Politics Beyond Voting: A Study of Ahmadiyya Community’s State Accessing Mechanism in Ralioke, Sialkot by Asad Shoaib

Nation building and State formation are simultaneous processes, correlated with each other. In Pakistan, State’s use of religious idiom to direct the nation building process has pushed minorities out of the political and social fields. The Ahmadi question is one such important juncture in Pakistan’s history which not only pushed Ahmadiyya community from Muslimness, a nation building idiom used by the Pakistani State, but has transformed it from a secular or at least an open-to-everyone outlook to a more fundamental and patronising position. As a result, the Ahmadiyya community faced social exclusion and oppression. The community, however, developed few rational strategies to claim their public space in the society, despite events of violence and victimisation. One such strategy is participation in informal political field to minimise the effect of State-led discrimination. Through informal political participation in local field and reliance on kinship based social capital, Ahmadiyya community accesses State. Earlier, the State, through a constitutional amendment, deprived them of their Muslim identity; however, the State could not deprive the community from its Punjabi identity, an influential identity in Pakistan. The community’s land ownership makes them influential, politically. This is how Ahmadiyya community remains safe in Ralioke, the village researched, which is an exclusive model of Ahmadiyya community’s non-violent existence with the majority non-Ahmadiyya community in Pakistan. Using explanatory case study research design and qualitative elicitation techniques of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), In-depth interviews (IDIs) and non-participant observation the study explained how Ahmadiyya community in Ralioke, using kinship networks, bureaucratic sub fields and informal political participation, acquires statist capital to protect its lives and assets.

Keywords: Habitus; informal political participation; kinship; Punjabiness; statist capital.