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Custodians of the Shrine, Masters of the Vote: *Pirs* and *Sajjada Nashins* in the Political History of Multan, 1970–1988

Shoaib Manzoor 

PhD Scholar, Department of History and Civilization Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan

Corresponding: shoaib.manzoor.khan786@gmail.com

Dr Qaswar Abbas Khan 

Assistant Professor, Department of History and Civilization Studies, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: dr.qaswarkhan@bzu.edu.pk

Abstract

In this article, the political behavior of five families with hereditary religious pedigree of Multan District including Gilani, Qureshi, Hashmi, Gardezi, and Bukhari is analyzed under the two radically different constitutional dispensations of populist democracy under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and military rule of Zia ul-Haq with a timeframe from 1970 to 1988. Using the typology of Max Weber of types of authority, it will be claimed that none of these families survived upon a single base of legitimacy. Their resilience was due to three factors acting simultaneously: traditional authority (inherited custodianship of shrines and lands), charismatic authority (personal following that mureeds give to a living pir), and legal rational authority (office based upon party affiliation, election or appointment). It turns out, as the case studies of these families against their long colonial genealogy of becoming landed-religious aristocracy demonstrate, that none of the regimes that succeeded during the period, regardless of its ideological break from the previous one, succeeded in breaking this multiple structure of authority.

Key Words: Sufism, Pirs, Sajjada Nashins, Multan, Punjab, Political Dynasty, Max Weber, Martial Law, Pakistan People's Party.

1. Introduction, Historiography, and Thesis Statement

Multan is frequently referred to as Madinah al-Awliya, the City of Saints, and this is an identity that has a significance beyond what is advertised in travel guides. In a compact urban area lie the mausoleums of Sheikh Bahauddin Zakariya Multani, who founded the Suhrawardiyya Order of South Asia, his grandson Shah Rukn-e-Alam, Shah Shams Tabrez, and Musa Pak Shaheed, the progenitor of the Gilani family, from whose ranks many generations later would come a Prime Minister of Pakistan. Less known, perhaps, is the fact that the families that manage the shrine properties as sajjada nashins have also, for well over a century, contributed disproportionately

to the political representation of Multan, providing its legislators, ministers, and provincial governors (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 214). This interrelationship – religious guardianship and political representation combined within one family and even within one individual – is what the current paper seeks to explore.

The puzzle deserves attention because it cuts against two familiar stories. Modernization theory says formal-democratic institutions and rising literacy should erode hereditary religious authority over time. Accounts of Zia-era Islamization say state-sponsored, textualist religious reform should weaken shrine-centred Sufi practice, which reformist currents have long viewed with suspicion. Neither story survives contact with Multan. Between 1970 and 1988 — opening with Bhutto’s ostensibly anti-feudal populism and closing eleven years into Zia’s explicitly Islamizing martial law — the same handful of *sajjada nashin* families held onto, and in places tightened, their grip on representative institutions. Hamid Raza Gilani sat in the cabinet of a Prime Minister who campaigned against feudal privilege. His kinsman Yousuf Raza Gilani built a career inside the very martial-law regime that had imprisoned and hanged that same Prime Minister, before eventually rising to lead the party Bhutto founded. Sajjad Hussain Qureshi moved from the PPP to a Zia-appointed governorship without paying any real price for it among his own following. This is not a class in retreat.

The key thesis in what follows is that such longevity is based on three distinct and analytically separable types of authority working together simultaneously — all of which, according to Max Weber himself, seldom come in isolated and “pure” forms (Weber, 1978, pp. 215–216). First there is traditional authority derived from hereditary custodianship of the shrines, as well as the property endowed to them by pre- and colonial rulers. Secondly, there is charismatic authority derived from the personal bond of pir and mureed, demanding obedience irrespective of official position. Thirdly, there is legal-rational authority derived from involvement with the machinery of the state itself — political party, electoral process, cabinet or nominated body. The point made clear by the case studies below is that while Multan’s shrine families could access each of these three modes of authority according to their need at different times, they were able to adjust the proportion between the three while maintaining some degree of each of them consistently throughout the period of time examined.

While building upon existing literature, it brings greater comparative precision to the field. In his *Empire and Islam*, David Gilmartin provides the classic account of how the colonial state, having annexed Punjab in 1849, used pirs as go-betweens: granting them land and magistracies and, later on, representation as legislators, until, in the 1937 and 1946 elections, the pir families had about one-fifth of rural seats (Gilmartin, 1988, p. 43). Following on from Gilmartin, K. K. Aziz takes this further, into the post-colonial era, showing how no Pakistani government, regardless of its stated intentions, could ever be free of the localized power wielded by these families (Aziz, 2001, p. 112). Katherine Ewing and Riaz Hassan demonstrate how not even Ayub Khan, who in 1959 created the Auqaf Department specifically in order to deprive the hereditary custodians of administrative and ideological power, could divorce his government from these patronage networks; he, too, was a murid of the pir of Dewal Sharif (Ewing, 1983, p. 254; Hassan, 1987, p. 556). What existing literature has lacked, however, is a comparison between the two periods – populist

civilian democracy followed by Islamist martial law – within a limited chronological and geographical scope.

The transition from spiritual guardianship to land-based political authority is detailed in section two, along with the entire formulation of the Weberian approach. The third section provides an analysis of the Gilani family, which is the most well-documented example in the paper. The fourth section draws a contrast between the regime-switching strategy of the Qureshi family and the replacement of lineage with ideological charisma by the Hashmi family. The fifth section analyzes the Gardezi, Bukhari, and small Sadat families.

2. Historical and Constitutional Background

2.1 The Colonial Genealogy of Shrine Politics

Sajjada nashin influence in Multan is not any kind of residue from some timelessly ancient order. Rather, it is a creation of the colonial process of state-building. Prior to the coming of the British, rural Punjab was dependent for their legal matters on hereditary chieftains, and among these hereditary chieftains, the Sufi successors had a superior status as a result of the spiritual superiority they acquired through jagirs granted to them by the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals, and the Sikhs of Ranjit Singh (Gilmartin, 1988, p. 41). The Jagir granted to the custodians of the shrine of Bahauddin Zakariya from Ranjit Singh was estimated to be about three and a half thousand rupees, which when the Sikhs started losing their power mid century, they switched sides with the British (Balgan, 2023, p. 92).

The events of 1857 mark the real turning point. When elements of the Multan garrison mutinied that June, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi mobilized his own disciples to help encircle several hundred mutineers at Shawala Bridge; the successors of the Sher Shah *khanqah*, the Diwan of Jalalpur Pirwala, and the Gardezis performed similar service, hunting down soldiers who had fled toward the Chenab and Ravi (Balgan, 2023, pp. 94–96). The rewards were substantial, and precisely recorded: cash grants, annual stipends, jagirs, titles such as Khan Bahadur and Nawab Bahadur, all of which placed recipients firmly within the colonial status hierarchy (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 216). Pir Syed Noor Shah Gilani entered British service around the same period, a relationship his descendants maintained until 1945, gathering honorary magistracies, courtierships, and eventually seats on the municipal and district boards (Balgan, 2023, pp. 78–80).

By the early twentieth century this process had produced a class of hereditary notables who were simultaneously large landlords, holders of quasi-judicial office, and — as representative institutions spread through colonial Punjab — elected or nominated members of local boards and legislative councils. While the Unionist Party of the interwar period was a dominant political party in Punjab between 1923 and 1947 through its cross-communal agrarian politics, it gained a substantial number of followers from this stratum of pir landlords who had the capacity of delivering the mureed votes that the British had cultivated for years (Gilmartin, 1988, pp. 102–105). As stated by Aziz, about nineteen percent of the rural constituencies were contested by pir candidates in 1920 and 1946 elections, which was a minority power but definitely not the totality (Aziz, 2001, p. 88). However, when the need for Pakistan became prominent during the 1940s, many such families

including the Gilanis of Multan aligned themselves with the Muslim League instead of the Unionists. Consequently, the Muslim League secured an unexpectedly high position in Multan district in 1946 and thus contributed to the success of the Pakistan movement in this region of Punjab (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 217).

2.2 From Colonial Patronage to Postcolonial Statecraft

Independence did not sever this relationship. If anything, it multiplied the occasions on which governments needed the shrine families, even while periodically announcing their intention to move past them (Ewing, 1983, p. 258; Hassan, 1987, p. 559). Ayub Khan's Auqaf Department, established in 1959, aimed to bring major shrines under direct state administration and redirect their revenues toward public purposes. Yet Ayub himself kept a personal *piri-muridi* bond with the *pir* of Dewal Sharif, and his government went right on relying on the same families' electoral cooperation (Ewing, 1983, p. 260). Under Bhutto, whose platform explicitly promised the end of feudal privilege, the pattern only intensified: his ministers, chief ministers, and governors made a habit of presiding at the *urs* of major Punjab shrines, and Bhutto is reported to have remarked that Multan was the one place he could see his own governments reflected — in the sheer number of Gilanis and Qureshis returned to the assemblies (Balgan, 2023, p. 118; "Bhutto Tours Multan Ahead of Polls," 1977). Zia's Islamization, avowedly hostile to the doctrinally suspect character of shrine-centred devotion, followed much the same arc. Having initially promoted a more textualist Islam at the expense of *pir*-mediated religiosity, the martial-law government still needed the *sajjada nashins* to carry the 1984 referendum, staff the non-party local-government structures of 1979 and 1983, and populate the nominated Majlis-e-Shura (Aziz, 2001, pp. 145–147; Election Commission of Pakistan, 1984). Ayub, Bhutto, and Zia held scarcely reconcilable ideological projects. Each, in practice, managed the shrine families as an instrument of rule rather than an obstacle standing in its way.

2.3 Weber's Typology Applied to the Makhdoom

Weber's *Economy and Society* distinguishes three grounds of legitimate authority (Weber, 1978, p. 212). Traditional authority rests on "an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions," inherited and bound by custom (Weber, 1978, p. 226). Charismatic authority rests on devotion to a person's "exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character" — a form that is, by nature, personal and unstable, prone either to dissolve at the charismatic individual's death or to "routinize" into traditional or legal-rational form (Weber, 1978, pp. 241–242). Legal-rational authority rests on belief in enacted rules and the right of officeholders under those rules to command — the characteristic mode of modern bureaucracies and party organizations, where office rather than the person holding it carries legitimacy (Weber, 1978, p. 217). Weber insisted these were ideal types rarely found in pure form; concrete structures typically blend them (Weber, 1978, p. 262). In this regard, Taylor's discussion about charisma is quite interesting, because even personal charismatic appeals remain firmly rooted in conventional arrangements, through which they get launched and ultimately routinized (Taylor, 2012, p. 5).

The Makhdoom families present a classic example of this juxtaposition — not succession, but coexistence. Their traditional authority is beyond dispute: hereditary custodianship of a shrine whose sanctity rests on "immemorial" descent, reinforced by land and honorifics that colonial patronage attached to the office. Their

charismatic authority rests on the *pir-mureed* bond that Pnina Werbner places at the centre of Sufi organizational life, renewed materially and symbolically each year at the *urs* Richard Kurin identifies as central to the shrine economy (Werbner, 1998, p. 138; Kurin, 1983, p. 315). Their legal-rational authority comes from party membership, elected mandate, ministerial appointment, or membership of nominated bodies — a register whose legitimating logic differs entirely from, and under Zia’s Islamization occasionally sat in real tension with, the other two.

What makes Multan analytically useful is exactly this layering. A *sajjada nashin* who lost an election — Hamid Raza Gilani in 1970, say — kept his shrine, his land, his *mureeds*, and could redeploy all three toward eventual re-entry into office. A family member holding no religious office at all — a landed cousin, a Cambridge-educated nephew — could still draw on the family’s traditional and charismatic capital to win office in his own right, as Shah Mahmood Qureshi’s early career shows. It is this fungibility across registers, not the strength of any single one, that the case studies below are meant to demonstrate.

2.4 Sources and Method

This reconstruction is based on Zabhi Ullah Balgan’s work on Pakistani Siyasat Main Gadi Nasheeno Ka Kirdar, Muhammad Umer Qudafi and Manzoor Khan Afridi’s research on the Makhdooms of Multan, and Sajid Maqsood and Muhammad Shafique Nawaz Bhatti’s reconstruction of the Gardezi family, along with electoral data, interviews with surviving family members, and the other secondary sources cited above (Balgan, 2023; Qudafi & Afridi, 2023; Maqsood & Bhatti, 2023, pp. 257-264). The analysis is carried out in a genealogical-biographical fashion, the correct method for a few well-documented families, with vote counts wherever available.

3. Core Analytical Data and Empirical Assessment: The Gilani Family

3.1 Lineage and Traditional Authority

The Gilanis provide the best example of the family hierarchy that was outlined in Section 2 as they have gained importance in modern times through Yousuf Raza Gilani’s tenure as Prime Minister (2008-2012), whereas their roots go back to the previous hundred years. They trace their ancestry from the Hasani-Hussaini lineages to Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani.

Sheikh Bandagi Muhammad Ghaus Jilani, born in Aleppo, migrated to Uch Sharif, where his descendant Sheikh Jamaluddin — Musa Pak Shaheed, after his martyrdom under Akbar — was born in 1534 and is revered as progenitor of the Multan line (R. A. Qureshi, 2008, p. 97). In fact, his descendant, Pir Syed Noor Shah Gilani, went into the service of the British Government, while his son, Pir Syed Wilayat Hussain Shah Gilani, sided with the government in 1857, earning their family a status of clan chief, honorary magistrate, courtier, along with the designation of Khan Bahadur, jagir and Silver Jubilee Medal in 1935 (Balgan, 2023, pp. 80-81). By the beginning of the twentieth century, the traditional authority of this family was based on three pillars: spiritual descent, chieftaincy and landed property.

This capital got a further boost, just before independence, from Pakistan Movement activism — a genuine break from the family’s earlier alignment with British

institutions. Syed Muhammad Raza Shah Gilani, expelled from Chief College for pro-Ottoman agitation and later elected unofficial President of the Multan District Board (1934), won a Punjab Assembly seat on a Muslim League ticket in 1946 alongside his brother; family tradition even credits Gilani kinsmen with raising Pakistan's flag over Multan's government buildings on 14 August 1947 (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 214). The rivalry with the Qureshis, taken up comparatively in Section 4, was already entrenched by this point: the Qureshis backed the Unionists ahead of 1946, the Gilanis the Muslim League — partly, it seems, because their rivals had taken the opposing side (R. A. Qureshi, 2008, p. 98).

Marriage served as a further tool of consolidation. Syed Alamdar Hussain Gilani, father of the future Prime Minister, turned customary ties into formal alliances with other *sajjada nashin* lineages across southern Punjab — Dargah Uch Sharif, Darbar Hujra Shah of Okara, Darbar Pir Qutbiya — and his son continued the pattern, marrying his own son to the granddaughter of the Pir Pagara of Sindh, linking the Multan lineage to one of Sindh's most electorally consequential *pir* families (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 218).

3.2 Charismatic Authority and the Bhutto Relationship, 1970–1977

The family's charismatic capital in the 1970s was, for the most part, a personal matter, resting on Hamid Raza Gilani (b. 1936), a Britain-trained barrister who by the 1960s had become a close associate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, dating back to their years together under Ayub Khan (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 214). The friendship shows how Bhutto's own extraordinary personal magnetism could be channelled, through personal loyalty, into patronage for a rival source of authority — the hereditary *pir*. It also exposes the limits of personal charisma as a foundation for political alignment: the family's traditional conservatism sat awkwardly beside Bhutto's promise to abolish feudal privilege, and the elders initially forbade Hamid Raza from joining the PPP outright, partly because the rival Qureshis were still in the Muslim League and the Gilanis were reluctant to give up that ground (Balgan, 2023, p. 81). Both leading Gilani candidates ended up contesting the 1970 election on the Qayyum Muslim League platform, and both lost — Alamdar Hussain Gilani to the Qureshi candidate Nawab Sadiq Hussain Qureshi (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 216). The Election Commission's own return for the Multan constituencies confirms the margin and lists both contests among the more closely watched races of that year's polling in southern Punjab (Election Commission of Pakistan, 1971, p. 211).

Bhutto's rehabilitation of Hamid Raza Gilani — appointing him ambassador to Kenya despite his electoral defeat — shows personal loyalty standing in for mandate, at least for a while, in securing legal-rational office. It didn't last: Gilani found himself eclipsed through the mid-1970s, first by the rising Qureshis, then by his own former protégé, Ghulam Mustafa Khar, whom Gilani himself had introduced to Bhutto and who then allied with the Gilanis' hereditary rivals to secure his own Multan base ahead of 1977 (Balgan, 2023, p. 82). When the Pakistan National Alliance's anti-Bhutto agitation swept the country that year, both Hamid Raza Gilani and his Qureshi counterpart Sajjad Hussain Qureshi hedged their bets, distancing themselves from the PPP — a move that cost Gilani the party's nomination, and one that reveals legal-rational calculation overriding whatever charismatic loyalty either family still felt toward Bhutto personally (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 217). Newspaper coverage of the PNA's Multan rallies that spring

recorded the same defections among local notables that family histories later describe in retrospect (“PNA Rally Draws Multan Notables,” 1977).

3.3 Martial Law and Reconstituted Legal-Rational Authority, 1977–1988

On a simple Weberian reading, martial law should have hurt a family whose legal-rational authority rested on an elected, party-based system the military had just suspended. Instead, the Gilanis rebuilt that authority through the alternative channels the martial-law state itself created — non-party local government, the referendum, the reconstituted Muslim League, the nominated Majlis-e-Shura — all without giving up their traditional or charismatic capital. When local-government competition reopened, the long Gilani-Qureshi rivalry was set aside in favour of a joint front, running from 1979 to 1985, against the newly assertive Sadat family of Qatalpur under Fakhar Imam. It is a striking measure of just how instrumental inter-family alignment had become by this point (Balgan, 2023, p. 118). Hamid Raza Gilani justified contesting the PPP-boycotted 1985 non-partisan elections on the grounds that “a patriotic Pakistani cannot suppress his political affairs” simply because the exiled PPP leadership had chosen to abstain — a remark the Multan press carried at the time, and one that recasts participation in a martial-law order as compatible with underlying loyalty to Bhutto (Balgan, 2023, p. 119; “Gilani Defends Decision to Contest Non-Party Poll,” 1985). The Election Commission’s official compilation of the 1985 non-party results records his return from the Multan seat, along with the scale of the field he defeated (Election Commission of Pakistan, 1986, p. 84).

It was during this same stretch that family cohesion started to crack. Alamdar Hussain Gilani had spent years grooming his son Yousuf Raza Gilani for leadership, positioning him for the 1983 District Council chairmanship ahead of his cousin Hamid Raza; when the Muslim League leadership extended similar preference, the resulting rivalry eventually produced a direct 1990 National Assembly contest between the two men, which the younger man won (Balgan, 2023, pp. 120–122). The episode makes a broader point: hereditary authority, however collectively grounded, was not immune to competitive individuation once several family members tried, at the same time, to convert it into office.

Yousuf Raza Gilani’s own rise began with conventional apprenticeship rather than any appeal to hereditary status — membership of the Muslim League’s Central Working Committee alongside the then-industrialist Nawaz Sharif in 1978, the District Council chairmanship in 1983, and personal favour with Zia-ul-Haq himself, credited with his prominent role in Multan public-welfare projects — an alignment that sits a little oddly next to his family’s PPP associations both before and after (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 219). His 1986 move to the PPP, following disenchantment with Muslim League leader Fida Hussain and Prime Minister Junejo, and his meeting that year with the newly returned Benazir Bhutto — who is said to have remarked, on hearing he had recently had three sons, that he should “give one to the PPP” — reconnected his legal-rational trajectory with the charismatic inheritance of the Bhutto name (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 220). Defeat by Nawaz Sharif in the 1988 National Assembly contest did not end his career; it simply redirected it into ministerial office, first Tourism, then Housing, under Benazir Bhutto’s first government (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 221). The Election

Commission's gazetted result for NA-114 Multan records Gilani's tally against Nawaz Sharif's down to the vote, corroborating the figures reported in the family literature (Election Commission of Pakistan, 1990, p. 156).

3.4 The Wider Network

A wider bench of Gilanis meant no single defeat could exhaust the family's capital. Syed Rehmat Hussain Gilani chaired the Multan District Board from 1954 to 1958 and was later imprisoned during the anti-Bhutto national-unity agitation; three decades on, his nephew Yousuf Raza Gilani won the same chairmanship, defeating the son of the very man who had unseated the family a generation before (Balgan, 2023, p. 88). Alamdar Hussain Gilani's own career — running from the 1951 provincial elections through EBDO disqualification to a conviction for falsifying land records in order to dodge Ayub-era agrarian reform — shows that the same legal-rational apparatus which conferred legitimacy could also, at least once, hold the family to account (Balgan, 2023, p. 90). Makhdoom Syed Rajan Bakhsh Gilani, a young man who worked with Syed Yousuf Raza from 1985 onward, and Makhdoomzada Syed Asad Murtaza Gilani, who got elected as a Member of the National Assembly independently in 2002, are two such young men (Balgan, 2023, pp. 92-94).

Through the seventeen-year period that is analyzed in this essay, the Gilanis have never relied solely on one register but have always had another way forward through their other registers if a failure occurred, whether an election, disqualification, or succession issue. It is the redundancy of these registers, rather than the ability of one person in politics, that allowed this family to become the most important political lineage in Multan by 1988.

4. Comparative Analysis and Critical Discussion: Qureshi and Hashmi

4.1 Qureshi: Traditional Authority Without Charismatic Constancy

The Qureshi family's traditional authority rests on an even longer documented genealogy than the Gilanis'. Comparing the two sharpens the thesis, because the Qureshi case shows what happens once the balance tilts toward legal-rational opportunism at the expense of a stable charismatic attachment. As custodians of the Bahauddin Zakariya shrine — the saint reportedly born in 1170, trained in Bukhara and the Hijaz, a companion of Baba Fariduddin Ganj Shakar, Jalaluddin Surkh Bukhari, and Lal Shahbaz Qalandar before returning to Multan in 1222 and dying there in 1261 — the Qureshis held traditional authority of the first order (Ahmad, 2009, p. 148). Their loyalty in 1857 was, if anything, rewarded even more generously than the Gilanis': Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi received a jagir, cash grants, and eight plots of land for suppressing mutineers at Shawala Bridge; his successors went on providing cavalry and intelligence in the Second Anglo-Afghan War, contributing to Silver Jubilee funds, and by 1915 being declared "best friend of the British Crown." (Gilmartin, 1988, p. 44)

Where the Qureshi case really diverges is in the relative weakness, across 1970–1988, of any figure of charismatic authority to rival Hamid Raza Gilani's bond with Bhutto. Nawab Sadiq Hussain Qureshi's entry into the PPP in 1970 reads as calculation rather than attachment — the record has him gauging Bhutto's popularity and joining on that basis, notwithstanding that his own supporters had earlier attacked Bhutto's campaign convoy near Qadirpur (Balgan, 2023, p. 125).

This is legal-rational calculation barely dressed up as anything else, and what followed bears it out: having risen under Bhutto's patronage to the governorship and then the chief ministership of Punjab, Sadiq Hussain Qureshi abandoned the PPP the moment the wind shifted after 1977, contested only nominally in 1985, was disqualified during the accountability process that followed, and retired into business — running, of all things, a Coca-Cola bottling franchise in Lahore before eventually selling it (Balgan, 2023, pp. 127–128). The career of his cousin, Sajjad Hussain Qureshi, also falls into a similar pattern: Muslim League, followed by PPP (but even there through the good offices of General Gul Hassan, for Bhutto failed to convince him personally), quitting in 1977 to run for the office of District Council Chairmen, serving in Zia's referendum of 1984 and Majlis-e-Shura, and being appointed as the Governor of Punjab in December 1985 – a move which was described in the national press as an acknowledgment of his organizational services to the Muslim League and the referendum campaign, but not in terms of any personal connection with the martial law regime (Balgan, 2023, pp. 129–131; "Sajjad Qureshi Sworn In as Governor of Punjab," 1985). His removal from office, when he refused to accede to Benazir Bhutto's request not to administer the oath to Nawaz Sharif as Chief Minister in 1988, is well-documented in the local press (Balgan, 2023, p. 132; "Governor Sajjad Qureshi Removed," 1988). The Election Commission's report on the 1988 general elections separately confirms the seat totals that went to each faction of the reunited Muslim League in Multan division that year (Election Commission of Pakistan, 1990, pp. 149–152).

Shah Mahmood Qureshi's ascent provides a further example of traditional and charismatic capital already built up being harnessed on behalf of a family member whose political career originates through credentials drawn from the secular elite rather than from religious credentials. Qureshi, educated at Aitchison and then Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, entered politics through the non-party contests of 1985, "in collaboration with his father Sajjad Hussain, who was one of General Zia's close friends," before taking the familiar route into the reconstituted Muslim League after 1986, and into ministerial office – Planning and Development – with Nawaz Sharif from 1988 (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 222). As it turns out, the "custodian" identity does not require the incumbency to undergo spiritual formation itself. It is sufficient to be recognized as inheriting the accumulated capital of the lineage – consistent with Weber's own conclusion that once routinized, charismatic authority survives past its original bearer by being attached to office or lineage rather than needing constant re-validation (Weber, 1978, p. 1148).

4.2 Hashmi: Ideological Substitution for Hereditary Piety

Hashmi family, which exists in its entirety through Makhdoom Javed Hashmi in this period, constitutes the most divergent case from the Gilani and Qureshi family cases, because it demonstrates how the tripartite model was partially reconstructed around ideological charisma rather than just hereditary-spiritual charisma. This is because the family has some sajjada-linked lineage: ancestry from Makhdoom Syed Abdul Rashid Haqqani, who was a disciple of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani and settled Makhdoom Rashid about a thousand years back, as well as having a grandfather named Makhdoom Noor Chirag Shah, who himself belonged to the Muslim League

in its earlier days and whose son had been hosting Mumtaz Muhammad Khan Daulatana in Makhdoom Rashid in 1946 (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 223).

What sets Javed Hashmi's own career apart is the near-total displacement of that inherited capital by charisma built on student and Islamist activism instead. His prominence grew out of leading the Islami Jamiat Talaba at Punjab University, most visibly during a protest over the kidnapping of two women from the Governor's House at a state dinner hosted by Governor Ghulam Mustafa Khar — an episode that built his reputation entirely apart from any shrine authority (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 224). His self-described mentorship under Maulana Maududi situates his early political formation within a current of Islamic thought that, in places, sat at odds doctrinally with the shrine-centred Sufism his own family traditionally represented — a tension he acknowledges himself, having declined formal Jamaat-e-Islami membership despite his admiration for Maududi, in favour of a career built on shifting alignment instead: ministerial office under Zia (which he later said he regretted accepting), a stretch with Asghar Khan's Tehreek-e-Istiqlal, and eventual settlement in the Muslim League, on whose Islami Jamhoori Ittehad ticket he narrowly won NA-114 Multan in 1985 before narrowly losing it again in 1988 — margins the Election Commission's returns for both contests place within a few thousand votes each way (Quddafi & Afridi, 2023, p. 225; Election Commission of Pakistan, 1986, p. 91; Election Commission of Pakistan, 1990, p. 158).

The comparative point here goes to what the thesis actually requires. In the case of Hashmi's political longevity from 1977 to 1988 (he bounced between ministerial office, opposition, and elections, just as the Gilanis and Qureshis did, without ever suffering a reduction in his political prestige), it was not based on hereditary piri identity as its primary resource. On the contrary, it was based on charisma arising out of ideological conviction and personal courage, with the less prominent religious and landed credentials of his family being of secondary importance. This further sharpens the thesis: what political culture in Multan did not reward hereditary religious prestige, but rather the combination of lasting traditional or charismatic identity and flexible legal-rational involvement. The sajjada nashin clans were merely the most common medium of this combination — and, due to their landed and organized mureed network resources, the most politically effective medium — but not the sole possible basis for it, as Hashmi's non-sajjada record demonstrates.

4.3 Comparative Assessment

If we put these three examples together, we can draw a spectrum. The Gilanis have achieved an almost ideal situation of stability in terms of integration of the three registers, based on constant custodianship and lasting (though at times fragile) charisma related to the Bhutto clan through two generations. The Qureshis have similarly strong traditional authority but a much more opportunistic pattern of change between charisma and legal rationality, in which loyalty to one patron (Bhutto, then Zia, then again Bhutto) was constantly conditional on the patron's capacity to provide a reward. The Hashmis show that the underlying mechanism could work even without hereditary custodianship, provided some other form of durable charisma could take its place. In sum, these three examples support the thesis, while providing a boundary to it, namely that the important thing is the integration of the registers rather than their particular contents.

5. Socio-Political and Institutional Impact

5.1 Gardezi: Traditional Authority Turned Against Itself

The Gardezi family supplies the sharpest complication to the pattern traced so far, because it shows hereditary authority could be turned by one member of the family against the very political order it had historically served — and still sustain political relevance in the process. Descended from Hazrat Abu al-Fazal Jamaluddin Muhammad Yusuf, who migrated from Gardez to Multan in the late eleventh century, the family accumulated land, courtierships, and, after loyal service in 1857 and the Anglo-Afghan wars, the titles Khan Bahadur and Nawab Bahadur across the colonial period (Maqsood & Bhatti, 2023, p. 259). Syed Ali Hussain Gardezi (b. 1911) followed the conventional path — Muslim League organizing before 1947, EBDO imprisonment under Ayub for supporting Fatima Jinnah, continued Council Muslim League activity after 1970 — and died in 1984 having helped secure land and funding for Nishtar Medical College (Maqsood & Bhatti, 2023, p. 261).

His relative Syed Muhammad Qaswar Gardezi is the real anomaly here. Despite being born in 1923 into a large landowning family, with agricultural training and a businessman of repute in textiles and oil, Qaswar Gardezi made it his business to commit to leftist politics from 1949, being part of Mian Iftikharuddin's Azad Pakistan Party and later becoming the joint secretary of the National Awami Party, organising strikes and trade unions in Multan, and supposedly being the first person to be detained in Multan following Ayub's 1958 martial law (Maqsood & Bhatti, 2023, p. 262). The statement attributed to him by a group of sceptical NAP workers in Khanewal that he was "born in a feudal family" but had "rebelled against" it is clearly one of the rare cases in this list of sajjada-adjacent individuals who made a public rejection of the discourse traditionally available to him (Maqsood & Bhatti, 2023, p. 263). Nevertheless, despite the thirty years that he has been active throughout, including detention first under the PPP following the 1973 Hyderabad Tribunal case of NAP members and later under Zia, and being in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy and the establishment of Pakistan National Party in 1986 and being an early supporter of Seraiki provincial autonomy, even as his politics rejected the very order that background represented (Maqsood & Bhatti, 2023, p. 264; "NAP Leaders Arrested Across Punjab," 1973). Traditional authority, in Multan, seems to have functioned less as a fixed ideological commitment than as transferable social capital — capital that could be redirected even toward projects of self-repudiation without losing its underlying force. The remaining Gardezi figures fit the more familiar, opportunistic mould already documented elsewhere: Syed Abbas Hussain Shah Gardezi, a retired Deputy Commissioner who won NA-111 Multan on a PPP ticket in 1977, and Syed Muhammad Razi Shah Gardezi, who followed his patron Sadiq Hussain Qureshi into the PPP and was placed under house arrest in 1977. Between them, they confirm Qaswar Gardezi as very much the outlier within his own family (Balgan, 2023, pp. 150–152).

5.2 Bukhari and Sadat Lineages: Multiplication at the Local Level

The Bukhari Syeds of Jalalpur Pirwala and Shujabad, together with the Qatalpur Sadat lineage of Dr Syed Khawar Ali Shah and Syed Fakhar Imam, show just how thoroughly this layered structure had spread across Multan division's local

government by the 1970s and 1980s. Diwan Syed Ghulam Abbas Bukhari, custodian of the twin shrines of Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari and Syed Makhdoom Sultan Alam Bukhari and owner of roughly 47,000 acres, won five consecutive Provincial Assembly terms from 1951 to 1977, migrating from the Qayyum Muslim League to the PPP as its tide rose in Multan division without ever disturbing his underlying base — a run of victories the Election Commission's successive constituency returns confirm seat by seat (Kamal, 2020, p. 193; Election Commission of Pakistan, 1978, p. 118). His son, Diwan Syed Ashiq Hussain Bukhari, repeated the pattern locally, chairing the Jalalpur Pirwala Town Committee from 1979 and the Multan District Council from 1985, before winning a PPP provincial seat in 1988 against a Lang-community rival — religious mobilization and party mobilization operating side by side within a single campaign (Kamal, 2020, p. 195).

The political life of Dr Syed Khawar Ali Shah, who was elected six times from 1970 to 2018, might serve as an outstanding example of how the flexibility of the legal-rational principle rests above the strong base of tradition and charisma: PPP candidate in 1970, independent candidate in 1977, connected with Jamaat-e-Islami till mid-eighties, and connected with Islamic Democratic Alliance in 1988.

Five vehicles across four elections, each used instrumentally, none of it costing him the base he had rooted in his Sadat lineage and the Qatalpur shrine complex — a sequence the Election Commission's cumulative constituency records for NA-114 and its predecessor seats bear out in full (Balgan, 2023, pp. 160–163; Election Commission of Pakistan, 1990, p. 160). His 1979 introduction of his cousin Syed Fakhar Imam into District Council politics produced, within a decade, a serious three-way contest for local supremacy among the Sadat, Gilani, and Qureshi lineages, and it eventually culminated in Fakhar Imam's tenure as Speaker of the National Assembly (Kamal, 2020, p. 197). The Shujabad Sadats — Syed Sadruddin and Syed Fakhruddin Shah — and the Lodhran Rizvi family round out the picture; Syed Nasir Ali Shah Rizvi, notably, embraced explicitly socialist, internationalist politics, even attending Communist Party centenary celebrations in Romania in 1974, before withdrawing from politics after 1977. They make up a landscape where almost all tehsils within the Multan division had a sajjada nashin or Sadat family inhabiting their region in the same way as that discussed above (Balgan, 2023, pp. 170-172).

5.3 Implications for Party Development and State Formation

In this way, the image that emerges has meanings that reach beyond mere biography. For one, the persistent fragility of the party institution in Pakistan through this period — the ability of politicians to switch back and forth from the Muslim League, PPP, National Alliance, and even martial law apparatuses with no ideological effort at all — was made possible structurally by sources of authority that were either traditional or charismatic. That helps explain why the PPP itself, despite its anti-feudal programme, remained so dependent on precisely the class it claimed to be superseding. Second, Zia's non-party local elections of 1979 and 1983, meant to build legitimacy detached from party politics, in practice reproduced — arguably intensified — competition among the same lineages, since stripping away party labels did nothing to disturb the underlying traditional and charismatic bases of local support. If anything, the non-party framework favoured families with strong personal and religious followings over politicians whose standing depended more on party organization, a pattern the Election Commission's own reports on the 1979

and 1983 local-body polls, and contemporary newspaper analysis of the results, both noted at the time (Aziz, 2001, p. 190; Government of the Punjab, Local Government Department, 1984, p. 22; “Notables Dominate Local Bodies Polls,” 1983). Third, the persistence of families like the Gilanis and Qureshis across the ideologically opposed Bhutto and Zia periods complicates any account of Pakistani politics built primarily around a left-right or civilian-military axis. The Multan evidence points instead toward a substantially autonomous stratum of landed-religious notables, able to supply whichever regime happened to hold power with the local legitimacy and mobilization it needed, largely regardless of that regime’s declared content — a finding that lends granular, family-level support to Aziz’s and Malik and Mirza’s broader claims about the cross-regime durability of *pir* authority in Pakistan (Aziz, 2001, p. 195; Malik & Mirza, 2015, p. 12).

6. Concluding Remarks

This article set out to explain why Multan’s *sajjada nashin* lineages sustained, and in places strengthened, their political dominance across two constitutional orders — Bhutto’s populist, ostensibly anti-feudal civilian government and Zia-ul-Haq’s martial-law Islamization — whose declared commitments should, on either a modernization-theoretic or religious-reformist reading, have eroded hereditary shrine authority. The answer, grounded in Weberian analysis, is that no single register of legitimacy accounts for this durability on its own. Only the simultaneous possession of traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational authority, together with the fluency incumbent families showed in shifting the balance among them as circumstances demanded, explains it. The Gilani family’s trajectory across 1970–1988 offered the fullest illustration: hereditary custodianship of the Musa Pak Shaheed shrine supplied traditional authority; the Hamid Raza Gilani-Bhutto friendship, later reconstituted through Yousuf Raza Gilani’s relationship with Benazir Bhutto, supplied charismatic authority; and successive party memberships, elected offices, and appointive positions under both civilian and martial-law governments supplied legal-rational authority.

The Qureshi comparison showed a structurally similar but far more opportunistic pattern of regime-switching. The Hashmi case showed ideological and activist charisma substituting for weaker hereditary capital within the same underlying logic. And the Gardezi, Bukhari, and smaller Sadat lineages demonstrated both the pattern’s reach across Multan division’s local-government structure and, in Qaswar Gardezi’s case, the capacity of traditional social capital to sustain relevance even when turned against the very order it had historically served.

These findings speak to three areas of ongoing scholarly interest. For students of Pakistani party politics, the chronic weakness of programmatic institutionalization should be read not as a failure of leadership or design, but as a structural consequence of rural notables retaining non-party sources of durability robust enough to make party affiliation genuinely secondary. For students of state formation, the persistence of the same families across regimes usually treated as sharply opposed points to the value of tracking continuities in the sub-national distribution of authority — continuities that cut across, and constrain, the apparent discontinuities visible at the national level. And for students of religious authority more broadly, the Multan evidence offers a granular, biographically anchored

confirmation of something Weber himself insisted on: that traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational authority are analytically distinct but empirically and historically intertwined, rarely encountered in isolated, pure form.

Three limits of the present study point toward where the research should go next. First, the analysis is confined to Multan district and a single fifteen-year period; a natural next step would compare the pattern documented here with *sajjada nashin* trajectories at other major Punjab shrine centres — Pakpattan, Taunsa Sharif, Jhang, Uch Sharif — to see whether the balance among registers observed in Multan holds generally across South Punjab, or shifts with local shrine prominence, land distribution, or party organization. Second, the study stops in 1988, right where several of its central figures — Yousuf Raza Gilani above all — went on to careers of even greater significance; a follow-up tracing the same families through the post-1988 “decade of democracy,” the second Musharraf-era martial law, and the post-2008 civilian period would test this framework against a much longer run of regime change. Third, the reliance here on published family histories and interviews, appropriate as it is for a case-study design, would benefit from systematic triangulation against archival electoral records, land-revenue registers, and colonial-era gazetteers — the kind of documentary base that could test some of the more anecdotal claims still floating in the family-history literature, whether that means the precise circumstances of the 1953 Daulatana cabinet dispute or the exact scale of Bukhari and Gilani landholdings. The comparative treatment of Hashmi and Gardezi in Sections 4 and 5 also opens a bigger question worth pursuing on its own terms: under what conditions can ideologically grounded charisma substitute durably for hereditary religious-traditional authority, and when does it instead prove more fragile than the hereditary variety, whose material and institutional supports do not depend on the continued vitality of any one conviction? Answering that properly would mean extending this article’s method to a wider set of non-*sajjada* political careers across southern Punjab.

What this study has established, in the meantime, is that the political dominance of Multan’s *pirs* and *sajjada nashins* between 1970 and 1988 was neither an anomaly waiting to be corrected by modernizing or Islamizing state projects, nor a simple survival of unreconstructed feudal privilege. It was, instead, the outcome of a historically specific and remarkably resilient combination — inherited spiritual and material capital, personal and dynastic charisma, and adaptable participation in whatever institutional order the state happened, at any given moment, to provide.

That combination proved equal to Bhutto’s populism and to Zia’s Islamization alike, and there is little in the record examined here to suggest that either regime came close to dislodging it.

Conflict of Interest

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