

Negotiating Tradition and Modernity: An Ethnographic Study of Social Institutions, Customary Governance, and Socio-Economic Transformation among the Sadozai Tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

Qirat Naz¹, Dr. Arbab Alam Khan²

¹Department of Social Policy, University of South Wales, United Kingdom; Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 45320, Pakistan

²Lecturer, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: March 10, 2026
Revised: March 29, 2026
Accepted: April 07, 2026
Available Online: April 14, 2026

Keywords:

Azad Jammu and Kashmir, socio-cultural anthropology, social organization, Jirga, customary governance, and cultural identity

Corresponding Author:

Qirat Naz

Email:

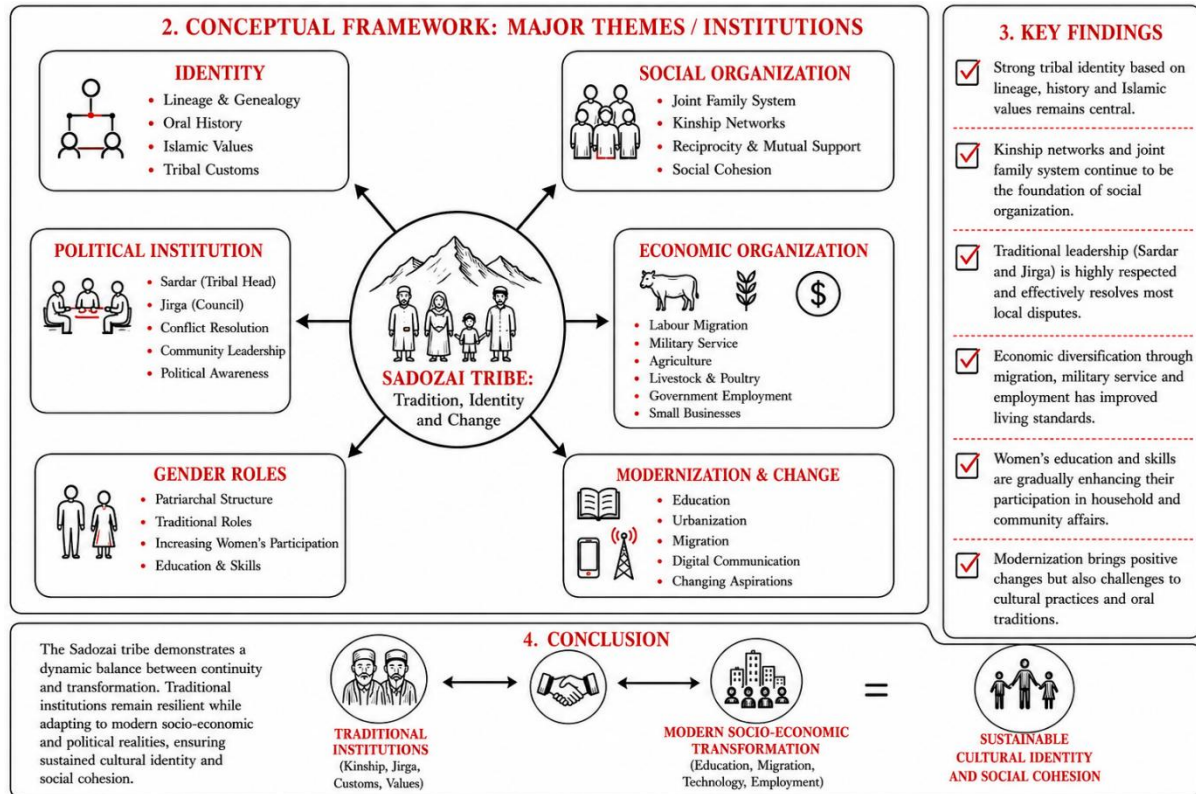
qiratnaz95@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.59075/tamsaal.v4i4.87>



ABSTRACT

The Sadozai (Sudhan) tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir represents one of the historically significant tribal communities in Pakistan, where traditional institutions continue to shape social, political, economic, and cultural life despite increasing modernization. This study explored the contemporary socio-economic and political organization of the Sadozai tribe, with particular emphasis on social organization, customary governance, kinship, identity, gender roles, livelihood strategies, and institutional transformation. A qualitative ethnographic research design was employed using purposive sampling. Data were collected from 30 households through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and informal discussions involving tribal elders, household heads, religious scholars, women, and educated youth. Thematic analysis was used to identify major patterns and institutional dynamics. The findings revealed that tribal identity remains strongly anchored in lineage (90%), oral traditions, Islamic values, and collective historical memory, while 93% of respondents considered tribal identity more important than political affiliation. The joint family system, kinship networks, and reciprocal social obligations continue to strengthen social cohesion. Traditional institutions, particularly the Sardar and Jirga, remain influential, with 90% of respondents expressing confidence in the Jirga as the preferred mechanism for conflict resolution. Economic organization has diversified beyond agriculture through labour migration (93%), military service, government employment, and small businesses, leading to improved household livelihoods. Although patriarchal norms persist, 82% of participants perceived improvements in women's social status due to education and employment opportunities. Modernization has expanded education (93%), communication (95%), and employment (88%), but has also contributed to the decline of oral traditions (79%). The study concludes that the Sadozai tribe demonstrates remarkable institutional resilience by integrating customary governance and cultural traditions with contemporary socio-economic development. These findings contribute to socio-cultural anthropology by providing empirical evidence of how indigenous tribal institutions adapt while preserving cultural continuity and social cohesion in a rapidly changing society.



Introduction

Human societies are structured through interconnected social, political, economic, and cultural institutions that regulate relationships, distribute resources, establish authority, and shape collective identities (Granovetter et al., 2017). Anthropologists have long recognised that these institutions are not static but evolve in response to historical events, environmental conditions, political transformations, and socio-economic change (Nicoll et al., 2020). Understanding these institutional arrangements is therefore fundamental to explaining how communities preserve social cohesion while adapting to changing circumstances.

Tribal societies represent one of the oldest forms of human social organisation. Unlike modern bureaucratic systems, tribal communities traditionally regulate social life through kinship, customary law, collective decision-making, and shared cultural values (Richerson et al., 2012). These institutions influence marriage practices, inheritance, dispute resolution, leadership, land ownership, and social obligations. However, tribal societies are not isolated or unchanging. Increasing state intervention, education, migration, market integration, technological development, and globalisation have transformed many traditional governance systems, creating new forms of social organisation while simultaneously challenging established cultural traditions (Schlippe et al., 2013). Within South Asia, tribal identity remains closely associated with lineage, ancestry, territorial affiliation, and customary institutions. In Pakistan, tribal societies have historically maintained distinct political and social systems based on clan organisation, elder councils, and customary norms (Shinwari et al., 2025). These systems continue to influence local governance despite the expansion of formal administrative structures. At the same time, issues of social stratification, caste-like hierarchies, economic inequality, and political representation

increasingly shape the experiences of tribal communities. Anthropological research therefore requires a comprehensive examination of how traditional institutions interact with contemporary social and political realities.

The Sadozai tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir represents a historically significant Pashtun-origin tribal community whose identity has been preserved through strong kinship networks, oral traditions, customary leadership, and collective social institutions (Hassan et al., 2025). Although the tribe has maintained many traditional practices, contemporary changes in education, employment, urbanisation, migration, digital communication, and state governance have influenced family relationships, leadership structures, gender roles, economic activities, and cultural identity. These transformations have generated both opportunities for social development and challenges to the preservation of traditional knowledge and customary institutions. Despite the historical importance of the Sadozai tribe, relatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to understanding its contemporary social organisation (Noelle et al., 2012). Existing studies have generally focused on descriptive accounts of tribal customs, offering limited analysis of the political organisation, economic transformation, social identity, caste relations, and changing institutional structures that shape community life. Furthermore, few studies examine how historical processes continue to influence present-day governance, social cohesion, and intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.

The present study addresses these research gaps through an ethnographic investigation of the social institutions of the Sadozai tribe in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It explores the interaction between traditional customs and contemporary socio-economic change while examining political organisation, kinship networks, leadership, gender relations, economic activities, identity formation, and caste dynamics. By integrating historical context with contemporary field observations, this study contributes to socio-cultural anthropology by providing a comprehensive understanding of how tribal institutions evolve while maintaining cultural continuity in a rapidly changing social environment.

Literature Review

Tribal Social Organisation and Anthropological Perspectives

Anthropologists have long regarded tribal societies as complex social systems organised through kinship, customary institutions, and collective identities rather than formal bureaucratic structures. Early anthropological studies emphasised that tribal governance depends upon reciprocal obligations, shared norms, and traditional leadership, which collectively maintain social cohesion and regulate community life (Olaopa et al., 2013). Contemporary scholarship recognises that tribal institutions continuously adapt to political, economic, and cultural transformations (Coffey et al., 2001).

Political Organisation and Customary Governance

Political authority in tribal societies is generally exercised through councils of elders, lineage heads, and customary decision-making institutions (Lutz et al., 2004). Such systems emphasise consensus-building, conflict resolution, and collective responsibility instead of formal judicial mechanisms. In many South Asian tribal communities, traditional governance continues to

coexist with modern state institutions, creating hybrid political systems that influence local administration, resource management, and community development (Ananth et al., 2010).

Economic Transformation in Tribal Communities

Traditionally, tribal economies relied upon agriculture, livestock rearing, forestry, and reciprocal labour exchange (Mishra et al., 1983). However, increasing market integration, overseas migration, wage employment, and educational opportunities have diversified household incomes and altered traditional economic relationships. These economic transformations have influenced family structures, inheritance practices, social mobility, and local leadership while simultaneously reducing dependence upon customary economic institutions.

Identity, Lineage, and Caste

Identity within tribal societies is shaped by genealogy, kinship, territorial affiliation, language, and shared historical memory (Shryock et al., 2023). Among many tribal communities in Pakistan, lineage provides both social recognition and political legitimacy (Lyon et al., 2019). Although tribal systems differ from the Hindu caste hierarchy, internal social stratification based on descent, occupation, marriage alliances, and social prestige continues to influence interpersonal relationships and access to community resources. Modern education and urbanisation have weakened some traditional distinctions, yet identity remains an important mechanism for preserving social cohesion and cultural continuity (Oluwatosin et al., 2023).

Cultural Change and Social Institutions

Globalisation, formal education, digital communication, and migration have significantly influenced traditional tribal institutions (Dui et al., 2024). Younger generations increasingly participate in modern educational and occupational systems while remaining connected to customary cultural practices. Consequently, tribal communities engage in ongoing negotiation between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to contemporary socio-economic realities (Banda et al., 2024). Understanding this balance is essential for explaining the resilience and transformation of indigenous social institutions.

Research Gap

Although several studies have examined tribal communities in Pakistan, there remains limited ethnographic research on the Sadozai tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Existing literature provides little discussion of how historical development, political organisation, economic change, identity formation, and caste-like social structures interact within this community. This study addresses these gaps through comprehensive qualitative field research.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

To examine the social, political, economic, and cultural organisation of the Sadozai tribe in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and analyse how traditional institutions have adapted to contemporary social change.

Specific Objectives

1. To document the historical background and social organisation of the Sadozai tribe.
2. To examine the political structure, leadership, and customary governance of the tribe.
3. To analyse the economic organisation, livelihood strategies, and recent socio-economic transformations.
4. To investigate kinship systems, family organisation, marriage practices, and gender roles.
5. To explore tribal identity, lineage, caste-like social stratification, and mechanisms of social cohesion.
6. To examine the impact of education, migration, urbanisation, and modernisation on traditional institutions.
7. To identify the challenges and prospects for preserving the cultural heritage of the Sadozai tribe.

Questionnaire

- How would you describe the historical background, social organization, and cultural traditions of the Sadozai tribe, and how have these changed over time?
- How do traditional political institutions, tribal leadership, and customary decision-making influence governance, conflict resolution, and community participation within the Sadozai tribe?
- What are the major economic activities and livelihood strategies of the Sadozai tribe, and how have education, migration, and modernization affected the socio-economic conditions of the community?
- How do tribal identity, kinship, lineage, and caste or social status shape social relationships, marriage practices, and cultural continuity among the Sadozai tribe in the present day?

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Sadozai (Sudhan) tribal community of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Pakistan (Figure 1). The Sadozai tribe is one of the prominent indigenous tribal communities of the region, predominantly residing in the districts of Sudhnoti, Poonch, and Kotli. The community possesses a distinct socio-cultural identity characterized by strong kinship networks, customary governance, Islamic traditions, and a predominantly agrarian economy supplemented by military service, overseas employment, and labour migration. The geographical isolation of many settlements has contributed to the preservation of traditional institutions while simultaneously exposing the community to gradual socio-economic transformation.

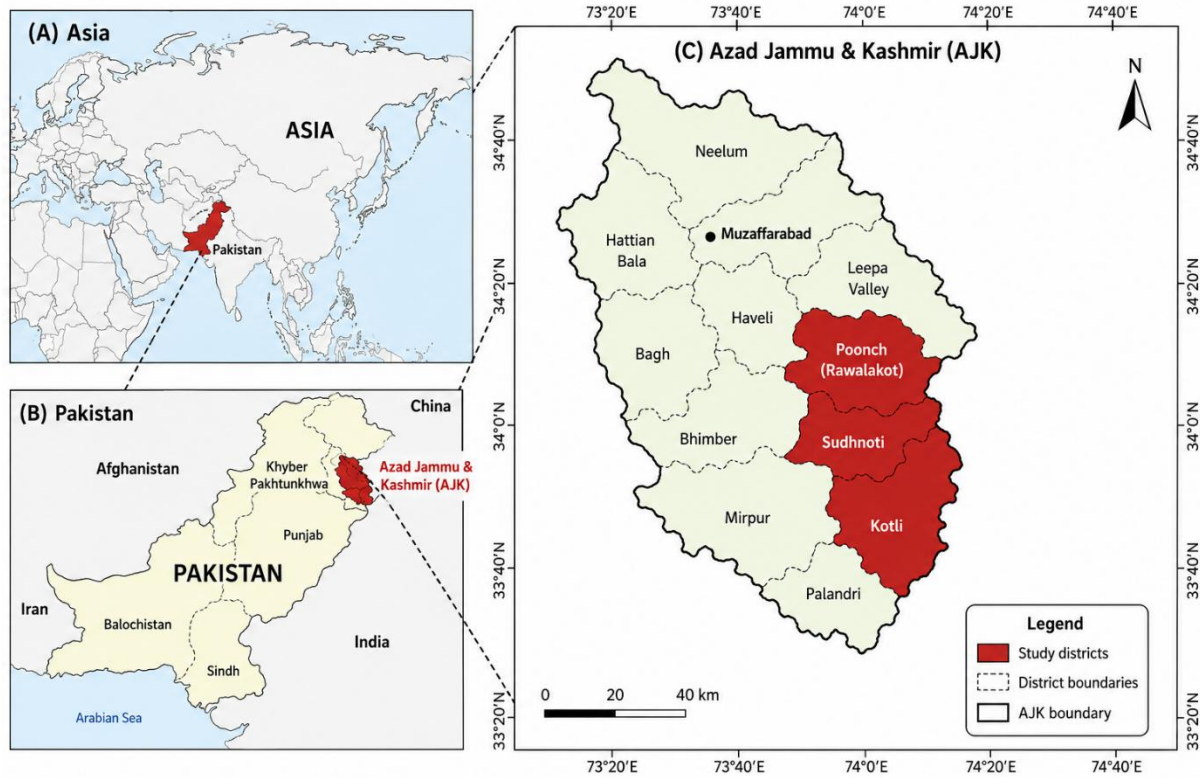


Figure 1: Map of the study area

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative ethnographic research design grounded in socio-cultural anthropology to examine the historical evolution, social organisation, political structure, economic activities, identity, and caste dynamics of the Sadozai tribe (Khan et al., 2023). An ethnographic approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth understanding of cultural practices, community institutions, and indigenous knowledge through direct interaction with participants in their natural social setting.

Sampling and Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select knowledgeable participants capable of providing detailed information regarding the tribe's historical development and contemporary social organisation (Abatayo et al., 2024). A total of 30 households participated in the study. Participants included tribal elders, household heads, religious scholars, community representatives, women, and educated youth to ensure diverse perspectives across different age groups and social positions. Elderly participants (≥ 55 years) were particularly valuable due to their extensive knowledge of tribal history, customary institutions, and oral traditions.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between household members and key community informants (Monroe et al., 2019). The interviews explored the historical background of the tribe, social organisation, kinship, family structure,

political leadership, customary conflict resolution, economic activities, identity, caste-like social hierarchy, gender relations, and the impact of education, migration, and modernisation on traditional institutions. The interviews were guided by four broad research questions:

- How has the historical background and social organisation of the Sadozai tribe evolved?
- How do traditional political institutions, customary leadership, and tribal governance influence community decision-making and conflict resolution?
- How have economic activities, migration, education, and modernisation influenced the socio-economic conditions of the Sadozai tribe?
- How do tribal identity, kinship, lineage, and caste or social status influence social relationships and cultural continuity within the community?

Field observations and informal discussions were also undertaken to document daily social interactions, cultural practices, traditional ceremonies, and community participation, thereby complementing the interview data through methodological triangulation.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts and field notes were analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data were transcribed, coded, and organised into recurring themes relating to historical development, social organisation, political institutions, economic transformation, gender relations, identity, caste, and cultural continuity. Similar responses were grouped into thematic categories, while representative quotations were incorporated to support the interpretation of findings. The analysis focused on identifying both continuity and change in the tribe's institutional structure and cultural practices.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

A total of 30 households participated in the study. Participants included tribal elders, household heads, women, religious scholars, and educated youth (Table 1). The majority of respondents were above 45 years of age and possessed extensive knowledge of tribal customs, oral history, and community governance. Agriculture, military service, labour migration, and government employment were identified as the principal sources of livelihood.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	22	73.3
	Female	8	26.7
Age	25–44 years	8	26.7
	45–60 years	13	43.3
	>60 years	9	30.0
Education	Illiterate	6	20.0
	Primary–Secondary	13	43.3
	College/University	11	36.7

Historical Identity of the Sadozai Tribe

Participants consistently described the Sadozai (Sudhan) tribe as possessing a strong historical identity rooted in Pashtun ancestry, Islamic traditions, and tribal solidarity. Oral traditions remain the principal means of preserving tribal history, genealogy, and cultural values. Elder participants emphasized that collective memory and historical narratives strengthen tribal identity and maintain continuity across generations. Approximately 93% of respondents considered tribal identity more important than political affiliation, while 90% believed that lineage remains an important marker of social recognition (Figure 2).

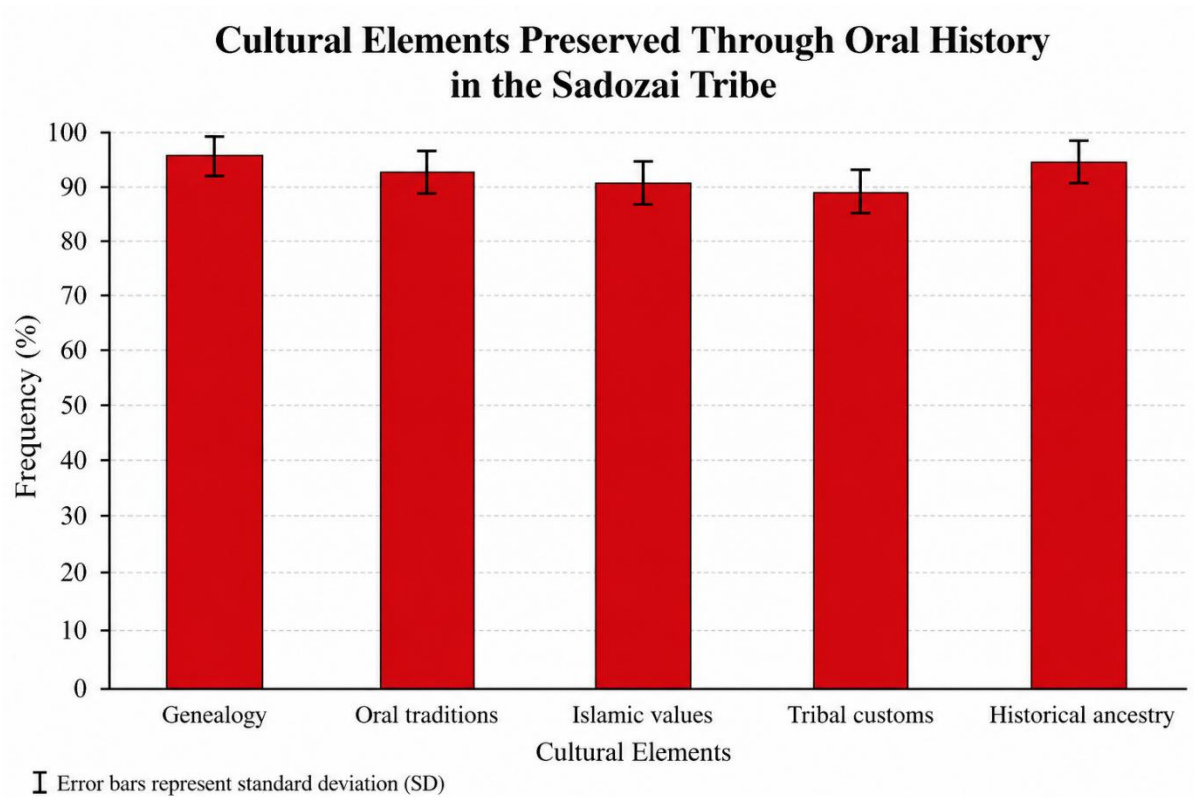


Figure 2: Sources of tribal identity among the Sadozai community

Social Organization and Kinship System

Interview findings revealed that the Sadozai tribe maintains a predominantly patrilineal and patriarchal social structure (Figure 3). The joint family system remains common, although nuclear households are gradually increasing due to urbanization and employment-related migration. Kinship continues to regulate marriage, inheritance, mutual assistance, and dispute settlement. Daily interaction among relatives, collective participation during marriages and funerals, and reciprocal support were repeatedly identified as major factors strengthening social cohesion. Respondents highlighted that respect for elders remains an essential cultural value, although younger generations increasingly participate in family decision-making.

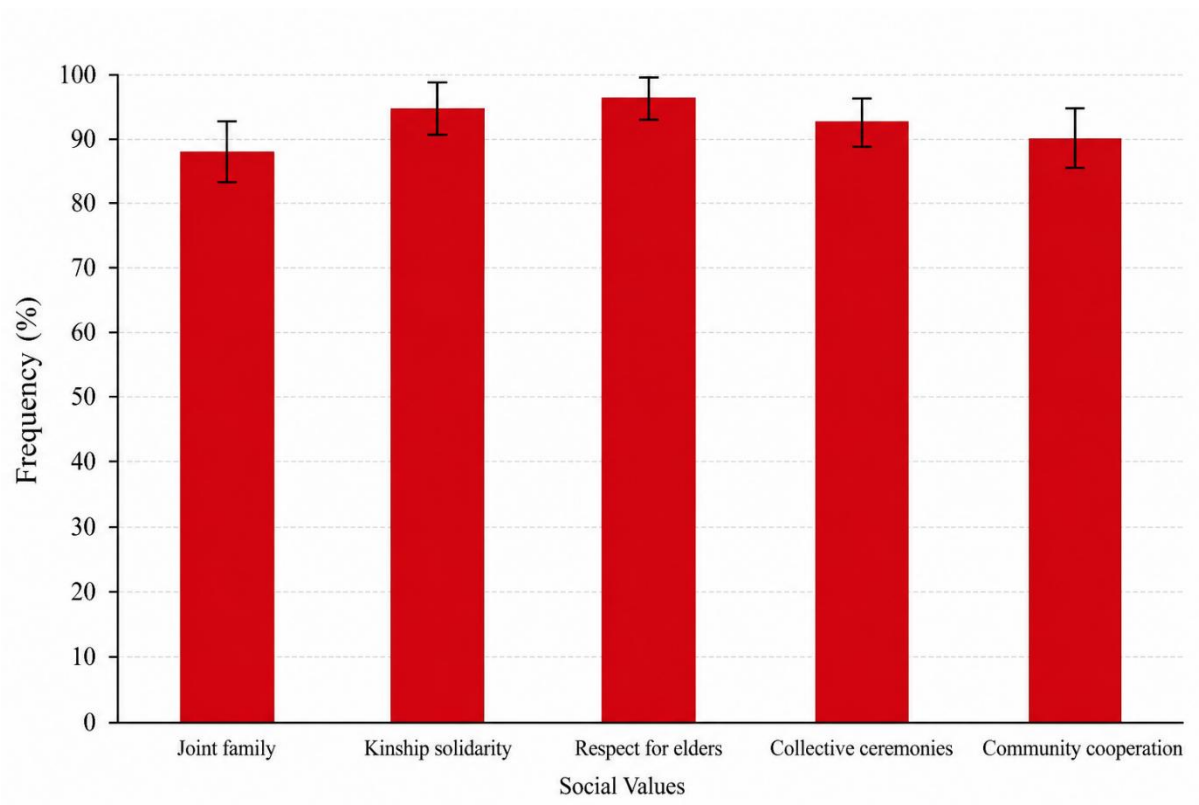


Figure 3: Interview-based overview of the social organization and kinship system of the Sadozai tribe

Gender Roles and Social Status

Participants reported that men traditionally occupy leadership positions and exercise authority in household and tribal affairs. Major decisions concerning marriage, inheritance, land ownership, and political participation are generally taken by senior male family members. However, respondents acknowledged gradual changes in women's participation due to education and employment. Female respondents indicated that education has increased their contribution to household decision-making, although traditional gender norms continue to influence social roles. Approximately 82% of respondents believed that women's social status has improved during the past two decades (Figure 4).

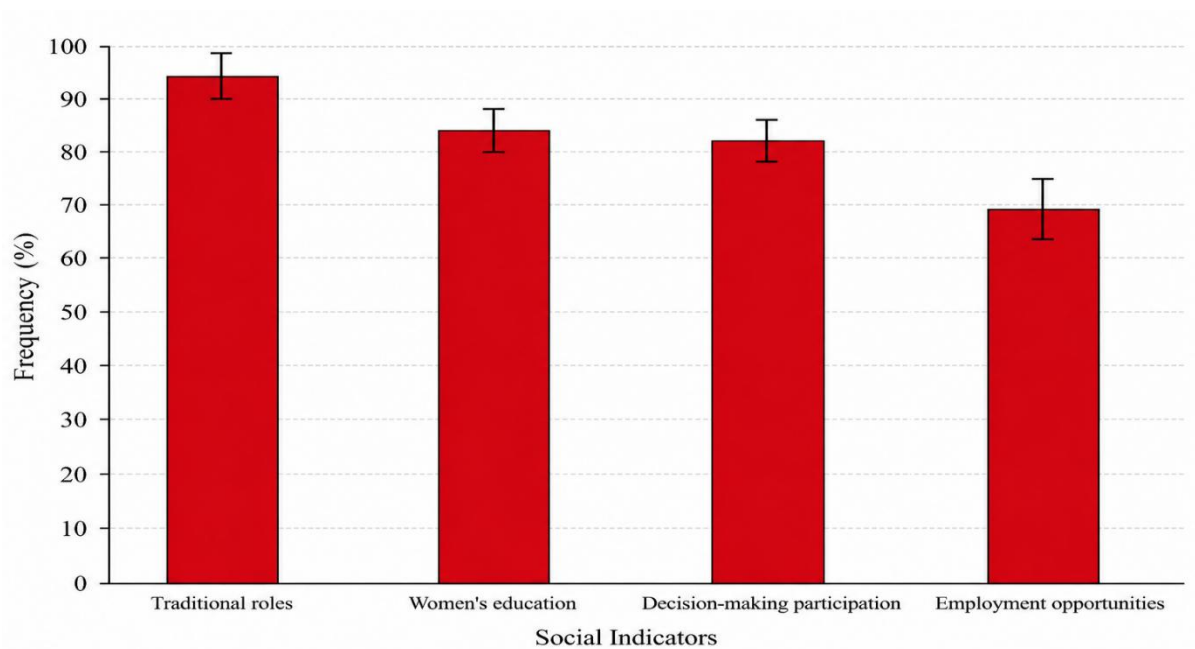


Figure 4: Gender roles and decision-making patterns in the Sadozai tribe based on interview findings

Political Organization and Conflict Resolution

The study found that traditional leadership remains an important institution within the Sadozai tribe. Tribal elders and the Sardar continue to guide community affairs, while the Jirga remains the preferred mechanism for resolving disputes. Respondents explained that most conflicts are resolved through consensus rather than litigation, strengthening social harmony and reducing long-term disputes. Nearly 90% of respondents expressed confidence in the Jirga system, while 87% supported collaboration between customary leadership and formal government institutions (Table 2).

Table 2: Respondents' perceptions of traditional leadership and dispute resolution mechanisms in the Sadozai tribe

Conflict Resolution Method	Percentage (%)
Jirga	90
Family mediation	82
Religious scholars	74
Formal courts	41

Economic Organization and Livelihood

The economic system of the Sadozai tribe has undergone substantial transformation. Agriculture remains an important livelihood; however, labour migration, military service, government employment, and small businesses have become major income sources (Figure 5). Nearly every household reported at least one family member working outside the local area. Migration has significantly improved household income but has also influenced family structure and weakened

some traditional social interactions. Women continue to contribute through livestock management, poultry farming, handicrafts, and tailoring.

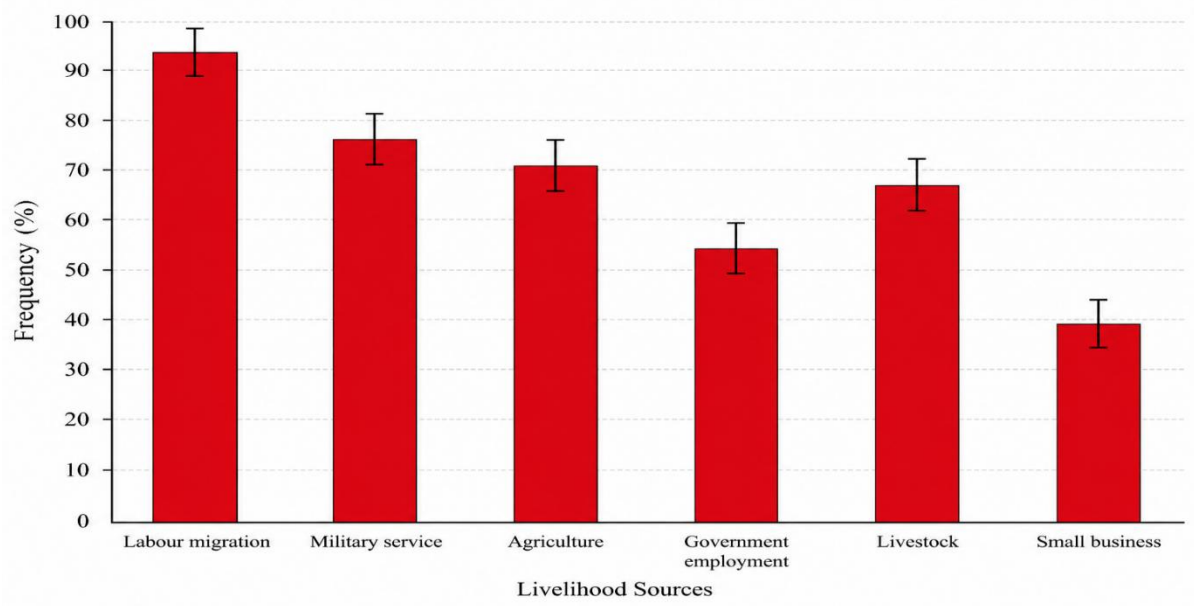


Figure 5: Livelihood diversification and economic transformation of the Sadozai tribe based on interview findings

6.7. Identity, Lineage and Social Stratification

Participants identified genealogy and lineage as the principal foundations of tribal identity. Most respondents stated that social recognition is associated with family reputation, ancestry, and community participation rather than economic status alone (Figure 6). Although respondents generally rejected rigid caste distinctions, they acknowledged that lineage continues to influence marriage preferences, leadership selection, and social prestige. Education, urbanization, and migration were reported to have reduced traditional social boundaries among younger generations.

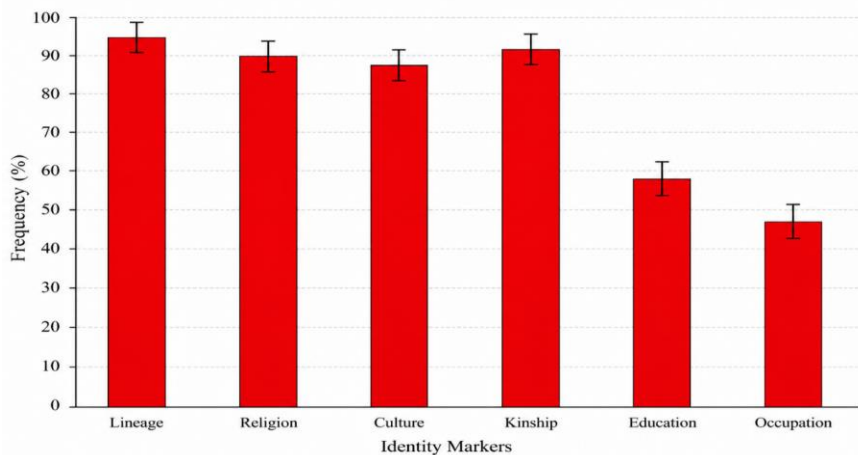


Figure 6: Factors influencing tribal identity

Modernization and Institutional Change

Respondents unanimously agreed that education, migration, digital communication, and urbanization have transformed the social institutions of the tribe. Younger generations increasingly pursue higher education and professional employment while maintaining strong emotional attachment to tribal identity. Most participants viewed modernization positively but expressed concern regarding the gradual decline of traditional customs, indigenous knowledge, and oral history. Approximately 91% recommended documenting tribal history to preserve cultural heritage for future generations (Table 3).

Table 3: Respondents' perceptions of social change and cultural preservation within the Sadozai tribe

Impact	Percentage (%)
Improved education	93
Better employment	88
Cultural change	86
Decline in oral traditions	79
Improved communication	95
Greater social mobility	84

Discussion

The present study provides a comprehensive anthropological analysis of the social institutions, political organization, economic transformation, identity, and cultural continuity of the Sadozai (Sudhan) tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings demonstrate that although the community has experienced significant socio-economic and political changes during recent decades, traditional institutions continue to play a fundamental role in maintaining social cohesion and preserving tribal identity. The study further illustrates that modernization has not displaced customary institutions; rather, both traditional and modern systems coexist and collectively shape contemporary community life.

One of the most significant findings of the study is the continued importance of kinship and lineage as the foundation of social organization (Fortes et al., 2017). The predominance of the patrilineal joint family system reflects a characteristic feature of many tribal societies in South Asia, where descent, inheritance, and social responsibilities are organized through male lineage. Participants consistently emphasized that the concept of *Khandan* extends beyond biological relationships and functions as a mechanism for mutual support, collective responsibility, and social security (Rai et al., 2016). Similar observations have been reported in anthropological studies, which describe kinship as the primary institution regulating social interaction, marriage alliances, inheritance, and reciprocal obligations within tribal communities (Coe et al., 2008). Despite increasing urbanization and migration, kinship remains the principal source of social identity among the Sadozai tribe.

The findings also reveal that tribal identity continues to be strongly associated with genealogy, oral history, Islamic values, and historical memory (Shryock et al., 2023). Participants regarded lineage and shared ancestry as essential components of social recognition and collective belonging. This observation supports anthropological perspectives that tribal identity is socially

constructed through common historical experiences, cultural practices, and symbolic representations of ancestry. Although formal education, migration, and interaction with wider society have broadened individual identities, respondents indicated that tribal affiliation remains more influential than political or occupational identity in maintaining social solidarity. Such continuity demonstrates the resilience of indigenous identity despite increasing globalization and social mobility (Hall et al., 2023). The study further demonstrates that political organization within the Sadozai tribe continues to rely heavily on customary institutions. The Sardar and the Jirga remain highly respected mechanisms for local governance, conflict resolution, and community decision-making. Participants expressed greater confidence in resolving disputes through consensus-based traditional institutions than through formal judicial systems. This reflects the broader anthropological understanding that customary governance emphasizes social harmony, reconciliation, and collective responsibility rather than adversarial legal processes (Sutanti et al., 2025). Nevertheless, respondents acknowledged that the authority of traditional leadership has gradually adapted to accommodate democratic governance and formal state institutions (Logan et al., 2009). Rather than replacing indigenous political structures, these changes have produced a hybrid governance system in which customary leadership continues to complement formal administrative mechanisms.

Economic organization has undergone one of the most substantial transformations within the tribe (Ahmed et al., 2013). Historically, agriculture, livestock rearing, and subsistence farming formed the economic foundation of the community. However, the findings indicate that labour migration, military service, government employment, overseas work, and private business have become increasingly important sources of household income. The widespread participation of Sadozai men in military service reflects the historical reputation of the Sudhan community for military involvement and public service (Saikal et al., 2004). Migration has improved household income, educational opportunities, housing conditions, and access to healthcare, thereby contributing to socio-economic development (De Haan et al., 2000). However, respondents also noted that prolonged migration has weakened daily social interactions, reduced participation in traditional ceremonies, and altered family relationships. These findings support broader anthropological research demonstrating that migration simultaneously promotes economic development while transforming traditional social institutions.

The study also highlights the evolving role of women within the Sadozai tribe. Traditionally, men exercised primary authority over household decision-making, inheritance, marriage arrangements, and political participation, reflecting the patriarchal structure of the community (Prillaman et al., 2023). Women were primarily responsible for domestic responsibilities, livestock management, poultry farming, and household production. However, respondents acknowledged that increased educational opportunities and improved access to employment have gradually expanded women's participation in family decision-making and community affairs. Although traditional gender norms remain influential, particularly in rural areas, the findings suggest a gradual transition toward greater female empowerment without fundamentally disrupting existing cultural values (Chandramohan et al., 2023). Similar patterns have been documented in many rural societies where modernization promotes social change while preserving important cultural traditions (Inglehart et al., 2000).

An important contribution of this study is its examination of identity and caste-like social stratification within the tribe. Unlike the rigid hereditary caste system observed in some South

Asian societies, the Sadozai community appears to organize social status primarily through lineage, genealogy, family reputation, and community service. Participants generally rejected the existence of strict caste divisions; however, they acknowledged that family background and ancestral prestige continue to influence leadership selection, marriage preferences, and social recognition. This finding suggests that although formal caste boundaries are relatively weak, social hierarchy remains embedded within customary cultural practices (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2025). Education, urbanization, and occupational diversification were widely perceived as reducing these traditional distinctions, particularly among younger generations. Consequently, social mobility has increased while tribal identity continues to provide a shared sense of belonging (Fong et al., 2023).

The influence of modernization emerged as another major theme of the study. Education, digital communication, improved transportation, urbanization, and migration have significantly reshaped traditional institutions. Younger generations increasingly pursue higher education, professional careers, and employment outside the tribal region while maintaining emotional and cultural attachment to their ancestral community. Participants viewed modernization as both an opportunity and a challenge. Improved education and economic development have enhanced living standards and expanded opportunities, yet these changes have also contributed to the gradual decline of oral traditions, indigenous knowledge, and customary practices (Clarkson et al., 1992). This dual process reflects the broader anthropological concept of cultural adaptation, whereby societies selectively preserve core cultural values while modifying institutional practices in response to changing socio-economic conditions.

The persistence of oral history remains particularly important for maintaining cultural continuity. Respondents emphasized that family gatherings, community ceremonies, religious events, and interactions with elders continue to serve as the primary mechanisms through which tribal history, genealogy, and cultural values are transmitted across generations. However, concerns were expressed regarding the declining participation of younger generations in these traditional learning processes due to formal education, migration, and digital media. The findings therefore underscore the need for systematic documentation of oral traditions to preserve the cultural heritage of the Sadozai tribe (Makki et al., 2025). Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Sadozai tribe has successfully maintained its social cohesion through strong kinship networks, customary leadership, shared historical identity, and collective cultural values while simultaneously adapting to political, economic, and educational transformation. Rather than experiencing cultural replacement, the community illustrates a process of institutional adaptation in which traditional governance, social organization, and identity coexist with modern education, democratic governance, labour migration, and economic diversification. This adaptive capacity has enabled the Sadozai tribe to preserve its distinctive cultural identity while responding effectively to contemporary social challenges (Khan et al., 2021).

From a broader anthropological perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of tribal societies in Pakistan by demonstrating that indigenous institutions remain dynamic rather than static. The interaction between customary governance and modern administrative systems, the transformation of traditional livelihoods, evolving gender relations, and the resilience of tribal identity collectively illustrate the complex processes through which tribal communities negotiate continuity and change. These findings enrich socio-cultural anthropology by providing empirical

evidence on how historical traditions, political organization, economic development, and identity continue to shape the contemporary social life of the Sadozai tribe in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the research was based on a relatively small sample of 30 households, which, although appropriate for qualitative ethnographic research, may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives within the entire Sadozai tribe across Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Second, the study relied primarily on semi-structured interviews and participants' perceptions, making the findings dependent on personal experiences, memory, and subjective interpretations. Third, the research was conducted within a specific geographical and cultural context; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to other tribal communities in Pakistan without considering their distinct historical, social, and cultural characteristics. Fourth, because of time and logistical constraints, prolonged participant observation and longitudinal fieldwork were not undertaken, limiting the ability to examine seasonal variations and long-term social changes. Finally, while the study explored social, political, economic, identity, and cultural dimensions, quantitative data on household income, demographic trends, and socio-economic indicators were not collected. Future studies should adopt mixed-methods approaches with larger sample sizes, comparative analyses across multiple tribes, and longitudinal research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation and resilience of tribal institutions in contemporary society.

Conclusion

The present study provides a comprehensive anthropological understanding of the social, political, economic, and cultural institutions of the Sadozai (Sudhan) tribe of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The findings demonstrate that the tribe continues to maintain a strong sense of collective identity rooted in kinship, lineage, Islamic values, and customary traditions. Social cohesion is reinforced through the joint family system, reciprocal social relationships, and active participation in communal ceremonies, while traditional institutions such as the *Jirga* and the leadership of the *Sardar* remain central to local governance and conflict resolution. These indigenous mechanisms continue to foster social harmony despite the increasing influence of formal administrative structures. The study further reveals that the economic organisation of the Sadozai tribe has undergone considerable transformation. While agriculture and livestock remain important components of rural livelihoods, labour migration, military service, government employment, and small businesses have become major sources of household income. These changes have improved socio-economic conditions and expanded educational opportunities but have also altered traditional family structures and patterns of social interaction. Similarly, gender roles are gradually evolving as women gain greater access to education and contribute more actively to household welfare, although patriarchal norms continue to shape decision-making in many aspects of community life. An important contribution of this study is its examination of tribal identity and social stratification. The findings indicate that lineage, genealogy, and family reputation remain important determinants of social status and community recognition, whereas rigid caste divisions are less pronounced than in many other South Asian societies. Education, urbanisation, and migration have reduced some traditional social boundaries, particularly among younger generations, while reinforcing broader social integration without diminishing the importance of tribal identity. Overall, the Sadozai tribe illustrates the resilience and adaptability

of indigenous social institutions in the face of contemporary social, economic, and political change. Rather than abandoning traditional practices, the community has integrated elements of modern education, governance, and economic development with its customary institutions, creating a dynamic balance between continuity and transformation. This study contributes to socio-cultural anthropology by documenting how historical traditions continue to shape present-day community life while responding to the challenges of modernization. It also provides valuable baseline information for future research on tribal societies in Pakistan and offers insights that may support culturally sensitive policies for heritage preservation, rural development, education, and community empowerment.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

The current work was approved by the ethical committee, Department of Anthropology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, under ethical approval number 2018/00018 ANTHRO.

Consent to Publish: Not applicable.

Author declaration: All authors agree to publish the work in its current form.

Clinical Trial Number: Not applicable

Author's Contribution

Qirat Naz: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, formal analysis, visualization, writing—original draft preparation, and project administration. Dr. Arbab Alam Khan: Supervision, validation, interpretation of results, critical revision and editing of the manuscript, and overall guidance throughout the research process. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding: Not applicable

Competing Interests: The authors declare no competing interests.

Availability of Data and Materials

All relevant data generated or analyzed during this study are included in this manuscript. Additional data may be made available upon reasonable request from the corresponding authors.

Acknowledgements

The author extends her appreciation to Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, for providing the research facilities in the completion of this work.

References

1. Granovetter, M. (2017). *Society and economy: Framework and principles*. Harvard University Press.
2. Nicoll, K., & Zerboni, A. (2020). Is the past key to the present? Observations of cultural continuity and resilience reconstructed from geoarchaeological records. *Quaternary International*, 545, 119-127.
3. Richerson, P., & Henrich, J. (2012). Tribal social instincts and the cultural evolution of institutions to solve collective action problems. *Cliodynamics*, 3(1).
4. von Schlippe, A., & Frank, H. (2016). CONFLICT IN FAMILY BUSINESS IN THE LIGHT OF SYSTEMS. *The Routledge companion to family business*, 367.
5. Shinwari, N. A. (2025). *Political and social change in Pakistan's tribal areas: Understanding Pashtun youth*. Taylor & Francis.
6. Hassan, K. W., Mohan, D., Wani, I. A., & Saqib, N. U. (2025). *Identity, dispossession and resilience of the subaltern: A study of marginalised communities in Kashmir*. Taylor & Francis.

7. Noelle, C. (2012). *State and tribe in nineteenth-century Afghanistan: the reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826-1863)*. Routledge.
8. Olaopa, O. R., & Ogundare, S. (2023). Traditional leadership, indigenous knowledge, and local governance: implications for good governance and sustainable development agenda. *Indigenous People-Traditional Practices and Modern Development*.
9. Coffey, W., & Tsosie, R. (2001). Rethinking the tribal sovereignty doctrine: Cultural sovereignty and the collective future of Indian nations. *Stan. L. & Pol'y Rev.*, 12, 191.
10. Lutz, G. (2004). Traditional structures in local governance for local development. *Institute of Political Science, University*.
11. Ananth Pur, K., & Moore, M. (2010). Ambiguous institutions: Traditional governance and local democracy in rural South India. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 46(4), 603-623.
12. Mishra, S. N. (1983). Arunachal's Tribal Economic Formations and Their Dissolution. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1837-1846.
13. Shryock, A. (2023). *Nationalism and the genealogical imagination: Oral history and textual authority in tribal Jordan* (Vol. 23). Univ of California Press.
14. Lyon, S. M. (2019). *Political kinship in Pakistan: Descent, marriage, and government stability*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
15. Oluwatosin, A., & Rojak, J. A. (2023). The Role of Cultural Identity to Build Social Cohesion: Challenges, Implications, and Integration Strategies in Multicultural Societies. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 2(1), 56-62.
16. Dui, K. (2024). Contours of Change: Gender, Culture and Globalisation among the Tagin of Arunachal Pradesh. *Indiana Journal of Arts & Literature*, 5(12), 68-75.
17. Banda, L. O. L., Banda, C. V., Banda, J. T., & Singini, T. (2024). Preserving cultural heritage: A community-centric approach to safeguarding the Khulubvi Traditional Temple Malawi. *Heliyon*, 10(18).
18. Khan, S. I. (2023). A study of the socio-political, caste and class factors in waste picking in Bangladesh: a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work at Massey University, Albany, Auckland, New Zealand.
19. Abatayo, J. V. C. S., & Gumapang, D. (2024). Cultural Activities, Resources, Practices, and Preservation of the Higaonon Tribe: An Ethnographic Study. *The New Educational Review*, 77, 35-47.
20. Monroe, A., Mihayo, K., Okumu, F., Finda, M., Moore, S., Koenker, H., ... & Harvey, S. (2019). Human behaviour and residual malaria transmission in Zanzibar: findings from in-depth interviews and direct observation of community events. *Malaria journal*, 18(1), 220.
21. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
22. Fortes, M. (2017). *Kinship and the social order: The legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*. Routledge.
23. Rai, S. (2016). *Property inheritance laws of women in tribal societies: a case study of Sikkim* (Doctoral dissertation).
24. Coe, K., & Palmer, C. T. (2008). The words of our ancestors: Kinship, tradition, and moral codes. *World Cultures eJournal*, 16(1).

25. Shryock, A. (2023). *Nationalism and the genealogical imagination: Oral history and textual authority in tribal Jordan* (Vol. 23). Univ of California Press.
26. Hall, T. D., & Fenelon, J. V. (2015). *Indigenous peoples and globalization: Resistance and revitalization*. Routledge.
27. Sutanti, R. D., Rochaeti, N., & Damora, A. R. (2025). Customary law as an instrument of restorative justice: an alternative approach to criminal conflict resolution in plural legal systems. *Clío. Revista de Historia, Ciencias Humanas y Pensamiento Crítico.*, (10), 1348-1381.
28. Logan, C. (2009). Selected chiefs, elected councillors and hybrid democrats: popular perspectives on the co-existence of democracy and traditional authority. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 47(1), 101-128.
29. Ahmed, A. (2013). *Pukhtun Economy and Society (Routledge Revivals): Traditional Structure and Economic Development in a Tribal Society*. Routledge.
30. Saikal, A. (2004). *Modern Afghanistan: A history of struggle and survival*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
31. De Haan, A., & de Haan, A. (2000). Migrants, livelihoods and rights: the relevance of migration in development policies.
32. Prillaman, S. A. (2023). *The patriarchal political order: The making and unraveling of the gendered participation gap in India*. Cambridge University Press.
33. Chandramohan, S., Salinger, A. P., Wendt, A. S., Waid, J. L., Kalam, M. A., Delea, M. G., ... & Sinharoy, S. (2023). Diagnosing norms and norm change in rural Bangladesh: an exploration of gendered social norms and women's empowerment. *BMC Public Health*, 23(1), 2337.
34. Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values. *American sociological review*, 65(1), 19-51.
35. Bandyopadhyay, S. (2025). *Caste, culture and hegemony: Social dominance in colonial Bengal*. Routledge India.
36. Fong, C. J., Owens, S. L., Segovia, J., Hoff, M. A., & Alejandro, A. J. (2023). Indigenous cultural development and academic achievement of tribal community college students: Mediating roles of sense of belonging and support for student success. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 16(6), 709.
37. Clarkson, L., Morrisette, V., & Régallet, G. (1992). Our responsibility to the seventh generation: Indigenous peoples and sustainable development.
38. Makki, L. (2025). Comporative analysis of folktales and oral traditions across cultures: shared motifs and cultural values. *Centre for Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 16(1), 1-23.
39. Khan, Z., & Shah, Z. A. (2021). Pashtun community Indigenous resilience to changing socio-cultural and political challenges. In *The Routledge international handbook of indigenous resilience* (pp. 121-133). Routledge.