

## Between militants and “mafia”: Interrupting dispossession in rural Pakistan

*Ethnography*

0(0) 1–21

© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:

[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)

DOI: 10.1177/1466138120967688

[journals.sagepub.com/home/eth](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/eth)**Shozab Raza** Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto,  
Toronto, Canada

### Abstract

In 2000, one of Pakistan’s largest social movements began: a tenant struggle for land rights on the country’s military farms. Though the military tried to subdue the movement, it eventually succeeded insofar as many tenants stopped paying rent. As a result, villagers experienced a generalized (albeit uneven) prosperity. Certain movement leaders, in particular, became especially wealthy, relocating from their mud houses to big bungalows, replacing their motorbikes with SUVs, and transitioning from tenant farming to lucrative businesses in nearby cities. They also started moving around with armed security, allying with urban elites, and entering Pakistan’s major political parties. Rumors also began spreading that some leaders were using violence or intimidation to accumulate this political-economic power. In the movement’s afterlife, ordinary villagers began to wonder: were their leaders still committed to militantly pursuing villagers’ collective interests? Or were they now using the movement for their own private, even criminal, ambitions?

### Keywords

Mafia, social movements, militants, land, dispossession, Pakistan

---

### Corresponding author:

Shozab Raza, Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, 19 Ursula Franklin Street, Toronto, ON, CAN M5S 2S2.

Email: [shozab.raza@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:shozab.raza@mail.utoronto.ca)

## Introduction

Pakistan's military is not simply an institution for "national defense": it is also a corporate empire, involved in finance, real-estate, manufacturing and even farming (Siddiq, 2007). Though the military's political power has periodically been challenged, its economic empire has remained largely uncontested. But that changed on June 30th 2000. That day, the administration of the Okara Military Farms — the country's largest military-owned farm that spans over 17,000 acres and almost 20 villages — announced a change to their tenurial relations with sharecroppers. For close to a century, the farm's tenure relations was the "*battai* system": a sharecropping arrangement where tenants delivered roughly half the crop to the military as rent. Under the new "*tekidari* (contract) system", tenants would be re-classified as "contract labourers", given a 3-year land lease subject to annual renewal and required to pay a fixed amount of rent in cash per annum. Farm authorities justified the change by arguing that it would bolster declining revenues, but farmers widely believed the contract was a ruse to dispossess them.<sup>1</sup> Shortly after the announcement, tenant leaders formed an organization, the *Anjuman Muzareen Punjab* (AMP) (Punjab Tenants Association), to oppose the tenurial change. With the assistance of outside supporters, they soon discovered that the military neither owned the land in question nor did they have any legal right to collect the rent. The land, in fact, belonged to the Punjab government, which rented it to the British India Army in 1913 on a lease that expired in 1938. Though the land was automatically transferred to the Pakistani army after partition, they had neither renewed the lease nor paid any rent to the Punjab government. After this discovery, tenants began demanding outright ownership of the land: "*malki ya maut*" (ownership or death) became their infamous slogan. During the height of the movement between 2000 and 2004, the army tried to coerce tenants into signing the new contract, even deploying the paramilitary Rangers to besiege their villages. But villagers remained steadfast, responding with their own set of militant tactics. To defend their villagers, women, for instance, armed themselves with a *thappa*, a flat wooden stick used to wash clothes. Thousands of villagers, men and women alike, would also occasionally occupy major roads and block traffic. Because of its strength — alongside pressure from international NGOs and the declining legitimacy of General Musharraf's dictatorship — the movement eventually succeeded. Though they still struggled for legal land rights, tenants had acquired them de facto in that they stopped rent payments entirely. Military-led dispossession had, in effect, been interrupted.

Given both its scale and the fact that it occurred in a region (Punjab) considered the heartland of military support, the movement attracted significant journalistic and scholarly attention. Scholarly studies, based largely on fieldwork conducted during or shortly after the movement's zenith, have focused on how it was able to coalesce (Akhtar, 2006; Bano, 2012: 95–118) and articulate a right to land without any clear legal basis (Rizvi, 2019). Little, however, has been written about the movement's afterlives.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I focus on the evolution of the AMP

leadership, especially as this was perceived by the military farms' ordinary villagers. When I conducted fieldwork in 2012–2013, the conflict had reached a detente. Farmers widely reported experiencing generalized (albeit uneven) prosperity after several years of rent-stoppage. Certain AMP leaders, in particular, became especially wealthy, relocating from their mud houses to big bungalows, replacing their motorbikes with SUVs, and transitioning from tenant farming to lucrative businesses in Okara city. They also started behaving like village “big men”, allying with Okara city's political elites, enrolling in Pakistan's major political parties and entering electoral politics. Rumors also began spreading that some leaders were using violence or intimidation to accumulate this political and economic power, rumors bolstered by the fact that certain leaders now travelled with an armed entourage. Whereas a decade ago, ordinary villagers overwhelmingly praised their leaders — and in fact, the movement was widely celebrated for its unity across caste, class and gender (Akhtar, 2006) — now some began expressing uncertainty. Were AMP leaders still committed to advancing the collective interests of ordinary villagers? Or were they now using the movement for their own private, even criminal, political and economic ambitions?

Several decades ago, Eric Hobsbawm and Anton Blok's debate over peasant banditry centered on a similar sort of question. Whereas Hobsbawm (1965 [1959], 1969) argued that peasant bandits engaged in “primitive” anti-elite class struggle, Blok (1969: 168), drawing on his study of the Sicilian mafia, claimed bandits eventually allied with state and other elites who, in turn, used them to occupy land and violently suppress peasant insurgencies. Banditry eventually and necessarily morphed into mafias: elite-driven and violently entrepreneurial, they discard the law while also colluding with the state. To Blok (1974: 99–101), bandits were actually “anti-social” and Hobsbawm's idea of “social banditry” was, in essence, a “myth” (Blok 1972: 502). Recent scholarship, however, contests this binary. Bosses — as Thomas Blom Hansen (2001: 188) once wrote about Mumbai's Muslim gangsters — are “deeply ambivalent” figures. Though bosses accumulate wealth, they also redistribute some of it downwards. They certainly injure or intimidate subalterns, yet they also offer genuine protection to others. And finally, though they certainly collude with state elites (Berenschot, 2011), they can also confront others. As Lucia Michelutti et al. (2018: 6) summarize in their study South Asia's “Mafia Raj”, bosses operate in “in-between worlds”. Writing more broadly about popular politics in the global South, even Partha Chatterjee (2004) acknowledged this ambivalence. Though he focused on political society's democratic and redistributive dimensions, he also conceded that it had a “dark side” as well, involving “criminality or violence” (Chatterjee, 2004: 75).

Precisely because of their ambivalence, local perceptions about bosses can also vary, as recent scholarship has noted. Governments, for instance, can shift between casting bosses as “activists” or “criminals” depending on whether the ruling party are allies with them or not (Ruud, 2014: 314). Subordinate groups display a similar variability. For some, especially those who experience only coercion, violence and theft at their hands, bosses are unequivocal criminals (Sanchez, 2016). To others,

bosses are admired and respected as Robin Hood-type figures (Vaishnav, 2017: 30) able to “get things done” for them (Piliavsky and Sbriccoli, 2016). While this literature centers on the contrasting perspectives between a boss’ supporters and detractors, in this paper, I narrow in to focus on subordinate supporters’ evolving perceptions. As Chatterjee (2004: 75) writes, though political society certainly has what might appear to us as a “dark side”; for those within, “crime and violence are not fixed black-and-white legal categories; they could be open to a great deal of political negotiation”. In this paper, I probe this political negotiation, showing how the AMP leadership’s ambivalent practices generated competing perspectives even amongst their village supporters.

What is especially distinct about this case is that villagers’ uncertainties hinged over the very concept of the “mafia” boss. When the AMP movement first began, villagers did not call its leaders bosses at all, but instead praised them as *kissan rehnumao* (literally: peasant leaders), a figure whom we might liken, given their use of militant tactics, to the English term “peasant militant”. This is a salient figure in Okara, given the history of peasant agitations here. During the early 1970s, major landlord-tenant confrontations occurred in the district, as elsewhere in Pakistan, especially in the context of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s 1972 land reforms (Herring, 1979). On the military farms, these struggles were led by various *kissan rehnumao*, who demanded a fairer and more transparent distribution of the crop and, in this pursuit, used various extra-legal tactics “like squat[ing] and subject[ing] the residence of the AC [Assistant Commissioner] to *gherao* [occupation]” (Punjab Special Branch, 1972).<sup>3</sup> When the AMP movement first emerged, villagers interpreted its leaders as resurrected peasant militants; their extra-legal or violent tactics as analogous to those used in these historic struggles. Later however, some villagers began to wonder: were leaders still peasant militants who, if they deployed coercion or violence, did so for *ek-numberi* (licit work)? Or had they become “mafia” bosses using violence for *do-numberi* (illicit acts)? Either because they still supported them or because mafia-like entities often elicit a “code of silence” in their territories (Kirmani, 2017: 116), villagers often spoke only indirectly about their leaders’ mafia-like practices. In addition to *do-numberi*, others words they used to signal this included the English terms “mafia-type” and “boss” and colloquial Punjabi/Urdu terms like “*chaudhary*”/“*chaudhrahahat-pan*” (acting like a *chaudhary*).<sup>5</sup>

Methodologically, I centre the paper on two of the AMP’s central leaders, Salim<sup>6</sup> and Nadir, whose ambivalent practices especially elicited contrasting positions amongst villagers.<sup>7</sup> Four ambivalences stood out to villagers, which I frame as questions and explore ethnographically throughout the paper. Were AMP leaders (1) performing like militants or “mafia”?; (2) legitimately protecting or violently extorting?; (3) pursuing collective village welfare or private profit? and (4) confronting or collaborating with state apparatuses? Villagers answered these questions differently — a variation that accounts for their uncertainty over whether AMP leaders were militants or “mafia”. My intention, though, is not to arrive at a conclusive answer to this larger question, for the ethnographic material doesn’t lend itself to this sort of “analytical closure” (Gupta, 1998: 30). Instead, I explore

the conditions and practices that enabled the AMP leaders to appear in this liminal position between militants and “mafia”. More broadly, I also think viewing these liminal leaders as “figures” can invite pedagogical reflection on the context in which the figures live, much like Walter Benjamin (1973: 35–66) probed the figure of “the flaneur” to tell us about 19th century Paris. Figures are real people “whom others recognize as standing out and who encourages reflexive contemplation about the world in which the figure[s] [live]” (Barker et al., 2014: 2–3). As I discuss in the conclusion, these liminal AMP figures provoked certain villagers, as it can provoke us as well, to reflect on the messy boundary between radical peasant militancy and rural “mafias” and, more broadly, on the character of Pakistani society and the politics required to transform it.

### Performing like militants or “mafia”?

One chilly winter morning in 2012, I travelled to the AMP’s central office to meet Salim, one of the movement’s chief leaders. The office was located in his native village, on the outskirts of Okara city. When I arrived, Salim was expecting me and, without provocation, began to tell me how he became an AMP leader. When the movement began in 2000, he was studying for a master’s degree at a university in Faisalabad. He first observed the movement from a distance, but since he was, in his words, a “society-oriented person” concerned about “social welfare”, he decided to leave his degree and join. At the time, the AMP was centered in a Christian-majority village and led by two Christian tenants. Because of their connections to the NGO world — connections cultivated through their globally networked local church — both leaders had acquired a skill set and savvy to lead the AMP. When Salim returned to Okara, he joined the AMP as a regular member. “Despite being educated”, he said to me, “I followed them [the Christian leaders] as a worker”. But soon, these leaders started to lose their authority, especially after they accepted funding from an international NGO. Ordinary tenants, particularly Muslims, became skeptical about how these funds were being used and for whose agenda — especially since Christians in Pakistan, like elsewhere in the subcontinent (Roberts, 2016), are already viewed as inside-outsiders. “After that”, Salim continued, “the tenants insisted that I become their *rehnuma* [leader]”.

In conveying his story, Salim seemed to be re-narrating a script about himself that he had told on many occasions. “Self-legitimizing narrative[s]”, as Paul Rollier (2019: 134) discovered in his study of Pakistan’s urban bosses, are central to “the art of bossing”. Often emphasizing a boss’ autonomy through fantastical stories about his meteoric rise and violent murders, these narratives are part of their “permanent performance” (Hansen 2001, 232). Indeed, as many recent studies have stressed, performance is a central way bosses acquire recognition as leaders, not only from their own subordinates (Michelutti et al., 2018; Harriss-White and Michelutti, 2019), but also from elite politicians (Berenschot, 2011: 266–267). Yet the performative self-narrative I heard from Salim that day was different. Unlike a typical boss, he neither boasted about any violent deeds nor did he emphasize his

own autonomy. Instead, he downplayed himself, emphasizing his reluctance to take leadership, his satisfaction with being just an ordinary AMP worker, and how he was urged into his current position by villagers. Social or collective forces were over-determining, not under-determining, in his account. He did not narrate his life-story like a typical boss.

Several ordinary tenants confirmed my first impressions of Salim. Take Junaid, for instance, a tenant in his forties who cultivated around four acres of military farmland. I once asked him what he thought about Salim:

He is our *kissan rehnuma*. He didn't want to do this work, but we encouraged him. And he's sacrificed everything for us: his youth, his education. Still, wherever we stand, he stands. If he talks, it is only for the AMP.

Like others, Junaid admired Salim's self-sacrifice, making much of the fact that he left his master's degree and a potentially lucrative career — one that could've improved his family's meager standing — to support the movement. By re-circulating narratives Salim told about himself, supporters like Junaid weren't simply passive audiences to his performance, but co-producers of his spectacle (c.f. Ranciere, 2009: 2).

Yet, precisely because both the audience and the actors are involved in the performance, room remains open for a disjunction. Supporters' narratives about their leader can exceed, or even contradict, what the leader might say about himself. This happened when I met Mohsin, a small tenant in his early forties who started actively participating in the movement after the military arrested his uncle. When I asked him about Salim, he initially repeated what Junaid told me. "He's our *kissan rehnuma*", he said to me one evening as I sat in his house, "I accept him as our leader". Later in the evening, however, he did mention that he had some "disagreements with Salim". I asked him what these were about. "He acts like a *chaudhary*", Mohsin replied, "I don't like his *chaudhrahat-pan*...his 'mafia'-type behavior". Though he did not elaborate on what exactly constituted *chaudhrahat-pan* or "mafia-type" behaviour, I soon understood what he meant when I met Salim on another occasion. This time, I did not arrange a meeting in advance, but turned up unexpectedly at the AMP head office. When I arrived, I was told I could find Salim at his nearby house. The house, it turned out, was actually an ostentatious and gated villa, still undergoing construction, which stood out drastically from the other more-modest village houses. Parked outside was an SUV, which I later discovered belonged to Salim. Inside, I saw Salim sitting on a chair in a neatly trimmed garden, wearing dark shades and flanked on either side by armed security guards. Various villagers were seated around him, and I took my place among them. Each villager took their turn to level a request at Salim — to solve a local dispute or facilitate a job search, for instance — which Salim seemed to heed by making various phone-calls. It appeared I was in Salim's *dera*. In rural Punjab, *deras* are a space where "big men", often landlords, adjudicate disputes between villagers and distribute patronage. As Hansen (2001: 232) urges, we must pay

attention to these sorts of public spaces, and the performances therein, for this is the heart of political society, the arena where various “sovereigns beyond the state” (Hansen, 2005) (re)produce their authority. Though *deras* have historically been a rural phenomenon, they have now started appearing in urban Pakistan, especially amongst new urban mafias whose heads, typically hailing from subaltern backgrounds, use this space to affirm their new identity as bosses (Rollier, 2019). Flaunting weapons is often part of this performative practice (Michelutti et al., 2018: 244), an element in a wider performative repertoire of violence (Hansen, 2001; Piliavsky and Sbriccoli, 2016: 379). By reproducing this intensely hierarchical space — one also flagged with performative intimations of violence — Salim, much like Pakistan’s nascent urban bosses, was signaling an alternative spectacle of himself: not the *kissan rehnuma* I met earlier, but a rural “big man”, even a “mafia” boss. When Mohsin spoke of Salim’s *chaudhrahath-pan* or “mafia-type behaviour”, this, I figured, was what he was referring to.

When I told Junaid that some other tenants (whom I did not name) were suggesting that AMP leaders were becoming bosses or *chaudharys*, he at first rejected the accusations. “A *chaudhary*’s door is always closed”, he said, “they only care about themselves and not others”. Yet he then went on to justify Salim’s seemingly “mafia-type” behavior. “The SUV, the security guards, the protocol”, he said, “this is our political culture. Salim needs to do all this to be taken seriously and do our work”. Indeed, as I elaborate later, Salim had developed political connections with influential police officials, city bureaucrats and politicians, and, at the time of my fieldwork, had decided to run in the upcoming provincial assembly elections on the ticket of the incumbent party, the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP). Whereas Mohsin read Salim’s performance as reflecting a constitutive shift in what the AMP leadership was becoming; for Junaid, the performance was a deliberate tactic to curry the favor of Okara’s political elites and achieve the movement’s objectives. For Junaid, Salim’s performance didn’t discount his credentials as a militant or *kissan rehnuma*; in fact, it affirmed them, for it showed the extent to which Salim would go to serve ordinary villagers. To Junaid, Salim was a savvy performer, skillfully able to conceal his poor upbringing — he apparently had less than one acre of land when the movement began — to play the part with elites.

### **Legitimately protecting or violently extorting?**

The day I met Salim in his *dera*, he invited me to accompany him and his armed entourage to one of the military farms’ villages. On the way there, I asked him why he needed to move around with armed security. “It’s for our protection”, he said. By “our”, Salim wasn’t only referring to himself or his entourage, but all of the military farms’ villagers. He went on to say that, though hostilities between the military and villagers had waned for now, they needed to be prepared for a surprise attack. Junaid too, when I asked him once about the AMP’s weapons, articulated a similar point. He even compared the AMP’s movement against the “military-

landlord” to the infamous 1970s struggle of Hashtnagar peasants against Khan landlords in what is now the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (Ali, 2020). Just as the peasants there and then needed to be armed against the Khan landlords, who had their own private militias, so too did the AMP. In ways like this, AMP leaders were likened to the peasant militants who led Pakistan’s historic agrarian struggles.

Yet what I saw the day I travelled with Salim also made it apparent that, at least at the time of my fieldwork, villagers were unsure about how real or imminent this military threat was. By the time we arrived at the village, the local headman had assembled around hundred villagers. All of them were sitting on the dirt floor in the village centre, while Salim proceeded to sit on the empty chair (presumably left vacant for him). With his armed security standing behind him, Salim began to address the assembled villagers. He recounted the success of the AMP movement thus far, before going on to emphasize how the struggle was ongoing — tenants had yet to secure legal land rights, which meant the military could still dispossess them. All this was the pretext for why, I now discovered, we were actually here: to solicit what the AMP leaders called “funds”. Salim asked that each tenant hand over 100 rupees for every acre in their possession. Those assembled remained silent at first, and I sensed a serious discomfort in the area. One tenant then mustered the courage to articulate what others appeared to be thinking. “But we have the land now”, he said. “Isn’t our struggle over?” Many villagers were clearly reluctant to hand over money. Visibly exasperated at this, the village headman then began calling individual tenants by name, revealing how many acres they held, before asking — almost demanding — that they hand over what they “owed”. Only then did villagers start giving any funds.

Witnessing all of this, I began to wonder whether these funds were actually being solicited — or, for that matter, the weapons carried and flaunted — for the protection of tenants against the military, as Salim and Junaid had claimed. Mafia kingpins are of course known for — arguably even defined by (Gambetta, 1993) — the practice of demanding money in the name of “protection”. For mafia-type bosses in South Asia, “protection” is an especially attractive revenue-source since it involves low-investment (Michelutti et al., 2018: 37) and many bosses come from subaltern classes without prior wealth (Piliavsky, 2014: 21). But what we’re actually talking about here is not protection per se, but extortion or racketeering. A “fine line” (Hill, 2003: 19–20) exists between the two. Elaborating on the distinction, Charles Tilly (1985: 170–171) wrote:

Someone who produces both the danger and, at a price, the shield against it is a racketeer. Someone who provides a needed shield but has little control over the danger’s appearance qualifies as a legitimate protector.

Racketeers, in other words, use protection from the threat of their own violence to procure funds. Violence of this sort, either threatened or enacted, is central to how bosses cultivate their authority (Michelutti et al., 2018; Sidel, 1999). Indeed for Jane Schneider and Peter Schneider (2011: 16), a mafias “‘trademarked’ means of



production” is “the capacity of its members to exercise physical violence”. It is this ability to exercise violence, or threaten to, that distinguishes mafias from capitalist firms, which usually abdicate the violence or intimidation necessary for their accumulation to the state. Was the AMP leadership soliciting funds and carrying arms to legitimately protect tenants against the military, or were they extorting — “protecting” villagers against a danger that they themselves could inflict?

To find out, I returned to this village alone to meet up with Majid, a young man in his early twenties whose family were tenant farmers. A friend from Okara city had put me in contact with Majid, re-assuring him that I wasn’t affiliated with Salim nor the AMP leadership, and that he could speak to me in confidence. Still, he remained cautious. When I asked Majid what he thought about that day Salim came to solicit funds, he began by praising him and other AMP leaders for their work in the movement. Only later did he allude to a criticism, and did so only through analogy, speaking, not directly about Salim or other AMP leaders, but about the military farm authorities:

You know, during harvest time, the *chak-in-charge* [local military farm authority] would come to collect the *battai* [their share of the crop, typically half]. When he came, he was the boss. He would come in his car, make an announcement and the tenants would come and sit on the floor. He would sit on a chair.

Majid then described how the *chak-in-charge* would often intimidate tenants into giving more than the half-share, pocketing the extra amount. Tenants widely reported similar forms of military corruption and intimidation (c.f. Rizvi, 2019: 38). Given the way in which it was procured, some villagers had even come to view the *battai* itself as a form of extortion money, and the military, as one villager put it, a “mafia” (c.f. Gayer, 2010). Like extortion money (or *bhatta*), *battai* protected tenants and their livelihoods (especially their access to land) against the violence of the military itself — an analogy that tenants found even more convincing once they stopped paying rent and saw how the military attacked them. Though Majid didn’t say it explicitly, his intention in recounting this earlier history was clear: to (very implicitly) compare Salim’s efforts to solicit funds with the farm authorities’ collection of *battai*. Not only did Salim and the *chak-in-charge* instantiate similar hierarchical relations with villagers, but the “funds” Salim was collecting, ostensibly for the protection of tenants, resembled the *battai* once collected by the military. By re-conceptualizing “funds” as *battai*, Majid was suggesting, in effect, that this money may not necessarily be financing a “legitimate protector” (to use Tilly’s words), but an AMP leadership that was extorting — just like the military before them.

But would these leaders, like extorters proper, intimidate and assault recalcitrant tenants who refused to buy their protection? Or, to put it in Tilly’s terms, was their evidence that AMP leaders produced the danger that they, at a price, shielded villagers against? I didn’t pose this question directly to Majid, though over the course of our conversation he did allude to an answer. “We do have a right to this

land, and to defend it, but now they [the leaders] have gone a bit over”. I asked him what he meant. “In the sense that, you’ll find, they have a lot of weapons. They do a bit of *do-numberi*. You must’ve heard about Nadir?”. I had indeed. Nadir was one of Salim’s close allies and another central AMP leader. Majid was referring to accusations against Nadir for the murder of a Christian tenant in 2011. A few years prior, this tenant had launched a campaign against Nadir and his associates, labeling them a “land mafia” that was arbitrarily confiscating the land of Christian farmers. For this activism, Nadir apparently had the tenant killed. Two years later, when I was doing fieldwork, Nadir was arrested for the murder, though he was quickly released after villagers (led by Salim and others) blockaded Okara’s main road in protest. But it wasn’t only Nadir who faced these sorts of accusations: I also heard some tenants accuse Salim for intimidating defiant tenants, even murdering a Christian boy in 2008. Both Salim and Nadir of course denied responsibility for these murders, insisting that these were lies spread by either the military, which wanted to discredit the movement, or the “envious” former Christian AMP leaders.

For Salim and Nadir, and for ordinary tenants like Junaid, it was precisely to protect the movement against these sorts of slanders and threats — which threatened to disunite and demobilize it — that leaders needed to be well-funded and armed. But for villagers like Majid, the rumors, irrespective of whether they were true or not, did nevertheless make them anxious about what AMP leaders may do to those who disobeyed. Perhaps this was why many villagers assembled that day in front of Salim ended up handing over “funds”, even though they appeared confident that their land was secure from the military threat. Perhaps they feared intimidation from the AMP leadership itself should they disobey. Ultimately, what drove this uncertainty about AMP leaders — whether they were militant protectors or mafia-like extorters — was the fact that both figures deployed violence, the key difference being whether villagers believed that the targets of this violence were external enemies like the army or the Christian leaders (as Junaid did) or recalcitrant villagers internal to the AMP (as Majid suggested). In other words, villagers’ uncertainty stemmed, in this instance, from the slippery nature of violence itself.

### **Pursuing collective welfare or private profit?**

To suggest, as Majid did, that the “funds” the AMP leaders were collecting resembled the *battai* once collected by the military also implied that leaders were now privately profiting (and deploying violence and intimidation to do so). Mafia bosses, though they redistribute some wealth downwards in order to legitimize their own position, also use coercion to channel wealth and assets upwards (Blok, 1974). In fact, the Schneiders (2011: 3) once concluded that mafias are, on balance, “closer to ‘capital’ than to ‘labour’” — a closeness to capital especially evident in recent rounds of land-grabbing, as mafias have often allied with the state and private developers to facilitate these dispossessions across the global South (Grajales, 2013; Walker, 2006). While the AMP emerged ostensibly to oppose

rather than facilitate a land-grab, certain villagers began to wonder: were its leaders, like militants proper, still pursuing collective welfare? Or were they now using the movement (especially its funds, arms and mobilizing capacity) to pursue private profit, as a “mafia” might?

Some villagers remained confident that AMP leaders were still committed to collective welfare, occasionally contrasting them with the previous Christian leaders who, in taking funds from NGOs, “ate money and made their *chaudhrahats* shine”. Many villagers even referred to the AMP as an *akath* (collective), believing that the organization was pursuing the economic welfare and prosperity of the collective. This collective included not only tenants but also landless peasants, who, even though they didn’t lease any agricultural land, had their homes, mosques, churches and ancestral gravesites within the military farms. In fact, the boundary of this imagined collective even extended beyond those residing on the farms to include shopkeepers and traders in nearby towns and even the nation at large. Hussain, an elderly tenant in his seventies, put it this way:

If the government gives ownership to tenants, then the country will benefit. If we prosper, everyone will prosper — the landless who’ll now have more work in the village, the people we buy from in the markets, the people they buy from etc. Pakistan will prosper.

For tenants like Hussain, the AMP’s demand for land rights wasn’t simply a tenant-specific demand, but one that incorporated the interests of the nation as a whole. Indeed, as Mubbashir Rizvi (2019) argues, the movement legitimized its claims to land rights, in part, on this basis, especially as it couldn’t find any legitimization in law (the Punjab government, as the AMP’s own investigations revealed, legally owned the land). Tenants insisted that they should be granted ownership rights, first, because of their (and their ancestors’) labor in reclaiming and cultivating the land and, second, because of the collective, country-wide, prosperity they believed these rights would generate. As Rizvi (2019: 28) writes, “the AMP’s understanding of land rights is not exclusively about individual possession, but also about common rights that are conceived as moral entitlements”. Neither European in origin nor liberal in its framing, their demand for land rights was grounded in a local “structure of feeling” (Rizvi, 2019: 85; c.f. Subramanian, 2010). And as I was also reminded, this structure of feeling had a history, with several tenants suggesting that the AMP’s demands fulfilled the ambitions of the district’s earlier agrarian movements. “The slogans [Zulfikar Ali] Bhutto gave us were a lie”, a tenant once said to me. “But those slogans are alive and well in the AMP”. The slogans he was referring to included “*roti, kapra, makaan*” (bread, clothes, shelter) and the land-to-the-tiller slogan “*jera wahway oh khaway*” (whoever tills the soil should reap the harvest). During the 1960s popular uprising to topple General Ayub Khan (Ali, 1970), Bhutto, founder and leader of the PPP, raised these populist slogans in his bid for power, emboldening peasants to confront their landlords. Though he put forward a land reform program in 1972 once elected, its

implementation was uneven across the provinces and practically stifled in Punjab (Herring, 1979). Leaders like Salim and Nadir were viewed, in essence, as fulfilling Bhutto's promises and the ambitions of those peasants who led these earlier anti-landlord movements. As Hussain said, "the PPP promised us a lot but it is leaders like Salim — it is their *zaat* — who are doing something". By *zaat*, Hussain did not necessarily mean "caste" (its usual translation), but a figure or a type. Salim had resurrected the figure of the *kissan rehnuma*, one who prioritized collective welfare over private profit.

In contrast, tenants believed the military would use the land to benefit their own generals. As Mohsin once put it, "[when] the army takes the land, they're going to build private villas and sheds to park their cars, but we're going to feed the country". Like almost every villager I met, Mohsin believed the new contract, in eventually dispossessing tenants, would subordinate land to a logic of unproductive and private accumulation. He had good reasons to believe this. In Pakistan, declining returns on industrial investment over the past few years has fueled speculative and unproductive land investment. One of those land speculators is the Pakistani military (Blom, 2011; Siddiqa, 2007), hence why it's occasionally called a "land mafia" (Michelutti et al., 2018: 274). Yet, even though Mohsin contrasted the AMP's collective orientation to the military's private one, he also suggested something else the AMP leaders were doing:

There's a lot of unity in the movement. But it hurts me that some leaders are also doing *do-numberi* [illicit acts]. They give it a bad colour. People sometimes use the unity and strength of the movement — our *akath* — for personal benefit.

Mohsin was alluding to the various ways the leadership had started illicitly profiting. Since the detente with the military, both Salim and Nadir had begun occupying additional military farmland beyond their original leasehold — land that was either left vacant or cultivated directly by the military. Mohsin didn't specify exactly how much land leaders had occupied, though Majid, the villager in his twenties, said Nadir had increased his landholdings from 10–15 acres to over 100 acres. Salim, for his part, had also started a business in Okara city, renting the bus station from the municipal government for Rs 38,000,000 [approx. 400,000 USD at the time] per year and collecting fees from the bus companies that passed through. For critical villagers like Mohsin and Majid, the AMP leadership's accumulation wasn't, in itself, a problem. What *was* a problem to them however — what made this accumulation *do-number* or illicit — was that the leaders appeared to be instrumentalizing the movement, especially its mobilizing ability, to profit. Mohsin felt that their additional land occupations, for instance, were driven by the confidence that, should the military end the detente and strike back, tenants would blockade the roads in protest. Likewise, Salim was able to acquire the bus station lease through his relationships with Okara's urban elites, relationships he built by leading the movement. One of those elites, for instance, was Ijaz, an influential figure with connections to Okara's municipal administration. Not

only did Ijaz facilitate Salim's bus station project, but Salim, in turn, used his influence amongst traders in Okara's major produce market (some of whom were AMP tenants) to oust the previous market president and install Ijaz instead. Like Ijaz, many other city elites had come to see Salim as an influential power-broker, someone who could mobilize votes or support. But to tenants like Mohsin and Majid, Salim and other AMP leaders appeared to be using the unity of the movement for ends unrelated to its original objectives: to intimidate rivals and nurture relations with Okara's elites in order to profit themselves.

But it wasn't only the movement, and its capacity to intimidate, that enabled the AMP leadership's profit-making. Pakistan's changing political-economy also shaped their accumulation trajectories. Undergirding the emergence of almost all mafias are processes of economic liberalization — be it, the 19th century land liberalization in Italy (Blok, 1974: 90), the liberalization of China and Russia's state-socialist economies (Holmstrom and Smith, 2000; Walker, 2006) or the 1991 economic liberalization of India (Sanchez, 2012). Essentially, the commodification of previously un(der)commodified resources creates a climate for competitive resource-grabbing, one where mafia-like entities able to use strong-arm tactics are at an advantage — a state of affairs Nancy Holmstrom and Richard Smith (2000) once termed “gangster capitalism”. However, in Pakistan, more so than economic liberalization per se, it is the declining returns on productive forms of investment (in industry or agriculture) that have created the conditions for criminal economies to emerge (Michelutti et al., 2018: 36). Combined with excess savings from Gulf remittances (Nadeem, 2002: 86) and the “fragmented hegemony” (Akhtar, 2018) of the country's state authorities, conditions are ripe for criminal entrepreneurs to emerge and engage in unproductive, rent-seeking activities. This was the economic context that enabled Salim and other AMP leaders to instrumentalize the movement for their own rentierism.

Yet there was something about the struggle Salim and Nadir led that enabled them to appear, not only as “*do-number aadmi*” [illicit men], but also as peasant militants. This was the fact that the struggle was over land. Whereas some scholars celebrate the progressive potential of peasant demands for land (McMichael, 2006), others (e.g. Brass, 1991) view them as ultimately a particularistic, even conservative, appeal for private property. Though the AMP justified their land claims in collective terms, their claims were still riven by this paradox, especially since the movement ultimately sought legal recognition from Pakistan's liberal property regime. It is this paradox of land rights claims — on the one hand, challenging one form of exclusion (in this case, orchestrated by the military) while, on the other, advancing what is essentially a “counter-exclusion” (Hall et al., 2011: 22) — that, in part, explains the AMP leadership's liminal appearance. Leaders were able to justifiably appear as defending collective welfare while also simultaneously instrumentalizing the autonomy and wealth acquired from the rent-stoppages to profit privately. In other words, villagers' uncertainty about their leaders stemmed, in this instance, from the politically ambiguous nature of

the demand for land — a demand that, in this case if not in others, was both collective and decidedly private.

### **Confronting or collaborating with state apparatuses?**

One thing I found paradoxical about Salim's bus station project was that he acquired the lease from Okara's municipal government. Whenever I met Salim, he always insisted that the AMP was opposed to all state entities because, as he once put it, "the entire nation-state is morally and politically bankrupt". Condemning every state apparatus was part of Salim's own projection of himself as a peasant militant, someone who refused to compromise. But as I came to discover, AMP leaders had a more complicated relationship with various state apparatuses than they led me or their supporters to believe — an ambivalence that also contributed to ordinary villagers' uncertainty about them. Were they confronting state apparatuses, as they had done before? Or were they now using the movement to cultivate strategic relationships with state entities in order to pursue their private, even criminal, ambitions?

Some tenants reproduced the AMP leadership's representation of themselves as militantly confronting the entire state. As Hussain, the elderly tenant we met earlier, put it: "The whole state machinery — the army, the police, the government, the political parties — is totally against us. And we are against them". Though Hussain recognized the different apparatuses that constituted the state, these distinctions mattered little to him because, as far as he was concerned, all had collaborated with the army in one way or another to deny tenants' ownership rights. Even the PPP — which, during General Musharraf's regime, had promised tenants' ownership rights if they came to power — reneged on these promises once it was elected in 2008. "Any government is scared of the generals", Hussain said, "once in power, they remain silent". Because of these practices, Hussain had come to acquire an idea of the Pakistani state as a coherent and intentional entity distinct from, and counterposed to, the AMP (Mitchell, 1991). For this reason, he also insisted that the AMP should continue to cultivate its own juridical procedures. "Any problems that arise are solved in our village", he said. "We don't let the police or politicians interfere — of course not — since they're against us". Smaller disputes were solved within the village, while larger issues were taken to the "big committee", centered in the AMP's main office and chaired by Salim. In ways like this, ordinary tenants came to see in the AMP and its leaders "sovereigns beyond the state" (Hansen, 2005), who confronted the authority of state apparatuses in the form expected of a peasant militant. And villagers had good reason to believe that AMP leaders could cultivate this extra-state sovereignty, for certain peculiar political conditions enabled this. Unlike other parts of rural Punjab, the landlord on the military farms was not a personalistic individual but the state — a factor that, as Aasim Sajjad Akhtar (2006) pointed out, contributed to the emergence and unity of the movement. But moreover, just as the decline of India's "ma-baapism" — a top-down and paternalistic model of state sovereignty —

encouraged the emergence of extra-state sovereignties like the Shiv Sena (Hansen, 2001: 72), so too did the already existing absence of this paternalistic authority on the military farms enable AMP leaders to legitimately appear as sovereignties competing with the state.

Other tenants, however, were skeptical about whether AMP leaders actually rebuffed state authorities in the way they boasted about. Mohsin, for instance, pointed out the friendly relations AMP leaders had developed with some police officers and city bureaucrats, relationships built during the PPP's tenure (2008–2013) and indeed partly enabled because of the party's rule. For even though the PPP reneged on its promises to tenants when it came to power, villagers did report a noticeable decline in police intimidation. As one tenant put it, "the PPP didn't do anything for us, but they didn't bother us either". In fact, Salim had a curious relationship to the PPP, which Mohsin alerted me to. For the upcoming 2013 elections, Salim had accepted the PPP's offer to run on their ticket. Mohsin found this decision disturbing, not only because Salim had repeatedly told villagers at the time that he would run as an independent, but also because the PPP were the incumbent party and had failed to deliver land rights to tenants during their past five years in power. Salim's electoral run with the PPP was, in turned out, a culmination of an electoral career that began soon after he became an AMP leader. In 2001, he was elected chairman (*nazim*) of his village union council and in the 2008 national elections, after unsuccessfully lobbying for a PPP ticket, he ran as an independent and lost.

Mohsin was opposed to Salim's engagement in electoral politics entirely. "What can one person [sitting in the provincial assembly] do?", he told me. "They'll close the mic. He'll be left screaming." Convinced that Salim couldn't accomplish anything for tenants in the assembly, Mohsin suspected that his electoral ambitions — and, more broadly, his imbrication with state entities like the police and the municipal administration — were driven by personal, even criminal, ambitions:

Some have seen in the movement an opportunity to build connections with elites, so that they can get a friend who committed a crime out of jail by pressuring or bribing the DPO [District Police Officer]. This is wrong. Whoever does a crime should be punished — even if he's my dad. I've never done *sifaarish* [intercession] using this movement — the only bribe I've taken on the basis of this movement is a Pepsi. I do people's work.

Indeed, because of their connections, both Salim and Nadir had reportedly been able to protect their allies from police intimidation and arrest. One senior police officer was even suspended for negligence to pursue a murder case against Salim (Rizvi, 2013: 218), while the police also dropped Nadir's murder charges (discussed above), in part, because of these connections. As many have argued (e.g. Berenschot, 2011; Sidel, 1999) mafia-like entities typically develop these sorts of close relations with state apparatuses. In fact, for Fabio Armao (2015: 3), this imbrication is what constitutes mafias: when criminal entrepreneurs "encounter politics", he writes, "a third type of system emerges and this is called the mafia".

What sustains this relationship is the mutual advantages that accrue to both parties: for mafias, political connections protect and sustain their “criminal predatory economies” (Harriss-White and Michelutti, 2019: 2), whereas political parties, for instance, benefit from the “money and muscle” criminals provide (Vaishnav, 2017). Politicians in South Asia have used criminal entrepreneurs to finance their electoral campaigns, intimidate political rivals and to “get things done” for their supporters in a context where the formal state is otherwise inefficient and/or inaccessible to poorer citizens (Berenschot, 2011). The PPP had similar reasons to build relations with the AMP, especially during those times when it sought power (the 2008 elections, when it championed the AMP’s demands) or looked to lose it (the 2013 elections, when it gave Salim a PPP ticket).

Because of the relations AMP leaders had developed with state apparatuses, Mohsin believed that they had stopped doing “people’s work” — that is, the work peasant militants would do — and started doing “*do-numberi*”. Yet as Hussain’s comments (discussed earlier) suggest, state apparatuses — including the PPP — did not have an unambiguously friendly relation with AMP leaders. Precisely because of the AMP leadership’s changing relationship to the PPP, police and bureaucracy — who variably supported, opposed or ignored their demands — ordinary tenants remained divided over whether their leaders were confronting or collaborating with the “state machinery” (to borrow Hussain’s words). Ultimately, what contributed to this ambiguity — the contrasting positions of Hussain and Mohsin, for instance — was the fragmented nature of the Pakistani state.

## **Conclusion: Liminality as pedagogical**

Arnold van Gennep (1960) first introduced the concept of liminality, which was later developed by anthropologist Victor Turner (1967). Turner understood it as an “interstructural” stage in rites of passage, where the ordinary norms of the society in question are upended or inverted. Those in this liminal phase are “liminal persona”, who embody the ambivalent position of being “neither this nor that, and yet both” (Turner, 1967: 95). To Turner (1967: 106), what made liminality particularly interesting was its pedagogical import: it “breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchises speculation”. In one of the Ndembu rituals he studied, for example, neophytes were exposed to masks that merged animal and human, encouraging them to grasp the necessary conceptual distinctions — in this case, between animals and humans — required to be meaningful members of their society. Put differently, liminality and liminal figures can “evoke the pulse of a particular social formation” (Barker et al., 2014: 5).

In this paper, I argued that AMP leaders like Salim and Nadir similarly appeared as liminal figures who engaged in ambivalent practices: performing like militants and “mafia”, legitimately protecting and violently extorting, pursuing collective welfare and private profit, and confronting and collaborating with state apparatuses. Their liminality also invited pedagogical reflection and evoked the pulse of Pakistan’s social formation (and perhaps even of the global South at



large). Namely, they forced several ordinary villagers to relinquish any romance with resistance (Abu-Lughod, 1990), encouraging them to explore the messy boundary between radical peasant militancy and “mafias” and, more broadly, between a politics of resistance and accommodation. Mohsin, for instance, was one of those tenants forced to reflect on this boundary. He recognized that AMP leaders participated in a politics that was both resistive — especially in their defense of poor villagers against the powerful Pakistani military — and accommodative, especially as they built relations with elites and started accumulating capital. I once asked him what he thought about this ambivalence. He responded:

if we wait for an ideal, self-less leader, completely pure of heart, we'd be waiting a long time, for no such leader exists in Pakistan. And in Pakistan, you only get listened to if you're a *chaudhary* or a boss. Though it may not be the ideal, perhaps this movement needs a boss to be listened to and get its demands met.

Though he initially spoke about the AMP movement, Mohsin went on to suggest that all “progressive movements” would not only be plagued by this paradox, but may even benefit from it.

His comments upset some of the distinctions drawn in recent studies on popular politics in the global South. Writing about Pakistan in particular, Akhtar (2018: 2), for instance, argues that subordinate groups seek out elite patronage to get their needs met, engaging in what he calls the “politics of common sense”. This politics, as Akhtar himself suggests, is akin to Chatterjee’s (2004) broader concept of “the politics of the governed”. Yet unlike Chatterjee, who sees in this politics a force for democracy and surplus redistribution (Chatterjee, 2008), Akhtar (2018: 134) views this politics with less “romanticism”, as it does little to challenge the structural inequalities that sustain and reproduce patronage. To Akhtar, the politics of the governed is, in essence, a politics of accommodation to the status quo. What is required instead is a “politics of resistance” — one that confronts rather than accommodates to elites, a politics that once existed in Pakistan in the late 60s and early 70s (Akhtar, 2018: 141). Like Akhtar (and unlike Chatterjee), Mohsin also seemed to believe that only a politics of resistance, one aimed at overturning structural inequalities, could truly deliver the gains Chatterjee attributes to the politics of the governed. However, unlike Akhtar, Mohsin also suggested that an engagement in the politics of common sense/the governed may in fact sustain and strengthen this politics of resistance. Given the character of Pakistani society (and perhaps the global South at large), Mohsin believed that the progressive transformations expected from militancy could only be accomplished — regrettably — through a certain “mafia-type” accommodationism.

### **Acknowledgements**

I thank Tania Li, Michael Ekers, and Ryan Isakson for their feedback on earlier iterations of this paper, as well as the editors and three anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## ORCID iD

Shozab Raza  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5747-0837>

## Notes

1. Tenants were especially concerned about two clauses in the new contract: Clause 11: If the land is required for defense purposes, the land is to be evacuated at six months' notice. In this case, the contractor will be refunded for the rent already paid by him in advance. Clause 25: The contractor cannot claim occupancy tenancy rights. Under no circumstances does the contractor possess ownership rights.
2. Some of Mubbashir Rizvi's writings (e.g. Rizvi 2018) have explored the movement's afterlives, though his focus has been on how the Pakistani state, especially during Nawaz Sharif's government (2013–2018), used anti-terrorism legislation to arrest several AMP leaders in 2016. In 2020, under Imran Khan's government (2018-), many of these leaders were released. Though I cannot fully account for this recent development here, what I can say is that the AMP leadership's cyclical experience of imprisonment and release is partly an outcome of their ambivalent relationship to state apparatuses (including various political parties), a point I explore in the paper.
3. I acquired these secret intelligence reports from the Punjab Police's Library of the Special Branch in Lahore during archival research for a separate project.
4. *Chaudhary* is a historical term for patriarchal "big men" or patrons in rural Punjab that has also occasionally carried criminal connotations. A historically common Punjabi proverb suggests this connection: "*chor uchakka chaudhary te gundi rann pardhan*" (a thief and a pickpocket are *chaudharys*, and a harlot a leader) (Hares, 2001 [1929]: 246)
5. Similar terms used in other South Asia contexts include *goondas* (Berenschot, 2011), *dadas and dons* (Hansen, 2001), and *mastans* (Rudd, 2014).
6. I use pseudonyms throughout this paper.
7. To ensure that villagers felt comfortable sharing their honest opinions about AMP leaders, I tried to approach leaders and villagers through different contacts. Various activists from Lahore who assisted the movement connected me with ordinary villagers. On the other hand, I approached leaders through some of my relatives who live in Okara and belong to landed classes. As AMP leaders acquired connections with elites (a point I explore in the paper), these relatives also entered their orbit.

## References

- Armao F (2015) Mafia-owned democracies: Italy and Mexico as patterns of criminal neo-liberalism. *Revista de Historia Actual* 1: 4–21.
- Barker J, Harms E and Lindquist J (eds) (2014) *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Michelutti L, Hoque A, Still C, et al. (eds) (2018) *Mafia Raj: The Rule of Bosses in South Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Abu-Lughod L (1990) The romance of resistance: Tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women. *American Ethnologist* 17(1): 41–55.
- Akhtar A S (2006) The state as landlord in Pakistani Punjab: Peasant struggles on the Okara military farms. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 33(3): 479–501.
- Akhtar A S (2018) *The Politics of Common Sense: State, Society and Culture in Pakistan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ali N (2020) Agrarian class struggle and state formation in post-colonial Pakistan, 1959–1974: Contingencies of mazdoor kisan raj. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 20(2): 270–288.
- Ali T (1970) *Pakistan: Military Rule or People's Power?* London: J. Cape.
- Bano M (2012) *Breakdown in Pakistan: How Aid is Eroding Institutions for Collective Action*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Benjamin W (1973) *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*. London: NLB.
- Berenschot W (2011) On the usefulness of goondas in Indian politics: ‘Moneypower’ and ‘musclepower’ in a Gujarati locality. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 34(2): 255–275.
- Blok A (1969) Peasants, patrons, and brokers in Western Sicily. *Anthropological Quarterly* 42(3): 155–170.
- Blok A (1972) The peasant and the brigand: Social banditry reconsidered. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 14(4): 494–503.
- Blok A (1974) *The Mafia of a Sicilian Village, 1860–1960: A Study of Violent Peasant Entrepreneurs*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Blom A (2011) *Pakistan: Coercion and Capital in an “Insecurity State”*. Paris: IRSEM.
- Brass T (1991) Moral economists, subalterns, new social movements, and the (re-) emergence of a (post-) modernized (middle) peasant. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 18(2): 173–205.
- Chatterjee P (2004) *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Chatterjee P (2008) Democracy and economic transformation in India. *Economic and Political Weekly* 43(16): 53–62.
- Gambetta D (1993) *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gayer L (2010) The Pakistan Rangers: From border defense to internal “protection”. In: Briquet J-L and Favarel-Garrigues G (eds) *Organized Crime and States: The Hidden Face of Politics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 15–39.
- Gennep A V (1960 [1909]) *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grajales J (2013) State involvement, land grabbing and counter-insurgency in Colombia. *Development and Change* 44(2): 211–232.

- Gupta A (1998) *Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Hall D, Hirsch P and Li T (2011) *Powers of Exclusion: Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Hansen T B (2001) *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hansen T B (2005) Sovereigns beyond the state: on legality and authority in urban India. In: Hansen T B and Stepputat F (eds) *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, pp. 169–191.
- Hares W P (2001 [1929]). *An English-Punjabi Dictionary*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.
- Harriss-White B and Michelutti L (2019) Introduction. In: Harriss-White B and Michelutti L (eds) *The Wild East: Criminal Political Economies in South Asia*. London: UCL Press, pp. 1–34.
- Herring R (1979) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the “eradication of feudalism” in Pakistan. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21(4): 519–557.
- Hill P B (2003) *The Japanese Mafia: Yakuza, Law, and the State*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hobsbawm E J (1965 [1959]) *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. New York: Norton.
- Hobsbawm E J (1969) *Bandits*. New York: Delacorte Press.
- Holmstrom N and Smith R (2000) The necessity of gangster capitalism: Primitive accumulation in Russia and China. *Monthly Review* 51(9): 1.
- Kirmani N (2017) Life in a “No-Go” area: Experiences of marginalization and fear in Lyari. In: Khan N (ed.) *Cityscapes of Violence in Karachi: Publics and Counterpublics*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 103–119.
- McMichael P (2006) Peasant prospects in the neoliberal age. *New Political Economy* 11(3): 407–418.
- Mitchell T (1991) The limits of the state: Beyond statist approaches and their critics. *The American Political Science Review* 85(1): 77–96.
- Nadeem A H (2002) *Pakistan: The Political Economy of Lawlessness*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- Piliavsky A (2014) Introduction. In: Piliavsky A (ed.) *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*. Delhi: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–38.
- Piliavsky A and Sbriccoli T (2016) The ethics of efficacy in North India’s *goonda raj* (rule of toughs). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22(2): 373–391.
- Ranciere J (2009) *The Emancipated Spectator*. London, UK/Brooklyn, NY: Verso.
- Rizvi M (2013) *Masters Not Friends: Land, Labor and Politics of Place in Rural Pakistan*. PhD Thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, USA.
- Rizvi M (2018) From terrorism to dispossession: Pakistan’s anti-terrorism act as a means of eviction. *Anthropology Today* 34(3): 15–18.
- Rizvi M (2019) *The Ethics of Staying: Social Movements and Land Rights Politics in Pakistan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Roberts N (2016) *To Be Cared for: The Power of Conversion and Foreignness of Belonging in an Indian Slum*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Rollier P (2019) The adjudicators. In: Michelutti L, Hoque A, Still C, et al. (eds) *Mafia Raj: The Rule of Bosses in South Asia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 129–151.

- Ruud A E (2014) The political bully in Bangladesh. In: Piliavsky A (ed.) *Patronage as Politics in South Asia*. Delhi: Cambridge University Press, pp. 303–325.
- Sanchez A (2012) Questioning success: Dispossession and the criminal entrepreneur in urban India. *Critique of Anthropology* 32(4): 435–457.
- Sanchez A (2016) *Criminal Capital: Violence, Corruption and Class in Industrial India*. New Delhi/New York: Routledge.
- Schneider J and Schneider P (2011) The mafia and capitalism: An emerging paradigm. *Sociologica* 2: 1–22.
- Siddiq A (2007) *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy*. London/Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press.
- Sidel J (1999) *Capital, Coercion, and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Special Branch Punjab (1972) Daily Situation Report, 17 October 1972. Vol 5. No. 246. Library of the Special Branch Punjab. Lahore, Pakistan.
- Subramanian A (2010) *Shorelines: Space and Rights in South India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Tilly C (1985) War making and state making as organized crime. In: Evans P, Rueschemeyer D and Skocpol T (eds) *Bringing the State Back in*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 169–191.
- Turner V (1967) *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Vaishnav M (2017) *When Crime Pays: Money and Muscle in Indian Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press
- Walker K L M (2006) Gangster capitalism and peasant protest in China: The last twenty years. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 33(1): 1–33.

### **Author Biography**

**Shozab Raza** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto.