. This is followed by a discussion of the types of goods that form the basis of the clientelistic exchange and point out the gaps that exist in the political science literature in relation to nonmaterial religious goods. In the second stage of the literature review, I zoom out and review how religion has been treated in political behaviour scholarship at large, with a focus on the subfields of religious voting and ethnic identity politics. I detail and critically assess the arguments of each literature, their unit of analysis and the prevailing methods used, and the type and magnitude of data that exists to show how these explanations fall short in explaining how religion affects individual political behaviour.

Chapter 3 provides the main theory of the dissertation. To advance the theory of religious clientelism and illustrate how religion shapes the basic tenets of clientelism I differentiate religious clientelism on two core aspects – the type of goods exchanged between the actors and the presence of trust. Working from inside out, I use these two characteristics of the relationship to show how these differ from the mainstream political science scholarship on clientelism. The inclusion of religion as the basis for a long-term hierarchical bond into the analysis of the actors' political behaviour and their preferences helps bridge the gap between classic and modern literatures of clientelism. Furthermore, I use James Scott's framework to illustrate how religion affects core components of clientelism: the actors, affective/instrumental balance, religion as a resource base, and duration of bond. I theorise that religion serves dual functions for the client –as a belief system and social identity. On the one hand, at the individual level, religion serves as a belief system. It is through this that nonmaterial religious benefits are availed to the client, (such as blessings, prayers being answered and peace of mind). Clients have experienced the benefits of these nonmaterial religious rewards in this life and thus have a certain level of conviction as to the benefit of these rewards.⁴² On the other hand, at the collective level, religion provides a social identity to clients through which they relate to others in their spiritual community as well as their overall social life. The result of this is the individual belongs to a community of like-minded people and is bound by the spir-

⁴² *Dilli sakoon* (mental peace) was a term repeated by respondents.

itual connection to a common leader and congregation. Furthermore, and importantly, the religious client is driven by the rationality of the religious believer. Here utility from the exchange relationship is sought through nonmaterial religious goods. This in turn affects the client's preferences for the type of goods they demand from their leader, where nonmaterial religious goods are central to their preferences even when the relationship enters the political realm. This includes, but is not limited to, the exchange of their vote. As such, at the collective level, religious clientelism delivers the vote; at the individual level it allows for the inclusion of nonmaterial, supernatural, religious goods of spiritual guidance, and blessings and salvation – all of which are excludable and private. This contrasts with the typical exchange covered by the contemporary scholarship that views clientelism as vote buying – where material incentives remain a dominant explanation for individual political behaviour (vote choice). Furthermore, because of clients' preferences centring on nonmaterial religious goods, the patron often ends up with the material gain. This contrasts with the contemporary literature where the poor voter is often highlighted as the one making the material gain relative to the patron who makes the investment to provide these material inducements (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Furthermore, it also offsets the costs typically associated with clientelism that is said to tip the scales in relation to when patrons stop using it as a political strategy, i.e. when clientelism becomes too expensive. In the case of the patron who is both religious leader and politician, the strategy does not have similar associated costs because the goods their clients demand are not resource intensive.

Chapter 4 sets the stage of the empirical site and the applicability of the dissertation's overall theory. The theory is applicable in developing contexts where political parties are weakly institutionalised, and politics operate through personal networks. Like most developing democracies, politics in Pakistan are personalised. More precisely, in these contexts although political parties exist, they resemble a collection of strong men, resulting in voters being linked not to the institution of the political party, rather they are linked to individual politicians – i.e., individual level linkages. Similarly, religion's political effect is also observed at the individual level. In these contexts, established models of religious voting (understood as citizens voting for conservative policy platforms that align with their religious values) may not hold. Instead, religion's political effect is observed at the individual level – between voter and candidate, especially where voter and politician already share a hierarchical bond. Religion serves a dual function – as social identity and belief system simultaneously. To substantiate the theory the chapter provides an overview of the Pakistani context – its electoral history and the lack of success of *ulema* parties at the polls, the type of Islam that is prevalent and briefly explains what the *pir* (saint) politician – *murid* (follower) voter relationship is. Pakistan's electoral history is elaborated to show the weak presence of political parties as an institutional feature. Instead, there is a personalization of politics, i.e., lack of party identification, and elections are contested based on individual politicians' personal networks. The second section of the chapter disaggregates Islam into Sunni and Sufi Islam to show the prevalence of each type. I juxtapose Sufi Islam against Orthodox Sunni Islam to demonstrate the divergent linkages these form between leader and follower. This

results in a novel contribution of explicitly including Sufi Islam into the fold of political Islam, currently not included in political science scholarship.

Chapter 5 presents the empirical analysis of the religio-clientelistic relationship from the perspective of the client. This chapter provides micro-level evidence on how religious clientelism operates on the ground. It first presents the basic tenets of the relationship, by providing rich data on how the relationship operates on the ground. It then applies the concentric identity model presented in chapter 3 and disaggregates each circle of the *murid*-voter's identity. It provides evidence for religion ranking as the primary identity of the client and acts as the mechanism through which the *murid*-voters' preference for nonmaterial religious goods takes place. Furthermore, drawing on fieldwork, I show the variation of *murids*, and how their socio-economic make-up affects the role that the relationship plays for them. For the *murid*-voter who is from a poorer socio-economic background, the relationship functions as a coping mechanism, and their political choice exercised through the vote is part of a survival strategy. In contrast, for the more well-off *murid* (such as a landlord) the relationship functions as an added layer of insurance, e.g., by providing access to the higher echelons of the justice system in cases of land squatting.

Chapter 6 presents the religio-clientelistic relationship from the patron's perspective. Drawing on fieldwork carried out in the spring of 2019, the chapter elaborates on the mechanisms through which the spiritual power of the *pir*-politician is translated to political power. These mechanisms include the khalifa network and coalition building with adversaries. I provide micro-level data on the inner workings of how patrons operate on the ground, including drawing parallels between how the network of khalifas as brokers between *pir* and *murid*, and the political party. I argue, khalifas' agency to be limited because they cannot provide the *murid*-voter with the good they want from the relationship – religious nonmaterial goods. The provision of these is exclusive to the *pir*-politician. The data suggests that *pir*-politicians use their network of khalifas as their main bargaining chip with political parties (in whatever form they exist) when bargaining for their political ticket that they will contest. Finally, the chapter analyses the socio-religious power held by pirs that are not politically active. Specifically, it delves into the power the non-political *pir* holds, specifically their ability to influence their followers' political behaviour both directly (through sermons and direct orders) and indirectly (such as pirs' affiliations).

Chapter 7 presents the overall takeaways of the dissertation and suggestions for how the research agenda can be moved forward. There are four main takeaways. First, nonmaterial religious goods matter. Contrary to the assumptions of much of the contemporary clientelism scholarship that views clients as demanding material incentives in exchange for their vote, the main finding of this dissertation is that nonmaterial religious goods play a central role in clients' political preferences and calculus when their religious leader runs for office. It underscores that material goods matter, but nonmaterial religious goods matter too. In fact, as illustrated by the empirical chapters in this dissertation, at times nonmaterial religious goods may matter more. Second, religion is complex. Not only does it serve two functions simultaneously (as both social identity and belief system), but it also activates a ration-

ality that seeks utility in the form of ideational goods. In this case those provided by nonmaterial religious goods. Third, political Islam is not homogenous. Currently, there is a lack of precision as to what political Islam is. This is especially the case in relation to analyses of political behaviour and quality of government. Fourth, one surprising finding is that with all the power the *pir*-politicians exercise in terms of being able to use religious clientelism to their advantage, they still face pressures from below – i.e., from their *murids*. The chapter concludes with suggestions of how the inductive theory presented in this dissertation can be moved forward and the implications it may have for clientelism research moving forward as a whole.

2

Existing explanations of political behaviour

Religion is not dead. In fact, "...for the majority of the people in the world, religion is much more important in their lives than politics" (Esmer and Pettersson, 2007).⁴³ The importance attributed to religion mattering more than politics is discernible in how religion continues to affect the political behaviour of citizens across the world. The study of how religion affects political behaviour, however, remains difficult for several reasons including that religion as a category of analysis and object of study is multifaceted, heterogeneous, and lacks coherent boundaries (Reidle and McClendon 2021).

Following the two-stage process of the dissertation's inquiry, my review of existing explanations is also in two stages. In the first section, in line with the overall aim of this dissertation to refine and expand clientelism theory, and to justify the need for a new theory that may better explain the role of religion in people's political choices, I first review the scholarship on clientelism. I trace how the literature has evolved, the types of questions posed and analyse the scholarship's main assumptions, simultaneously pointing out its gaps and illustrate how these do not hold in relation to the empirical data gathered during fieldwork.

In the second section, I zoom out and review how political behaviour scholarship analyses religion. I hone in on the subfields of religious voting and ethnic identity as explanations. I detail the prevailing arguments of each literature, their unit of analysis and the predominant methods used (with comments on the type and magnitude of data that exists), to show how these explanations fall short in explaining how religion affects individual political behaviour. In the final section, I detail my aim to address these gaps, and the contribution I make. Building on these literatures, their insights, and their gaps, I then present my theory of religious clientelism in Chapter 3.

⁴³ See Esmer and Pettersson 2007 where they provide hard data detailing the world's population into different religions, "of the 6.5 billion (www.prq.org) inhabitants of the globe, almost 85% belong to a religion, while those classified as 'secular/non-religious/agnostic/atheist' number about 1.1 billion (www.adherents.com)"

2.1 Clientelism

2.1.1 Evolution of a concept

Clientelism was first developed by anthropologists as a micro-sociological tool to understand traditional societies' social and political organization. It was often viewed as a carryover of pre-democratic relationships into the modern era, assumed to dissipate as countries modernised (Eisenstadt and Lemarchand 1981; Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Lande 1983; Lemarchand 1977; Scott 1972). This older literature studied clientelism outside competitive electoral politics as a durable, dyadic, affective, and asymmetrical relationship between a single patron and his/her dependent population (Yildirim and Kitschelt 2020:21). The relationship was typically analysed through a sociological lens, where the focus was on the social and interpersonal nature of relationships between patron and client. In these accounts clients had close, personal, ongoing direct relationships with their patron (Powell 1970, Boissevain 1984). As much of this was outside of competitive electoral politics, scholars oftentimes focused on the social function of the relationship and power relations – where reciprocity was the main ingredient in self-regulating the relationship (Gouldner 1960), and its dyadic nature attributed as the core of the relationship's longevity because of the essential place dyadic contracts hold in forming social structure of societies (Foster 1961). The unit of analysis was at the individual level – the patron and client. In fact, specific attention is paid to the client side – especially in terms of what meanings and perspectives they associated to the clientelistic bond shared with their patrons. This included the interaction of clients' different identities, and the overlaps between their social and political networks alongside the interplay between the two (Foster 1963, Springborg 1979). Simply put, the literature honed in on the client and treated the relationship as a diffuse and holistic one, accounting for more than one sphere of the actors' lives.

Methodologically, research on clientelism prior to the 1980s generally employed case studies, ethnographies, and other intensive types of field observation as its empirical basis. Thus, this scholarship is rich with thick descriptions of the social relationship in different contexts (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984), where much of the literature offers historical accounts of specific cases that chronicle the emergence and evolution of clientelism as well as the changes it brought to social and political order.⁴⁴

2.1.2 The instrumental turn - political science adopts the concept

Political science adopted clientelism as a concept to understand political action and organization in developing societies, especially those that had recently gained independence from colonial powers (Scott 1972, Lemarchand 1972, Schmidt et al 1977). This wholesale adoption worried some scholars about conceptual stretching where the validity of the concept may be lost, termed the “level of analysis problem”, underscoring a microlevel concept being used to analyse meso and macro

⁴⁴ For detailed case studies spanning various continents, see the following readers Schmidt et al. 1977 and Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984.

level interactions (Weingrod 1968, Kaufman 1974, Hilgers 2011). In fact, Kaufman's summarises his concerns succinctly

“The larger the macro-unit [...] the more necessary it becomes to introduce into the analysis properties and assumptions which are not implied by and cannot be derived from the patron-client concept. And what is still more important, it would seem advisable to treat many of these not merely as environmental ‘givens’ but as integral parts of the macro-system itself.” (1974)

These critiques and concerns are reflected in some of the most influential contemporary writings on clientelism that the political science scholarship produced, where the dyadic, interpersonal, and direct elements of the patron-client relationship (such as reciprocity, face-to-face interaction, and diffuseness) have been deemphasized and instead more attention is paid to the clientelist network which distributes the resources.

During the past two decades, clientelism has been applied to explain how and why politicians and parties garner votes from their constituents to gain or build power (Kitschelt and Wilkson 2007, Piattoni 2001, Stokes et al 2013). This has resulted in the analytical unit shifting from the individual actors of patron and client to political parties as the unit of analysis. It is what Lande termed the “middle level” studies, i.e., those concerned with specific institutions within clientelist systems (1983). Moreover, the shift overtly focuses on the patron side (political parties, brokers, and politicians), where political scientists adopt the outlook that patrons use clientelistic tactics as a rational strategy to attain or maintain political power. Here, the clientelistic tactic used by the patron entails either “the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support” (Stokes 2007:605) or “the direct exchange of a citizen’s vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007:2). The *quid pro quo* nature of these definitions carries forward implicit assumptions as predicted by Kaufman (1972). Because the exchange is not simultaneous, there is an inbuilt assumption of a commitment problem, where either actor can renege on their promises – i.e., the “double contingency” problem (Hicken 2011, Yildirim and Kitschelt 2020).

On the one hand the voter can choose to take the material good offered by the patron but still vote for another candidate (due to the secrecy of the ballot). On the other hand, the patron can renege on his promise of delivering goods and services once they are in power. This commitment problem is solved by monitoring and enforcement/sanctioning (Brusco et al 2014, Stokes et al 2013). The assumption of monitoring as a solution to the commitment problem has overall implications for the democratic model, where clientelism reverts the basic accountability mechanism that democratic elections offer to citizens. Instead of voters holding politicians accountable for performance and election promises, politicians hold voters accountable – what Stokes labels “perverse accountability” (2005). Much of the present-day scholarship is shaped by these assumptions, evidenced by some of the most prominent research questions, including but not limited to “what kind of voters do parties target with clientelistic offers”, “how do patrons monitor the clients’ political behaviour” and “who are the actors that deliver the clientelistic benefits”.

First, scholars identify a range of voters targeted with clientelistic appeals by political parties – these include the poor, those that live in underserved communities, loyal party supporters, swing voters and those part of deep social networks (Auyero 2000; Jensen and Justesen 2013; Nichter 2008; Schaffer and Baker 2015; Stokes et al. 2013, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013). The second strand of literature offers explanations for the logic of using clientelism despite the difficulties of monitoring voter compliance – including norms of reciprocity (Finan and Schechter 2012; Nichter 2008; Kramon 2016; Mares and Young 2018; Medina and Stokes 2007; Rueda 2017, Lawson and Greene 2014). The third strand of research focuses on who delivers the clientelistic benefits – a third actor – the broker. Within this strand scholars examine the broker’s identity, their relationship with voters and politicians and their effectiveness as vote mobilisers (Aspinall and Hicken 2020; Holland and Palmer-Rubin 2015; Larreguy, Marshall, and Querubin 2016; Mares and Young 2016; No-vaes 2018; Stokes et al. 2013, Cornell and Grimes 2023).

Methodologically the scholarship has broadened to include studies based on large scale quantitative data, surveys, matching techniques, and experiments into its repertoire (Fujiwara and Wantchekon 2013, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Young 2009, Stokes et al 2013, Gonzalez -Ocantos 2011, Weitz-Shapiro 2012). Despite this empirical advancement, theoretically, the economic understanding of the actors continues to remain dominant – where the rational actor model forms the basis of our analyses for how or why actors behave the way they do. In this the utility for the actor is often understood as material achievement, in other words our overall understanding of the client-voter is as somebody that values material benefits in exchange for their vote. The below table summarises the essential characteristics included in most studies that use the umbrella term clientelism (Hicken 2011).

Table 2.1. Comparing waves of clientelism research (Varraich 2014)

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Classic – anthropological</i>	<i>Modern – political science</i>
1. Affective/instrumental balance of relationship	Higher ratio of affective to instrumental ties	Lower ratio of affective to instrumental ties
2. Type of exchange	Diffuse/nonmaterial	tangible, material
3. Resource base	Local, personal	External links, office-based
4. Duration of bond	More persistent	Less persistent
5. Presence of trust/loyalty*	Very likely	Less likely
6. Quid pro quo	Not likely	Very likely

Consequential to this wave of research, over the past five years several issues have become evident. These include: a limited understanding of the client side, lack of empirical evidence backing many of the key assumptions of the literature, and a focus on the supply side (patron/broker). First, we have limited understanding of the client side. In our top-down approach focusing on patrons’ use of clientelism as a tool to gain or retain power, although our understanding of the patron and the way they use clientelism has deepened, our understandings of clients are not as nuanced. In fact, a large takeaway from the modern school of clientelism as presented in polit-

ical science, is an understanding of clients in developing contexts as vote-sellers, willing to sell their vote to the highest bidder (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Stokes 2005, Stokes et al 2013). This is based on data where the patron is the main point of analysis, thus leaving out important aspects pertaining to clients. Furthermore, this conceptualisation often sees the client as passive and lacking agency (Pellicer et al 2019). Much of the literature views the voter-client through a lens of rationality where utility maximization is understood as material gain. This often leaves out deeper social structures such as context, traditions, and actors' expectations from our analyses of the clients' decision-making. The result is a view of patron and client operating in hypothetical surroundings, where social relationships are separate from their electoral decision making – which is not reflective of how politics works in day-to-day life.⁴⁵

Second, over the past ten years it has become increasingly apparent that many of the assumptions our models operate on lack empirical backing (Nathan and Hicken 2020). Take for example the assumption about monitoring. Due to the secrecy of the voting booth and the ballot, it is often difficult to monitor individual level vote choice. As such scholars have focused their attention on indirect measures of monitoring such as turnout buying, and methods that focus on the collective or depend on the deep-seated knowledge of brokers that often are party operatives (Nichter 2008, Brusco et al 2004). That said, a surprising finding that confirms the lack of monitoring is that studies between 2008–2018 either claim that no monitoring is taking place (41% of studies) or studies do not make any claims of monitoring at all (16%) (Hicken and Nathan 2020). As Hicken and Nathan point out “...systematic monitoring is rarely observed because it rarely happens” (2020:8).

Third, the central focus of political science as a discipline on the political party as patron has created an expectation of a strong party machine wherever clientelism persists (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Piattoni 2001, Stokes et al 2013, Thachil 2014, Hicken et al 2022). One example of a strong party machine where clientelism persists is the Peronist party in Argentina. The Peronist party as political patron exercising clientelism is the subject of much research output on clientelism of a strong party machine (Stokes 2005, Stokes et al 2013). Another example of a strong party machine is found in Tariq Thachil's work on the BJP of India, where the party despite its policy programme favouring elites, can mobilise poor voters. Thachil illustrates how the BJP wins over disadvantaged voters by privately providing them with basic social services via grassroots affiliates. Simply put, a strong party machine exercises its clientelistic strategies through grass-root organisations affiliated with the BJP, that provide basic public services such as education and healthcare, effectively garnering votes from voters that typically do not ascribe to the party's ideology (Thachil 2014).

That said, in the past decade there has been a significant portion of the clientelism scholarship that examines clientelism in the context of weak political parties, in what are often termed patronage democracies – such as Indonesia, Philippines, Pakistan, and Kenya (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019, Berenschot and Aspinall 2020, Cruz 2014, Keefer 2007, Kramon 2017, Cornell and Darcy 2016, van de Walle

⁴⁵ There are several exceptions to this Ayuero 2000, Chauchard 2018, Kao et al 2017 among others.

2007). Here the drivers of clientelism typically are individual politicians or brokers, and the focus is either on the brokers or the brokerage network through which the exchange of clientelistic material goods takes place. The role of brokers is a strong focus here. Specifically, the focus lies on how brokers ensure voter mobilization through their own personal networks (Cornell and Grimes 2023). In their comparative case study of Indonesia and the Philippines, Aspinall and Hicken differentiate brokers in terms of their commitment to a politician, where some brokers are said to operate as ‘guns for hire’ and others rely on long-term relationships such as those found in the ethnographic literature (2020). Those that are ‘guns for hire’ operate under conditions of one-shot clientelism – where the focus is on the exchange of material goods for the votes they deliver, and there is no loyalty to any one politician. Instead, their actions and loyalty are limited to the election cycle. Effectively, in these cases the brokers’ services are up for grabs by the highest bidder each election, where material gain is the main concern – in line with much of the political science literature. In contrast to the “guns for hire” type of brokers is those that mobilise vote banks through long term relationships which are stable and enduring, where brokers share long-term relationships with voters that go beyond the election cycle itself (Aspinall and Hicken 2020). Another example of clientelism in weak party contexts is Cornell and Grimes work on Peru (2023). The authors zero in on bureaucrats as brokers of clientelism. They highlight political and party connections as weak predictors of brokering, especially where bureaucrats act as brokers, because bureaucrats can use their discretionary power to cultivate reciprocal relations with voters and leverage this political capital in negotiations with politicians to secure career advancements.

Despite the non-party focus of this subsection of the scholarship, like their programmatic counterparts, these studies also focus on the supply side of clientelism (in this case the brokers) and pay little attention to the client side. Specifically, they focus on how the patron/broker outside the party context use clientelistic strategies for power gain or retention. Much of the data through which we understand clients’ political behaviour has been indirect, where data based on patron/brokers is extrapolated to understand clients’ political behaviour instead of data gained directly from clients. This results in, once again, a lack of direct focus on the client-voter overall, especially in our understanding of the clients’ preferences. In contrast, my project’s focus is on clients’ preferences and how clients understand their clientelistic bond, and the choices they make. Furthermore, my analysis of clients’ political behaviour and preferences is rooted in and draws on data gained directly from client-voters through qualitative fieldwork. Thus, I join an emerging literature that focuses on the client side including the clients’ preferences/what they demand (Pellicer et al 2019, Pellicer et al 2020, Pellicer et al 2014).

2.1.3 Let’s get social – a return to relational forms of clientelism

In the latest wave of clientelism scholarship there has been “a plea to tone down the strong emphasis on vote-buying in clientelism studies and return to an older tradition...to focus on relational forms of clientelism” (Yildirim and Kitschelt

2020:37). It is a twofold plea - it asks us to focus less on the vote-buying aspect that entails the exchange of material goods in return for political support and the assumptions tied to this. Furthermore, it asks for a return to an older ethnographic lens that focuses on the actors themselves – as a tool of micro analysis, which acknowledges the importance of social context and the intricacies of the relationship that is shared by actors. Importantly it asks for this to be done from the actors’ individual perspectives. It critiques the contemporary conceptualization of clientelism, where many relationships are cast as “not quite clientelism” and left out of being categorized as such due to arbitrary criteria of a model of clientelism we have set up that is not necessarily backed by empirics (Hicken and Nathan 2020). Simply put, the latest wave of clientelism scholarship looks to a return to basics, where analyses of political behaviour are not limited to an economic lens of cost-benefit analysis, with material gain as the ultimate form of utility maximization. Instead, political decision making is to be analysed in all its complexity, where multiple rationalities are considered, including the importance of non-economic/nonmaterial incentives exchanged between the actors and offered by the clientelistic bond itself.

As mentioned above, there is an emerging literature that focuses on the client side: what clients demand from patrons; how they view the clientelistic relationship; how they use clientelism to their own advantage and the value clients associate with the clientelistic relationship as a whole (Kao et al 2017, Mohmand Khan 2019, Pellicer et al 2014). Unlike much of the political science scholarship on clientelism this emerging scholarship recognises that voters are not passive actors (Pellicer et al 2022). Instead, clientelistic relationships can provide agency to otherwise disenfranchised voters (Mohmand 2019). Furthermore, scholars in this camp acknowledge the strengths of the ethnographic methods and empirics in clientelism, and how important it is to utilize not only cross-disciplinary approaches to studying clientelism, but also to ensure the comparative study of clientelism (i.e., the varieties of clientelism) for a better understanding of democracy, elections, and governance (Berenschot and Aspinall 2020, Pellicer et al 2020).⁴⁶ An apt example is Pellicer et al.’s meta-analysis of ethnographic work on clientelism from the clients’ perspective. They provide a framework and typology of clientelism that reconciles the political science literature, that tends to focus on the supply side and vote buying, with the ethnographic literature that emphasizes client agency and diversity of clientelism. However, in their analysis, the authors do not treat religion and its associated exchanges of nonmaterial religious goods (ideational in nature and those that lack instrumentality in the temporal world). In fact, the authors leave this type of clientelism out entirely, labelling it as “dated” (2020:4).

Prior to the tipping point that resulted in this emerging literature that focuses on the client, there were dispersed calls for a more inclusive, balanced model of clientelism. One such call was the edited volume *Patronage as Politics in South Asia* from social anthropologist Anastasia Piliavsky (2014). Much like Nicholas van de Walle in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa (2007), Piliavsky highlights clientelism

⁴⁶ As Berenschot and Aspinall point out “Indeed, given the centrality of clientelistic politics throughout the world, it could be argued that patronage democracies constitute the normal – in the sense of most common – form of democracy” (2020:2).

as “a political form in its own right”, specifically in the region of South Asia. She highlights the discrepancy between theory and empirics that results from analysing citizens through an economic lens (2014:4). The presence of this volume is a reminder of the need to reframe and re-gear our questions from “why doesn’t clientelism disappear” to trying to understand how clientelism works on the ground and the mechanisms through which it operates and survives. Thus, understanding clientelism through a focus on the voter-client can help deepen our understanding of how citizens live and think about democracy and the state, by focusing on social relationships and not only presumed profiteering motives of actors which may ultimately help understand how citizens perceive and participate in politics, and the society that surrounds them.⁴⁷

2.1.4 What do voters want? The nature of the goods exchanged

This leads us to a central question of clientelism – what do voters want? A quick glance at the literature suggests that voters want material goods (Stokes 2007, Berenschot and Aspinall 2020, Guardado and Wantchekon 2017).⁴⁸ However, a closer look reveals the type of goods exchanged in clientelism to be both material and nonmaterial (Hicken 2011). Material incentives are exemplified in the contemporary literature and are said to be limited only by politicians’ and voters’ imaginations. Examples include cash, cookware, or even corrugated metal (Hicken 2011:291), “medicine, milk, or a packet of yerba or sugar” (Brusco et al 2004:78), or “simple goods as packets of pasta” (Kopecky and Mair 2012). Whereas nonmaterial incentives from the established scholarship cover a broad range of potential exchanges, patronage “jobs” (Hicken 2011:291, Robinson and Verdier 2013, van de Walle 2007) to connections (Springborg 1979), protection (Jamaal 2007), social service provision such as housing, healthcare, and education (Hicken and Simmons 2008, Brooke 2019, Cammett 2014, Masoud 2014), and intervention with bureaucracy (Chubb 1982) among others.

Although these goods have been grouped as material and nonmaterial in the literature, this grouping is unconvincing because the nonmaterial goods specified typically have an instrumental/material gain in the long-run for the client. That is, the nonmaterial good still serves the purpose of a commodity, such as a job. Simply put, the nonmaterial good is still instrumental in nature. This grouping follows the current rational logic through which most analyses take place, where utility maximisation by the individual actors is in terms of material achievement. This logic is overarchingly an economic one, where cost-benefit analyses dominate, and material

⁴⁷ The book is reminiscent of earlier works, such as Gellner and Waterbury (1977) as well as Schmidt et al (1977) which attempted to give a birds-eye view of the state of clientelism research across disciplines.

⁴⁸ In the literature there are some attempts at differentiating the nature of goods that make up the clientelistic exchange. One concerted effort disaggregates the types of goods found in the literature into five different categories – consumer goods, preferential access to public employment, social benefits, public works procurement and regulatory proceedings and decisions (Yildirim and Kitschelt 2020). However, there is a simpler and dichotomous grouping of the types of exchanges undertaken is possible of the types of exchanges that make up the clientelistic exchange – material and nonmaterial (Hicken 2011).

goods are modelled as the centre of the contingent exchange between patron and client. In cases where contingency is not fully monitored, scholars continue to lean on explanations that stem from the traditional forms of clientelism explicated in the scholarship of anthropologists and sociologists, where reciprocity is a central feature in how clientelism is regulated and enforced. One example of this is Stokes' modelling of clientelism as a repeated game where deeper social relationships, iterative in nature, drive the clientelistic relationship forward in conditions of imperfect monitoring (2005).

What is missing from the contemporary scholarship of clientelism is the inclusion of nonmaterial goods that are ideational in nature, or as the political economist Yanis Varoufakis puts it "goods that have experiential value" (2007).⁴⁹ These include concepts such as social standing, honour, and religious goods, which are typically diffuse in nature and deeply rooted in relationships and social contexts. One example of this is nonmaterial religious goods, and the rationality associated with religion – that is the rationality of the religious believer (Bano 2012). This dissertation addresses this gap. Sufi Islam presents a case where the religious believer's rationality meets the rational actor model predominantly used in the modern school of clientelism. Although there's a recent movement that looks beyond simple assumptions of material gain as part of the client's calculus in how they exercise their political choices, I bring the special case of religion to clientelism where two logics operate simultaneously. These are the rational actor model that prefers the material gain and the religious believer's rationality that includes religious rewards in the form of nonmaterial religious goods as a central part of their incentive structure. Simply, *religion brings in a set of supernatural nonmaterial goods unavailable outside of religion.*

I introduce a category of goods that provide ideal utility, that is the pursuit of ideas – specifically the ideals associated with religion – such as spiritual enlightenment, blessings, prayers and being at peace. These are gained by following prescribed religious rituals (Bano 2012). I argue that nonmaterial religious goods (such as prayers, religious guidance, promise of salvation) are a central part of clients' preferences where the actors are connected through a hierarchical, long-term religious bond – such as those afforded by Sufi Islam. These nonmaterial spiritual goods are demanded by the client, and form part of their rationale in entering this clientelistic bond (in the case *murids* they have a conviction that salvation can only be attained by having a Sufi *pir* as intercessor between themselves and God). This inclusion of religious goods into the clientelism scholarship is important because it offsets important assumptions in the scholarship such as actors' preferences as rooted in material goods, and because it displaces our analyses of when and why political actors use clientelism as a political strategy. One example is that supernatural nonmaterial goods tied in with the patron make clientelism as a political strategy viable long-term but also one that does not require investment of funds. Further-

⁴⁹ Yanis Varoufakis provides an excellent example of two kinds of values we associate to goods – exchange value and experiential value. Exchange value is what we associate with commodities and experiential value is associated with feelings and experiences. His examples include "a sunset, a joke, a dive in the sea". Similarly, religion provides experiential value, as do nonmaterial religious goods that stem from religious belief.

more, it highlights the complexity of political decision making (in this case a specific religious actor) – and illustrates that clients are driven by a multitude of logics, economic, social, and psychological simultaneously.

This complexity of logics that drive the political behaviour of citizens is underscored by Göran Hydén's "economies of affection." In the African context, Hyden argues there is a social logic at play in the political behaviour of citizens, over and beyond an economic one. According to this, the core logic of clientelism rests on "(a) whom you know is more important than what you know, (b) sharing personal wealth is more rewarding than investing in economic growth, and (c) a helping hand today generates returns tomorrow" (Hyden 2012:72). Thus, the individual actor is analysed through multiple lenses simultaneously. Seen from this perspective, the inclusion of diffuse nonmaterial religious benefits has the potential to play a larger role in how citizens behave in the political sphere than do short-term material gains. Here the political relationship is preceded by a relational clientelism rooted in religion.

The importance of diffuse nonmaterial goods outside of religion that can be classed as ideal, where their innate link to the clientelistic bond is well developed, is elaborated by the anthropological school of clientelism. An apt example is Geertz's case study of Balinese cockfights (2005). He elaborates on the role of diffuse nonmaterial goods as those that "take us out of the realm of formal concerns into more broadly sociological and social-psychological ones, and to a less purely economic idea of what "depth" [...] amounts to" (2005:70). This serves as a fitting example of the nature of diffuse nonmaterial goods and the impact these have on a citizen's behaviour, both social and political. Specifically in the context of a trade-off, such as material versus nonmaterial concerns, Geertz points out that "depth", valued by the individual, is not in the gain or loss of money but "much more is at stake than material gain; namely, esteem, honour, dignity, respect – [...] status" (Geertz 2005:71). This highlights the importance of the role of socio-psychological factors in the actions of citizens within a social context, where diffuse matters of status, reputation and what one's neighbour thinks of one are associated with "depth" whereas material concerns of money are seen as relatively "shallow." Diffuse, nonmaterial religious goods fall into this category. They are differentiated by their spiritual, supernatural nature – i.e., their ideational nature.

Including nonmaterial religious goods as a *type* of good into our analyses of clientelism has several advantages. First, it has the potential to recast our understanding of the client-voter from one that prefers tangible material goods to preferring diffuse nonmaterial religious goods which provide socio-psychological benefits – that show clients to benefit from these nonmaterial goods, unavailable outside of religion. Second, it allows us to bring in a second type of rationality into our analysis, where utility maximization is not limited to material gain, but is expanded to include goods such as religious rewards. Third, because clientelism exists everywhere but takes different shapes in different contexts (van De Walle 2007), this would add to the comparative study of clientelistic politics, through its empirical and theoretical contribution.

This dissertation addresses this gap by introducing an inductive theory of religious clientelism, a relational sub-type, dominated by the exchange of diffuse supernatural, religious, nonmaterial goods, where both patron and client exercise dual roles. The patron is both religious leader and politician, while the clients are both followers and voters. The actors share a long-term, hierarchical, social bond rooted in religious following. Religion operates both as a belief system and social identity. Specifically, because clientelism is ultimately an exchange relationship, I use the exchange as my point of departure. I focus on the clients' preferences for material/nonmaterial goods in tandem with how religion (as both belief system and social identity) influences their overall political behaviour. In this theory, the type of goods exchanged are not overwhelmingly material. Instead, the goods exchanged between patron and client include diffuse nonmaterial religious goods (such as prayers, blessings and promises of salvation),⁵⁰ tangible nonmaterial goods such as protection and access to legal systems driven by a social logic, and material goods typical of the contemporary scholarship that are driven by an economic logic of utility maximisation through material gain. I then explore how this long-term hierarchical religious bond affects client-voters' political behaviour when the religious leader participates in the political process. Specifically, I focus on the political behaviour – exploring if and why the client-voters cast their vote for their patron, and how religion affects clients' preferences. Specifically, how diffuse supernatural, religious nonmaterial goods, feature in the client's political decision-making. Thus, contributing to the emerging clientelism literature that uses frameworks and methods from the classical clientelism literature to today's political science scholarship (Pellicer et al 2022, Aspinall et al 2022). We will now zoom out and see how religion has been analysed in relation to individual political behaviour across political science, with a special focus on religious voting and ethnic identity politics. I choose to focus on these two subfields because of their inclusion of religion in the analysis of individual political behaviour and will use these to build my theory of religious clientelism in Chapter 3.

2.2 Religious voting

Religious voting is often expressed as citizens voting for conservative policy positions that form political parties' agendas (Raymond 2011, Gomez 2021, Kurzman and Naqvi 2010). The variation centres on secular versus non-secular stances of political parties (Evans and Northmore-Ball 2018). The inclusion of religion as a variable influencing citizens' political behaviour is often attributed to the seminal work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967) on social cleavages, where a cleavage “refers to salient demographic division, such as class or religion, which is associated with party preferences” (Baysu and Swungedouw 2020). It is through aligning with these social cleavages that political parties attract voters.

Moreover, our current understanding of religious voting is intimately tied with programmatic politics (Langsaether 2019, Knutsen 2004, Baysu and Swyngdeow 2020, Raymond 2011). The two overarching mechanisms through which religion is

⁵⁰ Stemming from the rationality that steers a believer (thus including psychological goods).

said to influence voting behaviour is social cleavage theory and political values, where the former is said to have a direct affect while the latter is said to have an indirect effect on individual political behaviour. The main argument of social cleavage theory purports that citizens feel like one party represents their social or religious group, independent of their policy platform, rooted in historical ties. Simply put, the citizens' alignment stems from a sense of belonging with the party due to events or processes that occurred a long time ago (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). It is a direct effect of alignment on vote choice, where group identification with a party steers political choice. One example of this is the Social Democratic party in Sweden. Up until the late 1990's conservative working class voters supported the Social Democrats because they identified with the working class and saw the party as the "working class" party. Another example is from the Muslim world, where citizens in several countries vote for the Muslim Brotherhood, because the party embodied opposition to the status quo of authoritarianism (Masoud 2014). The association of what a political party represents, and its group representation, is said to be transmitted across generations because children are socialized in politics from a young age through their parents (Langsaether 2019). It is what Tilly labels a "relic of past associations between groups and parties" (2015:923). This association and transfer across generations, also known as the 'frozen alignment' thesis, is currently heavily debated, where the importance of political party alignment is said to be waning in importance.

The second, and indirect, mechanism through which religious voting operates pertains to citizens' political values. Scholars argue that religion affects individuals' political behaviour indirectly, where religious stances affect the voter's political values and attitudes, and these, in turn, affect party preference (Knutson 2018:249). The logic of the argument is that religious voters will have more conservative stances on issues of morality, such as abortion, family law etc., and therefore will vote for parties that present more conservative policy platforms. A pertinent example of this in the American context are conservative, religious Republicans supporting Trump as a rational, religious voting choice. In the context of the Muslim world the political values explanation is juxtaposed against clientelism, where voters are understood either as religious or as seeking material rewards from political parties but not both. In the former case, scholars argue citizens cast their vote based on the religious association of the party, where political platforms maintain conservative stances and Islamic values are prioritised (Grewal et al 2019). Whereas, in the latter case, voters are thought to hold parties accountable on their ability to deliver individual material rewards rather than on policy promises (Wegner and Cavatora 2019). This clientelist logic is often expressed through the connection of Islamist Parties to large charity organisations as vehicles for clientelistic exchange, where charitable handouts are given or through their ability to provide social services (Masoud 2014, Brooke 2019).

Scholars have analysed the role of religion in influencing political behaviour foremost as a socio-psychological factor affecting the political choice of citizens, classing religion as a 'strong brand loyalty' (Bartels 2010). It is used as an explanatory variable that brings in both social settings and the different identities held by

citizens, over and above national and ethnic identities. Scholars argue that this fully allows the complexities of citizens to be considered. These loyalties, such as the ones developed through religion, are based on “sentiment and disposition” rather than “reasoned preferences” (Leighley, 2010). If citizens act on such loyalties, this represents a stark contrast with popular theories of voting behaviour revolving around the notion that political choice is based on rational considerations, or even cost-benefit analyses.

While much of the scholarship on religious voting has extended our understanding of the ways in which religion influences individual vote choice in relation to political parties, they are less helpful in explaining contexts of nonprogrammatic politics or where political parties remain weak.⁵¹ One example is developing contexts, where politics often are contested based on individual politicians’ networks. Adding to this, our current understanding of what a religious voter is does not include somebody that may have a spiritual leader, for whom voting may be a deeply religious act. This dissertation expands the definition of religious voter to include citizens who have a religious leader with whom they share a hierarchical bond. One relevant example is the follower of a Sufi saint (*murid*). Put simply, our current theories do not lend themselves to explaining linkages between politicians and voters at the individual level, especially where political parties are weakly institutionalised. Particularly, the political behaviour of voters that share a direct religious linkage with the electoral candidate running for office. Of the contemporary scholarship on religious voting, the cue taking literature comes closest to exploring explanations of candidate-voter linkages in weak party contexts.

According to the cue taking literature, religious language used by candidates can play an important role in influencing citizens’ political behaviour. This is because people tend to rely on social identity cues to infer politically relevant information. This rests on the widespread assumption that voters are cognitive misers (Popper 1991) and rely on shortcuts to make judgements about people, especially in low information settings (Zaller 1992). To compensate for the lack of information, voters use identity cues when making voting decisions (Downs 1957, Chandra 2004, McDermott 2007, Valentino 1999, Weaver 2012). One such information shortcut is a politician’s religious affiliation from which to make inferences about a politician’s beliefs and values. The religious affiliation can be communicated overtly or implicitly (McCloughlin and Wise 2014, Calfano and Djupe 2014). Overt religious cues run the risk of alienating a large portion of potential voters, whereas implicit religious cues appeal to an in-group without rousing an out-group’s suspicion. Religious cues do, however, appear to become more effective as citizens become more religious. A good example of implicit religious cues is Calfano and Djupe’s experimental study testing the Republican Party’s use of “God Talk” (2009). The study illustrates how specific religious terminology, in certain sequences, when targeted at white Evangelical Protestants result in voters casting their vote for the Republican candidate. Their

⁵¹ One recent exception is the *Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies* edited by Melanie Cammett and Pauline Jones, published in May of 2022. Although it dedicates an entire section to religion and programmatic politics it also includes aspects of religion’s influence outside of the political party context.

argument rests on politicians and voters sharing a social identity of religion. The role of religious cues, both implicit and explicit, however is not straightforward.

There's an assumption in the cue-taking literature that voters are making active choices when receiving cues which may not be the case. As Albertsson's experimental study demonstrates, implicit religious cues, may in fact be activating information processing through an uncontrolled way (2011). She critiques the models used by public opinion research as being skewed, because they continue to model decision-making processes as a conscious process, even though the same research acknowledges that our daily life is driven by automatic processes (Bargh and Chartrand 1999). Examples of such automatic processes is hot cognition. It argues that concepts in our associative networks carry affective charges that can be activated through uncontrolled processes (Lodge and Taber 2005:112). Generally, this literature still relies on religious language cues being used. It does not consider the candidate's personal religious affiliation as a heuristic for voters. This limits the extent to which causality can be assigned to religion (as a shared social identity) as an explanation for the political behaviour of the voter.

Using the candidate's personal religious affiliation as the cue brings the analysis directly onto the voter and candidate. This can have two outcomes. In the first case, the candidate and voter do not share religious identity. In this case the candidate's religious affiliation as an information shortcut activates stereotypes that voters may hold about those religious denominations and thus influence the citizen's political decision according to the stereotype held (McDermott 2009). If the stereotype held is a negative one, the voter may be put off from voting for the candidate. The second outcome is when candidate and voter share religious identity. Chhibber and Sekhon (2015) look at what effect religious cues have on different voters – Muslims versus Hindus. The study builds on a survey experiment where the physical appearance of the candidate (using religious symbols) signals religiosity to the voter, where shared religion induces a vote in Muslims but not in Hindus. This asymmetric role of religious appeals, the scholars argue, is because of the way the different religions are organized and practiced.

One study that goes beyond the party level/individual-level dichotomy is Baysu and Swyngdenouw (2020). The authors merge social cleavage theory (political party) with social identity theory (individual level theory). Specifically, they look at the social identity model of leadership to demonstrate how a political leader can be seen as someone who shares social identity with group members, and thus attracts followers on this basis. Accordingly, leaders will be successful if seen as "one of us". While these studies have made substantial contributions to our understanding of how religion affects political behaviour, they fail to demonstrate how a hierarchical religious bond shared between voter and politician, such as those shared by Sufi *murids* and with their spiritual leader, influences the political behaviour of their follower-voters, especially when these religious leaders choose to contest political office. This ranges from voting to following a candidate across partisan lines. For Shahid, religion plays a decisive part of his political behaviour. I argue that voting for your religious leader with whom you share hierarchical links also constitutes a form of religious voting, because of the diffuse role of religion where it is both a belief sys-

tem and social identity. Simply put, religious clientelism where voters' behaviour is steered by their religion, also constitutes religious voting. In contexts of weak political parties, political linkages tend to be at the individual level – i.e., between politician and voter. In these contexts, religious voting will also be at the individual level. This point is essential to address because many people around the world appear to find themselves in such relationships, where religion operates outside our current assumptions tied to programmatic politics. It has implications for citizens' self-determination exercised via voting, the continued weak institutionalisation of political parties in developing contexts, and some politicians having an advantage and more power than others due to exercising dual roles (as both religious leader and politician simultaneously).

Moreover, to disentangle nonprogrammatic politics, there are overarching limitations of political behaviour theories in general, and religious voting in particular. This stems from the type of data and the geographic locations it builds on. First, except for the cue taking literature, contemporary religious voting scholarship draws on survey data from the Western context, with the American and North-western European context dominating the field. Furthermore, the existing measures of religiosity used in these large-scale surveys that do cover non-Western contexts (such as the World Values Survey) may be underrepresenting the religious voting population because many of the existing measures typically are based on survey questions that ask whether an individual believes in God and how often one attends religious services. Such questions fail to capture populations that do not fall into these neat categories (Verghese 2020). One example is the Muslim woman population. In Islam attendance at mosques is not mandatory for women, as such, this question may not capture this segment of the population, and women constitute half of most populations. This effectively leaves out an entire gender from our understandings of religious voting, undermines existing models of religious voting and in today's world it is unacceptable to label this segment an outlier.

Second, we do not have systematic data for the developing world (Esmer and Pettersson 2007). This constitutes a problem as we know that religion is much more important in these societies, because it is deeply entrenched in day-to-day life of its citizens, and as such also plays a role in the political decisions of their populations (Esmer and Pettersson 2007). Adding to this dearth is the lack of data pertaining specifically to the Muslim world (Tepe and Demirkaya 2011). For the Muslim world, the available data is taken from Arabic speaking Middle East, where the general depiction of the Muslim voter is that Muslims vote Islamic, i.e., they vote for Islamist political parties (Masoud 2014, Brooke 2019).⁵² While this scholarship has helped extend our knowledge of the political behaviour of citizens in Arab contexts (Blaydes and Linzer 2012, Lust-Okar 2006, Mecham and Chernov Hwang 2014, Pellicer and Wegner 2014), it is less helpful in furthering our understanding of the Muslim voter in general because it is not derived from contexts where majority

⁵² The scholarship that focuses on the MENA delves into trying to understand these patterns, where much effort has been directed at honing in on what precisely attracts the voters – is it the Islamic ideology (i.e. religion) (Masoud 2014) or the parties' service provision (Brooke 2019, Cammett 2014).

Muslims reside. Adding to this, Charles Kurzman and Ijlal Naqvi's study "Do Muslims Vote Islamic?" contradicts the generalisation of the Muslim voter as voting Islamic. Using the most comprehensive election data from across the Muslim world till date, covering 89 parliamentary elections across 21 countries, they illustrate two key points. First, that Islamic parties regularly contest elections. Second, Islamic parties do not win most of the time (Kurzman and Naqvi 2010). Their findings contradict the depiction of Muslims as voting Islamic. This further underscores that our data on the average Muslim voter is not representative and likely stems from the limited empirical setting that the scholarship draws on, which only covers a handful of countries in the Muslim world (Tepe and Demirkaya 2011, Wegner and Cavatora 2019:559). The largest population of Muslims are found in Asia – Indonesia and Pakistan constituting the largest populations (Pew Research 2017). However, data from these regions remains scarce.⁵³ Coincidentally, Sufi Islam as a form of political Islam is prevalent in both Indonesia and Pakistan (both countries with weak political parties) where Sufi leaders contest political office (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019, Malik and Malik 2018). Our current religious voting models may not be capturing religious voting in these Muslim contexts, instead religious voting is subsumed under labels of clientelism and patronage, whereas the behaviour could be both. In these cases, the concept of religious clientelism may be better suited to capture and reflect the ground realities.

2.3 Ethnic voting

The second scholarship that considers religion and its effect on citizens' political behaviour is ethnic politics. Ethnic identity is defined as "a subset of identity categories in which membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent (described here simply as descent-based attributes)" (Chandra 2006). It is one of the prevalent explanations of vote choice in the developing world (Bratton 2008, Bratton 2011, Lindberg and Morrisson 2008, Weghorst and Lindberg 2013) and unlike the scholarship on religious voting, is closely tied to with non-programmatic, personalized politics. The logic of ethnic voting is, in its most simple form, expressing solidarity. Sub-national groups seek to elevate leaders from their own cultural background into positions of power ensuring not only representation, but citizens treat it as a safety net that they can access by gaining collective representation (Posner 2005). The main argument is that ethnicity functions as an information shortcut for citizens, where a shared ethnic identity between voter and candidate carries with it an implicit understanding that voting for one's co-ethnic candidate will result in the voter receiving preferential treatment – including but not limited to material gains and policies that will benefit their group (Chandra 2007).

Generally, in comparative politics, religion is grouped within the umbrella of ethnic politics. Such a grouping treats religion as any other identity – be it tribal, clan, or national, where the focus is on the mobilisation potential of the group identi-

⁵³ The largest Muslim majority countries are Indonesia, and Pakistan. (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/31/worlds-muslim-population-more-widespread-than-you-might-think/>)

ty in the political sphere. It furthers our understanding of political mobilisation, where one group identity enables the delivery of votes. However, it falls short in furthering our understanding of identity cleavages because it overlooks the strength of one identity relative to another. The focus on mobilisation potential of an identity stems from an underlying assumption that identities of language, tribe, ethnicity, and religion serve similar functions and generate similar expectations/preferences among citizens (see Chandra 2004, Posner 2005). This results in a limited understanding of the strength of different identities and their potential influence on individuals' political behaviour. Particularly, our understanding of how religion influences vote choice, and the strength of religion as an identity relative to other identities, remains incomplete.

That said, within the ethnic identity literature there are a handful of studies that attempt to differentiate between identities and how these differences affect people's preferences - specifically religion (Barr and Serra 2013, Baysu and Swyngedouw 2020, Corstange 2013, McCauley 2014, Posner 2005, Sachs 2009). Using experimental evidence John McCauley demonstrates how changes in the saliency of ethnicity and religion are associated with policy preferences at the individual level. While ethnic (i.e., ethnolinguistic) identity elicits the demand for club goods, when religion is made salient, otherwise identical individuals prioritise behavioural policies and moral probity (2014). Daniel Posner illustrates how citizens' party preferences are steered, where during periods of single-party rule, tribal identities serve as the axis of electoral mobilisation and self-identification but during periods of multi-party rule, language group identities play this role. Using evidence from a list experiment Daniel Corstange illustrates how class and ethnic identities elicit divergent public and private behaviour. Due to social pressures from ethnic identity, individuals elicit public expressions of allegiance with their ethnic group, but privately, the same individuals highlight their material, class interests (2013). This juxtaposes the clientelistic logic of voters demanding material goods versus social cleavage theory's logic of expressing solidarity based on identity politics.

Within the ethnic politics literature, religion is generally said to influence citizens' political behaviour in an indirect manner, whereas ethnolinguistic identities mobilise voters directly. One example is Dominika Koter's work. She hones in on nonprogrammatic electoral strategies of politicians (2013, 2016). Koter shows the different mobilisation potentials of ethnicity versus religion, where ethnic identity mobilises directly, whereas religion mobilises indirectly. Koter argues that ethnic identity directly mobilises voters due to shared ethnic social identity between politicians and voters. In contrast, religion operates indirectly through electoral intermediaries/brokers. For example, politicians rely on local religious leaders, such as the Sufi leaders in Senegal, to gain votes of religious followers - also known as vote banks. Furthermore, McClendon and Reidl also examine the indirect influence of religion on citizens political behaviour, in the sub-Saharan context (2021). Their focus is on religious sermons and how these function as signalling devices that indirectly activate political behaviour. This evolving scholarship helps shed light on the continued importance of religion and the power religious actors exert in an indirect manner. However, it is limited in helping us further our understanding of the direct

impact of religion on political behaviour. In short, the emerging literature does not include how citizens' political behaviour is affected when their religious leader contests political office, where the religious leader is not a broker but a political candidate themselves.

The literature on ethnic voting has many overlaps with the early political science literature on clientelism where analysis included an amalgamation of logics – economic logic where concerns of material goods was juxtaposed against social logics that valued social goods. This literature draws on the anthropological roots of clientelism in its analysis of individual political behaviour and what Scott terms 'political action' (1972) and includes long term bonds and solidarities as part of their models investigating political behaviour (see Lemerchand 1972, Scott 1972, Waterbury 1979). The newer literature that attempts to understand political behaviour of citizens in weak party contexts, tries to analyse these logics in tandem, where voters are seen as either clientelistic or ethnic (Lindberg and Morrisson 2008). However, because of the conceptual space that these logics share, it may be more beneficial to use a more comprehensive framework of clientelism to analyse these behaviours.

2.4 Contribution

I make three main contributions. My overarching contribution is to the clientelism scholarship. Heeding the call for a more balanced model of clientelism, this dissertation builds an inductive theory of religious clientelism, refining existing theory with empirical evidence. I draw on empirical data to theorise *how* religion shapes clientelism and its main tenets. This helps us tap into how religion affects actors' preferences when they are in a clientelistic socio-religious bond, and how this shapes their political behaviour. I include a long-term bond rooted in religion into the examination of the modern-day client's political behaviour and related preferences. This provides a more comprehensive clientelism framework because it includes a long-term, socio-psychological bond into our analysis of political behaviour of citizens, to a field dominated by an economic logic. Thus, merging the gap between empirics and theory. This adds to the emerging literature that aims to bring the strengths of the anthropological beginnings of the scholarship, to the contemporary political science scholarship on clientelism. Simply, I show how a long-term bond affects the choices of a client in the political arena when their religious leader runs for office. Furthermore, a novel contribution is the introduction of diffuse non-material, religious goods to the political science scholarship on clientelism. Religious clientelism expands the *type* of goods exchanged between patron and client. It allows for the inclusion of supernatural nonmaterial goods as part of voters' preferences and political calculus, not currently present in the overall scholarship – thus providing us with a more nuanced picture of voters.

The second contribution pertains to religious voting. Empirically, I provide micro level data from Pakistan, the second largest Muslim majority country, where religious hierarchical relationships permeate the political realm in the shape of Sufi saints (pirs) and their swathes of followers (*murids*) – i.e., the *pir-murid* relationship.

This helps address the dearth of data from non-Western contexts. Furthermore, I show the *direct* effect of religion on individual political behaviour, where the effect is due to shared religious bond between the actors. Finally, this dissertation expands understanding of religious voting to include non-programmatic contexts, i.e., contexts where political parties are weak, politics are personalized and take place at the candidate-voter level. It helps bring in religion as a variable affecting vote choice outside of policy platforms, instead religion has a direct effect on an individual's political behaviour through its shared bond between politician and voter.

The third contribution I make is to the ethnic identity scholarship. This dissertation underscores the special characteristics of religion as an identity versus other identities that influence citizens' political behaviour. I illustrate how religion serves a dual function – both as a social group identity and as belief system simultaneously, where clients perceive their shared religious bond as a higher-level identity due to its supernatural characteristic. I illustrate this by how followers rank their identities. This contributes to disaggregating religion from the umbrella term ethnic identity and emphasises it as a cross-cutting identity (Finseraas and Jakobsson 2012), over and above ethnicity and tribalism.

3

Religious Clientelism

During fieldwork for my master's thesis in Pakistan, I observed the Sufi *pir-murid* relationship. It presented a case of relational clientelism. Clients swear a life-long spiritual allegiance to living Sufi saints (patron) in their pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. Sufi saints are believed to possess spiritual charisma gained through their forefathers (which makes them closer to God and therefore good intercessors) and are understood as higher in spiritual status than others. Clients swear allegiance in exchange for spiritual guidance, prayers, blessings, and the promise of salvation and accept the Sufi saint as their spiritual master. Simply, the *pir-murid* relationship is a dyadic, asymmetrical exchange relationship, centred on the exchange of nonmaterial diffuse religious goods. What made the relationship stand out is that it is not contingent on a two-way material exchange; typically found in the contemporary political science scholarship. Instead, it is a diffuse exchange – ultimately based on nonmaterial religious rewards, such as affection, prayers, blessings, and identity. Conceptually this is closer to the anthropological literature on clientelism (Caciagli 2006:157, Scott 1972). On both an empirical and theoretical level it presents us with a different type of exchange relationship – it is based on religion and brings in a supernatural hue to the relationship – which affects all core features of clientelism. For our purposes, what further complicates the picture is, apart from being religious leaders, many of these hereditary Sufi saints also contest political office. Effectively this relational clientelism travels to the political sphere. Their followers, *murids*, openly admit to voting for their religious leader when they run for office. This suggests their political behaviour is swayed by their religious bond. Simply put, this relationship presented an empirical case of clientelism where many of the central assumptions of our contemporary scholarship (such as the exchange being based on tangible, material goods, quid pro quo, contingency, and monitoring) do not hold.

This lack of fit between theory and empirics was intriguing, especially because the clientelistic logic of voters exchanging their vote for the best material deal offered by a patron is often attributed as a central explanation of citizens' political behaviour in developing contexts. Thus, to help narrow the gap between empirics and theory, in this chapter I present an inductive theory of religious clientelism. I want to understand the client side, so I draw on in-depth interviews with clients aiming to uncover the subjective logic that lies behind actors' choices in the political realm to inform and refine existing clientelism theory. To better understand the role

of religion in citizens' political behaviour and choices, I empirically analyse how religion shapes clientelism, thus introducing a subtype of clientelism – religious clientelism. I build on the continuum model introduced by James Scott (1972) and bring together religion and politics into one model, through a long-term hierarchical religious bond (the purview of anthropologists) shared between patron and client, into the analysis of the modern-day client's political behaviour (dominated by political scientists). As one of the early adopters of the concept of clientelism in political science, Scott proposed a model of clientelism that would also account for inclusion of non-economic ties outside the political arena, what he terms “affective” ties. These can vary, from landlord-peasant relationships to social bonds shared between schoolmates. He proposes a scale model, where both economic and non-economic aspects of the client are part of the analysis. Depending on where the relationship measures on this scale the core elements of the relationship will alter.

At one end of this continuum one might place patron-client bonds which, in addition to their instrumental [economic] character, are reinforced by affective [non-economic] links growing, say from the patron and client having been schoolmates, coming from the same village, being distant relatives or simply mutual love (Scott, 1972:99).

To illustrate this; in the above example the patron and client are connected via three separate points on the non-economic side of the continuum – schoolmates, village membership, distant relatives – i.e., shared bonds, rooted in different identities – friendship, village belonging, blood ties etc. Whereas on the economic part of the continuum there is only one point of contact– i.e., as politician and citizen. The “affective” ties weigh heavier than the instrumental ones in this case, which directly impacts the type of goods exchanged, the duration of the bond and the presence of loyalty between the parties.

Although Scott offers a model that considers factors representative of the complexity of human decision-making, he does not offer any form of typologies – i.e., no varieties of clientelism. Instead, he provides us with a scale model, where different levels of affective and instrumental characteristics of the relationship produce different results in terms of political action. Explaining the variety of patron-client ties with a scale-model is useful for generalisations but does not allow analysis of the same type of clientelism across contexts, i.e., one where the core elements of clientelism remain constant, therefore enabling comparisons. Where typologies have been offered, those have been limited to geographical contexts (Lemerchand 1972).⁵⁴ Thus, I draw on Scott's model to provide a specific typology of clientelism that exists across much of the Muslim world, as a framework for future comparative work on clientelism. This religious bond shared between the actors affects the client-voter's political behaviour (in terms of preferences, partisanship, and vote choice) if and when the patron contests political office. To illustrate this, if a local priest runs

⁵⁴ Lemerchand offers a chart of typologies of clientelism limited to the context of Africa, where each type is differentiated on the following basis; the occupancy of role sets between patron and client; the underlying motivation driving the relationship; currency of exchange (i.e. the *type* of exchange) and finally, the base values of differential control over resources (1972:73).

for local office, how would this affect the voting decisions of the members of his congregation, and in fact, others within their vicinity?⁵⁵

Religion continues to play a major role in the lives of individual citizens, where it evokes a strong brand loyalty among believers, especially in the context of developing countries (Wald and Wilcox 2006, Grzymala-Busse 2012, Esmer and Pettersson, 2007; Bartels, 2010). As religion still plays a major role in most developing contexts, the inclusion of religion in clientelism can help disentangle the underlying mechanisms of how a long-term bond influences the political behaviour of both clients and patrons. This can help us understand why clientelism persists and how it may hamper the consolidation of young democracies. Specifically, it can shed light on voter preferences – especially in terms of the type of goods exchanged between patron and client – i.e., an exchange in which instrumental material incentives do not dominate. Instead, nonmaterial religious goods are a central part of the clients' preferences. It can also help further our understanding of how patrons use religion to their advantage as part of their political strategies and manoeuvring. In short, religious clientelism can help tease out “the mechanisms by which symbols, traditions, rituals, and myths influence social and political interactions”. As Johnson points out, “this specification of mechanisms is critical for cultural accounts, which have tended to underspecify mechanisms” (cited in Grzymala-Busse 2012:426).

In presenting religious clientelism I argue that religion serves dual functions for the client – as a belief system and as social identity. Thus, the client-voter's political behaviour is driven by multiple logics simultaneously, religious, and social. These two functions of religion operate at two levels simultaneously – both collective and individual. At the collective level, religion provides a social identity to clients through which they relate to others in their spiritual community as well as their overall social life, with the result that the individual belongs to a community of like-minded people (congregation), bound by the spiritual connection to a common leader. At the individual level, religion serves as a belief system. By belief system, I mean a private sphere through which individuals situate themselves in relation to the collective and make sense of the world. It relates to the supernatural, addressing questions pertaining to life after death, the meanings associated with different aspects of life and the like, and through which we exercise prescribed rituals to gain nonmaterial religious benefits such as prayers being fulfilled, peace of mind, blessings etc. This dual aspect of religion distinguishes it from other social identities due to its access to the supernatural, where only religion provides access to God, while other social identities cannot access this sphere or the nonmaterial religious goods it provides.

I suggest that this dual function of religion, as both social identity and belief system, enables nonmaterial supernatural goods to be part of the reciprocal exchange between client and patron. These goods are part of the believer's rationality, where nonmaterial ideal goods attached to religion are part of the voters' preferences – access to these nonmaterial goods is part of the reasoning voters choose to follow

⁵⁵ One pertinent example is the Lutheran minister Khader El-Yateem, a Palestinian American running for city council in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, in 2017. See Radiolab podcast Father K. <https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/father-k>

purs. When the religious leader then runs for office, the client's preferences from the relational clientelism also travel to the political sphere. This includes but is not limited to the exchange of nonmaterial religious goods for one's vote. As such, at the collective level, it delivers the vote; at the individual level (as a belief system) it allows for the inclusion of supernatural religious nonmaterial goods of spiritual guidance, blessings prayers and the ultimate promise of salvation – all of which are excludable and private. This contrasts with the typical exchange covered by the contemporary clientelism scholarship where the focus largely remains on voters being driven by an economic logic of utility maximization, where utility is understood as material gain. Furthermore, because a client prioritises religious nonmaterial goods, the patron often ends up with the material gain. This too contrasts with the contemporary literature where the poor voter is often highlighted as the one making the material gain relative to the patron who invests resources to provide material inducements (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

In delineating religious clientelism I make use of both classic and modern literatures, where both long-term factors such as actors' social identities/relationships in combination with short-term considerations and actors' cost benefit analysis of the exchange itself, are considered simultaneously when analysing the actors' political behaviour. Drawing on Scott's continuum model I present a theory of religious clientelism based on six core elements: the actors, the affective/instrumental balance, type of exchange, the resource base, duration of bond and the aspect of loyalty.

3.1 Theory of religious clientelism

Drawing on fieldwork and interview data I present the subtype of religious clientelism. Here I address the first question of the dissertation **how does religion shape clientelism and its core elements**. Following George and Bennet, to refine theory one must hone in on specific characteristics of the concept that is to be refined. Thus, I revise clientelism theory through two of its core characteristics – (1) the type of goods exchanged and (2) presence of trust (George and Bennett 2004:63). I differentiate these from contemporary mainstream political science scholarship on clientelism, and further illustrate how religion affects the remaining critical four components of clientelism: the actors, affective/instrumental balance, religion as a resource base, and duration of bond.

The inclusion of religion is unique for two reasons. First, it brings in the rationality of a believer to the clientelistic exchange. Second, it expands the *type* of goods exchanged between patron and client (and form part of clients' preferences) to include nonmaterial goods of a supernatural character. I build on Masooda Bano's theory of rationality of the religious believer. This rationality is different from the rational actor model we have become accustomed to in the clientelism literature (Piattoni 2001). In the political science scholarship of clientelism actors are overtly understood as utility maximizing agents, where utility more often than not, entails material achievement (where the client accepts a material good in exchange for political support). In contrast, Bano's theory of the rational believer rests on the

pursuit of ideal maximization, where utility is understood in terms of nonmaterial religious rewards, - i.e., ideas are pursued – specifically, ideas tied to religion (2012). Here the two rationalities are differentiated in terms of material or nonmaterial goods. She puts it concisely

The notion of material utility rests on the human need for material achievement; that of ideal utility, on the pursuit of ideas. The constant struggle between material and ideal utility is central to the rationality of the religious believer. (Bano 2012:12)

I aim to understand the political behaviour of religious actors, therefore it is apt to use Bano's concept of rationality of the believer, because it helps explain the inherent pursuit of nonmaterial religious rewards, and how these can form part of religious actors' preferences, and these in turn affect their political behaviour. In the next section, I begin by showing how religion shapes clientelism. I first elaborate on the role of religion as the basis for a long-term bond. The sections after illustrate how this in turn affects the overall tenets of the clientelistic bond.

3.1.1 Religion as basis for long-term bonds

Building on an emerging literature I merge the classic and contemporary scholarships of clientelism by including a long-term bond, provided by religion, into the analysis of the client's political behaviour (Pellicer et al 2020, Hicken and Nathan 2020, Yildirim and Kitschelt 2020). This inclusion has a ripple effect on the basic tenets of the clientelistic relationship – results in a model that includes the classic school's focus on social aspects of the clientelistic relationship, into the modern school's analysis of a voter's political behaviour. The inclusion of religion is novel because of two primary reasons. First, unlike other long-term bonds, religion serves a dual function simultaneously – both as a belief system and social identity. Its function as a belief system is what brings in the rationality of the believer. Second, these characteristics of religion have a knock-on effect on the overall clientelistic relationship; specifically, the actors' preferences, and in turn, on the *type* of goods that are preferred and exchanged between client and patron (both in the social and political realms), the presence of trust and ultimately on their political behaviour.

Let us start by first delineating religion's function as a belief system. It operates as a belief system for the individual client-follower, between him/herself, his/her spiritual leader (patron) and God, in which the patron serves as an intercessor between God and client. It is an iterative relationship in which the client prays to God and seeks favours and intercession via his spiritual leader – the patron. The client invokes the supernatural through prayer, paying of tithes etc. and prescribed rituals that are understood as the way to gain nonmaterial religious goods. One such religious ritual that forms part of the belief system is the pledge of allegiance, *baith*. The client swears allegiance to the patron as a means to partake in his *baraka* (spiritual enlightenment), and through him, God's gifts. Furthermore, as a belief system it provides clients with a framework for the nature of one's existence – how to lead a life, dealing with the transient nature of life, and how to deal with death and the hereafter (Hogg et al 2008). Finally, as part of their belief system, the bond shared

between patron and client reinforces clients' believed association with God. This creates feelings of positive self-regard, which not only enhances a client's self-image but also has the effect of amplifying their overall standing in society (White, Shariff, and Norenzayan 2019:7). Thus, religion serves the client at both group and individual levels.

This contrasts with the scholarship of religious voting, where religion plays an indirect role in its' effect on vote choice. It is at the level of belief system that religion is said to affect an individual's values, and in turn, their preference for a conservative policy platform (Knutsen 2018, Gomez 2021). In religious clientelism, religion's function as a belief system has a direct effect on the individual's political behaviour. Because a belief system operates at the individual level it avails the client-voter with excludable nonmaterial religious goods the client seeks.

In sum, religion as a belief system helps individuals grapple with the uncertainties of daily lives and provides a sense of security in relation to the unknown. It provides a cognitive safety net to help make sense of the material world as well as the spiritual. It is important to point out that the theoretical separation of religion as social identity and belief system is empirically difficult to make, because in the real world both overlap to quite an extent.

The second unique function of religion is as social identity. It is widely recognised in political science that individuals have multiple social identities, whether this be religious, tribal, clan, ethno-linguistic, or national, and that these can be activated towards various political ends (Bates 1983; Laitin 1986; Posner 2005; Young 1979). The affective linkages citizens foster in their daily lives come from these identity "hats". Each "hat" serves different purposes and elicits different preferences and expectations from each web of relations. For us to understand religion's function as a social identity in the political realm, we need to understand what purpose it serves.

As a social identity the religious bond of *muridi* provides the client with social standing and a reference point to a group identity within the community where they live and are followers of a religious leader. The overall purpose religion serves for the client is that it satisfies the innate psychological need to belong. For this need to be satisfied two criteria need to be met. The first criterion is for "frequent affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people." The second criterion pertains to the context within which these interactions take place, as "a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare" (Baumeister and Leary 1995:497). In religious clientelism the first need is satisfied by creation of a network of relationships with other client-followers who also share a hierarchical religious bond with the same leader. These attachments are developed through daily interactions both within and outside of the informal religious institution, where day-to-day activities and reciprocations create horizontal linkages between followers. These result in lasting positive, significant interpersonal relationships and fulfils the client's psychological need to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995, Hogg et al 2008).

The criteria of context within which interactions take place is satisfied in two parts. The first part, "temporally stable and enduring framework" is fulfilled by the client swearing exclusive lifelong spiritual allegiance to the Sufi saint, thus creating

a lifelong bond. This bond is reinforced by regular interactions between client and patron on a regular basis both directly (face-to-face) and indirectly (through regular contacts with the overall informal institution of *pir-murid* such as the shrines). Second, the criteria of “affective concern for each other’s welfare” taps into the actors’ subjective perceptions of their relationship – where each considers the other genuinely watching out for the other – i.e., is concerned about each other’s spiritual welfare. For the client the conviction of this concern from the patron is fulfilled by the act of swearing allegiance and submitting themselves for spiritual guidance to the patron. This oath is taken in good faith, where the patron’s acceptance of said allegiance is perceived as confirmation of the patron-saint genuinely caring for the client and being invested in their spiritual development. In short, the client perceives the relationship to be grounded in “affective concern for each other’s welfare”. The fulfilling of the need to belong by this relationship has positive externalities for the client-voter.

Belongingness is said to have a range of positive and strong effects on an individual’s emotions and cognitive processes. Satisfying this belongingness to a community can be a strong motivator because it provides not only community, but also one tinged with a spiritual hue, ultimately working as a powerful, fundamental motivation in a client’s political behaviour. In fact, religion as a social identity exerts similar social pressure on the individual’s behaviour, where their preferences and expectations are, at least publicly, driven by the pressures exerted by the group (in this case the congregation). This is well demonstrated in the social psychology literature where experimental evidence shows shopkeepers demonstrating increased pro-social behaviour when the Muslim call to prayer, *azaan*, is audible, compared to when it is not – i.e., when the *azaan* acts a reminder of God (Duhaine 2015). Moreover, as a social identity, religion can have a positive feedback effect at both the group and individual level. One example is the exercise of religious rituals – such as praying. Collectively engaging in religious rituals can lead to synchrony, where engaging in action with someone else creates the psychological reaction of feeling fused as a group, while at the individual level, the same religious rituals provide the psychological goods of peace of mind and can make clients more generous and generate prosocial behaviour (Sachs 2009). Put simply, in a shared religious community, “people become empowered, they develop the capacity to act in concert” (Legee and Kellsted 1993:9-10 emphasis in the original). This harmony and ability to act in concert can also be extrapolated to the act of voting if one’s religious leader is the one running for office.

Although most identities fulfil a certain need to belong, religion stands out because it “adds both a transcendent and immanent supernatural dimension to identity, norms and boundaries” (in Wald, Silverman and Fridy (2005:45). Due to its supernatural dimension, religion as a social identity transcends national, ethnolinguistic, tribal and clan identities. One telling example of the transcendent and cross-cutting nature of religion as a social identity is the societal acceptance of refugees based on religious background. In the United States, selling the idea of accepting fellow Christians fleeing Syria, emanates more acceptance versus Muslim refugees fleeing

Syria.⁵⁶ A more recent example is the acceptance of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war with Russia. A narrative that was easily related to people across the political spectrum was that Ukrainians were fellow Christians and thus deserving of being let in.

As aforementioned, not all identity "hats" carry equal weight and as such not all identities are equal, some are stronger than others and can be made salient for political ends (Hogg 2006, McCauley 2014). This weight affects actors' preferences (whether these preferences are economic, social, or political), the identity that weighs more dictates the clients' preferences. So, when a religious leader runs for political office, his followers' religious identity and the preferences tied to it are made salient in the political realm. The client-followers rank their spiritual identity above other identities they hold because of religion's supernatural character and its ability to satisfy the need to belong. This has two overarching implications. First, the client-voter will cast their vote for their patron. Second, it results in multi-ethnic vote blocs for the religious patron when he runs for office because followers are brought together through their religious identity. Simply put, the hierarchical religious bond provides a set of cross-ethnic followers (Koter 2013).⁵⁷ This contrasts with the scholarship on ethnic politics that focuses on shared ethnolinguistic identity as the basis for solidarity that delivers the client's vote (Chandra 2004).

Based on the dual function religion serves, for clients this long-term relational bond ranks higher than other bonds because of its nature as a high-stake trade-off of eternal reward and punishment and its potential to withstand the secular onslaught that would eradicate other communal identities (Grzymala-Busse 2012:424). This ranking has two implications. First the client cast their vote for their patron if and when they run for political office. Second the client's preferences in religious clientelism include nonmaterial religious rewards from their patron even in the political realm. The main impetus for clients to enter the relationship with the patron is to pursue nonmaterial religious goods – such as spiritual guidance and an insurance for the life after death where this relationship provides then with an insurance of redemption. When the religious patron enters the political sphere, clients' preference for nonmaterial religious goods travel with the citizen into the political sphere. Furthermore, due to the long-term bond and relational character of the social identity of being a *murid* it also invokes loyalty and trust. Put simply, nonmaterial religious goods are a central part of the clients' preferences, and sometimes can matter more than material goods. This reinforces Solaz et. al findings that suggest individual voters to be willing to sacrifice material gain if they share group identity with the politician (2019). It ties in with the rationality of the religious believer, whose utility maximization is in terms of ideal goods, i.e., nonmaterial religious goods not available outside of religion. Analysing religion through a clientelistic framework also helps address the problem of social desirability that can show up in the data in relation to preferences expressed by clients. This is especially so in public versus private

⁵⁶ I would like to thank medical anthropologist Aneel Brar at Oxford University for this example and perspective.

⁵⁷ I differ from Koter here because the patron in religious clientelism (Sufi Saint) is directly contesting electoral office, and not acting as a broker between candidates and citizens.

expressions of an individual's preferences and expectations. In other identities an individual may renege on their publicly expressed preferences about material interests versus interests offered in line with group identity (Posner 2013). However, in case of religion, preferences and expectations expressed by clients publicly remain constant in the private sphere because of the external enforcement of God, where fear of a supernatural punishment may serve as a deterrent to counter normative behaviour, even in anonymous situations free from human social monitoring (Shariff and Norenzayan 2011). This also addresses the monitoring assumption of the canonical accounts of clientelism that argue patrons ensure that clients do not renege on their promises of political support through monitoring. The case of religious clientelism is an example where monitoring is not necessary because of the self-reinforcing characteristics of religion, where believers fear the punishment of God, understood as the all-seeing, with the result that human monitoring is not required. I summarise the dual function of religion (as belief system and social identity in one) in Figure 3.1 below. In the next section I elaborate and differentiate religious clientelism from the contemporary scholarship based on the type of goods exchanged between the actors.

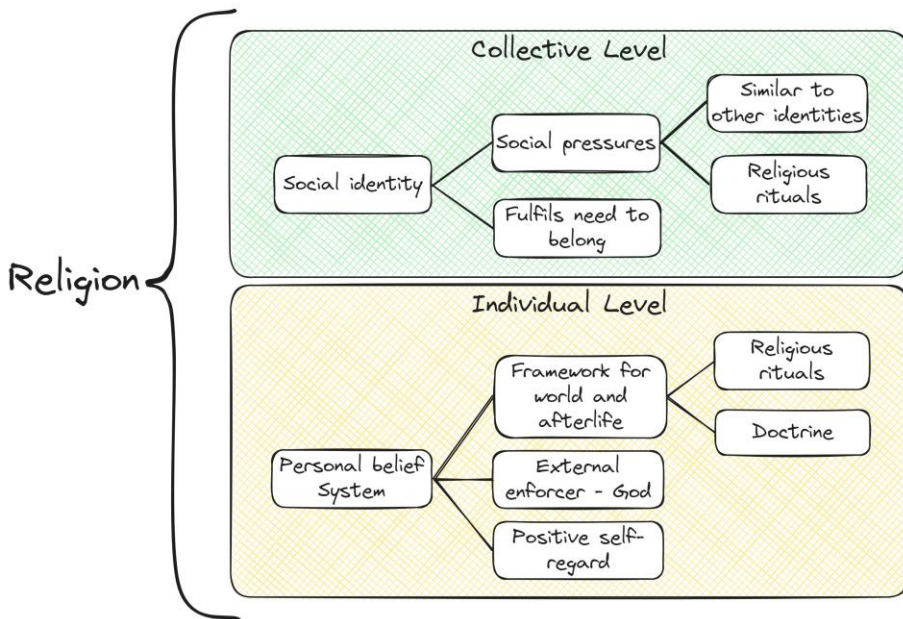


Figure 3.1. How a hierarchical religious bond operates

3.1.2 Religious nonmaterial goods

One of the central effects of religion on clientelism is on the type of goods exchanged between the client and patron. Instead of material goods, religion provides nonmaterial goods that are ideational in nature. In this case ideals associated with religion such as spiritual enlightenment, blessings, and prayers. These are typically

diffuse in nature and deeply rooted in the religious relationship and social context. These hold experiential value for the client. Religion offers clients the unique exchange of supernatural, nonmaterial goods in the shape of religious rewards. These include but are not limited to prayers being fulfilled, access to God (through intercession provided by the patron), spiritual guidance, blessings, psychological peace of mind and the ultimate promise of salvation – the latter provides an insurance for the afterlife. Religion provides believers with a way to deal with the uncertainties of life, and in that sweep most religions downplay the importance of material rewards and try to create a deep genuine appreciation for nonmaterial spiritual rewards. This appreciation is based on emphasizing the fleetingness of this temporal life and convincing the believer of a life after death. Bano puts it eloquently

All religions make a serious investment in convincing the believer of the other life and its rewards. The Quran makes repeated reference to heaven and provides descriptive accounts of the comforts that await the believer in heaven while frequently referring to the temporary nature of this life and this world. There is particular emphasis on *dua*, the act of asking God for help in all matters, at the end of each prayer. It is the actual ability of these religious rituals, and the religious texts to teach the believer the appreciation of ideal rewards, and make her feel emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually elevated, that in the long term retains the faith of the believer. It is therefore important to understand the complex interplay of material and nonmaterial rewards if one is to understand the rationality of religious action (2012:168).

For the client in religious clientelism religious action includes their political behaviour once their spiritual leader enters politics. According to most religions non-material religious rewards are attained through specific rituals, merely believing is not sufficient. There is always a contingent exchange taking place, where the believer must follow preordained rituals to gain spiritual reward. In Islam the five pillars are the basic requirements for any believer to gain spiritual growth, through which they can experience spiritual rewards for both this life and the hereafter. These pillars are belief in the oneness of God (this instils in the follower a sense that there is something bigger than oneself and that there is only so much a person can control), prayer (praying five times a day), *zakat* (tax on material wealth), observation of *Ramzan*, and *Hajj*. Observance of these pillars demand investment of time, effort and create a tension between material and nonmaterial rewards. Following the five pillars and accepting a Sufi master to guide you is said to provide spiritual rewards both for this life and the hereafter, where the appreciation of spiritual rewards is reinforced when the client sees the benefits of religion in this life.⁵⁸ It is this experience of seeing the benefits in this life that creates a conviction of religion in the believer and works as a force to continue to pursue these spiritual rewards.

One example from my fieldwork is Sana who had a difficult time getting pregnant. She had gone to the shrine to pray for a successful pregnancy, i.e., asked for a '*mannat*' (a request or prayer to be granted) and if her prayer would be answered she

⁵⁸ In Sufi Islam apart from the 5 pillars there are additional rituals that must be followed to gain spiritual reward. This includes the oath of allegiance to a spiritual master who can guide you in your spiritual journey and act as intercessor between you and God.

would return and pay her respects at the shrine (both in prayers and in kind). She had a successful pregnancy and delivered a healthy baby boy. This reinforced her belief and convinced her that her prayers had been answered. Also, this experience worked as force to continue practicing her belief. She also fulfilled her end of the bargain and travelled to her Sufi saint's shrine to pay respects and offered a *chaddar* to be put on the tomb of the saint.⁵⁹ This results in the conviction of the power of prayer in the client, where nonmaterial spiritual rewards in and of themselves are part of the believer's repertoire. Simply, followers have an appreciation for nonmaterial religious goods, and it is an active part of their preferences because they have experienced the benefits of these rewards in this life. Bano makes a similar point, where she emphasises that material sacrifice in this world is part of creating a deep appreciation for spiritual rewards in conjunction with seeing benefits of religious rituals in this world that helps believers develop religious conviction (2012).

Religious conviction is essential in shaping the preferences elicited by the client-follower in the political sphere. When the religious patron enters the political sphere, the relationship shared with the client continues to operate, and the client's preferences linked to their religious identity travel with them. The implication of this is that the client's identity as a religious follower is made salient, and thus their rationality as a believer is also activated – where they prefer nonmaterial religious rewards in relation to their patron. Therefore, when their religious leader runs for office, clients' preferences in relation to their spiritual leader will be to gain nonmaterial spiritual rewards from them.

In religious clientelism clients often end up providing the patrons with material goods – such as tithes, food, time, labour etc. and most importantly, their vote. This is over and above the social prestige and religious power the *murids* provide the *pir* through their following him, because a *pir* is only as powerful as the size of his following. This flips our contemporary logic of clientelism where clients are said to gain in material terms in exchange for their political support. Instead, here the client is gaining nonmaterial religious goods that they prefer and value, while the patron is gaining materially – in the shape of religious donations, donations in kind and importantly, the clients' votes. Finally, because of the rationality of the religious believer, if one's religious leader runs for political office when client-followers are placed in a trade-off position between the choice of material and nonmaterial goods, the client-follower shows a preference for nonmaterial religious rewards because of the conviction they have developed by experiencing the benefits of these religious nonmaterial rewards in this life. Put simply, clients are not operating on the distant promise of salvation in a life in the hereafter but are working on a conviction developed through an active experience of benefitting from religious nonmaterial rewards in their own current lives – such as mental peace, having their prayers accepted (ranging from pregnancies, getting a job, getting married etc.).

⁵⁹ Typically, these are sheets made of flowers that are bought by the *murids* at the shrine, and results in the money going to the shrine coffers.

3.1.3 The presence of trust

In religious clientelism, there is a strong overarching trust shared between both actors. It combines both social and political trust. The long-term relationship between patron and client is what fosters trust, however if the core characteristic of iteration, where face-to-face contact is removed, the relationship becomes less embedded. In this case the client has iterative interaction with the patron and the associated informal religious institution. Trust is present at two levels: at the interpersonal level and at the individual-institutional level, each of different strengths.

Let us begin with what I mean by trust. At a general level trust reflects our feelings about the future and the belief that others will not cause us harm. In fact, others will try to act for one's betterment (Gambetta 1988, Hardin 1999, Warren 1999). Specifically, I borrow Geoffrey Hosking's two-part definition. He defines trust as

- 1 Attachment to a person, collective of persons or institution, based on the well-founded but not certain expectation that he/she/they will act for my good.
- 2 The expectation, based on good but less than perfect evidence, that events will turn out in a way not harmful to me (Hosking 2014:28).

This definition is helpful for our purposes because it takes into consideration not only the different levels at which trust exists (individual/collective/institution) but also pays attention to the expectations of the actors involved, i.e., the client and the patron. This interlocking definition allows a representation of how religious clientelism operates on the ground and the complex reality posed by the symbiotic existence of relationships (social and religious) and expectations between, and from, patron-saint and client-follower. Religion generates through the functions listed below:

- 1 Epistemic; it offers us a secure knowledge of the world in which we place our faith.
- 2 Existential: it is identity-forming. It offers us a sense of ourselves, makes self-confidence possible, and hence provides a secure base from which we can trust others.
- 3 Salvific: it offers a way of salvation, not from all evil, but at least from radical contamination by evil, so that trust in ourselves and others is still possible.
- 4 Affective: trust is, among other things, an emotion, and religion offers it periodic nourishment, especially at times of difficulty or crisis.
- 5 Social-cultural: religion generates public institutions as frameworks within which people can readily interact trustingly. (Hosking 2014:51)

The religio-clientelistic bond satisfies all five trust generating factors. The *pir-murid* relationship is epistemic, and helps clients grapple with the day-to-day reality of the world. It provides *murids* with a social identity as followers of a particular Sufi saint (a group identity and individual one). Third, one of the central tenets of the *pir-murid* relationship is the promise of salvation – where the Sufi master serves as a conduit and guarantee for intercession in the temporal and spiritual world. Fourth, *piri-muridi* is affective, where an emotional attachment and the experience of receiving spiritual nonmaterial rewards reinforces trust in the bond. Finally, the entirety of the relationship is part of an informal institution that includes the *pir*, his

network of khalifas, congregation and shrine. These factors are reinforced through the reciprocal and iterative nature of the clientelistic bond, which David Torsello reminds us “is an inherently social, other than political phenomenon, which is informed by actors’ ideas and practices of trust...[and] is a cognitive as well as social mechanism of human interaction” (2012:77). As Hosking elaborates, religion is unique as a trust generator because it combines identity formation, security, a means of coping through its affective nature, and is set apart because of its salvific characteristic in tandem with its ability to generate public institutions. Having clarified what precisely we mean by trust, and the unique features of religion as a generator of trust, we now turn to the levels and degrees at which trust exists in religious clientelism.

Similar to identity ‘hats’ carrying different weights, one type of trust can be ‘heavier’ than another. Typically, in the scholarship on trust, this strength/weight is referred to as ‘thickness’, where thick trust is strong and thin symbolises weak trust (Putnam 2000, Hooghe 2007, Hwang et al 2021). Thick trust refers to a deep, complex and multifaceted kind of trust that is based on a rich history of interactions, shared values and mutual understanding. It typically is found in long-term relationships between individuals. At the interpersonal level, the client-follower shares strong thick trust between her/himself and the patron. This stems from the patron-saint as a religious leader serves as an authoritative figure, somebody the client looks up to as spiritual guide and intercessor, and due to their sacred position, trust them more than they would ordinary human beings. At the collective level, the myths associated with the patron-saint and the institution they represent provide a narrative framework for trust. This is reinforced by the iterative and reciprocal exchanges between both actors. The strong thick trust towards the patron because of his association to God stems from, among other things, the following of religious rituals (investment of time and emotion) (Hosking 2014, 46). In fact, trust in God has a specific place in most religions. In Islam it has a specific term, *tawwaqul*. It is a prerequisite for belief and an acceptance that there is a power higher than ourselves, admitting that there is only so much that we can control. Only through this first step can one gain the prescribed benefits of nonmaterial religious reward, through following preordained rituals. Similarly, in Christianity it is also considered a basic requirement from the faithful and is needed prior to one being able to benefit from following the overall tenets of the religion.⁶⁰ The Sufi saint acts as an intercessor between God and *murid*-voter, the trust between them, and through their association and connection to God, is also a strong, thick trust.

Thin trust, on the other hand, is more superficial and often based on formal, impersonal mechanisms rather than personal relationships, and exists at institutional-individual level. It is often referred to as generalised trust. There is a generalised trust between client and the informal institution associated with the Sufi saint (the shrine and the congregation). This is a strong, thin trust. A congregation is normally made up of thousands of followers that share the same religious leader. It is not

⁶⁰ See the latest book by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, wherein he discusses Christian belief and the importance of trust in God as a basic requirement prior to following Christian teachings. For details see introduction chapter in *Tokens of Trust* (2007).

necessary that a client knows every other follower in the congregation, hence the term ‘generalised trust’ in this context. Here a generalised trust is based on knowledge of how society functions in terms of “more general information about social groups and situations” and not on knowing someone personally but is “based on first-hand knowledge of how society generally works” (Newton 2007). One example is the knowledge of which streets are safe to walk at night in the city one resides in, what Bronislaw Malinowski calls ‘auto-pilot’ trust because of one’s cumulative experiences with said institution (cited in Hosking 2014). In this case trust exists between *murid*, *pir*, congregation – the informal institution of the *pir*. The presence of trust at these various levels lends longevity to the hierarchical relationship and provides an empirical example of an overlap between political and social trust. The trust between *murid* and Sufi saint can be understood as a diffuse meso level trust where generalised and interpersonal trust coalesce, which is largely absent from the individual-level empirical research thus far.

3.2 Four Major Components of Religious Clientelism

Now that I have presented the main two points through which I refine clientelism theory in this section I detail how religion affects the four components of religious clientelism: (a) actors, (b) affective/instrumental balance of relationship, (c) religion as a resource base, and (d) duration of bond. Each of these components provide an analytical development tool to show how two core elements operate within the theory of religious clientelism.

3.2.1 The actors

The basic tenets of religious clientelism are its individual actors: the patron and the client. It is essentially an individual-level dyadic relationship in which both actors exercise dual roles. The patron is both a religious leader and a politician. The client is a disciple and a voter. The patron's influence/power stems primarily from their role as religious leaders and active politicians. As religious leaders, patrons have both spiritual and worldly responsibilities towards their followers. On the religious plane their primary role is to ensure spiritual evolution of their congregants and access to spiritual nonmaterial rewards. They do this by providing spiritual guidance through example and teachings, access to the practice of day-to-day religion, and, ultimately, the insurance of salvation in the afterlife. They provide their clients with access to the *batin* (hidden, inside) realm of religion through their spiritual power. The patron’s religious power – *baraka* – is inherited and legitimated through their lineage and as such serve as a barrier of entry for other politicians. Through this *baraka* the patron operates as intercessor between his followers and God. On the worldly plane, i.e., *zahir* (apparent, outside), they also ensure the client’s welfare. In their capacity as religious leaders, patrons provide their clients access to a variety of things including protection. In the political sphere, patrons contest elections. The patron in religious clientelism is not the political party (Nichter 2010, Auyero 2001, Stokes et al 2013). Instead, the patron is an individual

with no rigid affiliation to any political party. Simply, they are religious leaders, what Joel Migdal would term “strongmen” (1988:33), who also contest political office. As such they have both religious and socio-economic power, thus they have access to both spiritual nonmaterial rewards and material rewards.

The second actor, and lower in religious hierarchy, is the client. The client seeks spiritual enlightenment through the patron as intercessor between themselves and God, accepting him as their spiritual master by pledging lifelong allegiance to them. This oath binds the actors in an exclusive, life-long relationship. The client in religious clientelism is not limited to the low-income voter, whose vote is bought through the exchange of material goods (Auyero 2001, Brusco et al 2004, Finan and Schethter 2012, Kramon 2009, Stokes et al 2013). Instead, the clientele is heterogeneous, coming from various socio-economic, ethno-linguistic, sectarian, and tribal backgrounds – where the religious bond to the patron serves as an overarching unifier, and the clients actively seek nonmaterial religious rewards.

Depending on different permutations of these characteristics, the relationship serves different ends for the client. For example, at one end of the spectrum, there is the client who is a poor farmer. For her/him the relationship serves several functions in his day-to-day life on both the spiritual and worldly planes. On the religious plane, the relationship dictates how the client can be a good believer through religious rituals such as prayers, dietary restrictions, exercising care for one's community, and paying respect to elders. This day-to-day guidance, together with their identity as followers, helps provide psychological rewards of peace of mind and a sense of control over their worldly situation (White, Shariff, and Norenzayan 2019:7). In short, for the poor client the relationship helps reinforce a bond with the supernatural where they avail nonmaterial religious rewards. It also works as a coping mechanism with worldly matters. On the worldly plane, the client may use this bond to solve worldly problems, such as contacting local authorities, conflict resolution, or even help with resolving a matter with local law enforcement all of which are understood as nonmaterial exchanges (Springborg 1979).

In contrast, for the well to-do client the relationship with the patron may not serve as a coping mechanism, instead it may provide extra insurance. For example, a well-to-do client may be a local landlord who employs members of the local population and maintains thousands of acres of land – i.e., they have both social and economic power. Such a client will have access to his/her own networks, assets, and resources.⁶¹ For them the clientelistic bond functions on two levels but to different ends. At the individual level, the supernatural goods of peace of mind and insurance of salvation will be present. On the collective level, however, religion provides the shared social identity, and as such social standing and protection – serving as an added layer of insurance. This is especially so in areas in which the state lacks the provision of the public good of law enforcement and where even the local superintendent police officer has been appointed through the consent of the local patron-saint.⁶²

⁶¹ R4, Karachi, 2015

⁶² Interview with former Superintendent Police officer of Sindh 2015, 2019

In addition, my definition of client also includes brokers (such as khalifas found in the *pir-murid* relationship in Pakistan). They are representatives of the patron and act as mediators between the patron and the client/citizen. The broker in religious clientelism wears two "hats". The first hat is of *murids* – where they too have sworn spiritual allegiance to the patron and accepted them as spiritual master, through whom they seek intercession with God. This effectively means that these brokers do not control nonmaterial religious rewards (such as blessings, spiritual guidance etc.) desired by the client. The second hat they wear is as a representative of the religious leader. The broker in his/her role represents the patron and deals with all non-religious issues pertaining to the client-voters' day-to-day life – i.e., all worldly/temporal matters, such as land issues and conflict resolution at different levels (from family disputes to village level disputes). This is unlike the typical broker found in much of the scholarship that controls resources or at least has discretion over their distribution. One example are brokers intimately tied in with the political party, such as brokers in Argentina's Peronist party. The Peronist broker are party representatives that are socially embedded and mobilise the local voter, and importantly, have discretion over the distribution of goods and hold final say over who gets what in the relationship (Auyero 2000, Stokes et al 2013). Another example is the broker in the context of weak political parties, such as bureaucrats who can use their discretionary power over material goods to cultivate reciprocal relations with voters and leverage this political capital in negotiations with politicians to secure career advancements such as those found in Peru (Cornell and Grimes, 2023). Another example are brokers who are working for direct material gain for their constituents for an election cycle, what Aspinall and Hicken term “guns for hire” (2020). Unlike these above-described brokers, the broker in religious clientelism is not tied to any political party nor does he have control over the religious nonmaterial rewards sought by the clients. Instead, he is intimately tied with the individual patron – independent of the associated political party, and lacks access to religious nonmaterial goods and the contact network the patron maintains. His/her discretion is limited to bringing matters from clients to the patron in worldly matters. In short, the broker does not have discretion or access to the religious goods that the clients want. Therefore, we treat the brokers primarily as clients, and not as a third party in the relationship.

The client in religious clientelism is distinct from the contemporary political science scholarship in two main respects. First, the number of linkages shared between patron and client. The client in religious clientelism is linked to the patron through three links – religious, social, and political. This contrasts with the contemporary literature, where, with a handful of exceptions (Auyero 2001, Aspinall and Hicken 2020) the client is tied to the patron on one plane – the political bond, with social bonds absent (Kopecky et al 2012). Second, the aspect of hierarchy. In religious clientelism there is a clear hierarchy between patron and client, rooted in the religious positions of each actor. The patron is believed to be higher in spiritual position and the client is in a lower position. In contrast, one of the assumptions of the canonical accounts is that the client is principal, and patron is agent (Hopkin 2006, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). The underlying logic is that because the patron

wants the client's vote, the client can use their vote as a form of currency to get the best deal possible in terms of material gain. Whoever can offer the best material good will get the vote. Thus, the client has a strong bargaining chip with his patron and will be able to shop around for the best deal. This is not the case in religious clientelism.

3.2.2 Affective/instrumental balance of relationship

In terms of affective instrumental balance of the relationship, in religious clientelism the patron and client share both instrumental and affective linkages. According to Scott's continuum model, the more linkages patron and client share, the deeper the bond is. Building on this model, religious clientelism accounts for not only the number of linkages shared between the actors but also considers the strength of each tie. On the religious plane, the client shares a deep, lifelong relationship with the patron. This affective bond is represented in several ways, the lifelong allegiance the client has sworn to the patron, the investment of time to the *pir-murid* institution by the *murid*, the regular face-to-face interaction, and the reciprocation of interactions. The affective relationship is rooted in both the bond operating as a belief system and as a social identity, which encompasses large parts of their life. In sum, the religious bond represents an affective tie at both the religious and the social level. This affective tie provided by religion is deep seated and strong. On the political plane, if the patron contests office, the client votes for their patron and effectively shares a political linkage too. This vote is driven by the religious rationality of the believer independent of political ideology or policy platform of the party that the *pir*-politician belongs to. This political bond provides the third linkage between the patron and client. This linkage is not as strong as the affective tie of religion, because it is a reciprocation of the affective tie. One implication of this is that the client can travel across party lines if a patron-saint changes political party. This contrasts with much of the contemporary scholarship, where the patron typically is the political party itself and as such the client is tied to the patron on only one plane – the political bond, with social bonds absent, what Yildirim and Kitschelt term spot-clientelism which emphasises the electoral cycle and not the relationships outside it (2020).

I argue the strength of the clientelistic bond rests on the strength of the combined linkages between patron and client. For example, a clientelistic bond with only two links shared between client and patron may supersede one that shares four linkages between the actors. In fact, a stronger bond can supersede and drive other parts of the clientelistic relationship. I posit that religion, when expressed as a hierarchical bond between actors, to be such a long-term bond, where the client perceives the religio-social bond with their patron-saint as their strongest bond /identity out of their existing social relationships.

3.2.3 The actors' resource base

The main resource shared between the patron and client are religious. The actors' resource base is personal and ties in directly with the actions available to each actor. Let us start with the resource base of the patron. The patron has access to several goods that he can offer to his client-follower. These goods can be divided into non-

material and material goods. The nonmaterial material are primarily religious goods, this includes the promise of salvation; spiritual guidance; access to God, and the religious identity of being a *murid*; social goods of wellbeing (including social standing, social identity as well as belonging), access (whether this be to a government office or to business/personal networks) and impartial arbitration. The nonmaterial religious rewards that a patron offers a client are tied in with his personhood, and thus highly personal. Only someone descending from a lineage of saints is believed to have access to *baraka*, spiritual enlightenment. This legitimation factor functions as a barrier to entry for other politicians.

The core difference between political science literature on clientelism and religious clientelism is the provision of nonmaterial religious goods by patrons. The nonmaterial religious rewards include but are not limited to spiritual guidance, access to God, fulfilment of prayers, making religion accessible by explanation of religious rituals and texts and the ultimate promise of salvation (which is availed in the life hereafter). Apart from the promise of salvation, clients can experience and partake in all nonmaterial religious rewards in this lifetime, which help reinforce their religious conviction. For the patron nonmaterial religious goods are not scarce and can be exchanged with the clients constantly without fear of depletion. This is distinct from the contemporary scholarship of clientelism where much research is dedicated to understanding when clientelism becomes too expensive as a strategy for candidates to use (Bergman 2019, Corstange 2018, Robinson and Verdier 2013, Schaffer and Baker 2015).

The resource base of the client-voter is also largely personal. The client has several goods (both material and nonmaterial) to offer the patron. These include allegiance (religious), loyalty (religious, social, and political), offerings (ranging from tithes, land deeds, monetary donations), investment of time, and political support – expressed through their vote, participation at political rallies and getting family members to vote for the patron. The investment of time by the client is not limited to the patron, but also includes volunteering within the informal *pir-murid* institution, where some may volunteer in the soup kitchen at the shrine and their time in the overall activities of the congregation, such as spreading the religious message of their patron. The client avails the nonmaterial religious goods offered by the patron (of identity, blessings, prayers, acceptance of spiritual guidance) through his position as a client, that is, through membership of the congregation. It is not an active good being exchanged, but one that requires investment of time, reciprocity, and on-going communication with the entirety of the organisation associated with the patron. Importantly, a clients' access to the nonmaterial religious goods can only be removed if the client were to leave the relationship, i.e., an active exit from the religious bond. It is imperative to note that because the actors relate to each other on two levels, both religious and political, both actors have duties towards each other in these spheres. Relatedly, for the religious bond to steer the political behaviour of the client, only if one's patron is running for office or has categorically expressed a political leaning towards a candidate, is the vote perceived as part of one's sworn spiritual allegiance, and therefore religious duty – where the client is expected to to

vote for their patron. This results in expectations from both sides, where there is a complex overlap of religious and social identities.

An important distinction between religious clientelism from the contemporary scholarship is that many times patrons gain more in material terms than do clients. Because nonmaterial religious goods are a central part of clients' preferences, many times the patron ends up with material gain. One example is when a client prays for something. If the prayer is fulfilled the client gives credit to the patron for effective intercession and reciprocates this acceptance by visiting the shrine to pay their respects and either donates cash or buys flowers at the shrine to lay on the tomb/provide donations to the soup kitchen. However, if the prayer is not fulfilled, the client-follower understands the lack of performance as "God's will" instead of something within the control of the patron-saint themselves. This works to the advantage of the patron because the client will still vote for them if they run for office. In this lieu, the religious patron-politician is at an advantage relative to other politicians in two respects. First in terms of investment because they do not have to invest in material goods, such as cash or other material goods such as milk or medicine (Chauchard 2018, Brusco et al 2004). Second, they still receive the client's vote, despite lack of performance and finally there is a lack of accountability. This skewed balance between the actors is unlike that portrayed in the current clientelism literature, which mostly highlights the gains that poor voters make by entering a clientelistic relationship and the investments that the politicians make when 'paying' for their votes (Brusco et al 2004, Hopkin 2006, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). In religious clientelism this calculus is reversed, where the larger gain seems to be by the patron and not the client. The patron gains not only his client's vote, but also their allegiance, tithes, and monetary gains (through donations to the religious institution) and increased social power by the size of his congregation. Whereas the client-voter gains supernatural nonmaterial goods that most of the time are not verifiable. In short, the client is the one that gives more in terms of material gain in the exchange than does the patron.

3.2.4 Duration of bond

The religious bond is an ongoing lifelong relationship initiated when the client swears spiritual allegiance to the patron. It only ends with either patron or client's demise. It rests on the informal contract between patron and client formed by the client swearing allegiance to the patron in a religious ceremony. As Scott points out "a patron is more likely to keep his followers if the scope of reciprocity that binds them is greater" (1972:100). The patron is offering reciprocity through a broad scope – varying from day-to-day advice on how to observe religious duties, to helping with day-to-day matters such as conflict resolution and settling land disputes. The iterative and reciprocal nature of religious clientelism has two implications. First, the relationship is not dependent on a direct quid pro quo (Kopecky et al 2012). Instead, there can be a lag in the exchange itself. The second is the longevity of the relationship. The lack of an immediate exchange reinforces the long-term bond, where reciprocation can occur at a later point in time. An example most of us have probably experienced is where one does a favour to a friend, but its reciprocation may not

take place until a later point in the future (Putnam 2000). This also is the main mechanism for the development of thick trust at the interpersonal level. Understanding this longevity can help explain the stability of clientelism in contexts where religion is embedded in the community. More specifically, it can help explain what the client demands from their hierarchical religious relationship and explain why we do not see more religious leaders in elected office because the other religious leaders are unable to offer the nonmaterial religious goods that clients want.

The relationship is reciprocal and iterative, effectively one that is embedded in the citizen's life. There is regular interaction between the actors. On a daily basis there is social interaction between clients of the same congregation forming part of one's social activities, and at least once-a-year interaction with the patron. These face-to-face interactions with the entire informal *pir-murid* institution of religious clientelism contrast with today's vote buying literature where interaction is primarily during election time (Chauchard 2018).

A further point, interconnected with the longevity of the relationship, is the loyalty and trust factor between both parties. The longer and more regular the interaction, the higher the probability of trust establishing between the parties. As Torsello elaborates "...clientelism is an inherently social, other than political phenomenon, which is informed by actors' ideas and practices of trust. Trust, be it constructed at interpersonal or individual-institutional level, is a cognitive as well as social mechanism of human interaction" (2012:76). Apart from the inherent trust established with the pledge of allegiance, the loyalty and trust aspects are reinforced by the face-to-face iterative interaction between patron and client. In sum, the client in religious clientelism is one that is more loyal and does not shop around for the best deal in terms of instrumental material gains. This contrasts with the modern school of clientelism. With a few notable exceptions (Auyero 2001, Brusco et al 2004), the relationship is treated as a one-shot exchange game, a *quid pro quo*, that takes place every four to five years during elections. The iterative function of the relationship provided by the long-term bond is absent and the lack of interaction takes away the basis through which trust is built, with the result that the trust and loyalty aspect is removed from the client's calculation of supporting the patron (Hopkin 2006). Ultimately, the relationship itself, is very fickle, not keeping the clientele anchored (Hopkin 2006). Thus, the client is more prone to "patron shopping." In short, clients may choose to go with the patron that has the best bargain on offer (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Hopkin 2006).

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I sketched out and elaborated on the concept of religious clientelism, detailing the important role of religion and its dual function of social identity and belief system. I theorise how clients negotiate between their identities relative to religion and rank their religious bond higher than other bonds they may have. Furthermore, I detail the type of goods demanded by the client-follower where nonmaterial religious goods form a central part of their preferences. Finally, I also theorise

the presence of trust between both actors in a clientelistic exchange. Due to the supernatural and transcendent character of religion and the bonds associated with it, if and when an individual's religious leader contests political office, clients' religious identity is ranked higher and their preferences associated with this identity travel to the political sphere. Thus, they demand nonmaterial religious goods even in the political sphere – they reciprocate their religious bond in the political sphere. Table 3.1 below summarises the basic tenets of religious clientelism in relation to the classic and modern schools. I summarise the core elements and components of religious clientelism. Relatedly, it is this supernatural and transcendent characteristic, along with the above detailed ranking and multi-layer operation of religion, that activates nonmaterial religious goods as part and parcel of the contingent exchange between patron and client in religious clientelism.

Table 3.1. Comparing clientelism models

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Classic - ethnographic</i>	<i>Modern – political science</i>	<i>Religious Clientelism (Varraich)</i>
Nature/type of exchange (1)	Diffuse/nonmaterial	Instrumental, material	Diffuse/nonmaterial prioritised
Trust/loyalty*	Very likely	Less likely	Very likely
Affective/instrumental balance of relationship	Higher ratio of affective to instrumental ties	Lower ratio of affective to instrumental ties	Long-term bond present*
Resource base	Local, personal	External links, office-based (scarce)	Personal (unlimited) and external
Duration of bond	More persistent	Cyclical	Persistent

*Differs on the strength of bond versus the number of bonds (prevalent in classical school of clientelism)

4

The case of Pakistan and applicability of religious clientelism

In this chapter I present the empirical settings of the case study and substantiate the applicability of the theory of religious clientelism presented in chapter 3. The theory is applicable to developing contexts where political parties are weakly institutionalised and politics are personalised, i.e., “where the weight of the political party is less than the centrality of individual politicians” (Rahat and Kenig 2018:1). Pakistan is one such context. Weak party contexts often result in a lack of party identification and instead elections are contested on the weight of individual politicians where this weight is centred on their informal networks and personal relationships (Rahat and Kenig 2018).⁶³ Put simply, in the context of weak political parties found in developing countries, elections are often contested more based on linkages between individual politicians and voters rather than policy platforms of political parties. In these contexts, individualised bonds matter more to citizens than do policy platforms of political parties (Chandra 2007, Aspinall and Hicken 2020, Aspinall and Berenschot 2019). Apart from Pakistan, examples of this include Indonesia and the Philippines, both countries that are the subject of extensive contributions to the clientelism literature (Aspinall and Hicken 2020).

I posit that in contexts where politician-voter linkages dominate, religion’s effect on political behaviour too is observed at the individual level – i.e., through individualised bonds. Simply, traditional religious voting does not gain traction in these contexts because people are linked to the individual politician and not to an overarching partisan identity. I illustrate this with election results in Pakistan, where religious voting, driven by political parties whose policy platforms are based on religion, have thus far failed to gain electoral momentum. In fact, in a highly religious country like Pakistan, religious parties have never won any majority in the National Assembly. However, there is a large presence of religious leaders across the political party spectrum, presently making up 16% of the Pakistani National Assembly. These are Sufi saints who are both active religious leaders and politicians simultaneously. This suggests that religion matters to individual political behaviour, but not at the policy level of political parties as understood by extant religious voting

63 Rahat and Kenig (2018) make a similar argument, in the opening of their book *From Party Politics to Personalised Politics*. They define personalised politics as “the process by which the weight of the group (in this book, the political party) declines in politics, while the centrality of individual politicians rises.”

scholarship. Instead, in the context of personalised politics religion matters at the individual level between citizens and politicians. As such, when religious leaders run for office they play dual roles, both as religious leaders and as politicians – where their power as religious leaders reinforces their political position. The followers of these religious leaders also play dual roles, in their capacity as both disciples and voters. These individualised bonds in the political sphere appear to be reinforced by the way religious following is structured and the role that religion plays for the individual follower. In the case of Sufi saints and their followers, they share a hierarchical religious bond with their religious leader, where religion plays a twofold function. First, it functions as a belief system, and second it functions as a social identity. This personalised religious bond between Sufi saint and disciple drives the political behaviour of the client-voter (in terms of preferences, partisanship and voting behaviour) if their religious leader contests office. For the Sufi saint, this religious position affects his political behaviour too.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section I provide a brief overview of Pakistan's electoral history to undergird the weak institutionalisation of political parties, and to illustrate how this has reinforced politics being contested based on individual politicians. This is followed by an analysis of the electoral performance of religious parties in Pakistan which highlights the failure of religious voting as per our existing models thus far. In the second section I empirically illustrate how religion appears to matter for individual political behaviour with the example of the growing presence of hereditary Sufi saints in parliament at both national and provincial levels. In the third section I differentiate between Orthodox Islam of the *ulema* parties and those provided by Sufi Islam and the linkages each form between follower and leader and how these divergent linkages are reinforced in the political sphere. Simply put, in the context of personalised politics, when a religious leader (who shares individualised, hierarchical bonds with their followers) runs for office, these personalised bonds are reinforced by the way politics are structured. The final section of the chapter hones in on the religio-clientelistic relationship of patron-saint and follower-voter in the context of Pakistan, briefly explicating roles of the individual actors.

4.1 Weak political parties and personalised politics

Politics in Pakistan are personalised. Elections are not contested based on policy platforms of political parties but rather on the basis of personalized bonds between individual politicians and voters. Although Pakistan meets the basic requirements of an electoral democracy – it holds regular parliamentary elections every five years, with multiple political parties contesting, and multiple parties represented within its legislature – this has not translated to the presence of institutionalised political parties.⁶⁴ Political parties remain weak, if not absent (Jalal 2005:221). The reason for this is two-fold. First, since its founding in 1947 there has remained a power struggle

⁶⁴ There are more than 300 registered political parties in Pakistan, but only 3 of these have ever held power – the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) and Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI).

between the bureaucracy and military to maintain control of the state, each camp afraid to lose its power and access to state funds and budgets. This power struggle resulted in a twenty-three-year lag before its first general elections were held in 1970. Second, and more importantly, there has been a lack of continuous elected civilian government. In its brief democratic history, Pakistan has suffered from intermittent stretches of military takeovers, where each military dictator has remained in power for nearly ten years.⁶⁵ During these periods the country's political parties and competitive national elections remained absent. Simply, for nearly 40 percent of its total 76-year history, Pakistan's citizens did not partake in the governance of their country, political parties remained absent from electoral politics and the holding of free and fair elections remained absent. Table 4.1 below provides a bird's eye view of the overall trends of Pakistan's electoral history, specifying regime type, types of election held, and the political party heading government.

Table 4.1. Pakistan's Electoral history by regime type

Year	Type of government	Party in power	Head of government	Elections held
1956 – 1969	Authoritarian/ military	N/A	General Ayub Khan	Non-partisan (1964)
1969 – 1971	Authoritarian/military	N/A	General Yahya Khan	N/A
1971 - 1977	Democratic	PPP	Zulfikar Ali Bhutto	National/provincial
1977 – 1988	Authoritarian/ military	PML	General Zia-ul-Haq	Non-partisan (1985)
1988 – 1990	Democratic	PPP	Benazir Bhutto	National/provincial
1990 – 1993	Democratic	PML (N)	Nawaz Sharif	National/provincial
1993 – 1997	Democratic	PPP	Benazir Bhutto	National/provincial
1997 – 1999	Democratic	PML (N)	Nawaz Sharif	National/provincial
1999 – 2008	Authoritarian/military	N/A	General Pervaiz Musharraf	National/provincial (2002, 2008) Local (2001, 2005)
2008 – 2013	Democratic	PPP	Syed Yousaf Reza Gilani	National/provincial
2013 – 2018	Democratic	PML(N)	Nawaz Sharif	Nation- al/provincial/local
2018 -	Democratic	PTI	Imran Khan	National/ provincial

⁶⁵ Ayub Khan served from (1958 – 1969), General Zia ul Haq (1978 – 1988), and General Pervaiz Musharraf (1999 - 2008). Technically there was a fourth dictator, General Yahya Khan. However, he is normally left out of the discourse of political analyses as he only served promising to “bring about the conditions to have a free and fair election.” He held elections in December 1971.

I will now illustrate the weak institutionalisation of Pakistan's political parties, and how this has reinforced the continuation of personalised politics. I do this in two steps. First, I begin with an analysis of the tactics employed by military regimes, followed by an analysis of the tactics used by Pakistan's civilian governments that reinforced personalised politics. During military rule, military dictators ensured weak institutionalisation of political parties through the retention of power at the executive level while maintaining the illusion of democracy by localizing politics, all the while retaining power at the top. This was carried out in several ways – holding non-partisan elections, forbidding the establishment of political activity (such as holding rallies, or forming political parties), forbidding political parties from contesting elections and implementing devolution programs. The first tactic was to hold non-partisan elections. Both Ayub Khan (1964) and General Zia-ul-Haq (1985) held non-partisan elections to gain legitimacy. In these elections politicians ran as independent candidates without any specific party programme. Instead, they gathered support through their personal networks. As the political scientist Rasul Baksh Rais tells us, in these party-less elections "...the personal influence of the candidates, the ties to clan, tribe, or biraderi and feudal social bases, in particular, largely determined the outcome of elections" (1985). This reinforced the importance of personal relationships and personal networks of politicians when contesting political office.

The second tactic military leaders implemented was forbidding the establishment of political activity. Upon assuming power in 1958, Ayub Khan banned all political parties "instituting a purge of politicians under the elective bodies disqualification order" (Jalal:1995: 56). In 1979 after hanging Z.A. Bhutto in April, General Zia banned all political parties as well as any organised political activity – such as rallying, gathering in public or propagating political party agendas (Jalal 1995:103). In his turn, when General Musharraf took over in 1999, he exiled several leading politicians and imposed education qualifications as a requirement for holding elected office, effectively barring many politicians from the political arena (Cohen, 2004, Mehdi et al 2010).

A third tactic applied by military regimes to ensure weak institutionalisation of political parties was to contest elections themselves. To legitimise their own hold of power, each military dictator created a version of the political party the Muslim League. In 1965 Ayub Khan contested the presidential elections as chairman of the Conventional Muslim League against Fatimah Jinnah. As the only government sponsored party, he won the elections. Of the three military leaders, Zia never openly contested elections, instead he nurtured and built the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and in 1985 held non-partisan elections to the National Assembly. Zia appointed Muhammad Junejo as the PML leader and head of government. In 2002, Musharraf held elections in which he contested himself. He formed the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q), and as chairman of the party contested elections. PML-Q garnered 118 of 272 National Assembly seats, effectively winning the elections of 2002. Finally, all military regimes in Pakistan instilled devolution programmes under the garb of bringing government closer to the people. It created more layers of government, removing focus from national legislative elections and as such also reinforcing the lack of importance given to national level

political parties. These combined tactics ensured that political parties remained weakly institutionalised. Thus, programmatic linkages normally afforded through a country's political party platforms remain weak in Pakistan. Instead, linkages provided by individual politicians and voters matters more. Clientelism in Pakistan takes place through individual politicians that are part of weakly institutionalised political parties, where political parties resemble a collection of strong men. Effectively the patron is the individual politician and not the political party. This contrasts with the Latin American context, where clientelism is heavily rooted within the structures of the formal political parties themselves, as evidenced by the rich scholarship dedicated to the study of the Peronist party of Argentina, and its various configurations of linkages to voters (see Stokes 2005, Auyero 2000, Nichter 2010, Szwarcberg 2013, Brusco et al 2004). Pakistan more closely resembles the cases of Indonesia and the Philippines, where much of the clientelistic exchange that occurs during elections, occurs outside of nationally organised political parties. Instead clientelism takes place through the linkages forged through individual, long-term relationships (Aspinall and Berenschot 2019, Berenschot and Aspinall 2020, Aspinall and Hicken 2020).

Although military regimes instilled measures to circumvent the development of political parties and depoliticised Pakistani society, elected civilian governments have continued, and at times reinforced, this trend. This is evidenced by two factors – short time horizons for parties in power, and excessive focus on the party leaders. In Pakistan civilian elected governments have suffered from short time horizons, where they failed to complete the full term for which they had been elected. This was coupled with the underlying power struggle between state and government. Thus, party development and institutionalisation (such as paid memberships and the presence of political party offices outside of urban centres) has not been a priority for elected governments. Instead, an overriding concern for elected governments has been the retention of power and amassing of wealth. This short-term time horizon is well demonstrated by the fact that none of the two main political parties', the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) or the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) - completed their terms in the 1990s. Instead, each one has in turn been dismissed on corruption charges or being deposed by a military leader (as was Nawaz Sharif's government in 1999) (Mohmand 2019). In fact, the first elected government to ever complete its term and transition to another elected government without military takeover took place as recently as 2013.⁶⁶

The second factor that demonstrates how elected civilian government reinforced the trend of personalised politics is that every political party that has formed a government, have all centred around the personality the party leader, where the party's existence is intricately tied with that leader's personality. Although this evidences the personalisation of politics, this also hinders party institutionalisation – highlight-

⁶⁶ Following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in December 2007, the PPP won an overwhelming majority in the general elections of 2008, and the government of Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani became the first government to complete its term, and power was transferred from one civilian government to the other (2013 Nawaz Sharif's PML(N) won the elections and formed the next government).

ed by the continued trend of ensuring the party leadership is retained by the leader's family, even after the leader has been removed. This includes the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) around the Bhutto family, the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) centred on Nawaz Sharif, and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) around its leader Imran Khan. In fact, up until 2018 Pakistan was a two-party system, where the competition was limited to the PPP and PML-N. Let us zoom in on each of these parties. Of all three political parties the PPP comes closest to resembling an institutionalised political party. It was the first political party to form an elected government in Pakistan and the country's first mass-based political party to run on a policy programme. The PPP's policy programme centred on Islamic socialism, epitomised by its slogan *roti, kapra, makan* (bread, clothing, housing) (Baxter 1970). This is not to say that the personal charisma of Z.A. Bhutto did not matter – but unlike the other two parties, in its infancy, it had the makings of a political party that could be institutionalised. However, following the untimely hanging of Bhutto, to maintain and benefit from the association with Z.A. Bhutto's charisma, the party quickly became centred around the Bhutto family itself, with different family members heading the party. Benazir Bhutto was at its helm until her assassination in 2007 (after forming 3 separate governments), followed by her husband Asif Ali Zardari. Today the party is headed by Benazir Bhutto's son Bilawal Bhutto. The importance of the Bhutto family brand is highlighted by Bilawal's change of surname from Zardari to Bhutto – a highly unusual exercise in a patrimonial society where progeny carries the father's name.

Similarly, the PML(N) is centred around Nawaz Sharif and his family. Unlike the PPP, the PML(N) was the product of military efforts to stifle party institutionalisation, where general Zia backed the formation of the PML(N) and spearheaded Nawaz Sharif's initiation into the state-backed party in the 1980s. He held the position until 2019 when he was disqualified from office on corruption charges related to the Panamagate scandal. After his dismissal by the Supreme Court, his daughter Mariam Nawaz and brother Shahbaz Sharif took over the party leadership (Chaudhry and Hussain 2019).⁶⁷

Finally, the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) is headed by former cricket star, Imran Khan, who became Prime Minister after the PTI won the 2018 elections. He served between 2018 – 2022 when he was dismissed from office because of a no-confidence vote. Since the party's inception in 1996, it has been led by Imran Khan. For one individual to lead a political party for almost thirty years is highly unusual by any standards. More so, it is reflective of the absence of internal party processes through which leadership can regularly change hands. These above examples underscore how Pakistani politics continue to remain centred on individual personalities and continue to be personalised – where traditional leaders serve as linkages between state/political party and its citizens, effectively a personalisation of politics where power is not vested in one institution or political unit but in the individual politician himself (Talbot 1998:30).

The third and final piece of evidence that demonstrates the lack of party institutionalisation and personalisation of politics by elected governments is the continued

⁶⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1505712>

use of intermediaries, such as local strongmen and biraderi (clan) leaders, as the point of mediation between politicians and citizens. Political parties seek out the endorsement of various local leaders to secure votes. One example is from my own fieldwork. I was staying with a local landlord and village elder – Mr. Malik (not his real name). In the run up to the general elections of 2018, representatives from PPP, PML(N) and PTI, separately approached Mr. Malik in pursuit of his endorsement in the hopes of securing the votes of the village as well as his kinsman. As the village elder and local landlord, Mr. Malik would host campaign events at his home, in both the front yard and his official drawing room, to hear out the politicians and see what they are willing to bring to the table for the villagers. This example illustrates two points – first, it shows the continued use of intermediaries by the political parties even taking place today. Second, that politics are primarily contested based on individual linkages and suggests individual political behaviour to be steered by considerations related to social bonds more than the political programme of any one party.

In the next section I provide a bird’s eye view of religious voting in Pakistan and how, in accordance with the extant scholarship, has failed to gain ground. I first introduce what religious voting is and the shape it takes in the Muslim world. I then illustrate Pakistan’s religious parties’ limited success at the ballot box. This is followed by a distinction between Ulema and Sufi Islam showing the different linkages each provides between religious leader and follower, and the implications of these linkages in terms of political behaviour.

4.2 Religious voting in Pakistan as per our existing models

In the political behaviour scholarship religious voting is driven by political parties that propagate religion as part of a political platform, i.e., these parties believe that religion has something important to say about how societies and their politics are formed. Overall, these political parties put forward policy platforms according to the religion that it draws on and what that religion considers would constitute a good society, including but not limited to conservative social values. In the European context, these include political parties that propagate Christian Democracy. The main aim of these parties is not to create a Christian state, instead “the Christian foundation is the common ground upon which all meet; the purpose of the party is indeed the application of Christian morality to political and social life (Einaudi 1947:16). One example is Italy’s Democrazia Cristiana (DC) party. From its inception in 1944, not only was it the largest political party in parliament, but it also governed in successive coalitions up until its demise in 1994. As Ivella Vittorio succinctly points out citizens voting for the DC “were voting for a way of life, not for a political party” (1948:701). Another example is Germany’s Christian Democratic Union, which has given Germany its longest serving chancellors since 1945, including Helmut Kohl and Angela Merkel – the latter served from 2005 to 2021.

In the context of the Muslim world, political parties that drive religious voting do so based on the politicisation of Islam – i.e., Islamism. If the Christian Democrats were a critique of the prevailing system in the 1940s, today’s Islamists “present a broad critique of the current political order, grounded in their interpretations of Is-

lam, and expressed in an Islamic political vocabulary close to the traditions of the mass of the populations” (Fuller, 2003:27).⁶⁸ Despite these political parties drawing on Islam to guide their world view of what a state and, consequently, a society should look like, the expression of these interpretations of political Islam varies across the spectrum, with some states donning a more authoritarian garb than others, and others more democratic – much like the political parties of Christian Democracy. As the former vice-chairman of the National Intelligence Council Graham Fuller points out “the real stuff, evidenced by real world examples, is in the details” (Fuller, 2003:49). The most prominent example of Islamism in electoral politics is the government of Iran, which has fashioned itself as a theocracy. Other examples of Islamist political parties include the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) elected into power in 2002 (Tepe 2005, Yilmaz et al 2020); Indonesia’s Prosperous Justice Party (PKS), Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood – which, after the revolution in 2011, won a plurality of seats in the lower house of parliament and its candidate, Mohammed Morsi, elected as president (Laub 2019); and finally Hamas in Palestine – which, following its landslide victory in 2006, took on its parliamentary responsibility and formed a government (Hovdenak 2009).

In Pakistan religious voting is driven by its Islamist ulema parties.⁶⁹ They have conservative religious policy platforms with the end-goal of government reflecting more Islamic models of democracy. There are three main Islamist parties, the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat ul Ulema-e Islam (JUI-F) and Jamiat Ulemai Pakistan (JUP). All three ulema parties forward a Orthodox (Sunni) interpretation of Islam and are headed by Sunni clerics. Of these three, JI is the oldest and most significant religious party, not only in Pakistan but in South Asia (Cohen 2004). Despite their Orthodox roots they differentiate between themselves based on international links, support base, their affiliated religious schools, and their opposition to Sufi Islam. At the transnational level JI is the sister organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood, and unlike the JUI and JUP, it is the only revivalist movement that believes in *ijtihad* – the concept of reinterpreting Islamic sources to adapt to contemporary times and be reformed so that it may survive. JI’s significance stems, in part, from its tight-knit organization, its discipline, its democratic centralism within the party (with a strong leader at every level), active member participation and an overall obedience to the organisation’s decisions. They spread quickly due to their social services offered to both members and non-members alike, with a base that is primarily urban and educated upper middle class. The second party is the JUI-F, an Islamic clerical party led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman. It is the main political outlet of the Deobandi school of thought, with its main power base in the thinly populated provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. Their main political message pertains to removing the colonial remnants of governance of the British Raj, replacing these with Islamic governance forms, and a strong opposition to Sufi Islam and the concept of intercession. The third significant religious political party is the JUP, the main political

⁶⁸ Pakistan was and remains an exception in the Muslim world.

⁶⁹ Ulema is the Urdu term for Muslim scholars recognised for their extensive knowledge of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. However, as Alavi (1988) points out, this term is often incorrectly used by referral to any member of a religious political party, many times this can be interchangeably used, colloquially, with *mullah*.

outlet of the Barelvi school of thought, which propagates the need for a guiding hand for individuals in politics, especially as they do not see politics and religion as separate issues (Burki 2006). Table 4.2 below summarises the three main religious parties and details when they were established, their political support base, international links and whether they are opposed Sufi Islam.

Table 2.2. Summary of three main religious parties

Ulema Parties	Founded in	Religious school	Political support base	International links	Opposed to Sufi Islam
Jamaat-e-Islami (JI)	1941 by Maulana Maududi	N/A	Urban	Muslim Brotherhood	
Jamiat ul Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F)	1919 (pre/partition)	Deobandi	KPK and Balochistan		Opposed to Sufi and Shia practices
Jamiat Ulemai Pakistan (JUP)	1949 by Maulana Noorani	Barelvi			Uphold Sufi traditions

4.3 Failure of religious voting via ulema parties

Despite the presence of these Islamist parties, religious voting (largely understood as citizens voting for conservative policy platforms) has not gained traction in Pakistan (Raymond 2011, Gomez 2021, Kurzman and Naqvi 2010). This is evidenced by limited electoral success of *ulema* parties (Kurzman and Naqvi 201, Lieven, 2011). Their performance at the ballot box has consistently remained weak, where no Islamist party has captured more than 5% of the national vote in an election. The only time religious parties have successfully managed to capture more than 10% of the national vote is by forming political alliances. For example, during the elections of 1988 and 1993, Islamist parties banded together to form the Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) and gained their highest vote share and number of seats in the National Assembly. This alliance also included the secular Pakistan Muslim League – which despite its name, is not an Islamist party. These elections resulted in Nawaz Sharif, the head of the PML(N) as Prime Minister of the country. Another example is the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) that was formed in 2002 by the six main religious parties.⁷⁰ They won 17.5% of the vote, yielding 60 out of 342 seats in the National Assembly.⁷¹ This gave considerable power to the MMA as a member of the opposition. This success was not the norm. Some scholars argue the ulema parties ‘success in 2002 was the result of mass discontent, good organization, and tacit support of the government and disarray of mainstream political parties (Cohen 2004:188). However, this argument has not stood the test of time because no other alliance formed by the ulema parties has been able to garner such results since. A

⁷⁰ The MMA consisted of the following parties – Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Sami-ul-Haq), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (Noorani), Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith, Tehreek-e-Islami.

⁷¹ This translates to 3,35,643 votes out of a total 30,012,407 cast.

CHAPTER 4

more plausible argument explaining the success of the ulema parties in 2002, is that the election took place under the military rule of the Musharraf administration, where control of election results was heavily exercised – i.e., it was not a free and fair election. Furthermore, historically the military has supported the ulema parties as part of their strategy to legitimize their own power (Jalal, 1995, CG 2011).⁷² Another piece of evidence that supports MMA's success due to Musharraf's military government are the weak results of the alliance in 2018, where the ulema parties collectively managed to garner a mere 3.8% of seats in the National Assembly. Table 4.3 provides a bird's eye view of the overall performance of the Islamist parties across time, detailing ulema parties' vote share, National Assembly seats and alliances. It highlights the lack of religious voting as part of the political behaviour of the Pakistani population, at least in accordance to our extant religious voting models.

⁷² Based on the lack of success in the general elections, many observers of Pakistani politics, both Western and Pakistani, draw the conclusion that Islamic political parties do not enjoy popular support. However, as Wilder cautions, such a conclusion may not only be hasty, but certainly is not an indication of the lack of popular support (Wilder 1997:170).

Table 4.3. Religious parties' share of National Assembly seats and vote share across eleven election waves

Political party	1970 (313)	1977 (200/216)	1988 (207)	1990	1993	1997	2002	2008 ⁷⁴	2013	2018
Jl /Pakistan Islamic Front	4 (out of 313) 1.2% of vote share (1,989,46 1)				3.2% of vote (650,278 votes)	Boycotted elections		Boycotted elections	3/342 0.9% of vote share	
JUL-F									12/342 3.5% of vote share	
JUP										
Alliances										
Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI) (included PML(N))			54 (207 seats) 26% of vote share (5,908,7 42)	105 (206) 50% of vote share (7,908,5 13)						
MMA							60/342 17.5% of vote	6/342 2.19% vote (758,877) (ONLY JUL-F and JUP)		13/342 3.8% of vote share
APDM										
Islami Jamhoori Mahaz (IJM)					4/202 2% of vote share					
Pakistan National Alliance (PNA)		36/200 18% of vote (6,154,921)								

IJI – Alliance of conservative right-wing parties, that included nine parties: Pakistan Muslim League, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), National People's Party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Nizam-e-Mustafa Group, Markazi Jamiat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith (Lakhvi Group), Jamiat-e-Mashaikh Pakistan, Azad group, Hizbullah.

IJM - (alliance between JUI and JUP)

Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) – Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Sami-ul-Haq), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (Noorani), Jamiat Ahl-e-Hadith, Tehreek-e-Islami.

APDM – Pakistan National Alliance – Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), National Democratic Party (NDP), Balochistan National Party (BNP), Muslim League (Qayyum) (ML-Q), Muslim League (Functional) (ML-F), Democratic Party (PDP), Tehreek e Istaqial (TI).

This begs the question, why have Islamist parties failed to gain ground in Pakistan? The reasons forwarded for the failure of religious parties at the ballot box include the type of electoral system in place (i.e., first-past-the-post), lack of appeal due to overt Islamisation stance, and the lack of political party institutionalisation. First, the type of electoral system, where Pakistan uses the first-past-the-post electoral system. Wilder argues that “few voters are willing to waste their votes on a losing candidate” (1997:170). According to this logic voters are not necessarily dissuaded by the religious policy platform itself, but rather are wanting to bet on a

winning horse, especially in a system that is so heavily based on patronage, where everybody is trying to get a piece of the pie. As an overall argument this could also be applied to any third party within a first-past-the-post system, where vote choice is not dictated by policy platforms, but the end goal of winning matters more. This is especially in scenarios where voters do not contend the third party to be a viable option to gain power. Wilder forwards the general elections of 1993 as an example where a well-respected lawyer from Faisalabad, in fact a card-carrying member of the JI, contested to become a Member of National Assembly (MNA). He shared the following experience

People really apologized and said, ‘You are the best candidate we have ever had in this city since Partition. But we are sorry to say that you will not succeed so we will be wasting our vote...’ Everyone came to me and said ‘...everything you say is one hundred per cent right. We sincerely believe that you are a man that will not tell a lie, and that if you come to power you will not distinguish between rich and poor, between Christian and Muslim or between parties. You will be true to your call. The only thing is that you will not win. (Wilder 1990:171)

The second reason forwarded for the failure of Islamist parties at the polls is their overt Islamisation stance. The overall stance of Islamist parties to purify Pakistani society, make it more moral, and the idea to impose Sharia law as the main form of governance does not appeal to the public at large and therefore does not translate to electoral success. As Cohen points out, if Islamic parties want to gain in elections, they need to “tone down [their] religious-nationalist expressions and ally with regional and even mainstream political parties, not just other Islamist groups” (2004:179). Although the average Pakistani citizen’s political behaviour may not be affected by religious policy platforms, they appear to remain committed to Muslim religious values. This point is argued by the American Iranian scholar Vali Nasr, who points to the “rise of the Muslim Democrats” which integrate “Muslim religious values—drawn from Islam’s teachings on ethics, morality, family, rights, social relations, and commerce into political platforms designed to win regular democratic elections” (2005:14). Nasr points out that Muslim values still play a role for citizens in Muslim societies such as Pakistan. He further argues that what is more likely to gain traction in such contexts are “political forces that integrate Muslim values and moderate Islamic politics into broader, right-of-centre platforms that go beyond exclusively religious platforms” (Nasr 2015:14). One example of this is Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s PPP in the 1970s. Bhutto propagated the concept of Islamic socialism, popularised by the slogan *roti, kapra, makan* (food, shelter, and housing), which resonated with voters of all strata.⁷³ It was a pairing of Islam’s core values of equality expressed through every citizen’s right to food, shelter and housing, without any religious policy positions inserted into the party programme. Another example is the centre of right PML(N) in the 1990s. Although Nawaz Sharif fashioned the PML(N) as the standard bearer of Islamic religious values, it maintained its policy focus on liberalisation and privatisation of the economy – i.e., leaving out conservative policy positions of its core programme. The most recent example to best support this thesis is the way PTI opens its political rallies. At the beginning of every election rally the

⁷³ On the political left-right spectrum the PPP was considered a centre of left party.

PTI leader Imran Khan reads out loud an excerpt of the Quran, followed by an explication of how his party will uphold those values, or already is on the way to doing so, i.e., using religion as a heuristic to tap into the voter's mind set. Simply put, citizens want politicians to uphold Islamic values without the Islamisation of the country.

The third reason for the lack of political success of the Islamist parties in Pakistan found in the literature is the lack of party institutionalisation. Although this is a valid critique of the general political landscape in Pakistan, it is less applicable to the Islamist parties, because they are the exception in Pakistani politics in terms of party institutionalisation. Typically, these are well organised, with competent leadership and a solid policy platform, where internal party leadership is elected from within the ranks.

A more persuasive reason for the lack of success of the *ulema* parties is that there is a mismatch between what currently is understood as religious voting and ground realities in Pakistan. In contexts where politics are personalised and elections are contested based on personal networks, religion's influence on political behaviour too takes place at this level – through individual politician-voter linkages. Simply, religious voting takes place at the individual level (politician-voter), and not through political parties' conservative platforms (party-voter linkage). In other words, in contexts where individualised bonds matter more to citizens than party programmes, religion's influence on individual political behaviour also is exerted at the individual level.

Ulema street power

Although *ulema* parties continue to perform poorly at the ballot box, they exercise a strong influence on policies and legislation through their street power. This is rooted in several commonalities across all Islamist parties: a common overarching goal, an ability to mobilise a large number of people, and provision of social services. The first reason for *ulema* parties' street power is their overarching political goal – to make Pakistan an Islamic democracy.⁷⁴ They want to achieve this through means such as adjusting the country's legal codes to Islam and institute Sharia law, such as the requirement of 'piety' in the code of conduct for members of parliament. The importance of this code recently came to the fore during the Panamagate scandal that resulted in the conviction of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Sharif was deemed to not have fulfilled the requirement of *saadiq* (truthful) and *Amin* (honest) in his actions as the head of government, resulting in his removal from power (Hussain, 2017). Another example is the retention of the blasphemy laws as part of the constitution. The *ulema* parties have rallied to keep the blasphemy laws as part of the constitution. According to these laws anyone who insults the Prophet Mohammad or publicly criticises sources of Islamic authority (such as the Quran or its teachings), can be punished for blasphemy. Despite the apparent limited applicability of these laws, they are often misused by citizens at large as a tool for intimidation against minorities (including Christians, Hindus, and the Muslim sect of Ah-

⁷⁴ For a discussion and explication of the differences between an Islamic democracy vs. a Muslim democracy see Vali Nasr's "The Rise of Muslim Democracy" 2005.

madis), which many times result in public lynching. One of the many examples of such vigilante justice is the high-profile murder of the former governor of Punjab, Salman Taseer. After Taseer publicly defended a Christian woman accused of blasphemy and proposed a presidential pardon for Asia Bibi, he was gunned down in a local market in Islamabad by his own bodyguard. The case received wide international media coverage that not only highlighted the political consequences of the blasphemy laws, but also the overt socio-political power that the clerics heading these political parties hold (Walsh, 2011).

The second source of ulema parties' street power is the ability to mobilise a large number of people through their religious schools. All three ulema parties have associated religious schools – i.e., the madrassah. Overall, these religious schools have grown exponentially over the years: in 1947 there were roughly 250 religious schools in all of Pakistan, in 1980s it was estimated to be around 3000, and today the number stands at anywhere between 10,000 to 45,000 (Cohen 2004:182). On a socio-economic level these madrassahs fulfil a lacuna left by the government in the provision of education. Although public schools are technically free, they entail fringe expenses such as uniforms, books, school supplies and more, which make up a substantial amount for poorer households. As such, many citizens choose to send their children to these religious schools as a cost-effective alternative to public schools, where these fringe expenses are not present, and many times students are also provided daily meals free of cost. The madrassahs vary in size, from a few hundred students to some commanding students in the thousands, effectively provide an important source of power of numbers to these religious political parties. This includes students that partake in the ulema parties' student wings as well as help make up the body count at demonstrations. One example is the anti-government Azadi march of 2019 led by the JUI-F leader Fazlur Rehman. Clerics took to the streets demanding the removal of the newly elected "corrupt PTI government" resulting in road closures, highway closures and an effective handicapping of the federal government for ten days (Jamal 2019).⁷⁵

The final source of ulema parties' street power stems from their provision of social services. Like Islamist parties across the Muslim world, ulema parties have charitable wings that mobilize in times of natural disasters to help provide relief to victims and their families (Fuller 2003). These social services include crisis management during natural disasters but importantly extend to more mundane and everyday social services such as "shelters, educational assistance, free/low-cost medical clinics, facilitation of mass marriage ceremonies to avoid prohibitively costly dowry demands, and legal assistance" to name a few (Fuller 2003:28). This is similar to Islamist parties in Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia (Brooke 2019). Although ulema parties have failed to gain much electoral success because of their indirect influence on the political sphere through their street power, they remain a force to contend with.

While religious voting as understood by the extant political behaviour scholarship has not gained traction in Pakistan, to say that religion does not play a role in the political behaviour of Pakistanis would be an understatement. There is a curious

⁷⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/print/1514784>

case that suggests that indeed religion does play a role in the political behaviour of Pakistani citizens. This is best evidenced by the steady increase across time of religious leaders such as *pir*-politicians (Sufi saints) in the National and Provincial assemblies, as seen in the below table 4.4.⁷⁶ In 1970 there were only 12 *pir*-politicians in the National Assembly, whereas the elections of 2018 brought in 32 *pir*-politicians at the parliamentary level. Similar increases are present at the provincial level. Why has one religious actor (Islamist political parties) failed to gain ground in conservative Pakistan whereas another (*pir*-politician) has steadily gained ground in both federal and provincial assemblies? (See chapter 6 for a detailed discussion).

Table 4.4. Number of *pir*-politicians in National and Provincial Assemblies across time

Election year	National Assembly (total elected seats 272)	Provincial Assembly Punjab (total elected seats 297)	Provincial Assembly Sindh (total elected seats 130)
1970	12	21	12
1977	16	30	10
1985	22	29	18
1988	27	28	24
1990	28	22	27
1993	23	22	23
1997	21	21	11
2002	30	25	28
2008	27	20	22
2013	35	21	26
2018	32	20	36

4.4 Religious voting in Pakistan – voting for Sufi saints

In this section I suggest that religious voting indeed does take place in Pakistan but not in the sense that our models of programmatic politics suggest. Instead, religious voting in the context of personalised politics takes place through personal networks such as those of the Sufi *pir*-politicians. If politics, in contexts like Pakistan, are fought based on individual personalities and not on partisan basis, then we must pay attention to the steady rise of the Sufi saint in politics. Specifically, the hereditary *pir*-politicians. Their steady rise across the political spectrum suggests that religious voting may be taking place but at the individual level, where voters are voting for specific religious leaders whose personal networks they belong to.

This begs the question, who are these religious leaders? *Pir*-politicians are hereditary Sufi saints, known as *pirs* in Urdu, that have large followings of *murids* who

⁷⁶ Examples of these include former Prime minister Yousaf Reza Gilani, and former Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, both of whom are *pirs*⁷⁶ (the Urdu word denoting saint) in their own right, and hold considerable power over their *murids*, over whom they exercise spiritual power. These individuals, together with their status as landed gentry and religious power form part of the local elite across the country but also serve as a constant feature of the political landscape of Pakistan.

are attached to *pir*-politicians through a pledge of allegiance. Effectively the *pir*-politician and their *murid* followers exercise two roles simultaneously – as religious-political leader and follower-voter. Pirs have been an integral part of the political landscape since partition in 1947 and continue to be an active part of the country's politics today. Like the general political cadre of Pakistan, pirs tend to belong to a higher socio-economic stratum both in terms of access (such as personal and professional networks) and assets. This includes landownership (Zaidi 2004, Malik and Malik 2015, Martin 2014:426, Varraich 2021).

They partake in politics both indirectly and directly. Indirect participation occurs through their role as intermediaries, where the *pir* endorses different political candidates, thus mobilising their followers to cast their votes for said candidate (Ansari 1992). In contrast direct participation occurs through pirs directly contesting political office, effectively acting as politicians, what is often termed *pir*-politicians. It is the latter that this dissertation is concerned with. Examples of *pir*-politicians are the former Foreign Minister of Pakistan Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi, federal ministers Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiar, and Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan. Former Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi is considered a living saint because of his position as the spiritual head of the shrine of Baha'uddin Zakariya in Multan. According to the electoral register he is also a landlord in his own right (ECP 2018). Another example of a *pir*-politician is former head of government Prime Minister Yousaf Reza Gilani. He is the head of the shrine Syed Musa Pak, and has large landholdings, and serves as an active politician within the Pakistan People's Party. Simply, both Qureshi and Gilani are spiritual leaders, landlords and politicians. Their large personal assets were gained through their religious and social positions and consolidated through political power. What differentiates the *pir*-politician from other politicians is that *pir*-politicians, in their capacity as living saints, also exercise religious power.

So, what is the *pir-murid* relationship? The form in which today's *pir-murid* relationship exists dates to the 15th century. It is a dyadic, hierarchical, exchange relationship centred around the exchange of nonmaterial religious goods such as spiritual guidance and supplication. The *pir*-politician is in a higher position (spiritually and many times materially too) than the *murid*-client. *Murids* have a conviction that their redemption is dependent on the intercession of a Sufi saint. This, the *murid*-client pledges allegiance to the *pir*-politician in exchange for nonmaterial religious goods of blessings, prayers, and the ultimate reward of salvation in life after death. This binds them in a lifelong relationship. The *pir*-politician's spiritual enlightenment (*baraka*) is believed to be inherited from his forefathers and thus a matter of lineage, and not available to politicians at large. Thus, this religious position they hold is exclusive. Furthermore, hereditary Sufi saints are affiliated with designated Sufi shrines – sites where the original Sufi saint is buried, from whom they claim lineage. These holy shrines serve as sites of spiritual pilgrimage for the *murid* followers, where the *pir* and his *murids* congregate at least twice a year. The typical congregations are for regular exchanges of blessings and the annual *urs* celebrations that commemorate the death of the original saint – celebrating the saint's union with God. Today's *pir-murid* relationship is essentially clientelistic in nature: it is an

exchange relationship between two unequal actors, where the patron is higher in power than the client, the patron's source of power stems from his inherited spirituality, and the client seeks nonmaterial psychological religious goods.

4.5 Differentiating *Ulema* (Orthodox) and Sufi Islam

The main difference between ulema and Sufi Islam is the way they link the follower to the leader. In this section I differentiate between *ulema* and Sufi Islam in Pakistan to illustrate the different types of linkages each type creates between religious leader and follower. These different linkages have implications for the actors' political behaviour. I contrast the two in terms of conceptual foundation, institutions, leadership, levels of association, presence of hierarchy, intercession, political linkage created and the type of political actor. This is followed by a brief discussion of the implications for the actors' political behaviour (more details are found in chapter 5 and 6). I do this to provide a nuanced understanding of the effects these different bonds have on the political behaviour of each respective actor.

Conceptually Orthodox Islam concerns the exoteric (*zahir*) aspects of religion, i.e., the outward face of Islam, including but not limited to its five pillars – i.e., Shahada (the profession of the unity of God and Muhammad being his messenger), prayer (praying 5 times a day), fasting, paying of zakat and Hajj, as well as the rules and regulations of the religion (i.e., the Sharia) which dictate the life of each individual Muslim. Sufism on the other hand, is the mysticism of the religion of Islam, much like Kabbalah of Judaism, or Benedictism of Christianity (Stoddart 1976:19). It centres on the esoteric (*batin*) aspects of Islam, where spiritual enlightenment is pursued through a deeper understanding of Islam (Baldock 2005). Many scholars refer to this as Islamic mysticism and 'traditional' form of Islam (for a full discussion see Geertz 1971, Metcalf et al 1984, Lings 1975, Ewing 1984).⁷⁷ Pursuit of spiritual enlightenment in this tradition is through the proscribed path of submitting oneself to a Sufi sheikh, where submission forms a cornerstone of the Sufi path. This is not to say that the exoteric aspects of the religion are negated by Sufi Islam, instead the focus is strictly on understanding the rationale behind much of the exoteric practices, and to achieve a closeness to God.

In practice these two forms of Islam take different shapes, especially in terms of institutions, leaders, level of association, hierarchy, and the concept of intercession. The first point of differentiation is the institution through which each operates. Orthodox Islam's main institution is the mosque, where Muslims congregate for prayers, ranging from daily basis to the weekly Friday prayers, as well as religious holidays. Mosques are found across the expanse of Pakistan, from large ornate architectural pieces in city centres, to simple one-room structures in neighbourhoods, where most neighbourhoods have a mosque. In contrast, the main institution of Sufi Islam is physically manifested by Sufi shrines, which house the tombs of the original Sufi saint who is known for their piety and typically associated with a specific miracle

⁷⁷ The word *batin* translates to "hidden" (esoteric), where batin Islam refers to the hidden truth of the religion, where practice is concerned with the inner meanings of religion, whereas *zahir* refers to the "exoteric" aspects of Islam, focused on the outer manifestations of the religion, such as its rituals, rules and regulations.

they performed. Shrines typically also have a mosque within its borders as well as areas of meditation. These shrines command large followers of *murids*, who visit these shrines on a regular basis as part of their journey to get closer to God and are also the main point of contact between the followers and the Sufi saint heading the shrine – *gaddi nishin* (seat holder).

Second, the two forms of Islam have different types of leadership. In Orthodox Islam the main religious leader is the cleric (*ulema/maulvi*), is usually associated with the mosque. He has gained this position through a variety of means (as rudimentary as being a *hifz* – someone who's committed the Quran to memory – to someone that is educated and trained in the jurisprudence of Islam). Anyone can become a cleric. *Ulema* are the main point of contact for a congregant in matters of performing religious rites, such as leading prayers, performing marriage ceremonies, funeral prayers, while also acting as an important node in the community. An *ulema* can best be described as a religious bureaucrat. In contrast, in Sufi Islam the religious leader is the Sufi saint. These are inherited positions, where the living Sufi saints, *gaddi nishins* (seat holders) claim lineage from the deceased saint buried at holy shrines. Unlike an *ulema*, Sufi saints are bound to their followers through a pledge of allegiance and thus responsible to guide followers' spiritual journey, spiritual wellbeing, and provide nonmaterial religious goods such as prayers, blessings, and all manner of spiritual guidance to their adherents, including promises of salvation.

Third, is the level of association between leader and follower. Orthodox Islam focuses on the collective, where the individual is linked to the *ummah* – the Muslim community at large. An individual is not exclusively tied to an *ulema* but can visit various mosques and gain guidance from different *ulema*. It is common for people to change mosques when they move from one home to another, and thus also gain a new cleric at the local mosque. In contrast Sufi Islam focuses on the individual believer, where the relationship is, primarily, at an individual level between the Sufi saint (*pirs*) and their *murid* follower. *Pir*-politicians are tied to their followers through a pledge of allegiance. *Murids* accept the Sufi saint as their spiritual guide – where both actors are tied by expectations from the other, and duties. This is an exclusive, life-long relationship, where the allegiance is transferred from one saint to the next in line whenever the *pir*-politician dies. This point of differentiation may be the most important for our purposes, as these linkages are replicated in the political sphere (discussed in detail below).

Fourth, the aspect of hierarchy. In Orthodox Islam the aspect of hierarchy between leaders and believers is flat. Theoretically, this flat hierarchy is evidenced by the lack of a priesthood in Islam, where all Muslims are equal in the eyes of God and therefore have equal access to Him through prescribed religious rites and rituals (Gellner 2001). Individuals may turn to their mosque's imam for advice, but this advice is not binding nor is it assumed that the mosques leader knows better. Individuals can contradict their local *ulema* by reference to religious authority found in the Quran and hadith. In contrast, in Sufi Islam there is an inherent hierarchy between leader and follower. Sufi saints are believed to have closer ties to God, because of inherited religious charisma, through which they are enlightened and have

access to God that their followers do not possess. Thus, Sufi saints are understood to be higher in spiritual status by their followers, and this is reinforced through the pledge of allegiance taken by *murids* to the Sufi saint.

Finally, the concept of intercession. Intercession is one of the most fundamental and contentious points of differentiation between Orthodox *ulema* Islam and Sufi Islam. In Orthodox Islam, all Muslims are equal and have equal access to God, meaning that all Muslims have an equal chance of communicating with God. In other words, there is no need for an intermediary – an individual believer can directly communicate to God. To use an analogy, a Muslim can pick up the phone and place a call to God directly. This is in juxtaposition to Sufi Islam, where intercession is a central part of the belief system. In Sufism, there is a general acceptance that some people are more pious and therefore closer to God, and as such, they can act as vessels for other believers seeking spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, Sufi saints tend to have a plethora of disciples who have sworn allegiance to them (Lings 1975, Stoddart 1976, Ewing 1983). Completing the analogy, in Sufi Islam, a phone call can only be placed indirectly, i.e., an operator is necessary – where the Sufi saint acts as intercessor between his followers and God.

These core differences between Orthodox and Sufi Islam form the basis for the different types of linkages between respective religious leader and their followers in practice. On the one hand Orthodox Islam is expressed at the collective level, where the relationship is between the believer and the collective of the mosque, imam, and congregation. There is an absence of hierarchy, and the relationship is, primarily, at an institutional level between the congregants and the imam. The main interactions pertain to carrying out religious rites, such as marriage ceremonies, funeral prayers etc. As such, the linkage is between the collective of the congregation and the individual follower. On the other hand, in Sufi Islam the relationship is at the individual level, between the Sufi saint and his followers i.e., individualised personal bonds. It is formalised by the follower swearing allegiance to the Sufi saint, accepting them as their spiritual master. The Sufi saint retains spiritual superiority, and acts as intercessor between follower and God – effectively a hierarchical relationship where the religious leader is in a higher position than the follower. Unlike Orthodox Islam, the Sufi *pir-murid* relationship is one of supplication, where the *murid* seeks spiritual guidance in all aspects of life that will lead to spiritual enlightenment, and to final redemption in the hereafter. The Sufi saints' advice and guidance is sought out by *murids*.

The political consequences of these different types of linkages are reinforced by the way politics are exercised, i.e., where politics are contested through personal relationships and networks instead of institutionalised political parties. In the political realm the consequences of these different linkages are illustrated by *ulema* parties and individual *pir*-politicians that run for office. On the one hand, Orthodox Islam is represented by the *ulema* parties – where the linkage of collective-individual is present through the party-voter linkages. On the other hand, Sufi Islam is represented in the political landscape by individual Sufi saints that contest political office (and for whom their followers vote), where the individualised religious

bonds between *pir*-politician and voter is replicated, if not reinforced through how elections are contested in Pakistan.

These differences between Sufi *pir*-politicians and *ulema* political party leaders impact the actors’ political behaviour. Sufi saints use their religious power in the political realm, where they readily rely on their religious disciples to cast their votes for them. Secondly, *pir*-politicians are at an advantage relative to other politicians and even *ulema* party leaders because they have access to religious rewards sought by their disciples. They can tap into this resource even in the political realm. The outcome of this is that the Sufi *pir*-politician does not have to invest in material goods that they provide their clients, instead they tap into a non-depleting source of religious rewards, that are tied in with their personhood. Finally, the *pir*-politician has access to their *khalifa* network – which serves as an extensive organisational and communication platform – where the main nodes in the organisation (the *khalifas*) also are religious clients of the *pir*-politician and thus loyal to him personally. In the context of personalised politics, the *pir*-politician is at an utmost advantage because their personalised religious bonds with their *murid*-clients are reinforced because of politics operating through personalised networks. In contrast, the *ulema* do not have access to a ready vote bank because they do not have specific followers, their congregants are more transient in nature, and thus *ulema* party leaders mainly rely on the policy positions of their respective political parties to attract votes. Additionally, *ulema* party leaders do not have access to nonmaterial religious goods in the way that Sufi *pir*-politicians do. *Ulema* are not considered spiritual leaders as much as religious bureaucrats who provide guidance of the rules and regulations pertaining to religious rites, such as marriage, funerals, and other matters to do with life here and now. However, *ulemas*’ position as the standard bearers of Islam in the political sphere drives their political behaviour as legitimisers of legislation, ensuring legal frameworks are in line with the sharia – or at least what their interpretation of the Sharia is. The below table summarises the differences between *ulema* and Sufi Islam as well as the type of linkages each type creates.

Table 4.5. Comparing Orthodox Sunni and Sufi Islam

	Orthodox <i>ulema</i> Islam	Sufi Islam
Institution	Mosque	Shrine
Leaders	Ulema	<i>Pir</i> /Makhdoom
Level of association	Collective	Individual
Hierarchy between leader and follower	Not present	Present
Intercession	No	Yes
Type of political linkage	Party – voter	<i>Pir</i> -politician – voter
Type of political actor	<i>Ulema</i> parties	<i>Pir</i> -politicians

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I set out the empirical setting of Pakistan and illustrated the applicability of religious clientelism theory. More precisely, religious clientelism is applicable in contexts where political parties are not institutionalised but resemble a collection of strong men, where voters are not influenced by the policy platforms of political parties. Instead, voters are linked to the individual politicians and in turn, their political behaviour is influenced by these individual level linkages. I showed the weak institutionalisation of political parties with a brief overview of Pakistan's electoral history, and how this has reinforced the personalisation of politics.

Furthermore, I demonstrated the lack of religious voting in Pakistan in accordance to our existing political behaviour models, where Pakistan's *ulema* parties have failed to win a majority on their own. I then empirically illustrated how religion seems to matter for individual political behaviour with the example of the growing presence of hereditary Sufi saints in parliament at both national and provincial levels. I suggest this may reflect how politics are played out in Pakistan, where *ulema* parties have failed because of the weakly institutionalized presence of political parties that have resulted in a lack of partisanship and party identification. Instead, because politics are personalised and elections are contested on the weight of individual politicians' informal networks and personal relationships, religious voting is observed at the individual level – i.e., through these informal networks and personal relationships. A ripe example of religious voting in this context is the *pir-murid* relationship.

In the third section I differentiated *ulema* (Orthodox) and Sufi Islam to show the divergent linkages each creates between leader and follower, and how these both are reinforced in the political sphere and drive the actors' political behaviour. Simply put, when personalised religious relationships enter contexts of personalised politics, the bonds between religious leader and follower will affect the political behaviour of the followers. Because followers enter these relationships in search of nonmaterial religious goods of spiritual guidance, these preferences also come into play in the political arena. The final section of the chapter hones in on the religio-clientelistic relationship of patron-saint and follower-voter in the context of Pakistan, briefly explicating roles of the individual actors.

This was followed by an analysis of the political behaviour observed between Orthodox *ulema* parties and Sufi *pir*-politicians, bringing Sufi Islam into the umbrella of political Islam, adding to the existing gap in the literature, where Islamism tends to be the main political form of Islam analysed as an influence in the voting behaviour of citizens in developing contexts. Sufi Islam provides individualised hierarchical linkages between spiritual leader patron-politician and client-voters. This is unlike orthodox Islam, or Islamism, which is typically forwarded by Islamic political parties and their political programmes. Sufi saints and their participation in politics can be observed across the Muslim world, including Indonesia, Morocco, Senegal, Malaysia (Bruinessen 2007, Berenschot and Hicken 2019, Koter 2016) and Turkey (Filkins 2016).

The stage is now set to empirically explore religious clientelism from the actors' perspectives. In the next chapter we explore clients' preferences in relation to their

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shared religious bond, and the implications of this religious clientelistic relationship for the political behaviour of the *murid*-voter. To understand this relationship, and its significance in the real world, where religion and politics intermingle through daily osmosis and form part of the *murid*-voter's lived reality, we must explicate on the main ingredients of this power relationship – the individual actors and their expectations in relation to each other, and how these expectations affect each respective actor's political behaviour.

5

The *murid*-voters' perspective

Imran is a 45-year-old, landlord who manages a few thousand acres of his family's farmland where he supervises cotton farming. Of this agricultural land, a few hundred acres are his own, and the rest belong to his extended family. His family belongs to the elite of Pakistan and is both asset and access-rich. He earns an income from his land that supports his life in Karachi, which includes moving about in private, members-only country clubs. He has a vast contact network, including family members serving (or having served) in provincial and national elected office. Prior to farming he had a career in the financial sector, which he embarked after completing his undergraduate studies at a prestigious American university. Our interview was conducted at one of Karachi's exclusive, members-only, country clubs. He's a follower of *Pir Pagaro*.

Shahid is a 40-year-old, father of four. He works as a private security guard for a family in an affluent, gated neighbourhood in Karachi, where he earns 10,000 rupees a month. He has worked as a security guard for more than ten years.⁷⁸ He sends money home to his wife and children who live in his village in Sindh and are financially dependent on him. He has completed his metric schooling [ten years of education] and is fluent in Urdu and Sindhi. Our interview took place in his employer's garden. He's a follower of Makhdoom Amin Fahim.⁷⁹

Khan is a recently retired high-ranking civil servant, who served 40 years in the provincial bureaucracy. His educational background is in law, where he earned his LLB Law and Master of Law degrees from a regional university. He has an extensive personal network gained through his career as a civil servant, both across different government sectors and armed forces. Our interview took place at his former office. He's an ardent follower of *Pir Pagaro*.

Bakshi is a Punjabi farmer, who farms for his and his family's sustenance. He's married and has four children. Although he has only completed primary schooling, he is fluent in Urdu, Punjabi, and Sindhi.⁸⁰ He tills his own land. He has come from

⁷⁸ This is equal to 54 USD as of April 2022.

⁷⁹ He was a follower of Makhdoom Amin Fahim until he passed away, and his son Jamil uz Zaman took over the spiritual seat of sainthood, when his spiritual allegiance was transferred to the new saint.

⁸⁰ These are not different dialects, but independent languages with a rich literary history and culture.

his village to Multan for his annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Baha Uddin Zakaria, where he hopes to meet his *pir*. Our interview took place at a guesthouse for *murids*, hosted by *pir*-politician Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

The above four vignettes provide a cross section of the respondents that I interviewed and visited during my fieldwork. They help illustrate that *murids* come from all socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities and are not limited to the poor voter or to any specific strata of society. In fact, anyone can be a follower of a Sufi saint and a large part of the Pakistani population falls into this category. Yet, stereotypes and fixed ideas about who *murids* are and how their religious relationship affects their political behaviour continue to prevail in Pakistan. When I began my fieldwork in the fall of 2015, I was living in a village 40km outside of Multan, Punjab. My host, Mr. Malik, a retired World Bank economist, asked me why I had chosen to study *murids*, or in his words “grave worshippers”.⁸¹ Others explained to me that people at Sufi shrines are “dopeheads who beg for a living,”⁸² while some outright warned me about these people having gone astray, because they “worship these fake saints”⁸³ and “put them [the pirs] on a pedestal in competition with Allah, and therefore perform *shirk* (ultimate sin)”.⁸⁴ What struck me from the general, and often derogatory comments about *murids*, was their conviction. The commentators gave an impression of being fully conversant in the meanings *murids* attach to their relationship and offhand remarks about their political behaviour, but when asked if they know any *murids* personally, they will shrug their shoulders and reply “not really.” In short, in Pakistan non-*murids* offer the general depiction of a *murid* as a poor, uneducated, intoxicated, and uninformed individual who found themselves coerced in a hierarchical religious relationship because they didn’t know better.

Unlike the description offered by non-*murids*, *murids* come from diverse socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. This is well illustrated by the vignettes of Imran, Shahid, Khan, and Bakshi. *Murid*-voters are also not limited to any specific geographic area. They are found across Pakistan, where the main divide appears to be rural and urban, where many more *murids* are found in the rural parts of the country relative to the urban, which may just reflect the country’s urban-rural divide.⁸⁵ With the steady rise of Sufi saints in Pakistani politics the religious leaders have been the subject of extensive inquiry (Talbot 1983, Ewing 1983, Hasan 1987, Mirza and Malik 2015, Kalhoro and Saleem 2016), but the *murid*-voter remains understudied. Despite a large portion of the Pakistani voting population falling into the category of *murid*-voter, there remains a dearth of scholarship on them and their political behaviour. Although precise numbers are hard to come by, according to one prominent Sufi *pir* interviewed every, seven out of ten Pakistanis follow a *pir*. To corroborate this figure, I looked at the spread of shrines across the two most populous provinces

81 Field diary September 2015

82 Interview reference – participant observation/field diary

83 Field diary, Punjab, 2015

84 Field diary, April 2019. *Shirk* is the word used for associating mortals to the one and true God and is considered the ultimate sin in Islam.

85 According to the World Bank 62% of the Pakistani population is classed as rural in 2020.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=PK>

Sindh and Punjab. In Punjab, home to 53% of the country's population,⁸⁶ there are an estimated 600 Holy Sufi shrines (Malik and Mirza 2015). In Sindh, home to 23% of the country's population,⁸⁷ there are 200 holy Sufi shrines.⁸⁸ All shrines have various followings, where older shrines such as the shrine of Hazrat Nuh in Hala is renowned as the *nao lakka gaddi*,⁸⁹ Urdu for the "seat commanding of 900,000" *murids*. I also performed a crosscheck with the *pir*-politician database I constructed for the whole of Pakistan. Given the population spread and spread of shrines across the country, the statistic provided by the Sufi *pir* can be assumed to be a representative ballpark figure. Thus, it is imperative to address this gap in the research to understand the political behaviour of this subset of voters, especially in terms of how these *murid*-voters are affected by their religious bonds, and what drives their political choices as well as preferences in the political field if we are to get a better understanding of how the clientelistic relationship operates and why it continues to matter. This chapter addresses this gap.

This chapter empirically illustrates the theory presented in Chapter 3, from the *murids*' side. It explores *murids*' preferences through the meanings associated to the long-term religious *pir-murid* relationship, with a focus on the type of goods exchanged between themselves and their patron. I then explore how this relationship between *murid*-voter and *pir*-politician ultimately affects the *murids*' political behaviour. The purpose of providing this bottom-up view is to illustrate the main argument of the dissertation that clients who share hierarchical religious bonds with a candidate, prefer and prioritise nonmaterial religious goods from their patron. This stems from how they rank their identities. When their religious leader runs for office, their religious identity is made salient and so are the preferences associated with their religious *murid* identity, which travel to the political sphere.

Furthermore, to demonstrate how this religious bond sways the clients' political behaviour, where clients vote for their religious patron when they run for office, I focus on the nonmaterial religious goods aspect of *murid* identity. What I mean by nonmaterial religious goods are ideational goods linked to the rationality of the believer (Bano 2012). These nonmaterial religious goods include identity, prayers, blessings, spiritual guidance, and the promise of salvation. To substantiate this argument, I use the stories of Imran, Shahid, Khan and Bakshi, and draw on interview data with forty-four *murids* of three different *pir*-politicians. These are followers of *Pir Pagaro* (leader of the Pakistan Muslim League - Functional), Shah Mehmood Qureshi⁹⁰ (Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf) and Makhdoom Jamil Uz Zaman (Pakistan People's Party). All three are *pir*-politicians who contest elections from different political parties' platforms. All three are currently also the spiritual heads of their Sufi congregations and associated shrines. They have inherited their seats from their fathers, who like them, were also *pir*-politicians.

⁸⁶ <https://www.usaid.gov/pakistan/fact-sheet/provincial-fact-sheet-punjab>

⁸⁷ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/12/19/factsheet-strengthening-social-protection-delivery-system-in-sindh>

⁸⁸ I compiled a shrine database for Sindh during fieldwork in 2019

⁸⁹ The shrine of Hazrat Nuh in Hala is known to have had 900,000 *murids* in the 1970s, and the number is believed to be much larger today.

⁹⁰ Serving as Foreign Minister in the Imran Khan government 2018-2022

A key insight of the dissertation is, that despite the diverse socio-economic make-up of *murid*-voters and meanings associated with the relationship, the ultimate effect on *murids*' political behaviour appears to be of a similar nature – they vote for their *pir*-politicians. Although *murids* receive a mix of goods from their saint-patrons, the followers voice a preference for nonmaterial religious goods relative to material goods and let the religious bond sway their political choices. This is unlike the prevailing assumptions of the modern school of clientelism, which generally understands voters in developing contexts as vote sellers, where clients sell their votes in exchange for material benefits (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Nichter and Peress 2017, Stokes 2005). The findings of my fieldwork challenge this narrow understanding of clients. Instead, I provide a more nuanced understanding of client-voters, with an exploration of their expectations and preferences in relation to their long-term hierarchical religious bond with the patron. Generally, the term preference in political science connotes a rationalist approach, where rationalist is closely tied in with an economic outlook. Such as the modern clientelism scholarship, where the clientelistic exchange highlights material goods as paramount in the political behaviour of voters (see Hicken 2011, Stokes 2015, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Maers and Young 2016). Here my understanding of a preference follows Emily Gade (2020), which goes beyond the economic rationalist approach and is inclusive of a predisposition, feeling, or attitude. In this case preference refers to those that stem from the religious bond. Simply, my use of the term preference includes nonmaterial religious goods as part of the clientelistic exchange and as the preference of the *murid*-voter, stemming from non-economic reasons: such as religious beliefs and social identity. All of which fall within the realm of the rationality of the believer, where nonmaterial religious rewards are goods wanted by clients and are the ones that provide them with utility (Bano 2012).

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section substantiates the first question of the dissertation theorised in Chapter 3 – how do hierarchical religious bonds shape clientelism. It elaborates on what the religious bond is, how it is initiated and what the *murids* think it is good for. I then illustrate how this religious bond of *muridi* serves a dual function of social identity and individual belief system, where religion remains pivotal. The second section addresses the second sub-question of the dissertation – how does religious clientelism (the theorised relationship) affect individual political behaviour of the client? It addresses the secondary aim of the dissertation to gain an understanding of client preferences. I illustrate what *murids* want and what they get. To come closer to what their precise preferences are, I juxtapose nonmaterial goods to material goods in illustrating these wants and gets. There is an implicit process of ranking that *murids* undertake of their different identities, where each identity elicits different preferences. I demonstrate this with a concentric identity model, and how this is reflected in *murids*' preferences. The third section illustrates how *murids*' political behaviour in terms of voting and partisanship is influenced by their religious identity. I show that *murids*' political behaviour is driven by their religious attachment, independent of partisan concerns.

5.1 *Muridi* – the religious bond

To establish a baseline understanding of the meaning *murids* associate to their *pir-murid* relationship, it is important to know how the relationship is initiated and how it operates, through an understanding of the day-to-day working of religious clientelism. Therefore, in this section I elaborate on how the relationship is initiated, who the actors are – setting out the basics of what, how and why.

The *pir-murid* relationship is a long-term dyadic relationship, much like the long-term bonds found in the classic school of clientelism (Foster 1963, Lande et al. 1977). The relationship consists of two actors – *murid* and *pir*, where the patron is higher in spiritual standing. It is initiated through pledge of allegiance, *baith*⁹¹, where the *murid* places their hand in the *pir*'s, and invokes all the connections between themselves, including the *murid* and *pir*, the *pir*'s ancestors, until the original Sufi saint, to the Prophet and then finally to God.⁹² This is an homage to the earliest followers of Islam, who pledged allegiance (both spiritual and political) to Prophet Mohammad, by placing their hands on the Prophet's and accepting him as spiritual master as well as political leader.⁹³ It is a sacred act and effectively provides *murids* with access to God. This ceremony is a pivotal part of their belief system and is the first step in the *murids*' spiritual journey – essentially the follower seeking spiritual enlightenment becomes connected to the *pir* and his ancestors, as a pathway to God in which *murids* explain the resultant linkage with a comparison to links in a chain. The chain analogy reiterated by *murids* from different congregations, helped highlight the basic function of the *pir* as providing access to God. Mushtaq, a follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, used the same analogy to reinforce the connectedness established between himself and God once the oath is taken

I took my *baith* at the hand of Sain saab himself [Shah Mehmood Qureshi]. So, you see, **there is a chain**. I am attached to God through this long chain. I swear allegiance to my *pir* who is the representative of his ancestor Baha Uddin Zakaria in this world, and through the great friendship and closeness between God and Hazrat Zakaria I am connected to God. (Multan, 2015).

Thus, the pledge becomes the primary mechanism through which a lifelong bond is initiated, and it is from this supplication that the relationship is maintained. It acknowledges and reinforces the asymmetric character of the relationship, with the *murid* in an inferior spiritual position to the *pir*-politician, an essential feature of clientelism.

⁹¹ Although the choice of what *pir* to follow tends to be a matter of family tradition⁹¹, all *murids* I spoke to have performed a *baith* ceremony.

⁹² Interview R3, Punjab, 2015.

⁹³ [Sura Al-Fath](#), [Ayah 18](#), [Quran 48:18](#)

Although *murids* swear allegiance to a *pir*-politician, in practice they bind themselves to an informal institution. The *pir*-politician is not a lone figure. Instead, the *pir*-politician is the embodiment of an informal institution, which operates with “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels” (Helmke and Levitsky 2004:727).⁹⁴ The informal institution consists of three parts – (1) the Sufi saint who acts as mediator between man and God (the *pir*), (2) his shrine as the focus of religious activity (Ansari 1992:4), and (3) the khalifa network – the *pir*’s representatives in each village and town.⁹⁵ The *pir* operates through the informal institution, including communication of rules and expectations (implicit and explicit).⁹⁶

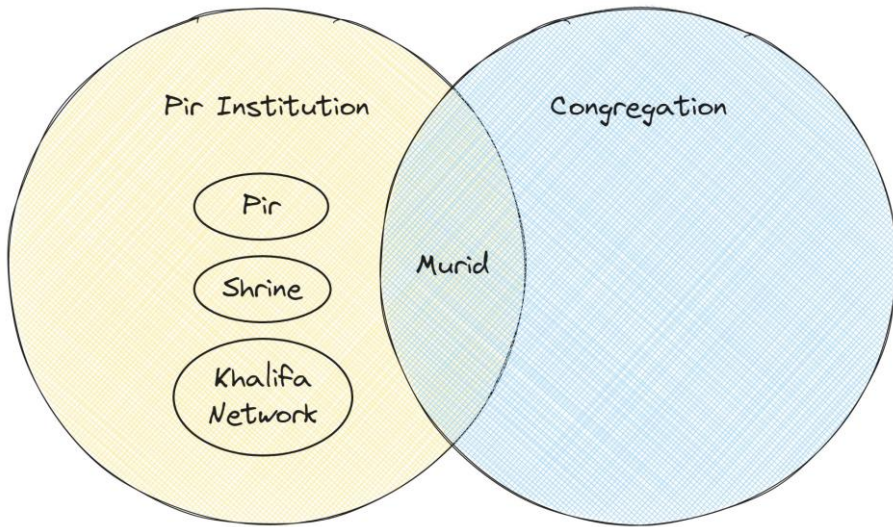


Figure 5.1. Informal institution of the pir

The primary pillar of the informal institution is the *pir*-politician himself. As patron-saint, he symbolises the enlightened soul that has inherited spiritual charisma of his ancestors (Ewing 1983, Malik and Malik 2017, Malik and Mirza 2015), through which he can intercede between God and others, to provide blessings, prayers, spir-

⁹⁴ This definition borrows from Brinks 2003a and is consistent with North 1990; O'Donnell 1996; Carey 2000; and Lauth 2000 (footnote from Helmke and Levitsky 2004)

⁹⁵ This informal institution and its infrastructure is mainly financed through donations (both monetary and in-kind) provided by murid followers. An example of monetary income flow are the regular tithes left by visitors – which consist of both murids and religious tourists. Larger monetary donations are in the form of land deeds, and zakat (annual religious tax) being given to the shrine, as well as nazraana (monetary donations specifically given by murids visiting the shrine). Most pirs have ancestral wealth in the form of agricultural land and assets, in some cases they have handed over the maintenance of the shrine to the Auqaf (department of religious affairs). As a result, many shrines fall under Auqaf department, which then legally responsible for the upkeep of the shrines and its overall structure as part of a religious site and its heritage value to the local culture. By handing over maintenance to the Auqaf department the *pir* saves important investment into the upkeep of the shrine.

⁹⁶ Interview R1, Sindh, 2015, Interview R10, Punjab, 2015.

itual peace, a fast route to acceptance of one's prayers, and a guarantee of redemption – the promise of salvation.

The second component of the relationship is the *pir*'s shrine – where much of the religious activity occurs. It houses the tomb of the original saint and serves as the site of spiritual pilgrimage. There, the *pir* and his *murids* congregate for regular exchanges of blessings, paying of respects, paying of donations, and to gain spiritual peace. Most *murids* travel to the shrine at least twice a year for the annual urs celebrations that commemorate the death of the original Sufi saint that is buried at the shrine – celebrating the saint's union with God.⁹⁷ Moreover, most shrines also maintain regular soup kitchens that are funded partially through tithes received from *murids*.⁹⁸ The food offered by a shrine's soup kitchen is considered a way to partake in the *pir*'s spiritual enlightenment (*barakat*), where food offerings are perceived as sacred, and part of the process of religious enlightenment, thus perceived as a religious good. Its symbolism is comparable to the Christian tradition of partaking in the blood and flesh of Jesus Christ during communion by sipping wine and eating the bread tokens.

The third component of the *pir* institution to which *murids* relate is the *pir*'s khalifa network. Khalifas are the local representatives of pirs at the village level. One khalifa elaborates on the role succinctly as

Well, I am a *murid* and a khalifa by my murshid [spiritual guide] Sain [his honour]. A khalifa is basically someone that is appointed as a local representative of the *pir* in villages. My family has served as khalifas for Baha Uddin Zakaria since our forefathers. Like they are pirs from generations, so we are their *murids* and appointed khalifas for generations. [...] So, before me, my father was the khalifa in our area. (R10, Multan, 2015)

Khalifas wear two hats – one as a *murid* (follower of the *pir*) and one as the representative of the *pir* at the local/village level. In this project khalifas are treated as clients because they too are religious followers of the *pir*-politician. The khalifas serve a variegated role. This points to the division of labour within the institution where pirs deal with spiritual matters and khalifas deal with worldly matters. This division of labour is well known by the overall congregation, and in fact helps explain why *murids* class their issues and expectations as either spiritual or worldly. This division of labour and the role of the khalifa within the institution is captured by Rajab, a follower of Jamil uz Zaman, as,

Okay, so he helps a lot with spiritual issues, but does he do anything worldly for you, like worldly troubles? Oh, worldly troubles, no, those we take straight to the khalifa, or even the chief Khalifa⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Interview R4, Islamabad, 2019

⁹⁸ When asked who funds the soup kitchens many respondents answered that the *pir* funds it. But they simultaneously explain how they give monetary donations every time they come to the shrine, the *nazraana* (it is a token amount for having been in the presence of the Saint or the institution in general. They also mention that one form of donation is to pay for a *daigh* [a giant cauldron] of food for the soup kitchen. The tithes are also collected by the *pir* on his annual ziarat to his followers across the country, the purpose of which is to collect *nazrana* (funds for the sustenance of the *pir*)

⁹⁹ Khalifas report to a Chief khalifa, who serves as the main point of contact with the *pir*-politician.

– who is the higher up, in charge of all the khalifas, the chief secretary. They have an appointed committee of six people who solve the worldly issues we have. *Ahaan so you take worldly issues to the khalifa and rouhani [spiritual] to your pir?* Yes, because the worldly ones are quite petty. **The rouhani [spiritual] is the ones that only the pir can help us with.** So how do you know who is the chief secretary? We know because we are told, and the chief khalifa can be found at the shrine at any time. He also helps to settle disputes, like if there has been a fight between neighbours, he will sit down both parties and listen to each side and tell us that we need to patch things up and then we do, because **we have to obey** the representatives. (Karachi, 2015)

The data excerpt above also underscores the role of khalifas as the communication platform for the *pir*, such as the structure of the congregation, the processes, and schedules of congregation – like a bureaucrat. Despite *murid* perceptions of worldly/material issues perceived as “petty”, they acknowledge the important role khalifas play as the *pir*’s implementers. Across congregations, there is full understanding that worldly issues are taken to the *pir*-politician’s khalifa network, which meets at set times during the week, and issues are funnelled through the institution to be solved.¹⁰⁰ Thus, khalifas are also seen as implementers, who uphold order, of decisions.¹⁰¹

Although khalifas are reminiscent of brokers found in the clientelism scholarship, especially in contexts where brokers are embedded in local contexts (Auyero 2000, Stokes et al 2013, Brusco et al 2004, Aspinall and Berenschot 2019) and help with daily concerns of clients, acting as problem solvers, specifically in solving material matters, they differ from the typical broker in two respects: resource control and discretion. First, khalifas do not have access to the goods most coveted by *murids* – nonmaterial religious goods such as religious guidance, getting one’s prayers answered nor the ability to provide salvation. Instead, their role is limited to dealing with duniyawi (worldly) matters – acting as implementers or rather problem solvers that deal with all issues of a temporal nature such as conflict resolution in cases of land squatting.¹⁰² Even in this their capacity is limited. Khalifas cannot act completely independently but must take all matters to the council appointed by the *pir*.¹⁰³ Furthermore, underscoring their limited capacity to take executive decisions, if a matter requires ‘jaan pehchaan’ (pulling strings), khalifas are reliant on the *pir*-politician’s contact network because they do not have their independent contact networks.

Second, unlike the general clientelism literature (Auyero 2000, Brusco et al. 2004, Stokes et al. 2013), khalifas’ positions are in a clear hierarchy to the *pir* and they serve a dual role as *murid* and representative of the *pir*. As *murids*, they are spiritually on the same position as other *murids*. They have sworn allegiance to the *pir* as their spiritual master and thus are obligated to obey the pirs as part of the informal contract entered upon when they swore allegiance to them. Thus, the khalifa does not have discretion over distribution of goods but must treat all *murids*

¹⁰⁰ Interview R5, Sindh 2015, Interview R1, Sindh, 2015.

¹⁰¹ Interview R4, Karachi, 2015

¹⁰² Interview R4, Karachi, 2015.

¹⁰³ This includes a council of khalifas, headed by a Chief *Khalifa*. It is the latter that has direct communication with the *pir*-politician. Interviews R1, Karachi, 2015, R7 Multan, 2015, R29, Hala 2015.

equally and fairly and go through the khalifa council before reaching a decision. As such, their role as brokers is limited and exists in a liminal space. This is different from the broker who is free to decide where to provide material goods and where they exercise full discretion due to their local knowledge, such as when distributing a bag of flour (Auyero 2000). This discretion is further reinforced by the perceptions that the congregants hold of them. They see khalifas as problem solvers and part of the *pir*'s system, not as independently able to help them out.¹⁰⁴ In fact, adding to this perception is how *murids* assign credit for their problems being solved. Although *murids* know to take their worldly issues to the khalifa network for resolution, when the problems are solved, *murids* do not credit the khalifa that helped them. Instead, *murids* give full credit to the *pir* for having solved their problems. It is to this amalgamation of *pir*, shrine and khalifa network as an informal institution that *murids* relate. Effectively, *murids* find themselves as part of an informal institution, in a web of relations, all which s/he identifies as the *pir*.

5.2 *Muridi as pehchaan (identity) and aqeeda (creed)*

The religious bond appears to serve two roles for the *murids* – as *pehchaan* (a group identity), and it serves as *aqeeda* (belief system). This section first illustrates this by focusing on the collective level as group identity through an analysis of the social aspects of the relational bond, including the choice (or lack thereof) of what *pir* to follow, the fulfilment of the inherent need to belong, and social sanctioning. The first aspect of the religious *murid* identity, of which *pir* to follow, being part of the actors' social identity begins to surface in the data in relation to the choice of what *pir* to follow. Most *murids* swear allegiance to the same *pir* that one's fathers and forefathers did, where *murids* highlight it to be “part of who we are”¹⁰⁵ or more directly as “this is part of our identity”.¹⁰⁶ Following the same patron-saint as one's forefathers carries on tradition in two manners: it emulates the act one's forefathers performed, and it adds the *murid* to the same spiritual link that their forefathers were part of. I asked Shahid, a follower of Makhdoom Jamil Uz Zaman, about how he chose what *pir* to follow. He replied,

We have been *murids* for generations. Our grandfathers were *murids* of the same *pir*¹⁰⁷ and so now I am too. (Hala, 2015)

This “generational” following, was often expressed as part of a *murid*'s identity, which went hand in hand with upholding tradition. It points to a socialisation process of sorts, where the choice of *pir* is given by the family, and the act of being a *murid* itself is part of the social norm in these contexts. Following the same *pir* as one's ancestors also helps keep alive the legends surrounding the miracles performed by the original patron-saint whom one follows, where sharing of legends

¹⁰⁴ Interview R9, Multan, 2015.

¹⁰⁵ Interview R11, Multan 2015, R15 Multan, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Interview R8, Multan 2015

¹⁰⁷ When *murids* refer to “the same *pir*” they mean the original saint who is buried at the shrine. The *pir*-politician that is alive is the progeny and representative of the original saint in the world.

surrounding the *pir* and the miracles he performed are part of the local history and traditions. Wahid, a follower of Jamil uz Zaman in Sindh, highlights the aspect of identity attached to the relationship as,

Oh, that we have been **since time immemorial**. My father was their *murid*, as was his father and so on. “Jaddi pushti *murid* hain hum [We are ancestral *murids*]” You see you can’t change your *pir*. You just mentioned that you can’t change *pir*, so if you were to like someone else’s teachings better, could you change *pir* then? No baji (sister), you can’t change your *pir*. It hasn’t crossed our minds even once, and why would you want to? We can leave everything in this world, but we can’t leave *piri-muridi* [the relationship between *pir* and *murid*]. **This is a part of who we are.** (Hala, 2015)

Although swearing allegiance elicits *murids*’ agency in the choice of *pir*, there is a tension in the aspect of choice involved. Following the social norm and tradition of following the same *pir* as one’s ancestors is more important than exercising individual choice. Following one’s individual choice and a different *pir* appears to be linked with an idea of abandonment and walking away from “who we are.” Simply, it is a social norm to follow the same *pir* that one’s family has always followed, which inadvertently constructs collective identity. This is corroborated by Katherine Ewing’s work on pirs. She points out “Even today allegiance is not a matter of individual choice. A man is the follower of a certain saint because this is the saint of this tribe. This tie is political as well as spiritual” (Ewing, 1983:255). The religious bond, overall, appears to be an amalgamation of tradition and identity, where one reinforces the other.

The second aspect which shows the relationship to be part of *murids*’ identity is the innate psychological need that it satisfies – the need to belong. The need to belong is defined as “a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting positive and significant interpersonal relationships” (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). For the need to be met, two main criteria need to be fulfilled: “the need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people” and “those interactions must take place in a context of temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other’s welfare” (Baumesiter 1995:497). For the *murid* the first criterion is satisfied by the congregation, as it provides other *murids* with whom they share regular interaction, their affection based on their common affection for the *pir*. The second criterion is fulfilled by the framework of the *pir-murid* relationship; the “temporally stable and enduring framework” is afforded by the lifelong and exclusive bond *murids* share with their *pir* as their spiritual guide. The aspect of “affective concern for each other’s welfare” is fulfilled by the premise of the *pir-murid* bond in which the *pir* is sought out to enhance and ensure the spiritual welfare of the *murid*, and the *murid* shares the concern for the *pir*’s welfare by contributing to him by obeying his commands. The conviction that *murids* express about their *pir* being genuinely concerned for their welfare is ex-

pressed through their expressions of the *pir* being their “spiritual parent”¹⁰⁸ and expressions of “he shows us the right way”¹⁰⁹ and “he does so much for us”.¹¹⁰

The social psychology literature stresses there are both positive and negative consequences to this need; its fulfilment provides positive effects – i.e., forming and solidifying social bonds leads to positive effects. These include psychological well-being as well as effects that can manifest themselves as physical effects. However, the unfulfillment of the need to belong, caused by a disruption of relations, has negative effects, including people feeling anxious, depressed or “even grief stricken” (Leary 1990). In the case of the *pir-murid* relationship, these positive or negative effects materialise depending on the status of membership of the group – underscoring the *muridi* serving as a group identity. One *murid* summarises the positive effects of being a *murid* through the *pir*’s public recognition of them

... he [referring to the *Pir*] even recognises me by face and name and whenever he is here [at the shrine] he ensures to come and give his respects. He notices each and every one of us. He gave me so much respect during one of the annual urs (celebration of the union with God of the original saint) he gave recognition to me and others living at the shrine when publicly, announcing ‘there are silent helpers here that serve us, without whom this shrine would not function.’ What else do you want child, if not that high stature of respect that he is providing us. **It was fantastic.** (R14Multan 2015)

Being a follower provides a source of elation, expressed best by the above quote’s final sentence “It was fantastic.” This emotion and gaining of status are only possible through the *murid* identity, where the recognition by the *pir*, underscores the religious nature attached to the evocation of this emotion and psychic benefit – the experiential value attached to this identity. It is reminiscent of the psychic good provided by ethnicity, especially in relation to boosting one’s self-esteem (Chandra 2007:102) except in this instance the veneer of religion brings a supernatural character to the social identity not available to ethnicity. For this *murid* the intimate religious bond of *pir-murid* appears not only to be important, but perhaps even necessary for happiness.

In contrast, negative effects of the need to belong not being fulfilled are observed from the disruption of relations: the fear of them being broken or if one is refused the relatedness completely. For example, when discussing the costs of exiting the relationship, identifying non-membership as “losing face,” being perceived as spiritually homeless, orphaned,¹¹¹ and social isolation. One respondent captures the extent of the social ostracism that takes place if one were to exit this relationship

“...who will take you seriously in the village?... Not everyone will want to talk to you in the village you see, because they would consider you leaving as a sign of weakness of character”.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Interview R14, Multan, 2015. Interview R16, Multan 2015

¹⁰⁹ Interview R16, Multan 2015

¹¹⁰ Interview R5, Multan 2015, Interview R24, Multan 2015.

¹¹¹ Interview R12, Karachi, 2015

¹¹² Interview R7, Karachi, 2015

While another *murid* underscores the aspect of losing face and one's reputation being tainted "But if you do leave, in the village you will get a bad reputation"¹¹³. As this last quote clarifies, once the relationship between *murid* and *pir* is established, exiting the relationship is almost seen as implausible.¹¹⁴

Constructing the third aspect of religious *murid* identity, social sanctioning describes the negative effects of the need to belong not being fulfilled is well illustrated by the far-reaching effect of social sanctioning, best underscored by the example of exclusion of a well-to-do *murid*. Imran, mentioned at the start of the chapter, is a local landlord who belongs to the elite of the country, both asset and access rich (he obtained his post-graduate degree in the USA, and currently manages 4000 acres of land. Of this, 380 acres are his personal property, and he has his own vast contact network across the country, with family members active politicians at the national level). His family was excluded from their congregation for displeasing the *pir* by their political behaviour and had their "hands tied".¹¹⁵ The family was ousted from the congregation and the status of *murid* revoked through public announcement.¹¹⁶ Within the community word quickly spread of a social boycott against not only the offending individual but also the members of their immediate family. Members of the community stopped communicating with them, refused to intervene to provide any form of help, and removed themselves from any public association with the former *murid* and his immediate family. This resulted in a social boycott and ostracization, where any work the *murid* tried to perform in this context was limited to their own devices.

In close-knit communities, social boycotts can spell doom for an individual actor, where even the well-off *murid* will be subjected to the same demands and expectations as any other *murid*, i.e., both implicit and explicit expectations between client and patron. As such being removed from the congregation may carry extreme social costs of social standing, protection of the patron and an added layer of insurance in matters of worldly matters. To borrow Anna Grzymala-Busse's phrase, religion as an identity is not fungible, you cannot leave without incurring a disproportionate social cost and the psychological burden of damnation (2012). In a conservative society like Pakistan, reputation and "face/honour" can be the highest thing an individual possesses; therefore, this plays a crucial role in how other members of society perceive and react to one. Social standing not only affects the day-to-day quality of life but is also a major aspect of how one operates in various aspects of society. Therefore, social sanctioning in the form of social ostracism can result in isolation of not only the individual but also the individual's family, revoking an imperative part of one's religio-social identity and belonging. As such, the client is not only reacting to goods provided to him by the patron but also reacting to the fellow *murids* of the congregation that are to be found in his surroundings.

Additionally, the psychological burden of social sanctioning, the fear of damnation and lack of protection in the hereafter is something that can drive some *murids*

¹¹³ Interview R2, Karachi, 2015

¹¹⁴ Interview R3, Lahore, 2015

¹¹⁵ Interview R3, Karachi, 2019.

¹¹⁶ The *khalifa* network was responsible for the announcement to be shared across the congregation

to remain with a *pir* despite *murids* disagreeing with their *pir* and not seeing them as performing their job of spiritual leader properly. This is best illustrated through a story recounted to me during fieldwork, where a *murid* confronted his *pir*.

Murid: Why should I listen to you? You yourself are not doing those things that you tell us to do. In fact, you are indulging in things that you yourself say are not permitted for us (the *pir*-politician is widely known to be an alcoholic).¹¹⁷ How can you then be a spiritual advisor?"

Pir: Let us light a fire here. [They light a small bonfire. The *pir* tells the *murid* to bring some water, and as there is no fresh water around, he tells him to fetch some from the sewer and throw it on the fire. The client did as he was told; he threw the pail of sewage onto the fire, and the fire went out]. The *pir* turned to the *murid* and said "You see what just happened here? No matter how dirty I am, at the end of the day, I am still the one that will save you from the fires of hell and provide you salvation in the afterlife. (R12, Karachi, November 2015)

Although the above story is an extreme example, almost bordering on psychological coercion, it is a good example highlighting how the fear of social sanctioning and the potential of losing access to nonmaterial religious goods and insurance of salvation in the afterlife, that keep *murids* following the *pir*. The psychological burden of damnation tied in with the religious bond, where the supernatural character of the relationship and its associated benefits (whether positive or negative) can effectively steer the *murids*' willingness to exit the relationship. This is reminiscent of the typology of clientelism constructed by Pellicer et al (2020) where the relationship also entails coercion – in this case the threat of violence is in the form of social ostracization. Furthermore, to highlight the exclusivity and loyalty/trust of this religious bond as tied to one single *pir*, Karim explains that they are encouraged to visit other saints' shrines and pay their respects, but spiritual guidance is locked in with the one with whom a person swears allegiance to

We believe in all the other pirs and respect them. We are also allowed to go to other shrines. In fact, we are encouraged to go to other elders too, they are great souls who did great services for Islam. When we go to other shrines, we only go for duas (prayers/blessings). We pray for them, say the fateha [opening chapter of the Quran, known as the soul of the Holy book], but we only follow one, because **we only have one murshid**.¹¹⁸ (R11, Multan, 2015)

Karim's response was echoed by Bakshi, another follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who points out the relationship as an exclusive one, where once you have sworn allegiance, you cannot go to another *pir* for spiritual leadership, therefore the question of changing a *pir* becomes out of the question.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Any form of intoxication (whether by alcohol or drugs) is widely considered *haram* in Islam.

¹¹⁸ *Murshid* is the Urdu word for spiritual master.

¹¹⁹ Perhaps Karim's and Bakshi's sentiments were heightened because they were both in Multan as part of their annual pilgrimage to pay their respects at their Sufi saint's shrine and may be saying what they think I want to hear. To address this possible skewedness in the data, I triangulated these data against the aggregate collated and coded data gained from *murid-voters* across congregations. The exclusivity and loyalty is expressed in similar terms and appears to hold (Interview R3, Lahore, 2015, Interview R14, Multan, 2015, Interview R12, Karachi, 2015).

Listen baji (sister), like I have been telling you, it is not possible. I cannot change *pir*, I have already pledged my allegiance to my murshid (spiritual master). **It's not a joke**. I can't just up and go and go to a new *pir*. Sure, hypothetically I can go to another *pir*, but it all depends on one's intentions and I have no such intentions to leave my *pir*. "Murshid say niyaat nai badlay gi" (My intentions towards my spiritual master will not change). He is my **one and only**. (R7, Multan, 2015)

Focusing on the belief system as individual identity, much like the ethnic identity scholarship, religion and the religious bond also operates based on a shared solidarity between actors (Chandra 2007). However, unlike ethnic identity, religion does not only operate as a social identity, but also as a belief system for *murids*. The supernatural element added by religion unlocks the supra nature of *murids* identity which brings together aspects of the social, psychological, and collective into one realm. Furthermore, both ethnicity and religion bring social pressures that actors react to. Ethnic identity exerts social pressures where individuals elicit public expressions of allegiance with their ethnic group, but privately, the same individuals highlight their material, class interests (Corstange 2013). In contrast, in case of *murids* their preferences and allegiances remain constant both in private and in public because religion's pressures are tied in with the supernatural, where God is the enforcer, hence in their belief system. Thus, the fear of God, and damnation keeps actors from renegeing on their publicly expressed preferences (Shariff and Norezayan 2011). This also addresses the monitoring assumption of clientelism, where much of the literature had earlier focused on monitoring of clients in order to ensure that they do not renege on their promise to vote after having received a material good. In case of religious clientelism, God is the all-seer and thus monitoring is a self-enforced mechanism. Together, analysing *muridi* as a group identity and belief system in one helps lay the foundation for the next section that explores *murids*' preferences and what the exchange between *pir* and *murid* consists of.

5.3 What *murids* want

Turning to the central contribution of this dissertation to provide a deeper understanding of what clients want, i.e., client preferences, this section analyses their preferences in relation to this exchange relationship. When asked what they want from their religious bond, *murids* point out that they want nonmaterial religious goods from their relationship with the *pir*. These are non-economic, ideational goods. Access to religious reward is one of the fundamental reasons they pledged allegiance to their *pir*. These religious rewards are intricately tied in with the identity of being a *murid*, thus the pledge and the relationship with the *pir* does not only form part of their essential belief system, and identity, but it is also the main path identified to gain access to spiritual enlightenment. With this as their central goal, the nonmaterial religious goods *murids* want are prayers being answered, religious guidance, access to God, blessings/prayers, and the promise of salvation.¹²⁰ There is an overt concern for the soul's wellbeing, both in this world but also in the next. Hence, to gain these nonmaterial religious goods, one must have a spiritual guide

¹²⁰ Interview R16, Multan, 2015, Interview R25, Multan, 2015.

i.e., somebody to “show you the right way”. Rajab, a follower of Jamil uz Zaman, explains this as,

Baji [sister], **you need to have a murshid** [spiritual master. Those that don't have one, have the Devil as their guide...also I have fear of the afterlife. Azab se bachna hai [we need to stay safe from the fires of Hell] You need to think about the Hereafter. This life is very brief, we need to remember the life after death that awaits us. **We need to think of the aakhirat** [Day of Judgement]. (R13, Karachi, 2015)

Not everyone expressed their want of salvation through the lens of fear of the afterlife and “fires of Hell”. Unlike Rajab, most other *murids* I spoke with provided layered and nuanced explanations of what they want from the relationship. To gain insight into their preferences and what they want from their religious bond I analyse their rationale for why they choose to be *murids*. This helps to get to the root of what their preferences are in relation to their patron in this exchange relationship. While sitting at the shrine, an elderly follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Karim, explains,

Child, there is a lot of sawaab [blessing] in this relationship. We are given so many duas [prayers] it is for that which we do it [follow]. To get duas of Sain saab (his honour), **especially for Khatum Sharif** (the Day of Judgement) and the sawaab we will get. (R11, Multan, 2015)

Karim provides an amalgamation of nonmaterial religious rewards that form his exchange with the *pir*-politician, featuring blessings and prayers as reasons for his following, but also the psychological insurance of life after death being secured – “especially for the Day of Judgement” and the idea of granting of “sawaab”. Sawaab is the opposite of sins, it can be thought of as bonus points that elevate one's spiritual status, and probably one of the most prominent nonmaterial religious rewards sought by all Muslims. Another *murid* highlights the nonmaterial religious good of “prayers being fulfilled” and the peace of mind as the main benefit she receives. Safoora, a follower of Shah Mehmood Qureishi, explains this as,

What I get out of it [the relationship] is simple. I get all **my prayers fulfilled**. Mere dil ki murad puri hoti hai [my heartfelt wishes are fulfilled] See, one example of what I get is my marriage to my husband. He had gone to the shrine and asked for intercession to be able to get married, and here we are today, he got married to me. God fulfilled his prayers. So, after we got married, we both came to perform ziarat [pilgrimage] at the shrine. So, I get my mannat [wishes] fulfilled. I come to ask for mannat, and then when it is fulfilled, I come again. But it doesn't have to do with just mannat [wishes]. **I get sakoon (peace) when I come here** [to the shrine]. (R8, Multan, 2015)

The above data points out an imperative aspect of the nonmaterial religious goods that she wants from the exchange relationship with her *pir* – spiritual peace, as something she has experienced in this life (Bano 2012). It is not a promise for goods to come in the Hereafter, life after death, where she may be hedging her bets against an unknown. Instead, the nonmaterial religious goods of “prayers being fulfilled” and “mental peace” are examples of what she has experienced. She got married to her husband (the fulfilment of her prayers), and she regularly gets peace from coming to the shrine (mental peace). Experiencing these nonmaterial religious

goods in this lifetime provides conviction in the *murids* of the power of the relationship and shows that the patron is successfully interceding on their behalf with God.

Furthermore, Safoora's explanation points to the dynamics of the relationship, where there is a conditional reciprocation between herself and God in relation to her prayers being fulfilled. If and when her prayers are fulfilled, she will go on a pilgrimage to keep her end of the deal – to come back and give tithes at the shrine or provide offering of her time. The investment of time and tithes (in the form of financial contributions) are both resource intensive, where the client offers up a substantial investment into the relationship. This is reminiscent of Foster's study (1963) where Mexican villagers would go to saint's tombs, and ask for something, but only upon the prayers fulfilled were they obliged to fulfil their end of the bargain. If the prayers were not fulfilled, the client would be under no obligation to fulfil their end of the bargain.

Unlike Foster's study, the *pir*-politician in religious clientelism is living and contests elections, whereas the patron-saint in Mexican villages from whom clients invoke favours is dead. This dual role of the patron provides an overlapping relationship to the *murid*-client, where the religion also plays a role in the political realm. What is remarkable is the similar attribution that the *murids* and followers in Foster's study make in relation to their patrons. If prayers are fulfilled, the intercessor is seen as successfully providing access to God. However, if prayers invoked are not fulfilled, both consider it as "not meant to be", effectively alleviating the patron-saint from accountability.

A final example of what followers of Sufi saints want is expressed by Haroon when explaining what he gains from the relationship. Haroon, a follower of *pir*-politician Jamil uz Zaman, gives a nuanced explanation

I get **peace of mind** and the knowledge that when I die, **I will be bakshed** [gain salvation] and go to Heaven. I get duas (blessings). I cannot say I get more than this. I mean, what proof do we have that Day of Judgement will come. I have my aqeeda [belief/creed] that is the most important. **I believe in this and that it will benefit me.** (R2, Karachi, 2015).

This gleans the nonmaterial religious goods gained by the *murids* as "peace of mind", the knowledge of "going to Heaven," "redemption" and "blessings and prayers." Haroon's explanation clarifies a key point in his rationale for wanting nonmaterial religious goods – a genuine belief that it will benefit him. The conviction in the value of nonmaterial religious rewards stems from his creed/belief system, and having experienced these goods in this lifetime, very much like the earlier example of Safoora (Bano 2012). After explaining what he gets out of the relationship, the self-reflection offered by mentioning "Day of Judgement" highlights an awareness of Haroon knowing his rationale may not be fit the typical rationality associated with cost benefit analysis of material goods. Instead, it highlights the rationality of the believer, where nonmaterial religious rewards are the goods that provide utility to them. This addresses a fundamental concern most humans have, of not knowing what happens after death and despite this lack of knowledge *murids* still opt to lean on the side of their beliefs and to obtain the psychological peace of mind associated

with it. This choice also reflects an undergirding trust that permeates the relationship, where *murids* have an unwavering trust in their spiritual leader and their powers to enhance their personal wellbeing through the shared religious bond.

5.4 What *murids* get

While *murids* explain what they want from their *pir* in terms of their rationale for following a *pir*, where they highlight the access to nonmaterial religious goods, what *murids* actually get from their *pir* in terms of the *type* of goods overs a wide range. This variety of goods is made clear by two things. First, the categorisation *murids* do of the type of exchanges between themselves and the *pir* as either *rouhani* (spiritual) or *duniyawi* (worldly). It immediately expands the reach of the relationship from the religious to the material. Second, when probed to differentiate between what the identity of being a *murid* (i.e., what the religious bond did for them) versus what the *pir* himself did, *murids* provided extensive lists that included both nonmaterial religious goods but also material goods.

The exchange relationship underscores *murids*' expectations, where they understand the role of the *pir* as intercessor not just in spiritual matters but extending to the material world, including but not limited to "taking care of them." Haroon, a *murid* of Jamil uz Zaman, explains this as,

Primarily our murshid is **taking care of our souls**, but of course he **also takes care of our worldly matters**, but he's doing that as part of being our spiritual leader, so that he can get sawaab (concept of spiritual points). He does as much as he can, like if you need help with your land he can help you out there, especially if there has been a land squatting. He will help to negotiate between the parties and bring about a mediation process. But no, he helps us by using his network, something we don't have access to on our own. There are a range of things he can help us with; help in getting loans, he will act as our guarantor, in negotiations etc. (R2, Karachi, 2015)

This highlights the encompassing nature of the *pir-murid* relationship. Over and above the religious following and *murids*' pursuit of nonmaterial religious rewards, *murids* appear to be provided with substantial help in worldly matters – i.e., the *pir* acts as intercessor for *murids* both in the religious and worldly realm. This includes help to settle matters of arbitration, help with land squatting matters, pulling strings ("helps us by using his network"), help getting loans, the *pir* serving as guarantor and much more. *Murids* understand this worldly help as part of the *pir*'s role as spiritual leader, where the spiritual leader also gets a nonmaterial religious reward in return as *sawaab* (bonus spiritual points). In short, the *pir*'s role as intercessor is applicable to the *rouhani* and *duniyawi* matters such as jobs and contact networks (contacting landlords, or government offices). Effectively, the *pir* provides access – both in the spiritual realm (access to God) and the *duniyawi* (worldly). This is reinforced by Assad, a follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi

Well, obviously he helps us with our spiritual problems, but we also take other problems to him. Like *duniyawi* (worldly) problems. Because he can **help us solve all types of problems**, in worldly problems. You see, he has contacts, something we don't have, jaan pehchaan (pulling string). His

contact network is quite large, so when we need his help, he can extend it by getting in touch with the right person. We are illiterate people; we don't have that kind of access. (R15, Multan, 2015)

This duality of the actors' roles, where allegiance by both actors is exercised and expressed both in religious and worldly terms, speaks to the pivotal and overarching role of religion in the minds of *murids*. This duality of their roles, and the provision to accessing networks etc. speaks to the stickiness of categories, where the type of good is not easily separable. For example, the worldly access provided by the *pir*-politician to their *murids* is similar to exchange provided by guanxi networks in China (Warren et. al 2004) or the exchange of contacts, or rather lopsided friendships detailed by Springborg (1970) in his now classic study of the Sayed Bey Marei in the Egyptian bureaucracy.¹²¹ These types of exchanges are typically deemed nonmaterial, many times labelling these as “diffuse” exchanges, but they continue to hold instrumental value typically associated with the cost-benefit associated with the economic understanding of clientelism. However, because the worldly intercession provided by *pirs* is seen as part of their religious duty, in the eyes of *murids*, the *pir*'s help in worldly matters can assume religious hues, even when the help extended has instrumental value.

Table 5.1. Type of goods exchanged *Indicates what the patron receives from murids

<i>Type of good</i>	<i>Nonmaterial (ideational)</i>	<i>Nonmaterial (instrumental)</i>	<i>Material</i>
Religious	Salvation –insurance for the afterlife Spiritual guidance Blessings, prayers and granting of wishes Peace of mind Access to God Identity		<i>Tavees</i> (amulets given for different reasons, including good health, keeping away evil spirits, and small paper pieces with prayers written in Arabic (surahs) to keep the bearer safe). Soup kitchen.
Social	Social standing Tradition	Impartial arbitration Access to social network	
Economic		Access to social/professional networks of the patron Access to government officials Jobs	Tithes*, land*, donations in kind*, cash*
Political		*Attending rallies, encouraging family members to cast vote for <i>pir</i>	Vote*

There appears to be a spectrum of goods exchanged between *pir*-politician and *murid*-voters – religious, social, economic, and political goods. I use the term spectrum to emphasise the difficulty in delimiting these goods to strict categories, be-

¹²¹ Springborg (1970) differentiates between first order and second order resources. He exemplifies first order resources as those typically associated with landlord-peasant types of clientelism, where land formed the main form of first order resource, from which the landlord as patron gained power. However, in Egypt, as clientelism moved from traditional forms to a type that exists in bureaucracies, connections within the bureaucracy became a second order resource in itself.

cause their nature is fluid. A religious good can be perceived as a social good and vice versa, without necessarily reducing its importance in either sphere. These overlaps stem from the religio-social nature of the *murid* identity, which is also reflected between the religious and social goods, as will be seen in the coming pages. Table 5.1 below summarises the types of goods exchanged and the type that they constitute in terms of nonmaterial (ideational versus instrumental), and material. These are further divided into religious, social, economic, and political.

The above table builds on the table presented in Chapter 2, where I compare the ethnographic literature to today's political science scholarship, highlighting the trends of how clientelism scholarship has evolved. The table above expands specifically on work such as that of Pellicer et al. (2020) by adding religion and its associated nonmaterial religious goods to the repertoire, something that the authors do not treat. In this case the nonmaterial goods provided by religious clientelism are both relational and affective at the same time. The identity of being a *murid*, is in and of itself a nonmaterial religious good the client receives. This identity lies at the cusp of the religious and social realms. Being a *murid* is not only part of religious following and their belief/creed but also an integral part of tradition, and the social norm of having a spiritual guide. It is a fitting example of a good that falls in the space where religious and social goods overlap, effectively *murid* identity is a nonmaterial religio-social good. It provides social identity, social standing and because it can only be obtained through entering the religious relationship shared with a *pir*, it too is also at once a religious good. As an identity, at the individual level it provides recognition of the self is in relation to the larger group (the congregation). Thus, this identity is both a religious and social group identity.

There appears to be a contradiction between what *murids* want and what they get from their patron. *Murids* specifically express nonmaterial religious goods as what they want. That is, they list nonmaterial religious goods as a central part of their preferences in their relationship to their *pir*-politician. However, they also express that they have expectations from their *pir* in worldly/temporal matters. In simple terms, they also have expectations of worldly, material goods from their patron. In fact, *murids* provide lists of goods when answering what the patron's duties are towards them. To clarify this contradiction and tease out what *murids*' preferences are, i.e., to clarify what they want versus what they get, I juxtaposed nonmaterial and material goods, and asked them what was more important to them, Rouhani (spiritual/nonmaterial religious goods) or *duniyawī* (worldly/material goods).

5.5 Juxtaposing nonmaterial and material goods

The overall data suggests that *murids* implicitly rank goods, expressing a preference for nonmaterial religious goods as the most important part of their exchange with their *pir*-politician. This is made explicit by Safoora, a 25-year-old follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, she explains "Oh, the spiritual. You see, the worldly matters they continue to take place. It is the *rouhani* [spiritual] that is superior (R8, Multan 2015). The process by which *murids* decide whether to take a matter to their *pir* illustrates their prioritisation of nonmaterial religious goods. The first step in this

process is to classify whether a matter is spiritual or worldly. In the hierarchy of goods, spiritual matters are seen as important and worthy of consideration by the *pir* because he is meant to guide you on the spiritual path. While material goods matter, or *duniyawī* matters are understood as “petty” and not to be taken to the *pir* himself because it would constitute a form of insult, or rather a waste of the *pir*’s time. As one *murid* puts it

...we would never take it [worldly matters] directly to him because these **petty, worldly issues** are beneath his time and dignity. It would be plain disrespectful for me to take this to him. I wouldn’t want to bother him with something so **small**. (R12, Karachi 2015)

Bakshi, a day-wage farmer and a *murid* of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, elaborates on this hierarchy and sorting of exchanges and goods into two groups. He highlights the weighting of issues

Well, you do not take all kinds of issues to him, **they have to be important enough**. The bigger things... I mean, I can take all matters to him, but why trouble him with **petty issues**. I will take my wellbeing issues to him; **you know spiritual and worldly**. For example, if I have a land issue, business - all such issues. He will pray for me and for my troubles to be resolved but he will also help me through calling up people and talking to the right people who can resolve my issues. (R7, Multan 2015).

As the above quote clarifies, *murids* can take all issues to their *pir*, but not all issues are equal. This is not to say that worldly matters are not taken to the *pir*-institution. These are taken to the *pir*-institution but handled by the bureaucracy – the khalifa network. This classification of spiritual or worldly is ingrained to such an extent, that despite knowing they can take all types of issues to their *pir*, many *murids*, such as Rajab, a follower of Jamil Uz Zaman, do not even bother taking their worldly issues to the *pir*. Rajab highlights his preference for the nonmaterial supernatural goods, while admitting he has not made use of the *pir*’s help in worldly/material matters “... For us **the rouhani [spiritual] is supreme**. And so far, that is all we have demanded from our murshid [spiritual master]. We have not bothered him with our worldly matters thus far (Karachi 2015). Haroon, another follower of Jamil uz Zaman, explains the preference for nonmaterial religious goods relative to material goods by comparison

The **spiritual matters more of course**. As I see it, this material world is going to come to an end. Death is inevitable, we all know this, and **it’s not like we can take any of this with us to the grave**. Time will be spent here, but in the end, what will matter are your deeds and your spiritual wellness. (R2, Karachi 2015)

Drawing on fieldwork in conjunction with the above data excerpt, *murids* understand worldly/material goods as ephemeral and limited to this life, whereas they perceive *rouhani* (spiritual) matters as nourishing the soul, something that will be needed in the hereafter. Although Haroon categorically ranks spiritual above worldly and chooses nonmaterial spiritual goods over material ones, he himself has benefit-

ted from help from his *pir*, where he was given a job within a government agency. This may undermine the actual meanings he holds with the relationship, and instead may be indicative of his answer being tinged by social desirability bias. But a similar reply and sentiment is expressed by Assad, a *murid* of Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Like Rajab above, he has never received any material help from the *pir*-politician. Yet, Assad too expresses a preference for the nonmaterial over the material one, and rationalises his choice

For me, the more important between the two [worldly and spiritual] is the rouhani (spiritual) goods. **Everything can be included in the dua** (prayer). But the things of this world will stay here [material goods]. The Hereafter is what we really need help with... Also, **I should mention that I have not had the chance to test the other as yet. That is, the material help.** (R15, Multan 2015)

The fact that Assad has never received material help from the *pir* strengthens the finding of *murids*' preference for nonmaterial religious goods. Despite never receiving material help, Assad still votes for his *pir* as a reciprocation and fulfilment of his implicit duties as a follower – a role he accepted when pledging his allegiance.

Furthermore, in explaining their preference for nonmaterial goods, some *murids* rationalise in favour of their *pir*-politician, where they express understanding that sources are finite. Abdul, while sitting on the floor of the shrine of the Sarwaari congregation in Hala, whose current leader (*pir*-politician) is the Member of National Assembly Jamil uz Zaman, juxtaposes nonmaterial religious goods to material goods, and explains that both matter, but ultimately nonmaterial religious rewards matter more.

Both matter. The material matters but **spiritual matters more to me.** [I interject – but you just said both matter, and it seems that he does a lot of work for his *murids*]. Okay, baji (sister), of course **the rouhani (spiritual) matters more**, because at the end of the day, out of all the requests and help that is needed by the *murids* from Sain [his honour], there are only so many requests and problems that he can solve. Let's say we have 100% requests and problems to be solved. Out of those, most probably 10% will be solved and helped. Sain cannot tend to every single one of us, but he does what he can. But he **can pray for every single one of us**, and that is the most important. **We need his prayers.** (R5, Hala, 2015).

Ostensibly, Abdul's rationalization is persuasive, especially in a context where social norms dictate the need for a spiritual guide to gain spiritual goods, one of which is the promise of salvation and entry to heaven.¹²²

Another explanation that provides insight into the preference for nonmaterial religious goods over material goods, is how *murids* rank their *murid* identity. This serves as evidence that helps undergird and strengthen *murids*' expressed preference for nonmaterial religious goods over material goods. In framing this argument, I build on McCauley's (2014) experimental evidence, where he demonstrates how changes in the salience of ethnicity and religion in Africa are associated with varia-

¹²² The prevalence of the norm is best captured by the Sindhi proverb expressed by one interviewee "The one who does not have a *pir* is homeless" or "the one who does not have a *pir* has the Devil as his guide." Interview #

tion in policy preferences at the individual level.¹²³ Based on this, as one central finding of the fieldwork, it is clear that *murids* rank their religious identity as their most important one. This is done both explicitly and implicitly. Explicit ranking was evident when *murids* were asked about the importance of the relationship in their lives and the function it plays. Respondents reiterated this ranking of identities, placing their religious bond higher than that of parent-child (kinship). This is concisely captured by Bakshi, a follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who explains that different identities serve different roles.

...all relationships in life serve different roles. The relationship between parent- child, teacher and student, and then the one between a murshid [spiritual master] and his *murid* [follower]. There is a ranking, like in a town. You first have the hawaladar, then he has the superintendent, and who does he report to? Well, the SP and who does the SP report to, the Governor. There is a system and an order to that system. **It's that order that matters.** So, like that hierarchy and system that I just gave example of, it is the same with this relationship. The spiritual bond is similar in this way. You see it's like this, if we go back in time, and look at the overall picture. Rasool (the Prophet PBUH) was first given the message from God, then he spread it in the form of Islam to us. After that, we got the caliphs to take over, who continued to teach people what the right Path was. And to follow on that tradition of guiding mankind on to what is right and what is wrong, the *pirs* are there. So, I have been blessed with someone whose family first spread Islam. You see, it is through his family that we converted [to Islam] generations ago, we owe them so much. They made us Muslims. It is thanks to him that I became a believer to begin with, so **don't I owe him anything?** [obligation of reciprocity] He has much better insight as to what is good for me than anyone else does. So, you see **there is a hierarchy**, first there is God, then Rasul [Prophet Mohammad], then the *pir*. Same way, **in the relationships that we have there is a hierarchy, where the parent-child bond is not higher but in fact it is below the rank of the *pir-murid* relationship.** So, you mentioned that there is an order to these relationships, where in the hierarchy is the *pir-murid* relationship? Well, I just told you, it **ranks the highest.** At the end of the day our relationship is with God, but our intercessor is the one that is ranking highest in the relationships we have. (R7, Multan, 2015)

In the above quote Bakshi explains the different roles that different identities play and underscores “it is the order that matters”. Here he ranks his religious identity as the highest among all his relationships. Another central point that Bakshi makes is the importance of hierarchies. He extrapolates the importance of hierarchy onto his own identities. This is reiterated by Karim, an elderly follower of Shah Mehmood Qureshi as “...the chain is very important. You know it's like a chain from me, to our *gaddi nishin* (seat holder) to the original saint – to God” (Interview R14, Multan 2015). This links back to how *murids* understand their oath of allegiance and their connection to the original Sufi saint, and through him to God. The relationship and religious bond between *pir-murid* appears to rank the highest because of its linkage

123 McCauley (2014) uses experimental evidence showing how group members primed to ethnicity prioritize club goods, the access to which is a function of where they live, and how otherwise identical individuals primed to religion prioritize behavioural policies and moral probity.

to their access to God. The *pir* is seen as their intercessor and is thus held in the highest esteem.

Furthermore, to underscore the importance of this religious bond, *murids* highlighted two specific relationships: the parent-child bond and teacher-student relationship, both of which are traditionally held in high regard and esteem in the Pakistani context. The weight of the parent-child relationship is universal and relatable across cultures where parents are primary providers of safety and wellbeing of a child. It is valued equally as an identity held close to one. In a similar fashion the parental analogy was used by most respondents to exemplify the status of their relationship to the *pir*, pointing out “he’s our spiritual father”.¹²⁴ They forwarded the analogy of *pirs* being their spiritual parent, whose role is to guide the *murids* on the spiritual path.¹²⁵ Additionally, the teacher-student relationship is one that carries importance across Eastern cultures, because of the intimate nature of learning by emulation and shadowing it involves in passing on of knowledge. Specific examples of this are the guru-shishya relationship (Khosla et al 2021) and the *ustad-shahgird* relationships found in the Indian Subcontinent (Mattoo 2022). The importance often associated to the relationship is underscored by teachers being likened to one’s parent. Following from this and returning to Bakshi’s use of these two relationships to highlight the importance of his bond to the *pir*, the relationship is an amalgamation of these two very important roles. If a *pir* is one’s spiritual parent, the religious aspect brings the relationship higher because of the supernatural nature of it.

To ensure the data is not skewed, and to triangulate the process of ranking, I compared this code to the overarching collated data, and the code holds across interviews. One example is a very similar response provided by Shahid, who follows a different *pir*-politician (Makhdoom Jamil uz Zaman) and belongs to a different ethnicity (he’s Sindhi).

You have to go to the right person for different matters. Like for dua (prayers), we turn to the *pir*, but other worldly matters we let the khalifa deal with. Just take my simple example. If I have a concern about my job that I think needs to be fixed, and it’s something small, obviously I am not going to go straight to my boss. I am going to talk to Zubair, who is the house manager and ask him to bring up the matter with my employer. **There is a hierarchy, like I said, you have to go to the right person for the different issues.** (R12, Karachi, 2015)

Shahid reinforces the importance of hierarchy, and thus ranking, through specifying a division of labour, where different people deal with different issues. Moreover, examples of implicit ranking of identities are also prevalent. This is evident in a *murid’s* political behaviour, where a respondent explains the importance of his relationship to the *pir* by stating that he would choose his *pir*-politician’s order over his own kin

Let me give you an example. Let’s say my own brother stands for elections. I wouldn’t even vote for him, even though I like him more than the candidate that Sain tells me to vote for. **It’s Sain’s huqqam [His Honour’s orders] that I will obey.** (R13, Karachi, 2015)

¹²⁴ Interview R14, Multan, 2015

¹²⁵ Interview R17, Multan, 2015

The repeated emphasis on hierarchy of relationships highlights a demarcation of not only some identities mattering more than others, but also reinforces the importance of upholding an established order. The above quote also connects back to the shared expectations between both actors where *murids*' pledge of allegiance binds them in an informal contract where they are to "obey"¹²⁶ the orders of their patron-saint. The model below captures the aggregate ranking that the interview data points to, where religion (the identity of being a *murid*) is held highest by *murids*, followed by kinship, clan/tribe and ethnolinguistic identities.

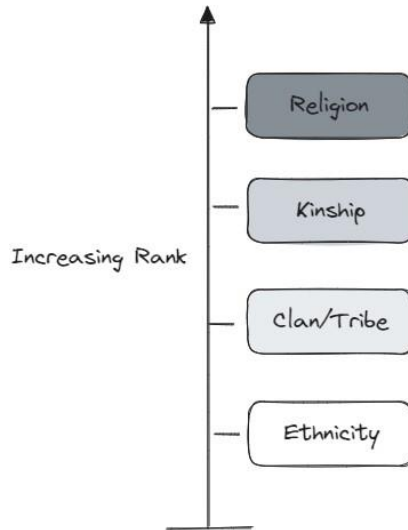


Figure 5.2. Ranking of identities

A final data point to support the finding that *murids* rank their religious identity as pivotal is that *murids* do not necessarily belong to the same ethnicity as the *pir*-politician. This speaks to the identity literature, that often highlights shared ethnicity as the basis of solidarity between actors, or in this case patron and client (see Chandra 2004, 2007). What differentiates religion is its ability to provide a supra identity, or rather an umbrella identity, which not only includes the characteristics typically associated with ethnic and tribal identities but evokes solidarity across ethnic/tribal identity cleavages. This is evidenced by *murids* that come from different ethnicities and many times do not share ethnicity or sect (such as Sunni/Shia) with the *pir*. It reinforces the role of the religious bond between the actors. This aspect of representation across tribal lines also helps underscore the religious bond to transcend tribal linkages.

The combination of *murids* ranking their *murid* identity as the one they hold highest, is also reflected in how they rank the type of good that they get from their patron. It adds to the established literature that finds preferences to be intricately linked to identities. Each identity elicits different preferences. In this case, the *murid*

¹²⁶ Interview R16, Multan, 2015

identity elicits preferences for nonmaterial religious goods, even if they are provided both types of goods by their *pir*. What this points to is, that material goods matter, but nonmaterial religious goods matter more. It also highlights the clash between rationalities, where the prevalent model in clientelism scholarship generally focuses on cost benefit analysis where the main utility is understood in economic terms of gaining material goods. However, *murids* are driven by the rationality of the believer, where utility is found through nonmaterial religious goods. Thus, when a *murid*'s religious leader (the *pir*) enters the political realm, *murids*' preferences associated with their *murid* identity also enters the political realm. Their *murid* identity is made salient by their *pir* running for office, as such, their preferences associated with their religious bond are active in the political sphere.

5.6 How does *pir-murid* relationship affect *murids*' political behaviour?

5.6.1 Voting as a religious duty

As part of the *pir-murid* relationship, most *murids* cast their vote for the *pir* as part of the expectations shared between the actors. They see it as a religious duty, where voting is part of "obeying" the patron-saint.¹²⁷ As a disciple of the late Makhdoom Amin Fahim puts it "Voting for Sain sahib is not only our duty, but it is also an expression of our love for him" (Karachi, November 2015). This is intimately tied in with the exclusivity and loyalty of the bond, where the emotion evoked towards their *pir* is love. It underscores the depth of the relationship and highlights the familial feelings they have towards the *pir*.¹²⁸ Another *murid*, Khan, explains this

If there is a person from *Pir Pagaro*'s party contesting the elections, then it is my **duty** to vote for him. *Okay, it is your duty?* Duty means that I am a follower of this person on the religious plane, so I should be following him on the political point too. There is no difference here on the political point. He hasn't said that go be different on the political plane. **His religious message is applicable to his political message too.** (R1, Karachi, 2015)

This quote underscores that the religious bond is not limited to the spiritual realm. In fact, the religious bond takes precedent in the political realm as well, which demonstrates that the *murid* identity is driving their political behaviour. Although voting is understood as a religious duty, this is not necessarily an active order from the *pir*-politician. Instead, it appears to be an implicit expectation held by both actors. The below quote highlights this expectation

Yes, I vote for him... He never tells us to, but if he were to tell us his opinions then we would be bound to do so... That is what a *murid* is, we are his disciples. (Hala, 2015)

There is a mixed picture about the modus operandi of what party to vote for. This is underscored by a large majority of *murids* pointing out "We vote for whatever

¹²⁷ R16, Multan, 2015, R14, Multan, 2015, R2, Karachi, 2015, R5, Hala, 2015, R15, Multan, 2015.

¹²⁸ Most *murids* refer to the *pir* as their "spiritual parent" and the absence of one is seen as being "orphaned" (Interview R12, 2015).

er political party that the Sain [his Honour] tells us”.¹²⁹ Although there is no direct order from the *pir*-politician instructing *murids* who to vote for, there seem to be “lists”¹³⁰ provided to the congregation through the *pir*’s substantial *khalifa* network. This is the main communication network of the *pir*-politician. This is over and above the combination of signalling and expectations at work. This is reminiscent of the implicit signalling done by religious leaders during sermons influencing congregants’ political participation (McClendon and Reidl 2020), except the provision of lists is an explicit signal. The “lists” in combination with the regular interaction of *murids* and *pirs*, where sermons and teachings reinforce the importance of obeying the *pir* are part of the overall relationship (via the shrines and annual *urs* celebrations, and general teachings of the *pir*-politician) that function as constant implicit metaphysical instruction. It is the combination of these implicit and explicit signals that drives the *murids*’ voting behaviour. This *modus operandi*, where there are no direct orders given, is confirmed by one *pir*-politician, who is serving as a member of parliament in the National Assembly (MNA). He explains this as,

We have never told our *murids* that you have to vote for this party etc. We keep reinforcing that whatever your local conditions, you should do that...We tell them to vote according to their local circumstances (R4, Islamabad 2019).

However, when asked if *murids* voted for them as part of their religious duty, the MNA contradicts himself with the following reply

Well, for example if we are contesting elections from Sindh, then **obviously they will for their *murshid*** [spiritual master]. **There are no two ways about it.** But we have never, as you know, as their spiritual leaders, told them to vote for this guy and not that guy.

The obviousness the *pir*-politician points to underscores the implicit understandings that exist between the actors, where one is assured the *murids* vote, without a direct order. Other *pir*-politicians are less coy about the expectation of voting as a religious duty for the *murids*. They explain that if the *pir*-politician has not voiced his opinion or “says nothing,” and the *pir*-politician is contesting elections from one constituency, then the *murids* will automatically vote for him (R2, Karachi, 2019).¹³¹

5.6.2 Following *pirs* across party lines

The view that voting is a religious duty and part of the expectations between *pir* and *murid* is further reinforced by *murids* voting across party-lines when their *pir*-politician switches party – regardless of the political ideological spectrum. One such example is Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who previously was with the left of centre Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), and currently is part of the centre of right Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI). One of Shah Mehmood Qureshi’s *murids* puts it bluntly,

¹²⁹ Interview R7, Multan, 2015, Interview R44, Multan 2015.

¹³⁰ Interviews R5, Hala 2015, R10 Multan 2015.

¹³¹ He serves as a member of parliament at the provincial level in Sindh (MPA)

detailing where their political allegiance stems from and why they vote for their *pir*-politician when they run for office as,

Our relationship is with Sain [His Honour], not with the party and not with anyone else. Listen, what is more important – this politics business or our faith? Imaan [faith] will be useful here and ‘there’ (pointing up to the sky, indicating heaven and afterlife). (R7, Multan, 2015)

The quote also highlights the religio-clientelistic relationship as the driving force behind the political choices of these voters, where their individualised religious bond to the *pir* supersedes links to a political party. This aspect of expectations is undergirded by a loyalty shared between the actors, at the cost of political party platforms, or manifestos. This distorts the traditional idea of the religious voter as voting for conservative platforms (Raymond 2011, Gomez 2021). Here the *murid* is voting on the personal basis of the *pir*-politician, and thus willing to follow across partisan lines. Other *murid*-voters explain this type of political behaviour to be part of a norm among *murids*, providing examples of other congregations than their own. To see whether political platform would matter, the party I suggested was on the opposite end in terms of political ideology. Imran explains,

So, if your pir decides to leave and join the Pakistan People’s Party will you follow? A lot of people are doing that. Isn’t Makhdoom Amin Fahim’s, Sarwaari jamaat doing that? Isn’t Shah Mehmood Qureshi’s followers doing that? No, my question is if Sain saab [Pir Pagaro] decides to leave [PML-F], then join PPP, will you vote for PPP? He can’t leave the Muslim League F because he is the president...but if he decides to dissolve it then. If he joins the PPP I will vote for him, if he tells us to vote for PTI then I will vote for them. Why? Because at the end of the day, if he is giving us so much and taking care of so many things for me, why wouldn’t I do it for him? I will vote for him. (R4, Karachi, 2015).

Haroon reinforces Imran’s explanation and clarifies that the personal tie to the *pir*-politician drives political behaviour more than partisan concerns. He emphasises that *murid* identity is where their loyalty and trust lies – in this case pointing out the congregation. Haroon, a *murid* of Jamil uz Zaman, explains,

Obviously, **we will vote for our murshid**. That is a given. Yes, even if he changes parties, we will vote for him. Our love for him is not limited. What kind of love and respect is it if we don’t give him our support when he needs us? **The party is secondary. We don’t really have much to do with the party**, although Makhdoom saab has been with the PPP since the start. If he were to change party, we would follow suit. We aren’t with the party we are with the jamaat (congregation) and the jamaat (congregation) is much higher than the party. (R2, Karachi, 2015)

Moreover, the element of active exercise of choice seems to disappear when the *murid* identity becomes salient as the *pir* contests elections. One former high level civil servant and follower of *Pir Pagaro*, Khan, tells me,

If my murshid [spiritual master] is standing for elections from an area where I can vote, then yes, I will vote for him. (R1, Karachi, 2015)

The above quote alludes to a practical constraint that could limit a *murid* from voting for their *pir*. Whether or not one can cast a vote for a candidate depends on where one is registered to vote. Simply put, if one is registered in the same constituency from which the *pir*-politician is contesting office only then can you vote for him. How do *murid*-voters support their spiritual leaders, through their vote, if they cannot cast a direct vote for them? One *murid* explains the process in detail as,

We vote for whatever political party that the Sain tells us, but **normally** we just vote for the person that is part of **the list**. Take my example, I can't technically vote for Sain because I belong to Sindh [his *pir* was running from Punjab]. In this situation I just vote for the candidate who belongs to Sain's party in our area. (R15, Multan, 2015)

This strategy – to vote for candidates via a list provided, or in the absence of such a list, for the political party that the *pir*-politician belongs to – appears to be a general trend among *murids*. This holds true whether they belong to the congregations of Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi or the followers of Makhdoom Jamil-uz-Zaman. Voting is understood by *murid*-voters to be a religious duty and is accommodated and adjusted in accordance with the knowledge at hand – specific (lists of candidates) or general (voting for the political party of the *pir*-politician).

To probe further and see whether one could vote for someone that may be performing better in their area in terms of delivery of promises such as public services, it quickly becomes clear that loyalty and trust towards the *pir*-politician appears to be driving their vote choice. Rajab, a security guard in Karachi, explains

We won't vote for anyone who is not approved by our Sain. Listen, **I'll vote year after year for the guy who is chosen by our murshid [spiritual master] even if he doesn't carry out a single promise or job in my own zila [district] or perform on any of his job.** The best example I can give is, like if the PML-N [Pakistan Muslim League -Nawaz] guy, who is in the opposition to our *pir*, were to be performing jobs in our zila¹³² [district] and actually getting results, I still wouldn't vote for that guy, and continue to give my vote to our *pir*. There have been many occasions where other parties have come to our villages and tried to get us to vote for them, but we still don't cast our votes for them. (R13, Karachi, 2015)

Rajab stresses how his belief is his highest priority. He underscores this with an example of how he has rejected large sums equivalent to his monthly salary in the face of having to decide whether to honour his bond with his spiritual leader or choosing a material good that could benefit him.

Some people even try to bribe us, with sums as large as 10 or 20 thousand rupees¹³³ but we *murids* will not vote for them. Even if our murshid [spiritual master] won't find out, we won't vote against his will. After all it's a matter of aqeeda [beliefs] and aqeeda [belief] is rohani [spiritual] and at the end of the day, the murshid [spiritual leader] knows what is in our hearts. (R13, Karachi, 2015).

¹³² First tier of local government in Pakistan.

¹³³ 54 – 100 USD as of April, 2022.

The above data reinforces the importance of the *murid* identity as the factor driving their political behaviour, where there appears to be a lack of demand in accountability of the *pir*-politician. The complex dual nature of the religio-social tie appears to be the driving factor, where supernatural, spiritual concerns drive the *murids*' reasoning, highlighting the rationality of the believer (Bano 2012).

5.7 Discussion

I have demonstrated empirical evidence to evaluate the relative strength of the patterns that appear in relation to each point through which the theory of religious clientelism is differentiated from the existing scholarship. First, *murids* prefer and prioritise nonmaterial goods over material goods in their exchange with their spiritual leader. This stems from their ranking of identities. Second, a point of differentiation is the aspect of trust existing between the actors. Both actors share a middle level, sticky trust that combines generalised and particularized trust. Third, and final, *murids* vote for their *pir*-politicians as a religious duty. It is perceived as part of the shared expectations between the two actors.

First, clients' preference and prioritisation of nonmaterial religious goods in their exchange with the patron. As shown in the above pages the data presented in this chapter supports the claim that *murids* prioritise their soul's wellbeing and the need to uphold the social aspects that come along with their *murid* identity. The data clarifies that preferences associated with an identity travel from one sphere to another, where the *murid*'s preferences elicited by their religious bond, travel to the political sphere when their *pir* runs for office. The preferences they express as most important for their *murid* identity are nonmaterial religious goods. These goods include but are not limited to prayers, blessings, spiritual guidance. These serve both religious and social purposes where the *murid* identity itself provides social aspects of social standing, the fulfilment of the need to belong, and the access that the *pir*-politician provides, both as mediator in their spiritual and worldly matters. The worldly matters include getting jobs, access to connections, protection, and intervention with bureaucracy – all of which fall into the category of nonmaterial goods (Hicken 2011:291, Chubb 1982, Springborg 1979, Jamaal 2007). It highlights a complex overlap between social goods provided by religion as well as the fluidity of categories, where goods can fall within a shared space of categories. Effectively, a good being understood as both religious and social simultaneously.

The special role of religion is highlighted by the effect it has on goods exchanged between both actors. Unlike goods provided by social identities (such as ethnicity), the goods emanating from *murid* identity fall within both social and religious categories, where *murid* identity itself is a religio-social identity. So much so, that some goods are not identified strictly as religious or social, nor material and nonmaterial. Instead, there is a diffuse religious characteristic assigned to the goods exchanged between the actors because of the encompassing and pivotal nature of the religious identity provided by the hierarchical bond. This speaks to the diffuse nature of religious goods, which unlike the short-term gains of economic goods that form an essential part of the contemporary scholarship on clientelism (Brusco et al 2004),

tap into a broader socio-psychological impact on *murids* overall wellbeing and how these interact with clients' political behaviour where these nonmaterial goods are part of their long-term gains. Effectively, this strengthens the importance of the inclusion of diffuse, nonmaterial religious goods (Hyden 2012, Geertz 2005, Johnston 2019), in the analysis of clients' voting behaviour. Religion functions as an umbrella effectively enveloping and diminishing the distinction between social/religious/political. But it can also blur the lines of categories of material and nonmaterial. Instead, what comes to the fore is religion's ability to blur these distinctions in the perception of *murids*, where even a material good like food from the soup kitchen at a shrine is considered sacred and observed as a ritual of partaking in the supernatural – or at the very least a way to get closer to God.

There may be the possibility that *murids* are unwilling to admit to valuing material goods as superior to nonmaterial religious ones. However, in conjunction with the data presented thus far in this chapter, what further strengthens the evidence for *murids* preference and prioritisation of nonmaterial goods is *murids*' political behaviour. All *murids* interviewed across congregations told me they vote for their *pir*-politician. In fact, voting for the *pir*-politician appears to be understood as a religious duty by the *murids*. This duty stems from their identity as *murids*, where their spiritual belonging appears to be what matters more to them.

The close association with the *pir* and a direct reference to belonging and identity speak to the deeply held position this religious identity holds for the client. This belonging is with the clients prior to the *pir*-politician entering politics. It suggests that the preferences tied to this identity, travel to the political sphere when the *pir* decides to run for office. Simply put, the bond of *pir-murid* is prior to the *pir*'s position as a politician, as are the preferences associated with the bond of *pir-murid*. In fact, as elaborated earlier, one of the main motivations to become a *murid* is to access nonmaterial religious goods of spiritual guidance, prayers, blessings, and the added insurance of salvation in the afterlife. These preferences and demands do not diminish because the *pir* runs for office, instead, this identity and their associated preferences spill over into the political realm when a *pir* runs for office. Thus, when the *pir* runs for office, the *murids*' preferences for nonmaterial religious goods travel with them to the political realm. And in contexts like Pakistan, where politics are contested based on personal networks, the political structure reinforces the personalised religious bond of the *pir-murid* when the religious leader runs for office. They already share a personalised hierarchical bond prior, and entering a field where politics are contested based on personal networks, provide ample space for *murids*' expectations and duties from their religious identity to operate in the political sphere. Thus, reinforcing the finding that *murids* prefer nonmaterial religious goods in their exchange with the *pir*. Religion plays a decisive role due to its dual function as social identity and belief system in one.

The second finding concerns the presence of trust between both actors. Unlike the contemporary scholarship on clientelism, in religious clientelism there is a meso level, sticky trust shared between both actors. By meso-level trust I mean a trust that is based on both generalized trust towards the institution of *pir-murid* relationship, but also a thick interpersonal trust developed between *murids* and *pir*. It works in

two directions, vertically and horizontally, landing on two scales simultaneously, where there is a genuine trust in the individual *pir*-politician, but also a general understanding of the institution, provided and sustained through the interaction and communication with the khalifa network.

Furthermore, an innate trust is part of the pledge of allegiance that *murids* swear to their *pir*-politician. This pledge lays the foundation for the relationship and is taken because of a genuine belief that one's spiritual leader wants what is best for you alongside an overwhelming conviction that they have the ability to provide what is best for you. The latter includes spiritual blessings and ability to intercede on your behalf in life after death, especially during the Day of Judgement. This meso-level trust is fostered and reinforced on a steady basis through *murids*' regular interaction with the *pir* and its institution (such as the annual urs and the *pir*-politicians' *nazrana*¹³⁴ visits), and through interactions with the general congregation including the khalifa network that is part of the informal *pir* institution. Although the data presented does not use the word "trust" the implications of the preferences voiced, and the reasoning provided by the aggregate data is evidence of a meso level trust existing between both actors.

The third finding pertains to *murids* voting for their *pir*-politicians as part of their shared expectations between themselves and the *pir*-politician. *Murids* understand voting as part of their religious duties. They rationalise it as fulfilling their part of the bargain, where voting is a way for them to take care of their *pir*, or at least a way to reciprocate for all the caring that the *pir* has done over the years. *Murids* openly admit to voting for their *pir*-politicians. In fact, many times when probing questions of partisan leanings were posed, *murids* were either dumbfounded as to my lack of understanding of what their answers during the interviews about their relationship communicated, but also elicited ridicule where partisan leanings were brushed off. To drive home their political behaviour, some *murids* compared their own behaviour to other *pir*-politicians' followers, explaining their own voting behaviour as a commonly practiced norm across congregations. Furthermore, the questions of voting behaviour also shed light on the lack of value *murids* as clients give the vote, i.e., whether they view it as a bargaining chip in their interaction with the *pir*-politician and his informal institution. The responses of "this is only a vote"¹³⁵ was repeated across interviews – underscoring the lack of value it holds in their eyes, and "I'm willing to give my life for him"¹³⁶ as a comparison for the value they hold for the vote, versus their loyalty towards the religious leader. The latter may appear as hyperbole to some, but it is a useful way to highlight the associated value of the vote in comparison, and to reinforce that the relationship is of a pivotal nature. Similar answers and intonations across interviews help undergird that *murids* do not attach value to the vote as a bargaining chip as is the case in much of the modern school of clientelism, that understands the low-income voter as a vote seller (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Brusco et al 2004). Instead, *murids* see the vote as a way for them

¹³⁴ These are annual visits *pirs* make around the country to visit their *murids* to visit his *murids* to hear their grievances and to collect donations from them (*nazrana* translates to "looking fee").

¹³⁵ R44, Hala, 2015, R17, Multan, 2015, R12, Karachi 2015.

¹³⁶ R8, Multan, 2015.

to reciprocate towards their *pir*-politician for all the effort and help, both spiritual and worldly, that the patron provides them.

5.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided an empirical illustration of meanings *murids* attach to their long-term hierarchical religious bond with the patron, their preference for nonmaterial goods in relation to their *pir*-politician and how this ultimately affects their political behaviour. I did this through an exploration of their expectations and preferences when they share a hierarchical religious bond with their patron. The aggregate data in this chapter helps strengthen the overall argument of the dissertation, of the importance of nonmaterial supernatural goods in the *murid*-voters calculus. It undergirds the extant gap in the current scholarship on clientelism, where material goods, typically a short-term gain in relation to elections, are de facto understood as the most important to clients overall in their relationship with the patron.

Another important implication of the data presented in this chapter pertains to the role of religion in politics. In the political science scholarship, the overt focus has remained on religion affecting voter's decisions indirectly, via political party platforms, where conservative policy positions are seen as the likely predictor of how religious voters will cast their vote. The data presented here shows the direct impact religion has. At the individual level where religion operates as belief system and identity at once, religion works in a direct manner, through the hierarchical religious bond shared between voter and politician. Thus, it expands our current understanding of what religious voting constitutes, especially in the context where elections are contested based on personalities and not on policy platforms of political parties, typical of hybrid regimes like Pakistan, where the scaffolding of electoral democracies exist but political parties operate as a collection of strongmen.

Moreover, to the scholarship on politics and religion, it adds a nuance to the general understanding of Islam, where it is detached from the oft-used security lens. The data presented in this chapter provides a deeper understanding of what political Islam constitutes, where the structure of the ties between religious leader and follower has the potential to sway their political behaviour, and not the ideology of the religion itself. This nuanced understanding has the potential to understand Islam as a force in politics in a similar way of the political analyses provided through the differentiation of Christianity into Protestantism and Catholicism, especially in relation to political outcomes such as quality of government and political behaviour at the individual level.

6

Pir-politicians – powerbrokers or politics as usual?

During my fieldwork in 2015, one of Pakistan's most renowned *pir*-politicians, Makhdoom Amin Fahim, passed away.¹³⁷ It made front page headlines of the national as well as local newspapers. The day after, one of my interviewees, Shahid, contacted me, and told me there will be a *soyem*¹³⁸ ceremony at the shrine in Hala on the third day of mourning. He also told me that Makhdoom Jamil uz Zaman, the eldest son of Amin Fahim, would be inaugurated as the new spiritual leader of the Sarwari jamaat in a turban tying ceremony.¹³⁹ I realized this was a once in a lifetime opportunity where I could witness the transfer of leadership from one *pir* to another and how the entirety of the congregations' *murids* transfer their spiritual allegiance to the new leader.¹⁴⁰ A bonus was the chance to witness, first-hand, the importance of the deceased, gauged from the type of media coverage the event receives and from observing who attended the ceremony. I left Karachi early next morning, and Shahid came along as my chaperone.

There are two types of *pirs* to be found across Pakistan. The first is the one trying to achieve spiritual enlightenment through leading a pious life and leading by example. These are the *pirs* that focus on the metaphorical annihilation of the self to achieve a higher state of being (Alavi, 1988). It is their tombs that are littered across the countryside, with small green flags flying above small domes at every turn of the road. These *pirs* are the subject of anthropological works such as Ewing's rich study *Arguing Sainthood* (1983) that examines Sufi religious meanings and practices in Pakistan and their relation to the Westernising influences of modernity and the shaping of the postcolonial self. The second type, and the focus of this chapter, is the hereditary Sufi saint who partakes in politics (Ansari 1992, Malik and Mirza 2015,

¹³⁷ Amin Fahim was the spiritual head and 18th custodian of the Shrine of Hazrat Nuh, and elected member of National Assembly.

¹³⁸ *Soyem* refers to the third day of mourning after someone passes away in South Asian Islam. It is a day marked by collective prayer for the deceased's soul, feeding those that come to pay their respects as well as distributing food amongst the less well off in the vicinity of one's home.

¹³⁹ This ceremony marks the transition of the spiritual seat and leadership from father to son, where the son effectively inherits the spiritual seat as custodian of the shrine and head of the Sarawaari jamaat (congregation of *murids*). Like his father, Makhdoom Jamil uz Zaman is also an elected member of parliament, belonging to the Pakistan People's Party.

¹⁴⁰ R12, Karachi, 2015.

Malik and Malik 2017). The hereditary *pir*-politician inherits his religious power and legitimacy through his blood ties to the original saint and its associated *dargah* (shrine) where the original saint is buried. To borrow Max Weber's phrase, today's *pir*-politician's charismatic authority is in fact "inherited charisma". These *pirs* are known as *sajjada nashins* (literally translating to sitting in prayer) or *gaddi nashin* (seat holder) of institutionalised shrines.¹⁴¹ Simply put, these *pirs* are the custodians of holy Sufi shrines, who claim blood ties to the original saint, and their followers accept them as spiritual masters, through whom they seek nonmaterial religious rewards of spiritual guidance, prayers, blessings, and insurance of redemption in life after death.

Moreover, these *pirs* actively partake in politics and use their position as religious leaders to gain advantage in the political field. They have been part of Pakistani politics since partition, and their presence has increased across time and space at both provincial and national levels. In 1970 only 12 members of the 272-seat National Assembly were *pir*-politicians. Today, this number stands at 35 – translating to almost one fifth of the current National Assembly being living saints.¹⁴² Similar increases can be seen at the provincial level. In 1970 the Provincial Assembly of Sindh had 12 *pir*-politicians serving as members of provincial assemblies (MPAs), whereas today this number stands at a staggering 36 – approximately 28% of its members are living saints.

This chapter explores the religio-clientelistic relationship from a top-down perspective to understand the political advantages *pir*-politicians gain from their positions as religious leaders. I provide micro-level data on the inner-workings of how religious clientelism operates alongside key insights into the mechanisms of the religious position that provide an advantage to *pir*-politicians relative to secular politicians. These mechanisms are (1) *murids* as voters (numbers), (2) the khalifa network as an infrastructure (organisation) and (3) access and provision of non/material goods (resources). These mechanisms provide the *pir*-politician with set advantages in the political realm. This is followed by an empirical analysis of how each mechanism impacts their political behaviour relative to secular politicians. Drawing on interview data with *pir*-politicians, high level civil servants and family members of *pir*-politicians, the empirical analysis helps untangle the complex role of religion, especially when donned by religio-political actors such as living saints, and its repercussions across the political spectrum when these actors contest political office. Additionally, the implications of the empirical analysis can be extrapolated to the larger context of the Muslim world, where hierarchical religious bonds are found.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ For details on how *pir* practice and shrines became institutionalized see Trimmingham 1977

¹⁴² See attached political database of *pir*-politicians. The political database is made up of the election results of 11 election waves, starting in 1970, and uses the Makhdoom, *Pir* and Syed as proxies to capture the presence of *pirs*-politicians. This database provides a conservative number as it is unable to capture those actors that do not use their honorifics as part of their name. Cross referencing of the proxies was done with the help of the addresses registered as part of their electoral papers – because many of these politicians indicate the addresses of their shrines as part of their electoral record.

¹⁴³ The chapter builds on fieldwork carried out in the months of April and May in 2019

The chapter proceeds as follows. The first section focuses on the religious bond from top down. I detail the basic characteristics of *how* one becomes a *pir*-politician and *what* the *pir*-politician understands as *murids*' expectations from himself.¹⁴⁴ In the second section, I provide an empirical analysis of the three mechanisms through which *pir*-politicians gain political advantage when running for office. These advantages are (1) *murid* vote bank (numbers), (2) *khalifa* network (organisation) and (3) access to nonmaterial religious goods (resources). The third section analyses how a *pir*-politician's these mechanisms affect their political behaviour in terms of election campaigning, coalition formation and alliance building.

6.1 *Piri* – the religious bond from above

To understand how hereditary pirs take advantage of their religious positions and influence in the political realm, it is important to understand *where* their religious power stems from, and through what means religious power is exercised in the political realm, and to what ends. Thus, in this section, I elaborate on *how* one becomes a *pir* and *what* the *pir* understands as *murids*' expectations.

6.1.1 What makes a *pir*-politician?

The core to a *pir*'s religious power is their inheritance. The *pir*-politician inherits his religious power and legitimacy as Sufi saint through blood ties to the original saint and its associated *dargah* (shrine) where the original saint is buried.¹⁴⁵ Typically, it is the eldest son of a *pir* that takes over the spiritual seat through the process of a turban tying ceremony. Simply put, spiritual abilities and access to nonmaterial religious rewards (such as intercession, ability to provide blessings, provision of access to God, and access to supernatural nonmaterial goods) are believed to be possible through establishment of a blood tie of an individual to the shrine's custodian family. This aspect of inheritance as part of legitimacy of religious power is reinforced by family genealogies displayed at shrines, showing family trees and linkages to the original Sufi saint, many times dating back to the Prophet or one of the first four caliphs of Islam.¹⁴⁶ Effectively, inheritance and lineage to an established Holy Sufi shrine and the prophet, serves as the main barrier to entry for secular politicians from being able to exercise the role of *pir*. Thus, limiting who can call themselves *pir*-politicians.

It is also necessary to understand whether pirs share a similar understanding of the religious hierarchical bond as understood by *murids* to see if they are reacting to what their followers demand of them, or not. Pirs understand the religious bond in similar terms as their followers. This is well illustrated by the descriptions *pir*-politicians provided of the relationship, where the most common reply was "you can

¹⁴⁴ Majority *pir*-politicians tend to be men, therefore I use male pronouns throughout the chapter.

¹⁴⁵ The *dargah* normally houses the original saint's tomb, as well as his descendants' tombs. The typical *dargah* has a courtyard for congregation purposes as well as a mosque within its compound.

¹⁴⁶ The four caliphs of Islam are 1) Hazrat Abu Bakr, (2) Hazrat Usman, (3) Hazrat Umar and (4) Hazrat Ali. The different sects and schools of jurisprudence of Islam also stem from these four leaders, whose seat of leadership was considered both religious and political.

only understand it if you are part of it”¹⁴⁷ or by the most common phrase used by *pir*-politicians and *murids* alike, where they liken the relationship to “immense love”, or as one serving minister of provincial assembly explains this relationship as,

Well, I told you this from the start, that the relationship is one of the heart. So, if there are 100 things of your murshid [spiritual guide] that you don’t like, even then the *murid* will mumble, but he will in the end say “what will I do without him”. This is a relationship of the heart and is not one that is made lightly. And the murshid must also make sure that he expresses and behaves in a loving manner towards his *murids*. This is a matter of the heart. (R4, Karachi, 2019).

The word choice and expression of what the relationship entails, as “one of the heart” corresponds to how *murids* describe the relationship specifically and the above quote underscores the reciprocal nature of the relationship.¹⁴⁸ This phrase stands out because it is not a normal one to be used in the Urdu language. As a native speaker, and having lived in the country, the only time I heard this phrase was during fieldwork, when in conversation with *murids* and *pirs* of various congregations.

Another piece of evidence supporting that *pir*-politicians understand the relationship in similar terms to *murids* is how they compare this religious bond to other social identities. Like the aggregate identity model presented in Chapter 5, *pir*-politicians also understand as ranking above other social bonds. In fact, when comparing the religious bond of *pir-murid* to that of tribal linkages, the *pir*-politician highlights tribal linkages as based on coercion, while the religious bond of *pir-murid* is based on mutual affection. One *pir*-politician explains this as,

Sardari [clan bonds] is all about power exertion – galla pakr ke rakhou (keep your hand on their throats). The spiritual is a relationship of the heart. The former is about the stick [maintenance through force]. Look at the sardaari [clan bonds] ones, go talk to the underlings. They are petrified from their Sardaars [clan leaders]. That system doesn’t exist with us. (Interview R4, Karachi, 2019).

This reinforces the meanings that *murids* hold of the relationship and confirms that *pir*-politicians too view the relationship in similar terms. Simply put, the actors react to shared expectations between the patron and client in religious clientelism and lends further credence to the finding of *murids* ranking their social bonds where the religious bond ranks higher than other social relationships.

6.1.2 What *murids*’ expectations are of the *pir*-politician

In this section I elaborate on the demands and expectations the *pir*-politicians describe that they face from *murids*, and the type of goods that *pir*-politicians as patrons provide *murids* as part of these shared expectations. One of the main demands *pir*-politicians elicit they face from *murids* is access. Access is provided through face-to-face interaction and availability. There are two types of face-to-face interac-

¹⁴⁷ Interview reference

¹⁴⁸ Interview R2, Karachi 2019, R2 Islamabad 2019.

tions that take place between patron and client, religious and worldly. One senior *pir*-politician elaborates like this,

Look there are two types of interactions. Whenever I go to Hala, I have a certain time set aside from 10 in the morning till 4 pm. I go and sit outside in a large hall. And people keep flowing in throughout the day – the worldly issues, of getting a job, getting work done in the DC (district council) or SHO (station house officer). Have something to tend to in this ministry, getting something fixed etc. Getting this job. And in that flow, there are people from the jamaat (congregation) as well. The second [type of interaction] is to go to some funeral, wedding, the rest of the jamaat (congregation) then says “if you’re here come and have tea with us...have a meal with us...” stay a day or stay 2 days. (R2 Karachi, 2019).

The *pir*-politician provides an overall understanding of the relationship, where religious and worldly interactions take place whenever he goes to his hometown, which is dependent on his personal schedule, demonstrating the regularity of interaction that takes place between the two. However, this interaction is dependent on the individual *pir*-politician’s own schedule.

Overall, there are set times of the year where face-to-face interactions on the religious plane take place. These are the annual 3-day *urs*¹⁴⁹ celebrations at the shrine, and the annual trip that the *pir*-politician undertakes to visit their followers across the country to collect *nazrana*.¹⁵⁰ During the *urs* there is a fair at the shrine, prayers are said, blessings and amulets given to fulfil wishes and unanswered prayers. These trips, both the ones arranging for the *murids* to attend the annual *urs* and the *pir*-politician’s *nazraana* are planned by the khalifas on a district-wise basis.¹⁵¹ The interaction on these two occasions is on a face-to face, intimate basis. A recently elected *pir*-politician explains

...the interaction [during the annual *urs* and *nazraana*] is on an intimate level, like a one-on-one audience with people. If they have any, problem resolutions, if they have any fights you know, panchayats (village councils), we normally hold them then. If there is a feud between the jamaat (congregation), between two members, we try to resolve it in-house. (R8, Islamabad, 2019).

Like the earlier quote regarding the two types of interactions that take place between the two actors, this also sheds light on the overlap of worldly and religious taking place, where a religious event, such as an *urs*, becomes an opportunity for *murids* to raise their worldly concerns such as conflict resolution. This is reminiscent of the overlap observed in the classification of goods, where religious and social goods are not fully separable, but it also underscores the lack of separation made by the actors in relation to the exchange and the holistic bond they share.

Finally, the main face-to-face interaction prioritized by the *pir*-politician, to ensure being there for his *murids*, are funerals and weddings. These occasions, described as “*khushi*” (happiness) and “*ghaami*” (sorrow), are two categories under-

¹⁴⁹ *Urs* (union) celebrations are the death anniversaries of the original saint, celebrating the union between God and the saint himself. These events tend to be grand religio-social events, with musicians performing at the shrines, soup kitchens, and a fair, where villagers (both *murids* and non-*murids* alike) congregate – praying, dancing and singing together 150 R2, Islamabad, 2019.

¹⁵¹ *ibid*

scored by pirs as priority, where they ensure to be present for their *murids* due to the expectations put on them by their followers.

I was advised by my father, that people require you at 2 times, on death and during their weddings. They expect you to share in their sorrows and expect you during their happiness. (R1, Lahore, 2019).

Weddings and funerals are two occasions that stand out because of their religious and social significance. On the one hand weddings are one of the high points of celebrations in an individual's life, no matter what one's socio-economic background. On the other hand, funerals represent one of the largest losses an individual can experience. Both weddings and funerals are part of religious rites and passages and are emotionally demanding, constituting some of the high points in one's spiritual life and the social life of *murids*. This taps into the expectations of *murids* and highlights their to have their spiritual leader present at the two religious and emotional high points in their lives – helping them gain mental peace and psychological Zen in their most emotionally ecstatic or demanding times. The quote below highlights the importance the *pir* assigns to these events as part of the *murids*' expectations and explains how he will be judged by the followers if he were not to fulfil this religio-social expectation. He explains,

In our Sindhi culture, it's the same in Punjab, **you cannot forego weddings or grieving** – i.e., funerals. **These things count.** You may make 100 roads, bring electricity to the village, but when it comes down to it the *murid* will say "Sain [your Honour] you didn't come during the death, my brother died. None of you came" or "my son got married". So, **these things matter a lot** in our culture, whether you are Baloch, Punjabi, Sindhi or Pathan. (R2, Karachi, 2019)

This reinforces two things. First, that *murids* rank the type of goods they receive from their pirs. Second, it corroborates that *murids* value nonmaterial goods, like time and physical presence, more than material tangibles such as roads and electricity, that the *pir*-politician delivers. This explains why *murids* rationalise their support for the *pir*-politician even when there is a lack of performance in areas such as infrastructure development. It also reinforces the importance *pir*-politicians assign these events to keep their followers happy. Unlike the *urs* and *nazraana*, both trips that can be categorized as religious visits, weddings and funerals are events that are considered both social and religious simultaneously, where each reinforces the other.

The second implicit demand *pir*-politicians face from their *murids* is availability – of the *pir*-politician, so that *murids* feel heard. To meet this implicit expectation pirs maintain active direct connections with their *murids* through several ways. The primary platform is the khalifa network associated with each congregation. This constitutes the infrastructure of brokers (who also are *murids*), through which travels, pilgrimages, and communication is carried out. Over and above this, many *pir*-politicians have devised secondary systems to ensure availability to *murids* such as via mobile phones. Technology has alleviated the need for the *pir*-politician to travel to see their *murids*, lowering the cost of investment for the *pir*-politician and in-

creased their outreach – wherever there is network coverage, the *pir* can “be there”. One Makhdoom explains the process

You are sitting here, and **you are in touch with everybody**. Now everyone has their own system of working, mine is that over there I have a council sitting, of friends and from the jamaat (congregation) (both from the PPP and the jamaat) and **they get the jobs done. They call me and I receive them on the phone**. They tell me the person’s situation and I tell them who to take contact with. ‘Then tell me the result and I will take it from there’. (R2, Karachi, 2019)

The importance of remaining in contact with *murids*, providing availability to oneself as an implicit demand that they fulfil as part of the expectations towards their *murids*, is reinforced by another MNA, who explains

After winning these elections, even then **you are in constant contact with these guys**. You get their programs, have to make roads, other favours. You are constantly in touch with them. You need to keep a certain demeanour. **People expect me to behave a certain way**. I expect myself to behave a certain way when I have you know, when you look at us from that prism, that angle of a custodian of a shrine. You have to conduct yourself in that respect. (R8, Islamabad, 2019)

Being able to keep in touch with the *pir*-politician and communication with the associated informal institution provides a platform for *murids* to be heard, essentially providing them with a voice, where the religious bond provides them with a voice also in their worldly affairs. The importance of this communication as part of the regular availability that *murids* value, undergirds the trust shared between the actors. It results in a virtuous cycle reinforcing the sticky meso trust shared between the patron and client, where *murids* know their concerns are being heard. This knowledge also provides *pir*-politicians with wiggle room in case they are unable to deliver on their promises. One *pir*-politician details

So, in politics, well politics over here (Pakistan), **if you keep in touch with people** – whether or not you can do their jobs, meet them and carry forward their concerns to the right people. **They must know that this guy did talk**, if the other person isn’t responding that is another matter – whether he is the DC (district councillor), minister, CM (chief Minister) or PM (Prime Minister). **There remains a link**. (R2-20190430-M-64, Karachi, 2019)

The above quote corroborates two points highlighted by *murids*. First, the maintenance of a link, through regular interaction and availability of the *pir*-politician as mediator, both in this world and the spiritual, is an implicit demand by *murids* that the *pir*-politician tries to maintain. This is done through the *pir*-politician’s contact network and ensuring *murids* have the feeling of being able to have your spiritual leader’s ear. Second, performance (in terms of delivery such as building a road, or school) is not what *murids* judge the *pir*-politician by. Instead, what *pir*-politicians understand to matter most to their followers, is that one keeps in touch with the *murids*, and raise their concerns with the right people. Simply, what *murids* appear to give weight to, is that they raised an issue with their *pir*, and that he will try to get it resolved. It is the perception of the *pir* doing his part that matters, effectively the importance of feeling heard and having a voice and place of redress.

And it is because of this perception that *murids* actively rationalise non-performance by their spiritual leaders (as was seen in chapter 5). One such example is apparent when a follower of Makhdoom Jamil Uz Zaman, explains why the spiritual goods matter more to him

Let's say we have 100% requests and problems to be solved, out of those, most probably 10% will be solved and helped. Sain (His Honour) cannot tend to every single one of us, but **he does what he can**. But he can pray for every single one of us, and that is the most important. We need his prayers. (R5, Hala, 2015).

I have now demonstrated that *pir*-politicians and their followers share similar meanings about their relationship and the type of goods that are exchanged between them both. The general understanding of the type of goods the *pir*-politician must provide are divided into worldly and spiritual goods, where spiritual goods tied in with the wellbeing of their soul is seen as the most important.

6.2 Advantages of the *pir*-politician

To understand the advantages of the *pir*-politician I first wanted to understand why they run for office. Many of the *pir*-politicians interviewed claim to be 'accidental' politicians. In support of this claim they point out their educational backgrounds and career paths. However, the data points to *pir*-politicians being groomed and brought into the business of politics by senior family members. There is an awareness that they will one day enter the political realm. One *pir*-politician explains this as,

...my father and my family have been in politics since pre-partition, the first elections that were held in 1938, that was the first time the ballot was introduced in the Indian Subcontinent. And my family has been in politics and parliament since then. So, I knew eventually I'd end up here, but didn't think it would be now. (R8, Islamabad, 2019).

The purpose of contesting political office despite their religious position is two-fold. First, to carry on family legacy. Second, to consolidate power – where they exercise both religious and political power simultaneously. Some examples include Makhdoom Rafiq uz Zaman of Sindh (father Makhdoom Talib ul Maula), Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani of Punjab (Makhdoom Syed Alamdar Hussain Gilani was one of the signatories of the Pakistan resolution and later served as a provincial minister in Punjab).¹⁵² Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi (his father Shah Mehmood Qureshi has served as foreign minister in PPP's government and PTI's government), and Shah Mehmood Qureshi (whose father was the former Governor of Punjab). Their grooming starts as part-time work, shadowing their fathers or senior members of their family.

¹⁵² His uncle Makhdoom Syed Wilayat Hussain Shah served as the chairman of District council Multan whereas he also remained a member of the legislative assembly. His grandfather Makhdoom Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah also served as the chairman of the Municipal Corporation of Multan and later got elected as a member of the legislative assembly in the 1945–46 general elections. His great grandfather Makhdoom Syed Sadar-ud-din Shah Gilani was invited to the Delhi Darbar in 1910 whereas Sadar-ud-Din Shah Gilani's brother Makhdoom Syed Rajan Baksh Gilani remained a member of the legislative council and later served as the first Muslim mayor of Multan.

To illustrate this let us give the example of Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi. Educated in England, he worked as a banker in Europe, and was called back to Pakistan to assist his father's political campaign in 2008. Simultaneous to his political grooming, he was given responsibilities within the religious sphere of his father. He was made responsible for taking care of 'day-to-day affairs of the *murids*'¹⁵³ as his father was unable to dedicate enough facetime to these constituents. As part of his political grooming, in the following election, Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi ran his father's 2013 political campaign. The final step was in 2018, when Zain Qureshi contested elections himself at the national level. He won a seat from one of Multan's six constituencies. Another example is Makhdoom Rafiq uz Zaman who studied and trained to be a medical doctor and surgeon but left that career path because his father "required a strong candidate to contest from Matiari at the local level – i.e., Sindh Provincial Assembly".¹⁵⁴

The overarching reason for pirs entering politics gleaned is to consolidate the actors' religio-social power, where political power completes the trifecta of power hold in Pakistan. As elaborated in chapter 4, Sufi saints historically were primary spreaders of Islam, where they preached and converted local populations, most areas have a Sufi saint associated with it along with the miracles the saint performed. Thus, Sufi saints held both religious and social power. Pirs entering politics helps to reinforce their religio-social power, by providing political control over areas their families have historically had strong influence over. There is also the case of pirs that do not enter the political arena. Although they do not enter politics directly, they maintain indirect political power by having final say over important posts within their local area. One example is the appointment of area police chief. The candidate assigned to Bhit Shah must be approved by the *pir* Syed Waqar Hussain (who does not contest political office). Another important exercise of indirect political power that non-political pirs exercise is the direction of how their congregation votes. This is like the signalling power exercised by religious leaders in Africa, where sermons serve as a signalling device for religious leaders in steering their congregations' political behaviour (McClendon and Riedl 2019). Furthermore, because non-political pirs do not contest office they have flexibility in what party to support in different election cycles. However, they do not have any budget control, which is typically associated with seats won at local and national levels. In summary, the reason *pir*-politicians run for office is to consolidate their power. This is through the three advantages they gain from their religious positions.

In following section, I use Bierstedt's (1950) framework of analysis of social power to locate the mechanisms that undergird the *pir*-politician's advantages gained from his religious position in the political sphere. According to Bierstedt's framework power stems from three sources (1) numbers, (2) social organization and (3) resources (1950:737). It is precisely these three mechanisms through which the *pir*-politician gains advantages from his religious position which are actuated in the political realm when pirs run for political office. These advantages are (1) *murid* vote bank (numbers of people), (2) khalifa network (organization) and (3) access to

¹⁵³ Interview with R8, Islamabad, 2019

¹⁵⁴ R2, Karachi, A2019

two types of resources (both material and nonmaterial). Let us deal with each mechanism in turn and discuss how each one provides an advantage in the political realm relative to secular politicians.

6.2.1 *Murid* vote bank

The first mechanism through which *pir*-politicians gain advantage from their religious position in the political sphere relative to a secular politician is in terms of a guaranteed number of votes. The number of followers a *pir*-politician has translates to a guaranteed number of votes from *murids* in the political arena. As illustrated in Chapter 5, *murids* understand voting as a religious duty, and it forms part of the shared expectations between *murids* and *pirs*. *Pir*-politicians are aware that their spiritual affiliation to *murids* serves as an advantage in the political field, and freely admit that the relationship garners them votes from their followers. One recently elected *pir*-politician explains this as,

Well for example if we are contesting elections from Sindh, then **obviously they will vote for their murshid** – there are no two ways about it. (R8, Islamabad, 2019)

The ‘obviousness’ of this knowledge that *murids* vote for their *pir* is centred on the awareness the *pir*-politician retains about how the relationship operates, and the expectations that both actors have of each other. Specifically, it highlights the *pir*’s awareness of how the relationship is perceived by *murids*, and the way they rank it as ultimately above other relationships.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, *pir*-politicians awareness of their power to translate their spiritual clout to electoral advantage is evidenced by the fact that *pirs* regularly issue direct orders to the *murids*, to either vote or withhold a vote for a specific candidate.¹⁵⁶ However, if the orders pertain to a family member who, for all intents and purposes, is perceived as a *pir*, then the *murids* can voice concern and try to persuade the ordering *sajjada nashin* to change his mind, even to vote for one’s family member. One seasoned *pir*-politician explains as,

...like Jamil Sahib [current custodian of the Sarwaari Nuh shrine], if he so wishes, that his jamaat (congregation) should not vote for his chacha (paternal uncle), he can issue such a vote. But chances are that people will argue with him, that no give us permission to vote for him, he is your chacha (paternal uncle). Then it is possible that after a while, he will cave. So, this is the relationship between the dargah (shrine) and the *murids*. (R2, Karachi, 2019)

This points to agency that the *murids* have in relation to their *pir*-politician, especially in situations where if another *pir* family member is contesting elections, and they belong to that constituency, then they want to vote for them. This agency indicates a two-way relationship between the two actors, and it can be argued that they

¹⁵⁵ Interview R2, Karachi, 2019

¹⁵⁶ Murids highlighted that during election time, if their *pir* was not on the list of candidates in their constituency, then they were provided with lists of candidates whom on should cast their vote for. “I vote for whomever he tells us to vote for. Normally we know what candidate, and its actually easy, it’s just to cast your vote for the PPP, which is Sain saab’s (his honour) party, but right before the elections, for us that don’t live in Hala we are given a list of whom we can vote for... “Sain ka huqaam (his honours orders), therefore no voting elsewhere” Interview R12, Karachi, 2015, Interview R

rationalize their decision of voting for their pirs. It also highlights the pressures that stem from expectations that *pir*-politicians face from their *murid*-voters.

Furthermore, advantage of the vote bank can be used simultaneously between members of the same *pir*-politician's family when contesting at different levels of government. One example is if a *pir*-politician is running for election at the national level, their family member running at provincial level can gain through association. Effectively, one level feeds into the other. One senior Member of Provincial Assembly explains,

Yes, they [the *murids*] will vote for him and for me. The current situation is that I am an MPA (member of Provincial Assembly) from the start. First my brother was my MNA (minister of national assembly), in 88 when this present Makhdoom saab was younger, I became an MPA. I went to the village and was home Minister for Sindh. So, in 90s election that I lost, I was contesting from Hala. Then in 98's election I fought from here as the one in 2013 (Matiari) as well as the 2018 one. I have done all of it. At the moment my current MNA (member of National Assembly) is Makhdoom Jamil Saab himself. So whatever votes he gets above, I get them too below, and whatever votes I get below he gets too. And if there are jamaat (congregation) members [*murids*] elsewhere, then the *pir* will instruct his *murids* "vote for chacha (paternal uncle)" This is all part of the relationship between *pir* and *murid*. (Interview R2, Karachi, 2019)

The *murid* vote bank has a direct effect on the *pir*-politicians political behaviour in terms of how they strategize their political campaign, where least effort is invested in areas that have high concentrations of *murids*. One *pir*-politician with the PTI explains this as,

We put least effort into where the jamaat is because those votes we know we will get (R8, Islamabad, 2019)

A political campaign requires investment of time and resources. For *pir*-politicians their knowledge of knowing how much of the vote they can garner from different geographic locations helps save them valuable time and resources relative to a secular politician who does not have a guaranteed set of votes. As pointed out above, another way that the *murid* vote bank effects the political behaviour of *pir*-politicians is in planning potential consolidation of power at different government levels. One example is from the Sarawaari jamaat. Makhdoom Jamil uz Zaman serves as the MNA for Matiari at the national level. His paternal uncle, Makhdoom Rafiq uz Zaman serves as the provincial minister of Matiari. Through the knowledge of their *murid* vote bank, they can consolidate political power at two levels of government. Although *murids* provide a set number of votes to the *pir*-politician, this is not a guarantee of victory. Instead, it serves as a rough estimate of where resources need to be invested to gain votes from non-*murids*.

Finally, the *murid* vote bank is also used as part of the bargaining *pir*-politicians do with political parties when negotiating tickets to contest, as well as a guaranteed presence in certain areas. Furthermore, it is one of the main bargaining chips that the *pir*-politician uses when choosing what political party to join, because it is through this the *pir*-politician can not only lower their own costs but also lower the costs of

the political party, where they can provide the political party access to areas that they may not have had any political presence to before. One *pir*-politician explains this as,

But your party benefits from your jamaat(congregation), does it not?

Yes, on a larger scale. In my opinion the access that PTI got in Sindh was basically due to our jamaat (congregation). PTI has been around for 24 years now and have not had any presence in interior Sindh. Their entire presence in interior Sindh is because of Shah Mehmood Qureshi. There are no two ways about it. Absolutely. (R8, Islamabad 2019)

6.2.2 *Khalifa* Network – from spiritual to political machine

The second mechanism through which *pir*-politicians gain advantage from their religious position in the political sphere relative to secular politicians, is the *khalifa* network. As the main organizational infrastructure of the informal *pir*-institution it serves a pivotal role because of three of its functions – (1) as knowledge holders (keeps records of the size of following, intricate local knowledge of villagers at micro level), (2) channel of communication between *pir* and followers, and (3) mobilization. This network is typically built up of a system of *khalifas*¹⁵⁷ that is spread throughout the rural areas at the village level. A *khalifa* is the go-between the *pir* and *murid*. This role, like the *pir*'s, tends to be hereditary.¹⁵⁸ The *khalifa* himself wears two hats, one as the representative/broker of the *pir* the other as *murid* (as they themselves are also followers of the *pir*). Each district has one *khalifa* per quom (tribe). This ensures full representation of *murids* and avoids situations of feeling unheard or side-lined due to their ethnicity or kinship, and according to *murids* interviewed, ensures a level of impartiality.¹⁵⁹ This tier of *khalifas* (at quom level) relay information to the Chief *Khalifa*, who is the main node between the larger *khalifa* network and the *pir* himself.¹⁶⁰ Overall, the *khalifa* network deals with the “worldly matters of the *murids* and act as the implementers of the *pir*-institution.¹⁶¹ The following quote from a *khalifa* summarises the role of a *khalifa* as,

Nai baji (sister), of course we don't get paid, it's a matter of respect and love. We are appointed *khalifas* and keep the tradition. And our duties are to tend to almost everything. So, for example if we are assigned to the haveli (mansion) here in Hala (town in Sindh), we must make sure to communicate all issues brought to us, to the chief *khalifa* himself, who will then take measures to address each issue, or take it to the *Pir* for resolution if he himself can't solve it. (R5, Hala, 2015)

¹⁵⁷ Brokers that are representatives of the *pir* himself at the village level.

¹⁵⁸ R5, Hala, 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Interview R5, Hala, 2015

¹⁶⁰ Interview R8, Islamabad, April 2019.

¹⁶¹ This network serves a variegated role – (a) data hoarding (b) communication between *pir* and followers, (c) solving day-to-day issues of *murids* (such as conflict resolution e.g., land disputes, marriage counselling and issues like helping with school admissions), (d) travel arrangements (for *murids* to attend the *urs* celebrations and, for the *pir*'s annual trip to see his *murids*), and (e) political mobilization. Of these variegated functions, political advantage is gained through the actuation of the three following functions – *khalifa* network as (1) knowledge holders (keeps records of the size of following, intricate local knowledge of villagers at micro level), (2) channel of communication between *pir* and followers, and (3) political mobilization.

The first and perhaps most valuable aspect for the *pir*-politician of his khalifa network is as knowledge holders. This includes maintaining records of the size of the congregation, intricate local knowledge of villagers at village level, such as “who is doing what”¹⁶² and what issues that concern the *murid*-voters. Khalifas carry out regular mapping at district level, providing detailed information about the followers’ and their households.¹⁶³ If politics is understood as a numbers game, where each follower represents a vote, then the number of followers ties in directly with how much power a *pir*-politician wields (Malik and Malik 2018). It is through this that the *pir*-politician has an overview of how large their following is and a rough estimate of the percentage vote they can get in different areas. One *pir*-politician corroborates this as,

We do have records (...) When my father took over from my grandfather, in 1998, he did a survey of his own, we did a **district-wise survey** of the jamaat (congregation), just to **see where everyone is** and **what they are doing** and tried to further streamline that structure that we have. (R8, Islamabad, 2019)

Furthermore, the number of followers a *pir* commands is in direct correlation to the age and renown of the shrine that the *pir*-politician heads. The political ramifications of this relationship, in terms of guaranteed votes from *murids*, is known across the political spectrum. The government and the state does not possess the same type of knowledge that *pir*-politicians have through their khalifa networks. To counter this consolidation of political and religious power in one actor, the state tries to keep track of the most important Sufi congregations. One example is when the Musharraf administration issued a survey to map out the largest shrine followings of pirs across the provinces of Punjab and Sindh in 2008.¹⁶⁴ In Sindh, the largest three congregations, gaddis, are those of *Pir Pagaro* (the Hur jamaat), the Saawari jamaat (Shrine of Nuh Sarwaari) and the Pirs of Ranipur. All three have their *sajjada nashins* partaking in politics, as well as other family members, serving as *pir*-politicians in both provincial and national assemblies.¹⁶⁵ In Punjab the largest following is said to be Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi’s, the Ghausia jamaat. The numbers obtained through this survey lists the *murid* following accordingly – the Hur jamaat, 1.8 million *murids* in their jamaat. Sarwaari jamaat around 2.1 million *murids* and the Ghausia jamaat, had about 4 million *murids*. Such large followings of *murids*, equate with a substantial size of vote bank that *pir*-politicians can rely on. Also, the issuance of such a survey by the government underscores the importance the state accords to these religious leaders as political actors. This also feeds into the larger discussion of *pir*-politicians’ role as mediators between state and populace over the

¹⁶² Interview R8, Islamabad 2019.

¹⁶³ Khalifas are registered and part of the record keeping kept at each shrine - they maintain rich knowledge of not only the *murids* but also the various issues that concern them.

¹⁶⁴ Interview R2

¹⁶⁵ From the Sarwaari jamaat Rafiq Uz Zaman serves as a Member of Provincial Assembly, his nephew and current *sajjada nashin* Jamil Uz Zaman is currently serving as Member of National Assembly. From the Hur Jamaat, the Syed Sigbhatullah Shah Rashdi serves as the head of the PML(F) and the pirs of Ranipur include the Jilanis at provincial and national levels of government.

years, and how their inclusion or exclusion has been used as a tool for legitimation and control by different governments across time (Ewing 1983, Gilmartin 1979, Ansari 1992).

Furthermore, the knowledge of how many votes they can expect as a “given” from their *murids*, becomes an essential bargaining chip when the *pir*-politician negotiates with potential political parties, under whose umbrella they may want to contest elections. Specifically, it helps them when bargaining for the type of political ticket/seat they contest – where national and provincial seats provide access to more budgets than do local seats. Like the example of Jamil Uz Zaman running for elections at the national level for the seat of Matiari, where his shrine is, and many his followers are, he effectively wields both religious and political power. This consolidates power into one actor, where access to budgets also reinforces their stronghold over and above the social power, they already exercise. Additionally, *pir*-politicians can use this knowledge as a basis for saving money for the party they join, because the knowledge of where concentration of *murids* are helps steer how election campaigns are planned and implemented, where least effort is put into areas where they are guaranteed votes (Interview R2, Karachi, 2019)

Finally, as knowledge holders the khalifa network also provides insight into the type of issues that *murids* care about. They gain this overview from the type of worldly issues *murids* bring to the khalifa network for resolution. It has a deep advantage for the *pir*-politician relative to the secular politician because it also gives them information on the prevailing issues related to an area, which includes voters that are non-*murids*. Because *murids* bring matters of social importance tied in with the locale where they live, the *pir*-politician can focus on the aggregate of concerns raised, which also affects the non-*murid* populations that serve as potential voters. Furthermore, this type of information, where he is constantly informed of the evolving demands of his *murids*, also provides him with an idea of what issues are of urgent matter in specific locales that extend beyond just his own *murids*. This entrenched knowledge provides the *pir*-politician with an advantage relative to the secular politician in Pakistan because the average Pakistani politician has highly inaccurate beliefs about citizen preferences (Liaqat et al 2019).

The second aspect of the khalifa network which provides the *pir*-politician an advantage relative to secular politicians in the political realm, is its function as a communication platform. In the religious realm the khalifa network enables communication flows between the two actors, which is essential as it helps undergird the relationship over and above election times. Simply put, the network functions as a platform for mass communication – with a flow of communication in both directions, i.e., to deliberate the *murids*’ concerns to the *pir*-politician, but also to communicate messages (religious, social, and political) from the *pir* to his *murids*. Effectively it functions as a constant flow of information from patron to client, pertaining to both spiritual and worldly concerns of *murids*. One example of this is the scheduled council meetings held by the different congregations, at set days and specific hours during which they can raise their concerns with the khalifa network. Abdul, a *murid* and khalifa of Jamal uz Zaman, describes this as,

...the khalifas meet twice a week, on Mondays and Fridays, at set hours. During these sessions if it is a very busy day then 10 decisions can be passed, but these matters take time. Normally on average, there are 2-3 decisions that are taken by the committees that hear all the sides of the story before passing their decision down to us. (Interview R5, Hala, 2015)

The communication function of the khalifa network is chiefly about maintaining face-to-face contact with the *murids*, which the khalifa network ensures throughout the year. Another example of the communication provided by the network is arranging the annual nazraana¹⁶⁶ visits of the *pir*, and the annual urs attendance of *murids* going for the annual pilgrimage to the saint's shrine. One *pir*-politician describes this as,

So, what happens is, the khalifa would have made a trip, let's say it's a 3-day trip, so he will have gone to the area, and tell the people of the area that you know your murshid (spiritual master) is coming on such and such date, so make yourself available. And you know, you'd go there and there is a whole series of meetings, visits, ziarat. Then there is lunch at somebody's place, dinner at somebody's place, night stays at somebody's place. (R8, Islamabad, 2019)

This face-to-face interaction maintained by the khalifa network is of a dynamic nature which helps reinforce the bond between the actors and maintains an intricate religio-social relationship that is part of the day-to-day lives of the *murids* and not limited to election time. It contrasts with much of the clientelism literature, where communication between patron and client is removed from the day-to-day and limited to election cycles, where the voter as a short-term calculator in terms of how they cast their vote.

During election time, this aspect of the khalifa network as a communication platform becomes a vehicle for political messaging. Instead of religious messaging, political messaging can take place, such as what candidate to vote for (through the provision of lists), what party to vote for (in case the specific candidate is not known, *murids* use this knowledge to fulfil their religious duty of voting for their *pir*) and what platforms the neighbours are running on. This provides an advantage to the *pir*-politician relative to secular politician. They can offer this established infrastructure that is spread out across geographical areas, at the district level. This is something that political parties lack in contexts like Pakistan for two reasons. First, politics are contested based on individual candidates' personal networks. Second, and relatedly, political parties do not have an apparatus that has such a far reach as the khalifa networks that have been established and maintained for centuries. Having this network provides the *pir*-politician a political advantage because they can gain themselves a more coveted seat from a political party during their negotiations, where whatever party can offer a better deal that is where they go. A political ticket to contest a National Assembly seat has access to larger budgets and thus also reinforces their perception of the *pir*-politician as an 'electable' candidate. Finally, the *pir*-politician controls this infrastructure, so they retain power over what kind of

¹⁶⁶ This is the annual pilgrimage the *pir*-politician makes to his *murids* across the country to collect tithes and donations (both monetary and in kind) to ensure the smooth running of his *pir*-institution, and to give blessings, prayers and spiritual guidance to his followers.

messaging is done through this platform even in the political realm, and keeps the party from hijacking the infrastructure, and ensures they hold their end of the bargain.

The third advantage of the khalifa network for the *pir*-politician in the political realm is that it mobilises the vote bank during election time. Mobilisation includes the spread of information (such as campaign promises), lists of whom to vote for,¹⁶⁷ political campaigning (putting up election posters), arranging transport to the voting booths and ensuring that as many people as possible participate in the election effort¹⁶⁸ and the most important – gaining the actual *murid*-voters' votes. This differs from clientelistic contexts where clientelism is channelled through the political party as political machine (Brusco et al 2004, Stokes et al 2013, Auyero 2001). In the context of hybrid regimes like Pakistan where politics are personalised, the khalifa network fills the void created by the lack of institutionalised political parties. In this case, contexts like Pakistan are more reminiscent of the 'guns for hire' type of clientelism that prevails in weak party contexts such as Indonesia and the Philippines, where political candidates use personal networks of brokers' outside the framework of national parties as their main vehicle for political mobilisation of voters (Berenschot 2018, Aspinall and Hicken 2020, Berenschot and Aspinall 2020).

In sum, the khalifa network which typically operates as a spiritual machine in relation to its associated shrine and *pir*-politician, functions as a political machine during election time, through its functions of knowledge holders, communication, and mobilisation.

6.2.3 Nonmaterial rewards

The third mechanism that provides *pir*-politicians an advantage relative to secular politicians is access and provision of nonmaterial religious goods. These are goods such as prayers, amulets, blessings, easing of tensions and the ultimate promise of salvation. In short, *pir*-politicians have access to what Robert Bierstedt terms "supernatural resources" (1950). Through the *pir*-politician's role as spiritual guide to their *murids*, and the identity space created and shared between themselves as spiritual master with their followers (Abumrad 2021)¹⁶⁹, the *pir*-politician has access to nonmaterial religious goods demanded by their *murids*. Because these goods are intimately tied in with their inherited religious position, where legitimacy and access are provided through the holy familial connection, these supernatural goods are not in danger of depletion.

Instead, nonmaterial religious goods are an infinite resource available to *pir*-politicians. In fact, the *pir*-politician does not primarily rely on state resources for providing its clientelistic goods to their clients. State resources that can be provided to *murids* as part of a *pir*-politicians worldly duties towards their *murids*, are secondary to goods that *murids* demand from their *pir*-politician. This aspect of nonmaterial religious rewards ties in directly with the viability and sustainability of client-

¹⁶⁷ Interviews with author (detail the interviewee number)

¹⁶⁸ Interview R12, Karachi, Sindh, November 2015.

¹⁶⁹ Radiolab host Jad Abumrad on NPR 11th August 2021 <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/26/1020715035/jad-abumrad>

telism as a political strategy for a politician. The *pir*-politician does not have to contend with clientelism as a sustainable political strategy because the main demand from their clients is the clients' souls' wellbeing. This is unlike the contemporary scholarship, where clientelism is considered a viable political strategy if the cost of clientelism is less than the electoral gain. Therefore, in large part clientelism remains a strategy employed by the patron-politician in developing contexts that target the poor voter, whether in India (Auerbach 2018, Thachil 2015), Argentina (Stokes 2013, Auyero 2000), or Benin (Wantchekon 2003). However, when the cost of provision of material goods is higher than the electoral pay-off, the assumption is that clientelism will not be sustainable for a patron and thus eventually dropped as a political strategy. A good example of this is the incremental increases that took place on the island nation of the Dominican Republic, where first small cash payments were the material reward given to voters in exchange for their votes (Sanchez et al 2012, Feiser 2016). The latest election wave in 2020, however, saw politicians handing out bicycles/mopeds from the back of a truck to their potential voters (Fieldnotes 2019). Another cost that patrons must contend with is the trade-off between votes gained from poor constituencies versus votes lost from middle class voters who reject clientelistic politics (Weitz-Shapiro 2012). This is not something that the *pir*-politician needs to contend with both because of their access to supernatural religious goods that matter more to *murids*, and because *murids* are not limited to the poor voter, but range from large landowners, bankers, high level civil servants and daily wage farmers.

6.3 How the religious advantages of *pir*-politician affect their political behaviour

Although the *pir*-politician has these three advantages over secular politicians, these are not enough to gain outright victory.¹⁷⁰ However, these three mechanisms gained from their religious position, form the basis of the *pir*-politician's political behaviour – gaining them good bargaining positions. In this section I illustrate the impact these mechanisms have on a *pir*-politicians political behaviour.

One of the main advantages *pir*-politicians gain from their religious positions is the ability to bargain with the political parties – whether as part of negotiations to join them, or in their negotiation about the type of political ticket they want to contest. This bargaining power comes from the trifecta of mechanisms that their positions as *pir*-politicians provides them – the assured number of votes gained through their *murids*, the infrastructure of the khalifa network and their access to both non-material religious resources as well as material resources. First, in terms of numbers, *pir*-politicians can guarantee a political party a set of guaranteed votes. This translates to access in areas that the political party may not have had any presence before. One example is the access PTI gained through Shah Mehmood Qureshi. A newly elected MNA explains this

But your party benefits from your jamaat (congregation), does it not?

¹⁷⁰ Interview R4, Karachi, 2019.

Yes, on a larger scale. In my opinion the access that PTI got in Sindh was basically due to our jamaat. PTI has been around for 24 years now and have not had any presence in interior Sindh. Their entire presence in interior Sindh is because of Shah Mehmood Qureshi. There are no two ways about it. Absolutely. (R8, Islamabad, 2019)

The second surety the *pir*-politician can offer a political party is lower costs in terms of resource investment. This is through two main avenues – the khalifa network and the access to nonmaterial goods. The khalifa network provides a ready infrastructure across the country (at least wherever *murids* are present), which can be actuated in service of the political party the *pir* joins. This continues to be a source of leverage for the *pir*-politician even after they join a party, because most parties lack infrastructure outside of the urban centres, evidenced by the lack of political offices of the main political parties in the countryside. As the loyalty of the khalifa network is based on their religio-social ties to the *pir*-politician, their operations are at the disposal of the *pir* and not the party directly. As such, the khalifa network effectively can provide not only a ready-made infrastructure to the party but can also carry out its existing functions from the religious realm (as data hoarders, and as a vehicle for communication) in the political realm.

Furthermore, in terms of lowering costs, because of the pirs rely on nonmaterial religious goods in their clientelistic relationship with the *murids*, the *pir*-politician does not need the party to provide material goods to satisfy the *murid*-voters. The *pir*-politician provides these on his own account in relation to the ticket he seeks from the party. Additionally, because of the religio-social status a *pir*-politician enjoys, the inclusion of a *pir*-politician also lends a legitimacy to the party that the *pir* joins – being seen as associated with “Allah loug” (God’s people), which in a conservative society like Pakistan can go a long way.

6.4 Coalition building

As mentioned above, although a *pir*-politician can be sure of a set number of votes through his *murid* following, this is not a guarantee for electoral victory. In this section I demonstrate how the trifecta of mechanisms (vote bank, organisation, and nonmaterial resources) affects the political behaviour of the *pir*-politician in terms of building alliances across partisan and non-partisan lines. Although *pir*-politicians freely admit that the vote bank and political power offered by the *murids*’ following is substantial in size, they are careful to point out that this alone is not enough to win an election. To win, the votes gained from their following of *murids* does matter, but only to an extent. This is because *murids* are not concentrated in one geographical area but are spread out over larger areas that do not necessarily match constituency demarcations. This results in the probability of straight-out victories being less likely, especially if the constituency is not dominated by *murids*.

Look, in politics it is not just matter of the jamaat (congregation of spiritual following). Now look at Hala – there are 2 provincial seats, one for Hala and one for Matiari. In Matiari, our jamaat (congregation), is the least. PS-49 is my seat. Sorry PS-59 is mine and PS-58 is where Makhdoom saab’s (Makhdoom Mehboob Zaman) son contested from. So, PS-58 constituency has a majority

of our *murids*. Then there is Sangrh, Mirpukhas, Sukkur, Dadu, our constituency has a majority. **Over here the majority is not of the jamaat but built on alliances.** R2, Karachi, 2019

It is this spread-out character that often leads to coalitions being built. Much like the bargaining the *pir*-politicians do with political parties, in the case of coalition building, the vote bank again is used as a bargaining chip between the *pir*-politician and respective political parties as well as between *pir*-politicians across the board. When alliance building takes place, the *pir*-politician has already joined a political party. The alliance building is done to ensure that political office is won, over and above the guaranteed vote bank of the *murids*. This highlights that the vote bank still matters because by directly contesting elections, the *pir*-politician has reduced competition in the political marketplace. One brother of a *pir*-politician explains this as,

We put least effort into where the jamaat (congregation) is because those votes we know we will get. Look at it this way. I will explain in accordance with PS (provincial seat). My PS where I contest elections from there are 17 union councils there. Okay, out of 30, 17 union councils and 3 town committees. So, our programme is carried out union-wise. To see what are the heavy candidates in these unions that carry votes. Accordingly, we go to each union council and campaign and form alliances.¹⁷¹

This underscores that the bargaining varies across constituencies and is done in accordance with the power they hold in each division. These alliance formations are not limited to *pir* and non-*pir* politicians. They also take place between the politically active *pirs* and those non-political *pirs* that choose not to contest elections, at times bandying together to maintain their power hold over the constituency. Although non-political *pirs* remain outside politics, the power of their political brokerage should not be underestimated. Like the *pir*-politician, they have large followings. And they direct their *murids* about how to cast their vote. As one *sajjida* nashin points out

I help resolve matters in a family. Similarly, I help resolve matters in elections too. I give my opinion. This happens. We talk about parties and the candidates. (R5, Karachi, 2019).

Unlike the *pir*-politician these non-political *pirs* can exercise more flexibility in how they choose to apply their political heavyweight through endorsements. They can choose to side with one political party during one election and opt to support another party in the next. Politicians, non-political *pirs* and *pir*-politicians alike, are aware of this flexibility and because of this try to create public impressions of themselves as having received the ‘blessing’ and endorsement of the shrine and its custodians through various photo opportunities covered by local media outlets. The head of one of the most revered and prominent Sufi shrines in Sindh explains this vying for endorsement that took place in the general election of 2018.¹⁷² The leaders of the

¹⁷¹ Ibid

¹⁷² It is one of the oldest Sufi shrines in Pakistan, with deep seated cultural value for Sindh as the original saint was a prolific poet, synonymous with Sindh. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1222679>

three main political parties Imran Khan (PTI), Nawaz Sharif (PML-N) and Bilawal Bhutto (PPP) wanted to start their political campaigns from his shrine, which is normally covered by lots of media attention.¹⁷³ Many try to use implicit signals by photos of themselves at the shrine, where the visual association created through physical presence with the shrine is an attempt to cash out on the influence of the shrine, with their presence at the shrine implying that the informal institution has given their blessing to them, signaling an endorsement.¹⁷⁴ The endorsement of these non-political pirs, in the form of them announcing their opinion, is essential if a contender wants to win a seat within areas where pirs that do not contest elections themselves dominate.

We never give a direction around the country. (Interview R4, Karachi, 2019).

This aspect of not giving a uniform direction to their congregation may in fact help the non-political *pir* use his congregation's votes as a bargaining chip with the potential winner, in how they invest money in the area if they were to win political office. This contrasts with the implicit understanding that takes place between the *pir*-politician and his *murids*. If a *pir* contests elections, his *murids* vote for their pirs as part of their religious duty, practicing their religious affiliation on the political sphere – all through implicit cues. If they are not in the same district as their *pir*, the implicit cue is to vote for the political party that the *pir* belongs to. One example is if the *pir*-politician's party is not able to gain political ground through their own following, they offer up their followers to join oppositions, to ensure that they have a say at the power table – with the ability to steer funds and investment into their areas.

The final type of alliance formation that *pir*-politicians engage in is to form alliances across shrines, between themselves. The logic of this is to push out potential non-*pir* competition and ensure the survival of the group (the *pir*-politicians) as a collective in the political arena. In this case, a good example is the Grand Democratic Alliance that was formed before the National elections of 2018. The formation was headed by the *Pir* Pagaro (the head of the Pakistan Muslim League Functional) who, together with other *pir*-politicians, such as *Pir* Sadaruddin Shah Rashdi, to lessen the power of the Pakistan People's Party in the province of Sindh – a party that is both rich in numbers of landlords but also in numbers of *pir*-politicians within its ranks.

6.5 Discussion

The empirical analysis of the *pir-murid* relationship from top-down sheds light on several issues. First, the long-term nature of the relationship is also applicable to the *pir*-politician. Like *murids*, the *pir*-politician inherits this role, and grows up aware of this association that binds them. It constitutes a long-term bond for them in

¹⁷³ Interview R4 points out that not only PM Imran Khan (PTI) and Bilawal Bhutto (PPP) attend, but so does Nawaz Sharif, who is not known to have any Sufi affiliations, but comes out of respect to their darbar.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

perhaps a heavier way than *murids* because they are initially free from expectations, until they come of age and partake in the religious activities and eventual political roles. Second, the religious bond ties the *pir*-politician in similar expectations (both implicit and explicit) to their followers as the *murids* have, reinforcing this as a reciprocal relationship, where hierarchies matter, but there appear to be expectations from both ends. Simply put, there are expectations *pir*-politicians need to live up to, even before entering politics, despite *murids* voting for them as a religious duty. Explicit expectations *murids* have is of their spiritual wellbeing, i.e., the wellbeing of their soul, while their worldly concerns are part of implicit expectations that they have of their *pir*-politician. The latter stems from the religious bond, where *murids* expect *pir*-politicians to take care of them in worldly matters too, as part of their duty as their spiritual master/religious leader. One *murid* rationalises that *pir*-politicians do this as part of the *pir*-politician's own need of wanting to earn sawaab (the concept of spiritual reward as points). He explains

Primarily our murshid (spiritual master) is taking care of our souls, but of course he also takes care of our worldly matters, **but he's doing that as part of being our spiritual leader**, so that he can get sawaab (concept of points) (R2, Karachi, 2015)

Third, this type of rationalisation also helps further our understanding of the holistic nature of the relationship, that sits a top of the existing web of relationships the actors find themselves in. The overarching and encompassing nature also extend to the exchange between the actors, where the type of goods has an overlapping nature which flows from one category to another – whether nonmaterial or material, but what matters to the *murids* mostly falls within the rouhani (spiritual) category. This encompasses mostly nonmaterial goods, and where material goods are included, it is understood as part of the spiritual and worldly at once. The holistic nature of the relationship is made more prominent by the fact that, unlike *murids*, *pir*-politicians do not separate their worldly and spiritual roles in the manner that their followers do.

The above, collectively, furthers the main argument of the dissertation, about nonmaterial goods being preferred and prioritised by *murids* in their exchange with their patron. More direct evidence of the domination of nonmaterial goods in this relationship is how the patron in religious clientelism ensures the nonmaterial goods of access to his followers and prioritises the communication that he has heard the concerns of his *murids* and forwarded them to the right people in the system – the people that remain out of reach for a large majority of their followers. Furthermore, is the prioritisation of *pir*-politicians ensuring their own presence at religio-social events such as weddings and funerals, which according to them, not only weigh more in the eyes of their followers, but also how their religious role is how they are judged by their followers in terms of performance.

As for the second argument of the dissertation, *murids* vote for their *pir*-politician and *pir*-politicians are fully aware of this. There are some *pir*-politicians that try to keep up appearances around the separation of the religious and the political, in case their religious advantage in the political sphere is seen as illegitimate, or rather perceived as a conflict of interest pertaining to mixing the two roles that undu-

ly influences the followers' political decision making.¹⁷⁵ However, many *pir*-politicians explain away this potential conflict by saying that both their religious and political roles ultimately operate towards the same end – of serving the people.¹⁷⁶

As noted at the beginning of the chapter, drawing on the *pir*-politician database I constructed, religious clientelism appears to have consolidated in the political sphere. This is evidenced by the steady increase of *pir*-politicians at all levels of government. This consolidation stems from a technicality between who a *pir*-politician is, versus who can establish lineage to a shrine. The spiritual authority of the *pir*, and its associated barakat (spiritual enlightenment) that *murids* seek, is technically limited to the sajjada nashin's (shrine custodian) person. In simple terms, only the person who is the custodian of a Sufi shrine himself possesses spiritual enlightenment and the ability to intercede between *murid* and God, through which he has access to nonmaterial religious goods. However, it appears that the political advantages of this religious position can also be tapped into by other members of the pirs family through the establishment of lineage or blood relation to the shrine's custodian family. Once such a familial linkage is established, the individual is also believed to possess spiritual enlightenment because of the blood link and hence holy inheritance of spiritual enlightenment. In the context of Pakistan, gaining elevated status in society through a familial linkage to a religious figure is not unusual (Belle et al 2010). A commonplace practice is people claiming patrilineal descent from the Prophets family. They highlight this affiliation by affixing Syed in front of one's name (Walker 1998). Despite Syeds having no formal religious authority, they typically enjoy elevated social status (Weekes 1984).¹⁷⁷

That said, unlike people claiming to be Syeds (Belle et al, 2010), for *pir*-politicians in addition to gaining elevated status, blood relatives of a *pir* being treated as pirs, is found in many facets of the fieldwork. One example illustrating this is my exchange with the brother of a prominent sajjada nashin. He concedes that technicalities of whether one is the sajjada nashin of a shrine, is not necessary to be considered a *pir*-politician in practice. He also adds that he benefits from the position of being a *pir* politically. He explains this as,

*But don't the murids consider you a Makhdoom too?*¹⁷⁸ They must call you Sain [honorific] saab? Ask you for prayers? Yes, yes. So, in practice you are a gaddi nashin (seat holder), if all but in name? Right? Well, I admit, yes. (R2, Karachi, 2019.)

To corroborate this, I asked him whether this relationship, with the spiritual status, gains him advantage in his political life, amongst his voters, to which he replied with "Absolutely". As such, the meaning of who constitutes a *pir*-politician is a broad one, where an established blood link to a shrine custodian (sajjada nashin) exists.

¹⁷⁵ Interview R8, Islamabad, 2019.

¹⁷⁶ R4, Karachi, 2019.

¹⁷⁷ One typical example is in matchmaking, where Syed girls are not married into non-Syed families.

¹⁷⁸ Makhdoom, like *pir* is an honorific that hereditary saints use as part of their name. In Farsi it means "the servant of the people" which is interchangeably used with *pir* for hereditary saints.

The implications for democracy in Pakistan considering the growing role of *pirs* in elected assemblies goes to the heart of one of the central tenets of democracy – the one man, one vote tenet and the country’s democratic consolidation. The importance of this type of clientelism and its effect on a country’s democratic trajectory is highlighted in developing contexts such as Pakistan, where political parties do not operate as programmatic ones, instead politics is personalised, where voters relate to politicians through personalised linkages provided by the myriad of power relationships that they find themselves in. The importance of these linkages, especially religio-political ones, is reinforced in how these can affect the democratisation or autocratisation of a nation. This type of clientelism has the potential to operate in either direction – towards democratic consolidation or autocratisation. In the absence of programmatic parties, one way to use this relationship towards democratic consolidation of developing democracies is to follow examples of countries such as Ghana, where tribal chiefs are legally barred from running for office. In this case if the *pir*-politician were to refrain from participation in the political arena, and actively encourage his disciples to not only participate in elections but ensure that they go to cast their vote, then the relationship could be a step in the right direction, to reinforce democratisation efforts. Nevertheless, this does not negate the potential risk posed by *pirs* acting as brokers between political parties and the voters, where their lack of direct participation can be geared towards indirect influence instead. For the success of such an initiative the *pir*-politician would have to remove themselves from the political process altogether, by not encouraging any affiliations or endorsements, but only to ensure their followers partake in the electoral process by casting their vote for whomever they please. If the relationship is used in the above manner, it would help reinforce democratic consolidation.

However, if this relationship operates and hinders the choice of *murid*-voters, not only will the presence of such a relationship continue to stagnate the one man one vote concept, but such ties will continue to contribute to the autocratisation of nations like Pakistan. This is especially in an environment where voters’ choice of candidate is not driven by their own political understanding of the political sphere, instead their decision-making is driven by loyalty factors. That said, if *murids* vote for these *pir*-politicians because they believe them to be the most suitable actors able to represent their interests in the political arena, where a blend of material and non-material religious goods continues to be swapped, then at its core it will be an exercise in choice. For that to take place though, other factors available to citizens in democratic settings must also be present. This includes freedom to express oneself without repercussions, insurance of one’s personal safety in day-to-day life and access to hold one’s politicians accountable. Until these other factors in Pakistani politics are assured, the *pir-murid* relationship will continue to be perceived by analysts at large as one that pulls Pakistan towards autocratisation.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided an analysis of religious clientelism from top down, providing an analysis from the perspective of the *pir*-politician, as an essential in-

gradient in support of the dissertation's theory. I first illustrated that the relationship is understood and treated as a long-term bond by both patron and client. They have shared expectations – where each actor is reacting to the other's expectations in their behaviour. The expectations that *pir*-politicians list as the ones which matter most to *murids*, and the ones that *pir*-politicians focus most on, are nonmaterial goods of providing access, availability and maintaining a link, where *murids* not only demand face-to-face interaction, but also require being heard – where communication with the *pir*-politician provides them with a voice. On top of this are the worldly expectations *pir*-politicians fulfil, which include matters such as conflict resolution, and providing access within spheres where *murids* cannot reach themselves.

The chapter also provided an illustration of the three main mechanisms that gain the *pir*-politician political advantage, through which their political behaviour is steered. These mechanisms are numbers (votes of *murids*), organization (provided by the khalifa network) and resources (where access to nonmaterial supernatural goods provide them with an advantage not available to politicians that do not exercise a hierarchical religious role). These three mechanisms provide *pir*-politicians with bargaining power with the political parties they join. It also functions as a platform through which to build alliances – both across partisan lines as non-partisan lines. One example of this is building alliances with other *pir*-politicians, to crowd out the competition from the political sphere where they contest elections.

Finally, the chapter helps further our understanding of this relationship as a holistic one, where religion not only influences the preferences and voting behaviour of the *murid*-voter, but also highlights the overlapping role the *pir*-politician exercises and the lack of disaggregation by the *pir*-politicians themselves. The lack of separation from the patron's end, underscores the difficulty of neatly fitting the clientelistic exchange into set categories, but also highlights religion's ability to sanctify even the smallest interaction or exchange. One example is the far reach of religion as a legitimising tool, where religion is not a strict delimited entity, instead it has a diffuse character that more than one leader can partake in. This broader understanding of religion as a factor steering voting behaviour outside of our typical measurement tools such as policy platforms provided by political parties, helps highlight the shortcoming of our existing tools for understanding what religious voting constitutes.

7

Conclusions and avenues forward

The seeds of this dissertation sprung from two separate projects. First, was my master's fieldwork to understand whether decentralization had improved or worsened Pakistan's quality of government, measured through its delivery of public services (education, healthcare, and law enforcement) (Varraich 2011). I conducted a comparative case study between Multan and Larkana, two cities with similar pre-conditions but vastly different QoG outcomes. When conducting this comparative case study, I noticed there was a segment of Pakistan's political elite that exercised both religious and political power, where one affected the other, without so much as people batting an eye. In fact, people I spoke with told me these politicians commanded steady vote banks. Here was religion affecting people's voting behaviour in a way that is not normally understood as religious voting, and as far as my knowledge of the Pakistani political landscape was concerned, the average Pakistani did not vote for the Islamist parties. Simply, a segment of the population appeared to be voting for a politician due to religious attachment – something not being captured by the political science scholarship. Second, was my work on corruption. When trying to understand why corruption and clientelism were used interchangeably (Kawata 2006), and whether the two concepts shared a conceptual core (Rothstein and Varraich 2017), I found two prevailing arguments. Some scholars argue that the core idea of clientelism as corruption stems from politicians obfuscating the electoral process by buying votes from citizens, especially in the developing context (Hopkin 2006). The other school of scholars emphasise on clientelism being a form of corruption because of the diversion of public goods in the clientelistic exchange by politicians. In fact, Swedish Radio's coverage of the elections in Lebanon in 2022 hits the nail on its head. They describe politicians who buy votes as essentially bribing voters with material benefits in exchange for their votes, where material benefits can range from "cash, sandwiches, food stamps, medicine and the promise of a job in the public sector" (Udden 2022).¹⁷⁹ In this sense media coverage and contemporary political science scholarship on clientelism view politicians as engaging in a form of corruption, where the offers of buying the vote through material benefits constitutes transactive corruption – i.e., bribes. This results in clientelism being seen as a form of corruption.

¹⁷⁹ <https://sverigesradio.se/avsnitt/1929181> Lunchekot, SR, 15th May 2022.

What did not sit well with me was the parsimonious understanding of voters. Not only were voters implicitly being understood as corrupt, at least part of a corrupt transaction, but they were also being seen as willing to give up their vote for a material good. Simply, voters' behaviour was explained away because of cost-benefit analysis, where material goods reigned supreme. Not only were citizens understood as corrupt, via their role played in a corrupt exchange, but more generally citizens were essentially being understood as valuing material benefits over all else in exchange for their votes. I found this predominantly economic understanding, rooted in the rational actor model where utility is often understood as material achievement, problematic because it suddenly made citizens the second actor in this corrupt exchange, and their calculus of utility was only seen in material terms. It effectively left out context, norms and utility that may be gained from nonmaterial goods. One example are those nonmaterial ideational goods provided through religion – such as peace of mind, blessings or prayers being accepted etc. Furthermore, the dual lack of deep understanding of context and human behaviour beyond cost benefit analyses reinforced my interest in understanding the client-voter in this relationship. Specifically, how was religion shaping clientelism and how this type of clientelism drives political behaviour? And finally, and perhaps most importantly, are material benefits what voters truly cared most about?

Furthermore, much of this was tied in with how we understand developing countries, where clientelism is often said to be found in traditional societies versus modern ones, which further pushed me to explore this gap in the literature. Once again, I found my attention turn to the religious elite I had encountered in Pakistan, where these actors exercised not only religious but also political power. And it hit me, of the long-term bonds that the ethnographic literature on clientelism elaborates on (such as peasant-landlord), the long-term bonds rooted in religion are not bound to any certain form of state. Instead, long-term hierarchical bonds rooted in religion, can be found across developed/ing contexts. So, to understand the preferences of citizens who find themselves in clientelistic relationships rooted in religion and politics, and how this affects their political behaviour, I set out to explore this relationship. This dissertation is the result of that curiosity.

The aim of this dissertation was two-fold. First to expand clientelism theory to include religion – i.e., to provide a sub-type of clientelism. This subtype is rooted in empirical evidence to help provide a deeper understanding of the meanings that client-voters attach to their religious bond that they share with their patron in the political arena, the type of goods which undergird their exchange, and the value (or lack thereof), assigned by citizens to their vote in relation to this relationship. It did so by addressing the overarching question of how religion shapes political behaviour by exploring the phenomenon of religious clientelism from the perspective of the individual actors involved. Using Sufi Islam in South Asia, it asked how do hierarchical personalised religious bonds, shared by voter and candidate, influence actors' political behaviour? I argued that when religion is expressed as hierarchical bonds between two actors, this bond will have repercussions in the actors' political behaviour and preferences. Specifically, in the context of developing countries where often politics are personalised, when a religious leader runs for office, the client-

followers of the patron vote for them. This voting behaviour is rooted in the meanings the client-voters associate with their religious bond, alongside the loyalty and trust it fosters between the two actors.

I find that religion operates at two levels simultaneously – both as a social identity (group level) and as a belief system (individual level), as illustrated by the data presented in Chapter 5. The social identity aspect of the religious bond is highlighted by *murids*' need to belong being satisfied by the relationship. It is best exemplified by *murids*' exclusion that carries with it potential for a social boycott. Religion as a belief system, at the individual level, is underscored by the individual nonmaterial religious goods gained from the *pir*-politician, where prayers and blessings form part of one's individual belief system. This dual function of religion as social identity and belief system in one, is what fosters the long-term aspects of the clientelistic relationship.

The simultaneous function of religion as a belief system and social identity provides access to nonmaterial goods that client-voters gain ideational value from. One explanatory mechanism for the preference for nonmaterial religious reward is a subconscious ranking of identities, where clients rank their religious identity above other social identities. This ranking extrapolates to the type of clientelistic exchange that takes place, where a similar process of ranking happens in relation to the type of goods the client prefers and priorities in their exchange with the religious patron. The ranking of identities has a knock-on effect on the preferences of client-voters. Because of the higher ranking of the religious identity, in their political behaviour, the client-voter shows an overarching preference and prioritisation for nonmaterial spiritual inducements in exchange for their vote. In short, clients' preference and ranking of nonmaterial supernatural goods as higher than material goods stems from how they view their religious relationship. The causal mechanism for their altered preferences is their religious bond that operates at two levels simultaneously. The repercussions of this preference in the political sphere are twofold. First, clients vote for their patron as a religious duty, which effectively creates a vote bank for the patrons, where the religious and political coalesce. Second, these patrons do not have to invest material resources in like the typical patron in the modern school's clientelism does. In effect, religious clientelism differs from the extant modern school literature on two points. First, the preference of clients for nonmaterial goods undermines our general outlook of clients as vote sellers. Instead, there is an inclusion of context, identity, and traditions where clientelism is understood and studied as a long-term and holistic relationship. Second, and relatedly, the patron in religious clientelism does not have to invest in material resources. In fact, the material exchange in religious clientelism is skewed in favour of the patron, where clients provide offerings of tithes, money, and donations in kind. On a larger scale, this not only distorts established models of vote choice but also stagnates the democratic consolidation of developing countries, availed through regular elections.

I argue we need to consider the role of religion (as both social identity and belief system) and its provision of nonmaterial goods needs in our analyses of citizens' political behaviour to gain a deeper understanding of what drives the voters in developing contexts. This is especially important in contexts where the institutionalisa-

tion of political parties is weak/non-existent and where long-term relationships play a role in people's day to day lives. Specifically, in the context of religion being expressed as hierarchical bonds, where both patron and client exercise dual roles. I argue that religion's provision of nonmaterial religious goods fundamentally alters the dynamics of clientelism from a material exchange between actors, to one where nonmaterial goods form a central part of clients' preferences, and clients vote for their patron, without a *quid pro quo* exchange of material goods. In fact, in religious clientelism patrons gain more in terms of material goods than do clients. This latter aspect turns our current assumptions about clientelism on its head.

This dissertation was primarily concerned with theory building: constructing the theory of religious clientelism and using this to examine political behaviour of voters and their preferences. Specifically, my contribution is twofold. First, I introduce a sub-type of relational clientelism that combines religion and politics to our modern study. Drawing on empirical data gained from fieldwork I theorise how religious hierarchical bonds shape clientelism's core characteristics. The Sufi *pir-murid* relationship is a hierarchical, dyadic exchange form of relational clientelism. The client swears a life-long religious allegiance to the Sufi saint with the conviction of the relationship being central to their salvation. It is an exchange relationship largely centred on the exchange of nonmaterial religious rewards. i.e., the relationship is not contingent on a two-way material exchange which is typically found in political science. Instead, there is a vertical power exchange in terms of religious following that results in an exchange of material and nonmaterial goods between patron and client. Thus, this study goes beyond the strict confines of what political science defines as the core characteristics of clientelism in terms of material goods as the main part of the exchange. Instead, it returns to the classical roots developed by anthropologists and sociologists, where the overall nuance of the relationship (i.e. family resemblance) matters more than precise characteristics being fulfilled.

Second, the dissertation introduces nonmaterial religious benefits as central to clients' preferences. It effectively recasts our understanding of clients. Instead of viewing clients as valuing short-term, material benefits, we now see them as prioritising nonmaterial religious inducements such as prayers and peace of mind, as central to their long-term considerations. My contribution expands on recent work that delves into understanding clientelism from the client's perspective beyond material benefits in exchange for the vote (Pellicer et al 2020, Pellicer et al 2014). These include nonmaterial goods such as protection/insurance (Pellicer et al 2020) and local public goods such as schools (Wantchekon 2003). This has implications for how we analyse the political behaviour of both voters and politicians. In our modern scholarship on clientelism there is an assumption that voters are willing to sell their vote to the highest bidder (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). Thus, clientelism as a political strategy for patrons is assumed to be expensive and unsustainable, and only viable to a certain limit because it is resource intensive and resources are finite (Bergman 2019).¹⁸⁰ However, my findings suggest that scarcity may not to be an acute concern for patrons that are both religious leaders and politicians because their

¹⁸⁰ This ties in with the overt focus that much of the clientelism literature has on the poor voter as its target segment of the population.

clients demand nonmaterial religious goods. These goods are tied in with the personhood of the patron, i.e., he is the main source of supply of these nonmaterial religious goods (such as blessings, prayers, intercession). Effectively this is an infinite resource base. As such the patron's use of this as a political strategy is neither expensive nor resource intensive. Importantly, this quality is also exclusive, and not available to rival politicians who are not religious leaders. The underlying logic of nonmaterial religious goods as part of clients' preferences (and of my findings) is similar those forwarded by Solaz et al. (2019). Their research suggests that voters are willing to sacrifice material payoffs if they share a group identity with the patron, driven by ingroup loyalty. In case of *murids*, they hold a religious conviction that their salvation is dependent on the intercession of their religious leader, but they also share a group identity with their religious leader/politician.

I have tried to add to the rich plethora of existing knowledge on clientelism by informing and revising existing theory with empirical data from the *pir-murid* relationship found across Pakistan. These empirical data were collected through two rounds of fieldwork with both clients and patrons. To my knowledge this is the first study to focus on the subset of *murid*-clients and their voting behaviour. Also, I contribute to clientelism and ethnic politics with an outlook that treats religion as both a social identity simultaneous to its role as a belief system, where it operates at both individual and group levels. In terms of a social identity, at the group level it is associated with an informal institution, where norms, and associated meanings are shared between followers of the religious patron-politician. While at the individual level religion functions as a belief system for the client-voter, providing the client with supernatural nonmaterial goods. The remainder of this final chapter is structured around lessons learned and the implications these have for future research.

7.1 Key takeaways

7.1.1 *It ain't all about the money*¹⁸¹

Nonmaterial religious goods matter. That is the key takeaway of this dissertation. It helps reinvigorate the classical clientelism scholarship, which focuses on what Michael Sandel's book puts at centre stage – what money cannot buy (2012). It highlights that ideational goods such as honour, and psychological goods, like peace of mind and answered prayers, matter to people. The findings presented in Chapter 5 underscore that clientelism involves much more than the exchange of material goods; it is deeply rooted in context, expectations, and traditions. It is within this universe that nonmaterial ideational goods play a central role for citizens and form part of their active preferences. Part of the stickiness of categories and the amalgamation of meanings that nonmaterial religious goods hold stems from their lack of tangibility and non-transactional nature. It reinforces studies like Robert Springborg's study of Sayed Bei Marei and patronage (1979), where he argues that clientelism should be seen (among other things) as "lopsided friendships" involving many

¹⁸¹ Reference to Swedish artist Meja's song "It's all about the money."

more connections than just the material. Or Frederic Schaffer's work on vote-buying in the Philippines in which he explains, again, that much of what goes on in clientelism is far more complicated and intangible than most accounts reflect. Finally, perhaps ideational nonmaterial goods are best exemplified by Geertz work on Balinese cock fights that elaborates on honour (2002).

The contemporary scholarship on clientelism has helped produce a wealth of knowledge over the past two decades, with a trove of data that illustrates that material goods matter. These include but are not limited to cash, cookware, pasta, or the like. However, the slimming down of clientelistic exchange to material goods, and the outlook of clients as vote sellers that demand material inducements in exchange for their votes, has created a gap in our understanding. It does not fully reflect the citizen but also neglects how their political choices are affected by their context, beliefs, and rationalities. Effectively, this limits our understanding of both individual political behaviour and political processes in the long run.

A further limitation of the clientelism scholarship is its close association with programmatic politics. In political science clientelism is understood as operating in the context of where political parties are the main patron, and citizens are the clients. One example of this outlook is the latest data collection effort from Herbert Kitschelt and Steven Wilkinson as part of the Duke University's project "Citizens and Linkages", contributing to an immense database that scholars across the globe have used. In their second round of data collection in 2022, I partook as an expert on Pakistani politics. What I noticed is that most of the questions focused on the political party as patron, instead of treating the individual politicians within the party as patrons. In contexts like Pakistan, where political parties are weakly institutionalised, it is more suitable to treat individual politicians as patrons, because most political parties resemble a collection of strong men. Effectively, such data collection misses out and fails to capture this nuance, where individual relationships of the politicians with constituents matter more than partisan identities. Even questions that do ask to focus on individual politicians, did so within the umbrella of the party as patron. This takes away from the importance of individual linkages between politician and voters.

Moreover, such data collection efforts' overt focus on material goods do not capture nonmaterial goods. They miss out on the type of nonmaterial goods that form part of the clientelistic exchange between *murids* and *pir*-politicians, where context, religion and tradition play an overarching role in the political behaviour of both actors. Thus, the central finding of this dissertation - that nonmaterial goods forming a central part of clients' preferences – serves as a good reminder to include ethnographic outlooks in our future studies of clientelism. Material goods matter, but nonmaterial goods matter too. Sometimes, as illustrated by the empirical chapters in this dissertation, nonmaterial religious goods can matter more than material ones.

Merging the methods of the classical school to the modern school of clientelism have the potential to better understand the political behaviour of citizens across contexts. It also helps reinforce the idea that long-term bonds are not relegated to 'traditional' societies but can be found in today's world as fully developed social systems. The implications for future research and policy are to develop better

measures to capture the preferences of voters, such as including questions that deal with nonmaterial aspects into their research agendas. Echoing Hicken and Nathan's findings (2021), we need to regear our questions and enquiries to reflect on empirical observations and ensure that we further the knowledge gap by asking questions such as "how does clientelism operate" rather than "why it is not going away". On the policy side, it reinforces that we must aim at deeper social understanding for successful policy implementation. If material goods are not centre stage for citizens in clientelistic relationships, perhaps policies can aim to make use of the meso trust fostered by religious clientelism to forward its agenda. One example is the polio vaccination drive that was taking place at the Baha'uddin Zakaria shrine in Multan during my fieldwork in 2015. In Pakistan there has been a stagnation in the polio drive efforts across the country because of their association with foreign NGOs.¹⁸² People do not allow their children to get polio drops if health workers from international NGOs show up at their homes. However, because *murids* have a deep-seated trust for their pirs and the informal *pir* institution, they allow their children to get polio drops at the shrines. This is where the World Health Organisation now carries out much of its work.¹⁸³ This is a good example of policymakers understanding the nuances of social context and adapting policy efforts and work towards ends that create societal impact fulfilling the government's health goals – in this case the eradication of polio.

7.1.2 *Pir-politicians face pressures from their murids*

One surprising finding of the project is that patrons who exercise both religious and political roles simultaneously still face pressures from below. Going into this project there was an overall impression that *murids* are the ones that face pressures from their *pir*-patrons. Instead, drawing on the fieldwork it is apparent that it is a two-way street, both actors are reacting to each other. Client-voters prefer nonmaterial religious goods in their exchange with their patron and view voting as a religious duty. Despite this, they make specific demands on their patrons, who then react to these demands. Even if the *pir*-politician in religious clientelism does not need to invest in material goods as part of their exchange with their clients, they face pressures from below. This includes maintaining face-to-face contact, paying attention to their client's dual spiritual and worldly problems but also the investment of time. *Murids* demand time and religious guidance from their patrons. *Pir*-politicians must invest time to foster these relationships, even if superficially, for them to maintain the congregation size and benefit from this religious bond in the political sphere.

Another pressure *pir*-politicians face from their *murid*-clients is keeping up appearances. As religious leaders they need to maintain a public persona that upholds their teachings and ensure that they are not caught up in political scandals that can be deemed to be beneath their station. A *murid* gives explains that *pir*-politicians

¹⁸² In 2011 Raymond Davis shot and killed two individuals in Lahore. There ensued a diplomatic straining of relationship between USA and Pakistan because the US claimed Davis to have immunity due to his status as a technical worker for the US embassy. Months after Davis release, it was revealed by investigative journalists Declan Walsh, that Davis in fact was a CIA spy and working covertly. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/20/us-raymond-davis-lahore-cia>

¹⁸³ Interview with World Health Organisation's coordinator, Multan, 2015.

must stand with what is morally right and show their moral standing by taking a stance. He gives the example of Shah Mehmood Qureshi when he resigned from his post as Foreign Minister in 2011 in protest to Raymond Davis being given diplomatic immunity even though he did not fall in that category (interview, Islamabad, 2019).

7.1.3 Religion is complex

Religion is not dead. Religion is very much alive and continues to matter, especially in politics. In fact, religion is complex and multidimensional. This complexity stems from the fact that the religious actor exercises a different rationality than the rational actor model that overtly builds on the economic understanding of utility translating to material benefit, prevalent in much of the clientelism scholarship. Instead, for the religious actor utility is understood to include nonmaterial ideational goods offered by religion. Within this rationality framework as shown in chapter 3, religion operates at two levels simultaneously, both as a personal belief system and as a social identity. At the individual level it serves as a personal belief system, while at the group level it serves as a social identity. Because these two functions are overlap, they are not easily separable. At the group level religion as a social identity is associated with an informal institution, through which people are socialised in the norms and values associated with the institution, and the space to interact with people who share the same identity as themselves. As a belief system, at the individual level, it avails nonmaterial religious goods to the religious voter and a way for voters to relate to the supernatural.

Furthermore, religion continues to influence politics in ways that we cannot capture because of the way we measure it. Our current measures of religious voting are intimately tied to policy programs of political parties, where religious voters are assumed to vote for more conservative policy positions. However, in contexts where politics are personalised, such as Pakistan, these measurements do not capture religious voting that occurs outside of policy platforms and ignores that religion is multidimensional and occupies both social and religious spaces. This has three main implications. First, when clientelism is based on religion, there is a mid-range trust between patron and client, what I term meso trust. This type of trust stems from a combination of generalised trust and individualized trust. Religion itself is a generator of trust, through its functions of providing people with (1) a secure knowledge of the world, (2) it offers a sense of us, and provides a secure base for trusting others, (3) it offers salvation (4) it is affective and (5) socio-cultural – generates public institutions where people can readily interact. Thus, in religious clientelism, religion effectively brings with it a strong overarching trust that combines both generalised and individual level trust, where religion inherently holds the characteristics of inducing trust between actors, where clients have a genuine belief that the patron wants their followers' best. On top of these characteristics, the long-term relationship, of religion as a social identity, fosters trust through clientelism's core characteristic of iteration, where face-to-face contact is included. In this case the client has iterative interaction with the patron and his associated informal religious institution. This meso level of trust is an amalgamation of thin generalised trust that adherents

have towards the informal institution of *pir-murid*. This is generally known as autopilot trust (Hosking 2014), which is built on one's understanding of how things generally work. This is combined with thick individual level trust, that is mainly held towards the patron himself and the other members of the congregation – with whom client-voters share regular interaction.

A second implication of religion as a social identity is that client-voters preferences include nonmaterial supernatural goods from their patron. Different social identities elicit different preferences. The religious actor is driven by the rationality of the believer, where voters find utility in religious rewards, and thus the *murid* identity elicits a preference for nonmaterial supernatural goods. These goods include the fulfilment of prayers, blessings, and the promise of salvation. This identity and its associated preferences are made salient when one's religious leader contests elections.

Third, because religion operates at two levels at once, it has the power to blur categories and subsume goods from different spheres within itself. One example is the identity of being a *murid* – it is a nonmaterial religious good, and at once a group identity that provides social benefits, such as social standing. Although *murid* is a religious identity, it has several social implications, and thus is not easily discernible as either religious or social, but both at once.

Future research agendas involving religion should build on emerging literature that tries to capture religion in better and more representative ways. Vergehse (2021) makes an important contribution to this field highlighting that current measures of religion specifically capture Abrahamic religions but fall short in measuring religiosity and religion in traditions such as Hinduism. In Hinduism, the bounds of religion are not necessarily limited to visiting places of worship or the number of times one prays. The empirical data from this dissertation, though stemming from an Abrahamic religion, highlights the importance of capturing the structure of religious bonds. It shows how these relationships can capture religiosity that fall outside of the typical questions posed.

7.1.4 Political Islam is not homogenous

One finding from this project is the lack of disaggregation of political Islam in the contemporary political science literature. This is especially the case in relation to analyses of political behaviour, quality of government, and voting behaviour. Furthermore, there is a lack of unity as to what political Islam is. Much of the academic output on Islam and politics is understood through a securitised lens, where political Islam is associated as a violent ideology propagated by non-state actors such as ISK (Jadoon and Mines 2023). Part of this narrative is rooted in the post 9/11 environment, where much funding and scholarly attention was diverted to the political behaviour of religious actors in the political sphere – with a special focus on jihadi and jihadis.

Our current disaggregation of political Islam is to divisions of Sunni and Shia, but again without much exploration of how political Islam affects governance outcomes the way the scholarship of religion and politics has disaggregated Christianity into Protestantism and Catholicism, and the divergent effects on governance sys-

tems. Sufi Islam hardly features as a form of political Islam, leaving out a large proportion of followers who may be voting for religious reasons but remain uncaptured by our current methods. This lack of unity and disaggregation in understanding what political Islam constitutes effectively creates a gap in the scholarship. This dissertation helps address this gap by its inclusion of Sufi Islam as part of political Islam and provides empirical data from third largest Muslim majority country. It illustrates how Sufi Islam permeates the political landscape and affects individual political behaviour of both voters and politicians. Overall, the project underscores that we must include Sufism in the umbrella of political Islam if we are to appreciate its effect on individual political behaviour.

7.2 Avenues forward

Building on the theory presented in this dissertation, a future avenue for research is to test the theory to find support for the mechanisms proposed. As part of this project, early in 2015, a pilot survey experiment was administered at the Evangelical congregation in Gothenburg. This was to test the theory and provide evidence of the underlying causes for why religious clients act the way they do.¹⁸⁴ The initial findings were promising - of the respondents 70% responded positively to the treatment, which indicated that religious bond between religious leader and follower was the causal mechanism for the religious clients' vote choice. To further test the theory presented in this dissertation, I intend to carry out a comparative survey experiment between southern state of Georgia in the US and Pakistan. The two empirical settings have hierarchical religious bonds in place, Sufi Islam in Pakistan, and evangelical congregations in Georgia. The survey experiment would test the theory presented in this dissertation, providing evidence for religion being the causal mechanism for the client's vote choice and provide experimental evidence that voters prefer nonmaterial goods over material goods from their patrons in their clientelistic exchange when their religious leader runs for office. Such a research agenda has the potential to accentuate the theorised mechanisms and help generalise the theory as applicable across contexts (i.e., both developing and developed countries). In fact, it would help lift religion as a force in politics beyond political programs.

Another avenue forward for this research agenda is to continue to expand the types of clientelism on the ground – adding to the varieties of clientelism scholarship. This would help balance theory and empirics and provide fertile ground for the comparative study of clientelism – both in terms of preferences of clients, but also in terms of the relationship. This is already an emerging field with many scholars contributing to revising our research questions to focus on how clientelism works on the ground, instead of focusing our energies on why the phenomenon does not disappear. Such work will help us understand why and how clientelism continues to survive across the world. Relegating traditional forms of clientelism to the history books and trying to impose strict definitions of what clientelism is and is not, has thus far not been very fruitful. Instead, we can benefit from furthering our research

¹⁸⁴ Smyrnayrkan.

agenda, by delving deeper into what clients want, what drives their preference formation, and ultimately how these affect their political behaviour both in terms of their vote choice and how they exercise political choices daily, and the ramifications this has for democratic consolidation of states.

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Appendix I

Interview Guide interviewing murids

Five areas of interview guide

1. Do you have a pir?

Purpose: do first get the talk going, to see if they actually view the person at the shrine as a pir

This question does not need to get asked when the interviewee has already identified themselves as a murid.

2. How did you come to have a pir?

Purpose: to help understand whether this is a socialization process they are weaned into or is it independent choices

- a. Family tradition
- b. Own initiative
- c. Village culture

3. Why do you come to a pir?

Purpose: to understand the reasoning/role the pir plays for their followers

- a. Dua?
- b. Help'?
- i. Religious/spiritual?
 1. Tavees
- ii. Material (food Are you aware of any political leaders who are also a pir and has followers?)
- iii. Social – to gain

4. As a *murid* of one pir, can you follow other pirs?

Purpose: to capture if there is specific loyalty aspect present, is that loyalty shared or exclusive

5. Do you know if your pir is a politician? How do you know if a pir is also a political leader/politician?

Purpose: to capture the awareness and of the followers and how they interact in their surrounding.

- a. Media outlets – both printed, digital, television, radio
- b. Friends?
- c. Family?
- d. Own experience
- e. Acquaintances

6. Would you vote for pir if he was a politician? / Do you vote for your pir (who is a politician)?

Purpose: relates to heart of the research and my theory, also this question can help substantiate the theory with examples of what their reasons are, but also the type of exchange they seek.

Why?

- a. Dua (prayers/spiritual wellbeing)
- b. Jobs?
- c. Salvation
- d. Security
 - i. Social
 - ii. Physical

7. What does your pir do for you?

Purpose: this captures the expectations of the follower/voter and links to the exchange itself

8. Being a *murid*, what are your “obligations/duty” towards your pir?

Purpose: to see how far their role as murid goes. Is there actually an exchange in allegiance.

9. Would voting for someone else be a possibility? Can you as a *murid* of X (who also is a politician) vote for someone other than your own pir, e.g. a non-pir politician?

Purpose:

10. Can anyone become a pir?

Purpose: This helps capture if the phenomenon has high barriers to entry or is open for anyone to tap into, thereby giving access to vote banks in form of followers, i.e. why doesn't every politician just become a pir?

- a. What's stopping other politicians from becoming pirs?
- b. Are there pirs that are not politicians?
 - i. what is stopping them from becoming politicians?

11. According to you, what is of more importance, in your relationship with the pir/politician?

Purpose; to find out if they actively are choosing. But the question itself seem redundant, the answer to this is gathered more from the answers to the other question of “why do you go to a pir”

- a. Dua
- b. Material?

12. If your pir decided to switch political party, would you still vote for him?

13. Is your pir landed elite?

- a. Are all pirs landed elite?

14. Are the pirs as powerful in the city as in the village?

Purpose: to capture how far the power of PP is perceived to stretch.

Appendix II

Interview guide for interviewing pir-politicians

The relationship

1. What are your duties towards your murids?
Purpose: this question will help tease out if the patrons see their roles as only religious leader or if there is a spill over between religious and political.
2. What type of goods do you provide your murids?
Purpose: to see if they give non-religious goods, and if so, what these are
3. What are your expectations from your murids?
Purpose: to be able to compare what the top down expectations are relative to the ones that the murid
4. How often do you interact with your murids?
Purpose: to deduce how much face-to-face interaction that goes on between patron-client
5. Can you stop being a pir/give up your seat?
Purpose: to find out if there is an exit for the pir from their role.

The political

6. How did you decide to run for office?
 - a. What did you weigh in favour/against running?
 - b. Who did you talk to about running?
 - i. Congregation?
 - c. Who was for/against it, and what made you decide?
Purpose: to understand their own rationale for running for elected office and whether their congregation actually are consulted when they run for office.
7. How does your role as a pir help you in your political role?
 - a. Do you have to advocate specific policies?
 - b. Do you have additional responsibilities or constraints because of your religious position?
Purpose: to capture whether they believe their religious role matters in politics. This will also capture their attitude towards mixing religious and politics.
8. Do you actively seek out your murids' votes?
9. In the last election how did you decide on where to campaign? Is the focus on consolidating the voter base you already have or gaining new ones?

Purpose: this captures if they use their congregation as a votebank as well as point out the duality of this relationship.

10. What do your murids/constituents/voters demand from you?

Purpose: to capture if they are playing patron to everyone or just to their clients? Also, do they have other political clients apart from murids?

11. Who do you prioritise murids/constituents/voters?

Purpose: whether they give preferred treatment to their religious followers.

12. Do pir-politicians or other politicians running for office affect your vote share? If so, how?

Purpose: will give a sense of who is seen as competition. Do they align with other pirs or not

13. On what basis do you choose party affiliation?

- a. Ideological
- b. Policy considerations?

14. Have you ever considered switching parties?

- a. Yes - If so, when and why?
- a. No - why not?
- b. Do you consult your congregation in relation to party-switching?
- c. Do you consult your congregation in relation to your policy platform?

Purpose: see how far they include their congregation in their political decisions, or at least lead them to believe that they are in power.

15. Do you see your role as a broker for your political party? If so, can you lower your own costs and then also lower the costs for your political party.

Appendix III

Murid Interview table

Respondent number	Gender	Age	City	Month of interview	Education	Occupation
R1	M	53	Karachi	12/2015	Master of Law	Former DG of Bureau of Statistics Sindh
R2	M	42	Karachi	12/2015	High school	Personal secretary
R3	M	35	Lahore	11/2015	MBA	Banker
R4	M	45	Karachi	12/2015	MBA	Banker, landlord
R5	M	34	Hala	11/2015	10 years	
R6	M	25	Multan	10/2015	Bachelors	Student
R7	M	55	Multan	10/2015	6 years	farmer
R8	F	25	Multan	10/2015	Bachelors	House wife
R9	F	19	Multan	10/2015	9 years	N/A
R10	M		Multan	10/2015	5 years	<i>Khalifa</i>
R11	M	60	Multan	10/2015		Chief <i>Khalifa</i>
R12	M	40	Karachi	12/2015	12 years	Private security guard
R13	M	35	Karachi	12/2015	7 years	Private Security guard
R14	M	55	Multan	10/2015	10 years	Shrine caretaker
R15	M	50	Multan	11/2015	No formal education	
R16	M	30	Multan	11/2015	5 years	Driver
R17	F	18	Multan	10/2015	10 years	House wife
R18	M		Multan	11/2015		Retired farmer
R19	M	40	Multan	11/2015		Craftsman
R20	M	22	Multan	11/2015	No formal education	Driver
R21	M	35	Multan	12/2015	10years	Farmer
R22	M	35	Multan	11/2015	5 years	Farmer and driver
R23	M	Artaalis	Multan	12/2015		Small landlord
R24	M	26	Multan	10/2015	5 years	Shopkeeper
R25	M	40	Karachi	12/2015	Graduate level	Landlord
R26	M	68	Karachi	12/2015	PhD	Police
R27	M	69	Karachi	12/2015	Masters of Law	Landlord, politician

R28	M	55	Multan	10/2015	Bachelors	Landlord
R29	M	50	Hala	11/2015	10 years	<i>Khalifa</i>
R30	M	29	Toronto	08/2015	MBA	Banker
R31	M	30	Multan	10/2015		Driver
R32	F	22	Multan	09/2015	Bachelors	Student
R33	M	23	Multan	09/2015	Bachelors	Student
R34	M	55	Multan	10/2015		Farmer
R35	M	50	Multan	11/2015		
R36	M	52	Multan	11/2015	University	Farmer/landlord
R37	M	55	Multan	10/2015	8 years	Car mechanic
R38	F	73	Multan	10/2015		
R39	M	76	Multan	10/2015		
R40	M	60	Multan	11/2015		Driver
R41	F	32	Multan	11/2015		
R42	M		Multan	10/2015		
R43	M	51	Multan	10/2015		Labourer
R44	M	32	Hala	12/2015		Shrine worker

