

AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES AND RURAL POWER STRUCTURE IN BANGLADESH
A STUDY OF THE COMILLA MODEL

by
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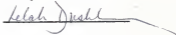
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to explore and analyze the problem of agricultural development strategy from a sociological point of view. Its central assumption is that the micro level problems of individual development strategies must be linked to macro level social structural relationships.

More than half the people of the world, nearly three quarters of the less developing world (Asia and Pacific 70-85%, Africa 80-90%, Latin America 40-50%), live in rural areas, sustained chiefly by work on the land and mutual services (Hunter, 1978, p.1). Thus, in these countries agriculture provides the largest source not only of income but also of employment. In addition, it is the predominant source of foreign exchange earnings. Economic growth in this context is critically dependent upon a breakthrough in agriculture.

From the colonial period onwards there has been a slowly growing effort to improve agricultural technology and output and to increase incomes in the rural sectors of these countries. However there is an increasing realization among the researchers and the policy makers, especially since the sixties, that while modern inputs such as high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and water, if properly applied are capable of greatly increasing agricultural production, the supply of inputs is not a sufficient condition for realizing the full technological possibilities in a given society. The issue of technological development is closely related to the problem of social relations. Thus emphasis has been placed on the study of the dynamics of social relations to comprehend the nature and the constraints of technological application in a society. Light has been shed on the non-technical variables, such as internal class composition, power structure, culture, ideology, formal

and informal groupings, external linkages and so on. These studies have given rise to an increasing concern that in many cases the facilities provided by the agricultural development strategies are being exploited by a small section of the rural population, while the vast majority of the peasant agriculturalists are virtually untouched by these policies. As the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development maintains

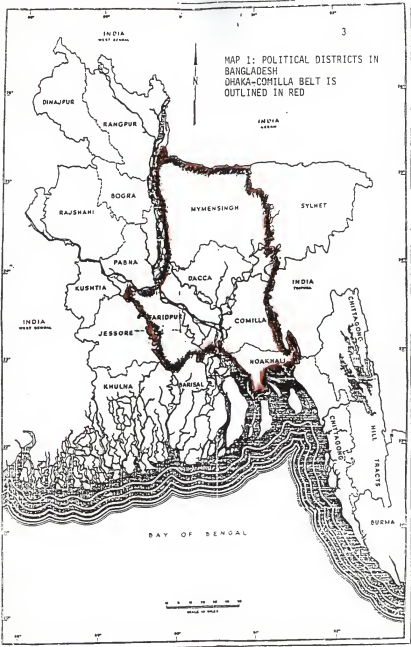
A relative inequality in land distribution, a system of tenancy that separated those cultivators unfortunate enough to be tenants from most of the benefits of their skill and labor, and concentration of power in the village elite, all tended towards the abuse of the existing measures and services provided for agricultural development (Pears, 1979, 175).

The analytical structure of the present thesis is developed against this backdrop. We will examine the relationship between the network of structural relationships and agricultural development in a particular area in Bangladesh. The strategy under question is the Comilla cooperative Model, a rural development project begun in the late fifties to develop the agricultural economy through effective participation by small and marginal peasants which ended up being controlled by the better-off farmers. The region of Bangladesh under study is the "Dhaka-Comilla belt". Its location, in the central Bangladesh, may be seen in the accompanying maps (Map 1 and 2). The term refers not only to a particular region but to a distinctive landholding pattern.

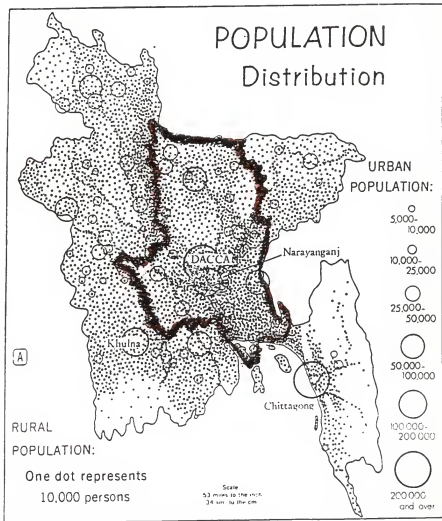
Differentiation in Rural Bangladesh

It is not unusual in the contemporary rural sociological and anthropological literature to divide the peasant category into different classes. It is, however, erroneous to assume that a universal

MAP 1: POLITICAL DISTRICTS IN BANGLADESH
DHAKA-COMILLA BELT IS
OUTLINED IN RED



MAP 2: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN BANGLADESH
DHAKA-COMILLA BELT IS OUTLINED IN RED



Source: Kingsbury (1974, p.79).

model of differentiation can be developed by examining the existing peasant societies. Although peasant societies and cultures have some similarities all over the world (Redfield, 1956), there are some peculiarities in each peasant society which make it imperative to undertake concrete analysis of the specific situations.

In the Dhaka-Comilla belt of Bangladesh, the small family farm is the basic unit of production and social livelihood. The rural population density is extremely high (over 1700 per sq. mi.) and the average size of landholding is only about 2.5 acres. Thus we would seem to have an undifferentiated peasant zone of small freeholders in the heart of the country. This interpretation, however, would be quite misleading. As Bertocci had observed, "absolute smallness in farm size should not obscure the importance of small difference in landownership and associated economic activities associated with them, as these reflect clear variations in class, status, life style and power" (Bertocci, 1972, p.37).

On the basis of such seemingly small but socially significant differences, we may differentiate four distinct strata among the peasantry of the Dhaka-Comilla belt. In the minifundist context of this region, it is not the large landowners but the farmers able to earn a surplus on their operations who dominate the rural economy. Farmers owning only 4.5 acres or more normally belong to this category. Small as their surpluses are, in an economy characterized by large amounts of subsistence farming and landlessness, the surplus farmers have a distinct advantage over the rest of the rural population. These farmers are in a position to diversify into activities like rent of land, manipulation of market, or moneylending, and thereby gain leverage over others. This leverage

is reinforced by other social, political, and economic relations.

Thus, it is the independent farmer who is defined as a "rich farmer" in this thesis. Unlike Alavi's "rich farmer", also called a "capitalist farmer", his farming is not primarily based on the exploitation of wage labor. The rich peasant prefers to do the farm work himself, along with his family, except in the harvesting season, when the family farms can not function without the help of the hired laborers.

The basic difference between a rich peasant and a middle peasant lies in the dual role played by the latter. Although the middle peasant is primarily an independent farmer, owning only 2.5 to 4.5 acres, occasionally he has to do sharecropping, because of his unstable economic position. The middle peasant produces a marketable surplus, but the amount is so insignificant that he essentially remains a subsistence farmer. Unlike the rich peasant, the middle peasant is never in a position to exploit the labor of others.

The poor peasant also has a very small plot of his own, usually less than 2.5 acres, but the principal means of subsistence is either sharecropping or working on somebody else's land. Thus his class position is close to that of a landless laborer.

Landless labor, the rural proletariat, is the most poverty stricken stratum in the agricultural economy. In the harvesting seasons, its members are solely dependent on working on somebody else's land. But, since an all year around employment is not available, the landless laborers in this particular region constitute a floating population which moves back and forth from the rural areas to the urban centers

and from one village to another in search of work. Rootless and almost permanently starved, they live on public work programs (e.g., food for work, etc.), relief and sometime even begging during the nonharvesting seasons.

The empirical description of these strata, and the analysis of the relations between the rich peasants and the other strata, form major components of the present thesis.

The Comilla Model

The "Comilla Model" is a pilot project initiated in 1959 by the Academy for Rural Development in Pakistan to develop village cooperatives. The project was limited initially to rural areas of Comilla District. Certain ideas about cooperation and the diffusion of technological innovations were to be tested in Comilla to determine their effectiveness and applicability to the former East Pakistan as a whole. Ten years later, under the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), the Comilla Model was extended to other districts. After Bangladesh came into existence as an independent nation state at the end of 1971, it considered the Comilla Model the "paradigm of agricultural development". By 1977-78 there were 25, 777 primary cooperatives in 250 thanas (Johnson, 1974).

In its pilot phase, when it was first adopted, the Comilla Model was aimed at the small and middle peasant strata described above. The hope was that this could be accomplished through cooperatives what they lacked the resources to do alone. Yet, from the outset, the architects of the Comilla Model assumed that power relations among the various strata of the peasant economy was not their concern. Because of this assumption, no systematic

effort was made to transform the existing structural relationships. Rather, we shall argue, the new wine of agricultural inputs was poured into the old bottle of relationships. The cooperative model, theoretically aimed at bringing into being new social roles and new leadership groups consonant with "modernization" in agriculture as well as other spheres of rural life, was in fact built on the traditional vertically structured system of the villages.

Of the twin goals of the Comilla Model, increasing agricultural productivity and improving the lives of the rural poor, the former thus met with more success than the latter. The production of food and cash crops in the villages under the cooperative system increased significantly, but it was mainly the larger rather than the small farmers that were the beneficiaries of this. As had happened in earlier experiments in India and Pakistan, eventually the better off farmers took over the cooperatives. They were able to direct major portions of the agricultural inputs, e.g., loans, fertilizers, irrigation water, and insecticides to themselves. Empirical studies indicate that the majority of the rural poor have not been reached by the development programs. Indeed their conditions appear to have worsened.

Against the backdrop, I propose to analyze the rural power structure and socio-economic relations with a view to answering two interrelated and overlapping questions: 1) How did a project theoretically

aimed at helping small and marginal farmers get taken over by the larger farmers? 2) In view of the increasing rural polarization in the Dhaka-Comilla belt, where landlessness is now approaching 40%, what is the potential for horizontal mobilization of agrarian protest in opposition to the existing vertical mobilization pattern? If there is no such mobilization, why has it not occurred?

Definition of Terms

For a meaningful and scientific discussion of the subject, it is essential that the terminology used should be unambiguous. Before we proceed further, the precise meaning of some terms, which are crucial to this analysis, ought to be clarified. First, the term "class". Stratification on the basis of simple differences in wealth, on a single linear scale, is an inadequate basis on which to distinguish classes. For us, as already indicated in the discussion of peasant differentiation, class is a structural concept. Production relations, which are also inevitably power relations, form the major basis of the class. A social class is any aggregate of persons who perform the same function in the organization of production and share the concomitant social power and power interest.

A crucial question here is the extent to which members of a class are conscious of this interest and mobilized to pursue it. In this regard, Marx made a distinction between a "class-in-itself" (Klasse an sich) and "class-for-itself" (Klasse for sich). There is a conscious collective will

in the "class-for-itself" which is absent in the "class-in-itself". (Bendix & Lipset, 1966, p. 7). In other words, "class-in-itself" is based on the criteria of relations of production. But in "class-for-itself", class consciousness and assertion of class interest has developed to the point of actual or potential class conflict. As already noted, one of our research questions is the extent to which this has or has not happened on the part of landless and marginal farmers.

I am also going to utilize the concepts of "vertical" and "horizontal" mobilization as developed by Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (1967, pp. 17-29). Although the Rudolphs applied these terms to caste politics in India, they derived them from the analyses of class mobilization in Europe. The Rudolphs' define vertical mobilization as

"marshalling of political support by traditional notables in local societies that are organized and integrated by rank, mutual dependence, and the legitimacy of traditional authority. Notables reach vertically down into such social systems by attaching dependents and socially inferior groups to themselves through their interests and deference. The community of the locality defines the boundaries of the system and contains its structural dimensions" (Ibid., p. 24).

Horizontal mobilization is defined as

the marshalling of popular political support by class or community leaders and their specialized organizations. Horizontal mobilization introduces a new pattern of cleavage by challenging the vertical solidarities and structures of traditional societies" (Ibid, p. 25).

The existing social pattern in the Dhaka-Comilla belt will be analyzed as a 'vertical mobilization' pattern. The 'vertical mobilization' pattern, as we will show, is responsible for the rich peasants' domination over the agricultural cooperatives and absence of protest from the rural poor against the present system.

In the present vertical mobilization pattern, the rich peasants

are conscious of their position and are materially and ideologically capable of directing their activities to particular goals. So the rich peasantry can be described as a 'class-for-itself'. On the other hand, because of the absence of this class consciousness among the middle and poor peasants and the landless labours, they are not in a position to actualize their class potentials. Thus they are virtually "classes in themselves". In other words, in the vertical mobilization pattern, the dominant class maintains an internal horizontal solidarity whereas the dominated classes lack it.

Method

Because of time and opportunity constraints, I could not conduct systematic anthropological fieldwork, although some informal, unstructured interviews were made on my visit in the summer of 1983. The informative and analytical structures of the thesis are largely based on the review of existing literature. I owe a deep intellectual debt to these studies for providing me the theoretical points of departure and empirical data bases for this thesis.

Furthermore, my understanding of the subject is enriched by my having grown up in Comilla town. In order to orient myself, I availed myself of all chances to establish close contacts with peasants who were working within the cooperative framework and those who were not. Interviews with the social scientists who have done research in the area, as well as officials working in development organizations helped me to comprehend the complex milieu of peasant society in the region.

Outline, Hypotheses and Conclusion

In order to address the issues posed earlier, in Chapter 2, I will undertake a historical discussion of the emergence and summary of

differentiation within the peasant societies in Bangladesh, for it will provide us with an understanding of the complex dynamics within this society.

In Chapter 3, I will review the history of what has become the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), its organizational structure, principal assumptions and the phases in the implementation of the Comilla Model.

In Chapter 4 and 5, I will analyze the cooperatives in action. Chapter 4 will focus on coop membership and leadership, and indicate the extent to which the cooperatives are controlled by the rich peasants.

In Chapter 5, I will address my two major questions. The answers to both questions must be sought in the same processes. In order to explicate these processes, I will attempt to test the following hypotheses.

First, extended kinship links are important for class consciousness and solidarity. Kinship can be perceived as a familiar network of relationships through which specific, particular interests can be related to universal sets of interests. Marriage patterns in rural Bangladesh, which has a significant role in kinship extension, tend to favor the rich peasants. The rich peasants are able to sustain kinship links at a greater distance than the poorer families of their village, although of course, local strategic marriages are also made for alliance purposes.

Second, effective control over the territorial organizations is a significant process through which the rich peasants maintain their authority on the rural power structure.

Third, the prevalence of factional politics in the villages, characterized by vertical cleavages dominated by rich peasants, hinders the emergence of class solidarity among poor peasants and landless laborers.

Although factional rivalries exist among rich peasants, these are far less damaging to their class solidarity than it is to that of their clients.

Fourth, the dominant ideology in the rural poor is a synthesis of scriptural Islam, Anglo-Saxon property concepts and a set of traditional values, e.g., kinship ethics, work morality, passivity. This ideology is transmitted in the whole society through an informal institution of rural priesthood and the rich peasants' control over the information flow. The predominant mode of information flow in the rural society is essentially vertical, which greatly inhibits horizontal communication among poorer peasants.

Fifth, the present form of exploitation involves the state. The state apparatus in Bangladesh is structurally biased towards classes which are responsible for inequity and poverty because it depends on them for survival in its present form. So the state throws its support behind the existing vertical mobilization pattern.

And finally, there is no political party in Bangladesh which both expresses the needs of the rural poor and has roots among them. The existing radical political parties have failed to provide a linkage between the rural poor and national politics.

The analysis of these processes will lead to our conclusion (Chapter 6) that in the cooperative, the poor peasantry will remain weak, even if rich peasants are excluded, precisely because of their subordinate position in other structures of dependence which constitute the greater part of their lives. Therefore, the essential precondition for successful cooperative strategy, which could reach the rural poor, is a positive transformation in these other structures of domination.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PEASANT DIFFERENTIATION

PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL PERIODS

Agrarian Economy in the PreColonial Period

This chapter will briefly discuss the historical development of the structural differentiation pattern within contemporary peasant societies in rural Bangladesh. In doing so, this chapter will focus on the background on which the cooperative model was built.

There is a conventional view of pre-colonial Bengal that is widely shared; that of a static 'traditional society' primarily rural and agricultural, founded on self-contained corporate village communities bound down by the caste system and engaged mainly in subsistence production, superimposed on which was a parasitic state apparatus. That society lacked an endogenous dynamic for development of market forces. It followed therefore that it was only the shattering impact of colonialism that broke open that closed society and generated new forces of change. This longstanding academic cliché can be attributed to Charles T. Metcalfe, whose characterization of the precolonial Indian village communities influenced the nineteenth century British writers (Hollingberry, 1979, p. 28). Marx's view of the pre-colonial Indian economy and society was not substantially different (Marx, 1960, p. 77).

A significant section of South Asian scholarship does not, however, share the consensus among classical writers about a static backward and unresponsive society and economy in precolonial Bengal. On the contrary, they recognize some indication of market development and structural change in a society that was still pre-capitalist.

Contrary to the conventional assumption of "communal ownership of land", a concept of private property existed even in precolonial Bengal. A class of revenue collectors, the rural elite, emerged out of the tax farming system. Evidence suggests that the society also contained elements of occupational

mobility. Marking this feature of the development of Bengal society,

Radhakamal Mukerjee says:

"Both in Bihar and Bengal, from the days of Muhammadan administration, there has been superimposition by the state of individualistic and capitalistic ideas of property. There has been remarkable development of economic and juristic institutions. While, on the one hand, capitalistic farming and landlordism superimposed by the state have overridden the communal interests of the village system, on the other hand, Jimutavahana and others developed individualistic concepts of property which dealt a serious blow to communal notions in the joint family and the coparcenary village community" (Mukherjee, 1940, pp. 310-11).

H. T. Colebrooke says:

"These tenures (i.e., petty properties which are common in the eastern districts of Bengal) seem rather to have been an extension of the rights of occupants, from vague permanence to a declared, hereditary, and even transferrable interest. They would bear a fixed quit-rent for portions of land which are to be inherited in regular succession and some were understood to authorize the transfer by sale or donation, and consequently conferred every right which constitute real property..." (Colebrooke, 1884, p.55).

The existence of private property in the precolonial period was also observed by N.N.Gupta

The Bengal school of Law (Dayabhaga), expounded by Jimutavahana between the 13th and 15th century A.D. has a basic conception of property-right quite different from the community of joint family rights which find expression in Mitakshara which prevails in western provinces (Gupta, 1949, p. 1)

Karim (1980) maintains that M. N. Roy's description of the development of commercialized production in India can be applied to the case of Bengal.

Roy observes—

"Although industrial production was still based on hereditary craftsmanship according to the caste system, another class had arisen (by the middle of the Eighteenth century) which controlled the distribution of the commodities produced by the guilds. The hereditary artisans had ceased in many instances, to be independent members of the autonomous village community. His production was no longer the property of the community to be exchanged by himself into other necessities produced by equally

independent members of the community. Arts and crafts, which ago had arisen as a part of village economy within the bonds of caste, had long ceased to be the exclusive concern of the isolated villages..." (Roy, 1922, p. 98).

Existence of a tax-collector rural elite class, the "zamindars", was also evident in pre-colonial Bengal. The zamindars acted as intermediaries between the established authorities and the tillers of the soil. In general, they had been appointed by the Mughal authority to collect revenue from the actual cultivators. They were "revenue farmers" whose interests were distinctly different from those who themselves labored on land (Jannuzi & Peach, 1980, p.1). The zamindar not only collected revenue as the subordinate instrument of the larger system, but also was answerable for the peace and good order in the country (Sinha, 1956, p.3).

The Permanent Settlement

However, despite the impetus for capitalist transformation, a full fledged market economy did not come into being in rural Bengal until the Permanent Settlement, the most significant legal framework of landed property in Bengal, laid down by the British colonial authority. The Permanent Settlement Act, promulgated in 1793, brought about two major structural changes in the agrarian economy of Bengal.

1. The class of tax-collector intermediaries were made the owners of the land.
 2. Actual tillers' rights on land were ignored. The peasants were now classified as "tenants" of the zamindar (Jannuzi & Peach, 1980).
- In its intellectual origin, this settlement was based on a physiocratic belief that a capitalist landowning class on the model of the English squirearchy could be produced in the richly endowed and prosperous province of Bengal (Gupta, 1963, p.74).

The complex patterns that emerged cannot easily be summarized here. But what was common to the whole process was the fact that access of the colonial state apparatus and the landowning class to the surplus produced by the peasant was not dependent on the exercise and organization of direct coercive force, typical of feudalism, but on the institution of property right by the colonial regime and the concomitant dispossession of the peasant. The peasant was rather subject to economic coercion, the economic law of capitalism. Appropriation of land either by the state (the state appropriated those lands which did not go under the "zamindari" ownership) or by the individual owners, combined with population growth, prevented the peasants from leaving a landlord's property and moving elsewhere. In theory, the peasant was not subject to feudal obligations. He was "free" - free, indeed to work for a landowner, his only means of access to land, or to starve (Alavi, 1980, p. 24).

However, with the cumulative effect of commercialization and rapidly increased pressure of population growth, it soon became apparent that uncontrolled high landlordism would have serious consequences. In particular, the Pabna revolt of 1873 showed clearly that it is imperative for the colonial state to define more precisely, perhaps redefine, the legal framework of property relationships (Chatterjee, 1903, p.2-4).

Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885

Periodically during the nineteenth century, British authority intervened to establish regulations to give some concessions to the actual tillers. As early as 1859, for example, it was established that cultivators who tilled the same lands for twelve years could be accorded "occupancy rights" to those lands, subject of course to the faithful payment of rent to their zamindars. But the British continued to be unsuccessful in enforcing such provisions,

and the rights of the cultivating peasantry of the region also continued to deteriorate.

Finally, in 1885, the British made a major attempt to establish a revised landlord-tenant relation in the region. In that year, the Bengal Tenancy Act came into force (Jannuzi & Peach, 1980, p.3). Whereas the Permanent Settlement of 1793 tended to ignore the full spectrum of customary rights in land and to confer proprietary rights to zamindars, the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 gave de jure recognition to the rights of others besides zamindars in the agrarian hierarchy. It gave legal substance to the rights, as well as the responsibilities, of those whose status had not been recognized by the Permanent Settlement. It established the basis for all subsequent legislation (even in contemporary Bangladesh) governing the relationships of people to the land in this region.

AGRARIAN STRATIFICATION ON THE EVE OF INDEPENDENCE

The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, as amended, presented a version of the intricately stratified system of rights in land in the region that is now Bangladesh. At the apex of the hierarchy was the ruling authority, the Provincial government of Bengal. Below the Provincial government were the zamindars, tenure-holders, and under-tenure-holders (those who had rent-collecting powers). In descending order there were different kinds of raiyats*, i.e., occupancy raiyat (a rent-paying holder of land having the right of occupancy on the land held by him), non-occupancy raiyat (a rent-paying holder of land not having the right of occupancy to land in his

* Raiyat is legally defined as a person who has acquired from proprietor or from another tenure holder a right to hold land for the purpose of cultivating it by himself, or by members of his family or by hired servants or with the aids of partners, etc.

possession) and the under-raiyat (a rent-paying holder of land having temporary possession of a holding under a raiyat). At the base were landless laborers whose rights in land were either tenuous or nonexistent (Ibid, pp.4-9). We will discuss each of these strata on the eve of independence in 1947.

Landlords and Tenure Holders

Zamindars, the landlords, used to enjoy the dual prerogatives of land-owners and rent collectors. The whole system of rent-collecting was characterized by an unlimited degree of corruption. In 1900, the total amount of government revenue in East Bengal was taka 39,000,000, but according to the report of the revenue board, the zamindars collected taka 165,000,000 (Siddique, 1981, p. 15). It means the tenants had to pay more than 400% of the legally due revenue. Although a significant portion of this money went to the intermediaries, the figure illustrates the exploitative nature of the landlord dominated economy. From 1793 to 1933, approximately taka 180,000,000,000 was appropriated by the zamindars by illegal means (Mukherjee, 1933, p. 34). In 1937, in the second session of the Bengal Parliament, three members showed the amount of revenue collected by the zamindars as follows — taka 290 million (legally taka 170 million and illegally taka 120 million), taka 300 million (legally taka 200 million and illegally taka 100 million) and taka 260 million (legally taka 200 million and illegally taka 60 million) (Siddique, 1980, p. 15). Sources of this information was not documented, but there are substantial reasons to believe that these reports were something more than sheer political rhetoric. On top of the land revenues, there were marriage taxes, penalty for social delinquency, and business tolls and taxes. Taxes were imposed in cases of marriages and funerals in the zamindar family, or when the zamindar was to buy

* Taka is the Bangladeshi currency. According to the government rate, one U.S. dollar was equivalent to twenty taka in 1982. However, since the dollar has a different purchasing power in different economies, a direct translation of the dollar into taka is not a good indicator of its real value.

a new car or horse (Ibid). Although the colonial authority outlawed this kind of tax imposition in 1859, 1885, and 1893, and a new law was promulgated in 1937, this illegal practice continued. It might sound amazing to a western observer, but it's true that there was not a single instance of legal action taken by colonial authority against the zamindars in this regard (Ibid, p. 19).

The surplus capital accumulated by the zamindars was mainly spent in non-productive sectors, such as feasting, maintaining concubines, consumption of luxuries, and building mansions in Calcutta and other district towns. Thus, a significant amount of the surplus capital which could be invested in agricultural or industrial sectors, was wasted (Ibid, p. 20).

In the agrarian hierarchy, the tenure holders were next to the zamindars. They had acquired from a proprietor or from another tenure-holder a right to hold land for the purpose of collecting rents or bringing the land under cultivation by establishing tenants on it. In fact, it was not the absentee landlord who was in a position to oppress the peasant from day to day. It was these tenure holders who used to make constant demands on the peasants and oppress them directly.

Rich Peasants

This class started gaining strength from the second half of the nineteenth century. Emergence of this class as a strong social stratum must be seen in the context of an agrarian economy increasingly dominated by the fact of commercialization. It was the gradual subsumption of peasant production to, market economy that brought into operation the familiar process of indebtedness leading to increasing control by the creditor over the surplus product of the small producer, leading in turn to the transfer of the small peasant's land. There was a steady increase in both sales and mortgages of small-peasant holdings in Bengal from the late nineteenth century, especially in the southern and south-western part of the province. These rates of increase picked up substantially in the years following the depression in the early 1930s, and

outright sales of small holdings increased dramatically after the free transferrability of raiyati holdings was legally recognized by the new Tenancy Act Amendment in 1939 (Chowdhury, 1976, pp. 105-165), (Chatterjee 1982, pp. 113-224).

The creditors to whom the land passed were typically the rich peasants, the "jotedars", who also engaged in money lending and grain trading, and often also in small agricultural processing industries, such as rice mills (Ghosh & Dutt, 1977, pp. 59-87). Typically, once again, the transferred land would be cultivated by the dispossessed small peasant, but now on a half-share-of-produce rent and with no legal rights of tenancy. The phenomenon of what has been called "depeasantisation" (Chowdhury, 1976) mostly occurred in the western and southwestern regions of Bengal. In the northern districts, in particular, the existence of jute crop production sustained the viability of small-peasant subsistence production much longer than elsewhere. It was only after the depression of the early 1930s that the fragility of small-peasant production was finally exposed in northern Bengal (Karim, 1980, p. 95).

In the eastern zone of the country where the Dhaka-Comilla belt is situated, a strong kulakism never got off the ground in the pre-partition period. Even at the present time, the rich peasants in the Dhaka-Comilla belt are much weaker than their southern, south-western and northern counterparts. However, this relative weakness, as I will show later, does not blur the crude reality of inequality in this area. The historical underdevelopment of the capitalist rich farmers in the Dhaka-Comilla belt can be partly attributed to the nature of landlordism in this region. In this area, moneylending and trading in agricultural produce was tied with landlordism into a single network. This was quite different from the typical "jotedari" form, where rich peasants would extend their effective control over the land of small peasant-sharecroppers by using a combination of debt-bondage and extra economic coercion

(Bose, 1982, pp. 463-92). In eastern Bengal, usurious and commercial exploitation of the peasantry was generally perceived as linked inseparably with zamindari exploitation.

The Middle Peasants

A large portion of the occupancy raiyats constituted the middle peasantry, the next layer in the agrarian hierarchy. Besides cultivating their own lands, the middle peasants occasionally sharecropped on the landlords' or rich peasants' land. The middle peasants' relationship with the market was a fluctuating one. Although they had a profit motivated rationale for production, most of the time their production output was exhausted after meeting the family requirements. The middle peasants' class aspiration was rather ambiguous. They had the ambition of becoming rich peasants, but at the same time they were aware of the fact that flood, famine, and bad harvesting could make pauperization inevitable for them. By and large, the middle peasants were subject to increased marginalization. In order to meet emergencies, they used to borrow money from the rich peasants and when they failed to repay the debt, lost their occupancy rights on land. In 1945, 27.8% of the total cultivating population in the Dhaka-Comilla belt belonged to this category (Reza, 1982, p. 17).

The Poor Peasants

Cultivating on fragmented and scattered lands, proportionately the poor peasants used to pay more tax than the rich and the middle peasant. But their occupancy rights were even less secured than the middle peasants. Since their lands were far from sufficient to meet their economic requirements, they sharecropped, even worked as agricultural laborers. Their debts to the rich peasants were greater than those of the middle peasants. Their production rationale was essentially a subsistence one. So far as class position and aspiration were concerned, they resembled the landless laborers more than other co-peasants. In 1945, 20.8% of the peasants in the Dhaka-Comilla belt were poor peasants of this kind (Ibid).

This was the class of agrarian proletariat who didn't have anything to fall back on except their labor power. Most of them even didn't have a cow and plough, essential for sharecropping (Siddique, 1981, pp. 19-23). According to the Flood Commission Report in 1933-39, 18.6 percent of the total cultivating population in Bengal lived either mostly or absolutely on selling its labor power (Report of the Land Revenue Commission, Vol. VI, 1940, p. 117). Ishaque found in 1944-45 that 29.9 percent of the total cultivating families were landless (Ishaque, 1944-45, pp. 122-33). Reza found that 18.1 percent of the peasant population in the Dhaka-Comilla belt was landless in 1945 (Reza, 1982, p. 36).

AGRARIAN CLASS RELATIONS AND POLITICS OF COMMUNALISM

To comprehend the nature of agrarian class structure in pre-partition Bengal properly, one has to take the peculiar communo-economic pattern of the agrarian economy of East Bengal in consideration. An almost universally accepted feature of the agrarian structure in eastern Bengal was its predominantly upper-caste Hindu landlord class (Chatterjee, 1983, p. 16).*

* The Permanent Settlement Act is usually held responsible for the dominance of the Hindus in the agrarian economy. However, there are two schools of opinion on the impact of the Permanent Settlement Act on the Hindus and the Muslims. The first school, following William Hunter, maintains that since the Muslims were in political power in the pre-British period, the British deliberately patronized the Hindus and deprived the Muslims (See Quereshi, 1962, pp 212-224, and Mullick, 1961, pp. 27-65). The second school, on the other hand, argues that a) the Hindus controlled most of the economic activities in Bengal even long before the British came. So the question of being biased to them is irrelevant. b) the British overthrew the Muslim military bureaucracy in Bengal. This bureaucracy had a distant relationship with land (See Sen, 1976).

True, there were many members of Hindu landlord families whose principal incomes were no longer from rent, but from white-collar employment or the professions. But nonetheless, analysis of the situation points to the significant fact that the urban Hindu "bhadralok" were closely associated with landlordism (Siddique, 1981, p. 24). As a class, the Bengali urban middle class came into being as a result of the Permanent Settlement Act. The surplus created from the agrarian economy enabled the sons of the rural elite to bear the expenses of English education. In colonial Bengal, English education was the key to enter the emerging urban professional and service-holder class. Since there was hardly any opportunity to invest in any other productive sector, their income was mostly spent in buying land. This investment pattern reinforced the urban middle class' ties with landlordism which prevented them from taking an independent class stance. While most of the bigger and more powerful landlords were Hindu, most of the peasants belonged to the Muslim community.

Many Muslim rent-receivers, although they had let much of their lands, often continued to cultivate some of the lands and remained culturally a part of the peasant community. Therefore, the cultural pattern of landlord dominance in the region was reinforced and demonstrated in terms of upper-caste Hindu superiority over the predominately Muslim peasantry. The Muslim peasantry developed a grievance against the Hindu landlords not only for economic reasons but also because of the social stigma they experienced from the "pollution of the predominant Hindu culture" (Ahmed, 1969, p.163).

Politically, the peasant grievance did not only take the form of an organized peasant movement. Particularly in the crucial period of 1926-31, it erupted in a series of violent communal clashes against Hindu landlords and moneylenders (Chatterjee, 1983, p. 22). The evidence on these riots suggests quite clearly the more or less general character of the Muslim peasant's

resistance. Ideologically, the participants saw themselves as resisting the unjust domination and exploitation of a peasant community by external enemies. The lines of division were clear in cultural terms: peasants resistance took the forms of acts of defiance against the targets that symbolized the wealth and power of the dominant classes. Besides plunder and destruction of property, there occurred widespread disobedience of "customary" cultural practices at religious festivals patronized by Hindu landlords and trading groups, desecration of idols worshipped in landlord households, and the almost ritualized burning of bonds and records of loans. The armed strength of landlords, on the other hand, was organized by Hindu zamindars, traders and professionals living in the district towns of the region, with open political support from the Hindu Mahasabha and various quasi-political Hindu religious organizations.

The National Congress, an ostensibly secular political party, tended to represent the interests of the Hindu landlords. On the other hand, the Muslim League and the Krishak Praja Samity, two major Muslim political organizations, supported the peasants' causes. Despite the upper class and middle class leadership structures of both of these parties, they supported the pro-peasant issues mainly for four reasons. In the first place, since it was the Hindus who mostly constituted the landlord class, the Muslim organizations felt less socio-economic obligations to identify themselves with the landed status quo. Even the distinguished "Nababs" of Dhaka, who earned this title by offering unconditional support to the colonial government in the second half of the nineteenth century and later played a pioneering role in establishing the Muslim League, had major stakes in trade and commerce, not in land (Karim, 1982, p. 136). Secondly, since it was the rich Muslim peasants, who provided the principal support base for both of these parties, they felt obliged to manifest their anti-big landlord sentiments (Ibid). Thirdly, since it was the vast multitude of the Muslim peasantry who constituted the electoral constituencies

for the Muslim politicians, under the system of separate electorates, it was not possible for them to act against Muslim popular causes (Siddique, 1981, p. 24). Finally, evidence shows that the populists in the lower level organizations of these parties were exerting pressure on the leadership structure to uphold peasant causes (Umar, 1974, pp. 124-129).

The political mobilization along class-communal line was clearly demonstrated at the time of the passing of the 1928 amendment to the Tenancy Act when the Congress-Swarajya Party in the legislative assembly unequivocally supported the rights and privileges of landlords against every attempt to voice the demands of peasants (Chatterjee, 1983, p. 22). On the other hand, both the Muslim League and the Praja Samity supported the peasants' demands (Siddique, 1981, p. 24). When the Flood Commission interviewed the district bar associations, dominated by the Hindu urban middle class, about the justification of the Permanent Settlement, almost all the associations supported the existing system (ibid). In 1937, Krishak-Praja Samity included in its election manifesto a number of pro-peasant issues, such as abolition of landlordism, tax reduction and establishment of a Debt Settlement Board (Ahmed, 1954, p. 39). In 1946, the Muslim League, in its election manifesto, promised to abolish landlordism without compensating the landlords (Reza, 1981, p. 47).

Muslim League's manifesto found unprecedented support and enthusiasm among the Muslim peasants which brought a landslide victory for Muslim League in East Bengal. The idea of "Pakistan", the concept of establishing a separate state for the Muslims of the subcontinent, advocated by the Muslim League, provided hope for the Muslim peasants to get rid of the exploitative economic relationship they suffered from.

This, therefore, was the context in which peasant resistance to landlord domination and usurious exploitation in eastern Bengal became communal. The

agrarian structure, together with a specific demographic distribution, set the stage for this political possibility. The particular cultural form of landlordism, and that of a peasant-communal resistance to landlord authority, then determined the specific political articulation of this struggle in the form of a "communal" conflict.

RICH PEASANTS' DOMINATION SINCE 1947

After Pakistan came into existence, the East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act of 1885 was abolished. The Act of 1950, as amended and supplemented by Presidential ordinance, contains the principal provisions of the law affecting the hierarchy of rights in land in contemporary Bangladesh.

The Act was designed to abolish the right of rent-receivers to act in behalf of the state in the collection of land revenue, i.e. to bring the state into a direct de jure relationship with rent-paying cultivators of land. By suggesting that the former rent-receiving intermediaries (zamindars) would not be permitted to retain their khaslands (lands that were not sublet, but occupied directly) the Act of 1950 seems not only to repeal the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885, but also to invalidate the Permanent Settlement Act of 1793. Abolition of rent-receiving big landlordism, coupled with the migration of the Hindu landlords to India en bloc, left the rich peasants with an opportunity to become dominant in the agrarian economy. However, the strength and the size of the rich peasants significantly varied from one region to another. In the northern and south-western part of the country, extensive concentration of land gave rise to a capitalist production relationship (a relationship between capital and wage). In the Dhaka-Cumilla belt the landlord dominated economy was replaced by a peasant mode of production. Like the previous economic pattern, the present one was also patronized by the state apparatus. Contrary to Chayanov's (1966) generalization

of "peasant economy", the present system, although basically structured on family farms, was marked by sharp differentiation.

In context of the near zero-sum game, a survival economy of small peasants resulted, coupled with a rich peasant surplus economy. The survival economy concentrated on food grains whereas the surplus economy developed cash crops.

This meant increasing marginalization and pauperization for the poor peasants. The National census of 1961 revealed that landless agricultural laborers increased by 63% in the decade of 1951 to 1961. In the same period, the total peasant population increased by only 32.59% (Government of Pakistan, 1961, Vol.1). The rate of increase of the landless poor was therefore far greater than that for other rural classes.

From their economic bases, the rich peasants slipped into the power vacuum left by the Hindu landlords. Their dominance in rural politics is evident from the following data. Out of 392 Union Councillors (Local Governmental Institution) elected in 1961, more than 60% owned more than five acres. Among them, 42 held 15.5 or more acres and only 2.3% held less than 2.5 acres. (Rashiduzzaman, 1968). However, the disequilibrium in land-human ratio, rudimentary technology and low level of overall capital accumulation put constraints on a rich peasant's aspiration of becoming a landlord.

One important aspect of rich peasants' domination and his relationship with the post-colonial state apparatus ought to be kept in mind. Since 1960 the government's main concern was to increase the marketed surplus. So, emphasis was placed on technology-oriented agricultural development, with government provision of new agricultural and physical inputs and credit.

The nature and the development of the Comilla Model cannot be comprehended without a proper understanding of this background. Chapter III will discuss the institutional development of the Comilla approach, again with

special reference to the historical growth of rural development strategies in this part of South Asia.

CHAPTER III

THE COMILLA MODEL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter includes discussion of the organizational development, assumptions, and organizational expansion of the Comilla Cooperative Model. But before that a historical description of rural development measures in Bengal is also endeavored. The Comilla Cooperative Model was not an isolated historical event. Rather it was a part of a gradually evolving historical process which had been initiated and supervised by the the administrative structures, both colonial and postcolonial.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT: COLONIAL MEASURES

Government concern over rural development in South Asia can be traced back to the late nineteenth century, when the colonial government adopted three important measures to analyze and solve rural problems.

Famine Commission

The government appointed several commissions, including a royal inquiry commission, to identify the causes of famine, which occurred at frequent intervals, devastated whole regions and generated enormous human misery. Instead of pointing out the consequences of colonial intrusion in the traditional economy, the inquiry commissions usually concluded that famine was a

natural Asian phenomenon, partly due to the climate and partly due to bad farming, which could not be prevented except in a few regions where irrigation canals could be built. In other regions, only its shock could be lessened by means of quick transportation of food supplies by railways and roads.

Subsequently, a famine code was prepared which described, in minute detail, when and how the dole should be distributed to save the disabled from starvation, how to organize public works at "test" (extremely low) wages for unemployed peasants, and how to advance loans to the landowners for the next cultivation. The famine code was loudly advertised as one of the imperial achievements, unprecedented in Indian or Asian history. It was claimed, on the basis of rather dubious statistics, that under British rule very few villagers died of starvation. More deaths, of course, were caused by malnutrition or disease (Khan, 1978, p.36).

Famines however, continued to occur with disturbing frequency, except in regions where the necessary investment was made for the control of floods and drought. In one of the very last years of the colonial rule (1943) the Bengal famine occurred, one of the greatest man-made famines in Indian History (Bhatia, 1963, p. 21).

Control of Credit Abuse

Landlords were not the only proteges who were abusing the powers acquired by them under colonial rule; merchants and money lenders were doing the same. Trade and usury hurt the peasant proprietors to such an extent that their desperation at last attracted the attention of district officers. They discovered that low prices and high interest charges were bankrupting the peasants at an alarming rate. Many of them were losing their lands. The colonial administration saw the potential for large scale rural unrest in this trend. Although laissez-faire was the predominant ideological overtone of colonial capitalism, attempts were made to reduce

usury and regulate money lenders. However, under the prevailing circumstances, the lenders still had wealth and prestige, while the borrowers were needy and helpless. Regulations were enacted, but rarely enforced.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, measures were adopted by some government officials to organize the peasantry into cooperative societies modeled after the German credit unions. It was hoped that in this way they would be able to protect themselves from the excesses of merchant money-lenders, just as the German farmers had done a generation earlier. During the abnormal agricultural boom of World War I, village cooperatives flourished briefly, but the following slump soon made them insolvent "banks of the bankrupts." The post World War I period found peasant indebtedness growing inexorably, not much affected by regulations of usury or by credit and marketing cooperatives (Khan, 1978, pp. 7-8).

Local Governments

Another safeguard against the dangers of rural disaffection was the Anglo-Saxon concept of local government. It was hoped that local councils would radiate feelings of participation, banish apathy, and encourage local initiative. Furthermore, beginning logically at the bottom, training in local self-government would gradually upgrade the Indians for national independence. But in practice, the concept of decentralization and autonomy could not be reconciled with the dominant colonial attitudes which were centralist, elitist, and paternalistic. Decade after decade, cooperatives or "panchayats" (local councils) remained not as functional parts of the steel frame but as its trim (Khan, 1978, pp. 8-9).

IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES AND COLONIAL RESPONSE

The nineteenth century colonial rural development measures were based on three axioms — the superiority of the British, the benevolence of colonial occupation, and the right of white men to be the guardians of the natives.

The new nationalist ideology in the twentieth century challenged every one of these axioms. There was no superiority; there was no benevolence; and there was no right of guardianship. On the contrary, there was the inalienable right of self determination. The nationalist challenge was reinforced by Gandhi, who provided a link between powerful sections of the domestic bourgeoisie and the peasantry through the doctrine of nonviolence, trusteeship, and the glorification of the Indian village community (Moore, 1966, p. 316). Right after World War I, a socialist ideology emerged in South Asia. The Communist Party of India was established in 1919 under the leadership of M. N. Roy, a Bengali Intellectual activist (Talukdar, 1982, p. 49). The appeal of nationalism and socialism was greatly enhanced by the rise of non-European Japan and the success of the Russian revolution (Talukdar, 1982 p. 73).

In order to respond to the new challenges — political, economic, and moral — the colonial administrators evolved a comprehensive ideology of rural reconstruction, which was persistently propagated in the turbulent third and fourth decades of our century. In South Asia, F. L. Brayne, a self-styled Socrates of the South Asian villages, was the most famous propounder of this philosophy.

Brayne (1940) admitted that village conditions were indeed miserable. He agreed with the nationalists about the facts of misery but not about their causes. According to Brayne, the deplorable rural conditions were not the consequence of the colonial system, as the nationalists or socialists suggested. These were rather due mainly to their own ignorance and bad habits, their folly and vices. Indeed, "they were their own enemies," he claimed. Brayne compiled a long list of their short-comings-lazy farming, burning precious cow dung, addiction to the hubble-hubble (The Hookah), poor hygiene, litigation, costly death and marriage feasts, female illiteracy, etc.

Brayne, having diagnosed the disease, prescribed the cure. Peasants could improve their lives by acquiring knowledge and reforming vicious habits, learning and practicing better methods of agriculture, health, education, and social conduct. Brayne assigned a new role to the government officer, viz to be the missionary of enlightenment and reform. Contrary to the popular stereotype of an arrogant and corrupt bully, the officer was to convert himself into a guide, philosopher, and friend of the villagers. He was also to inspire the loyal old collaborators, members of the gentry, to mend their ways and give a proper lead to the commoners (Brayne, 1946).

AMERICAN LEADERSHIP AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Direct colonialism came to an end in several Asian and African countries after World War II. The post-colonial period was characterized by new ideologies of rural development. The new ideologies, however, were related to the developments in international politics as the world powers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., competed with each other for political, economic and ideological superiority (McGrath, 1974, pp. 203-11). West Germany and Japan were rehabilitated by the United States so that their prosperity and progress might serve as bulwarks against revolutions. The Marshall Plan, for the revival of West Europe, was regarded as a shining success. It seemed obvious that a helping hand could be extended in the same manner to the poorer countries of the world and American aid could stabilize ex-colonial states as it had stabilized Western Europe and Japan. Hence, aid programs were started all around the world under Truman's "Point Four" program. Apart from military aid, material aid was given in the shape of loans, grants, capital, and consumer goods. Technical aid was provided in the form of experts, advisors, and foreign training. And ideological "aid" flowed in through the dissemination of orthodox economic and sociological wisdom. In

the 1950s rulers of many penurious states regarded America hopefully as a good fairy and foreign aid as a magic wand (Rogal, 1959, pp. 65-93).

Community Development Approach

Two major rural programs were sponsored by the United States during the 1950's, community development (CD) and agricultural extension (AE). The former was newly fashioned by American sociologists, while the latter was an old product of the American land-grant colleges. Both CD and AE were generously supported and carefully supervised by American advisors. CD promised political peace by including everyone in the harmonious community and putting an end to rural conflicts. It promised economic prosperity by inculcating the desire for development and by securing common participation. As an ideological weapon of the cold war, CD offered the prospect of consensus as an alternative to radicalism (Khan, 1978, pp. 16-17).

The Community Development Approach relied mainly on a government village-level worker (VLW) as the agent of change. Sending a missionary outsider was considered essential in every case. The VLW, like Brayne's guide, was advised to collaborate closely with the local gentry, the established or "natural" leaders. Ideally, the VLW came to help everybody not by fighting for the weak against the strong, but by uniting all of them into a fraternal community. The VLW, acting as a catalyst, would unite the villagers by discovering for them their common needs. He would lead them to a common endeavor. He would teach them to form councils and committees for the completion of projects. Much, of course, would be done by means of self-help, as Brayne had proposed before, but, now and then, the VLW would further encourage and stimulate the villagers by obtaining for them matching grants and technical assistance. The VLW would be a multi-purpose agent representing all "nation-building" departments. He would combine the functions of a missionary, organizer, technician, and patron. Community

development aspired to coordinate the activities of other departments, and follow an integrated approach (Khan, 1978, pp. 18-19).

Community Development in East Pakistan

Initially, the American community development approach dominated the scene, as far as rural development is concerned in East and West Pakistan. The first significant community development program in Pakistan was Village-Aid (V-AID). The program was set up in 1953. The V-AID workers were trained in especially created training institutes in both East and West Pakistan (Raper, 1970, p. 22).

V-Aid soon proved inadequate. By the mid-fifties, food shortages and the quite obvious stagnation of the agricultural sector became a continuous concern for Pakistan, as well as other developing countries. Backward rural areas, at a time when the countries were engaged in a program of industrialization, were indeed critically dangerous. In the first place, a lot more food was needed for the cities, and continued shortage and high food prices could threaten the whole governmental structure. And secondly, if more food had to be imported, then all the other programs of industrialization and import of capital goods would be upset (Talukdar, 1982, pp. 156-161).

One of the reasons the military junta gave to justify its overthrowing of the civilian government in 1958 was the large scale food shortage (Martin, 1975, p. 36). The community development approach became a scapegoat for this failure. The attack began in 1957-1958 and came from three quarters. First, the older bureaucratic departments censured the community development program since it appeared to be a threat to its stereotypical experience and unquestioned authority to deal with the developmental issue. Secondly, the economic planners were disillusioned. At first they had gone along, with some misgivings, but toward the end of the decade, they had the convictions that

the community development should be rectified. They maintained that the whole program had missed the point and had become a program of social welfare, not of increasing production. Finally, the most vocal and stinging attack came from the agricultural specialists. The "nation-building" departments said that they were being hamstrung, that they were being unable to work effectively on account of this community development approach and structure. Agricultural experts further maintained that the community development approach could not make any headway with the farmers, simply because of the poorly-trained, multi-purpose, village-level worker (Khan, 1969, pp. 7-8).

The disillusionment over the community development approach was widespread in many of the developing countries. By the end of the fifties, the great hopes and enthusiasm which were aroused by community development seemed to fade away and several countries dropped the name, while others changed the content and emphasis of the program. Now the emphasis was on institutional and legal bodies, on administrative reform, on local government bodies and on cooperatives. There was much greater emphasis on integration with the administrative structure, and there was more and more emphasis on agricultural productivity.

Rural Development Academy

In Pakistan, the government opted for reorganizing the community development approach by shifting emphasis. Stress was placed on the need for training of the higher level officials responsible for the policies and general administrative supervision of the program and of others associated with it. It was at this point in the evaluation of the V-AID program that the highest officials of the government of Pakistan began to formulate plans for meeting this deficiency and called for advice upon the United States advisors to the V-AID program and on the officials of the Ford Foundation (Raper, 1970, p. 22).

The sequence of steps which led to the establishment of the Academy for Rural Development began at a meeting of high officials of the Pakistan government in January, 1955. The working paper of the meeting stated:

"For some time the Village-Aid Administration has felt the necessity of establishing training Academies not only for the higher level administrative staff in project development areas but also for training and for reorienting the provincial extension staff of the nation-building departments as would be operating within the tahsils in which Village- Aid Development areas are located. . . . it is necessary to train fresh batches of Civil Service of Pakistan and Provincial Service officers for atleast a period of six months at these Academies and subsequently to get a selected few of them to assume charge of Project Development areas for a period of say one year (Pakistan Project Files, 1955, p.83).

The curriculum of the academies was to include provision of information about administration of the various levels in each of the provinces. Special attention was to be given to the effective use of technological information available to the tahsil and thana* level which would include training in such subjects as cooperatives, agricultural credit, financing, budgeting, social welfare, economics- with special emphasis on rural economics- role of cottage industries, home economics, and so on.

* An administrative unit in Bangladesh and the then East Pakistan. Roughly equivalent to the American County. Recently, the present Bangladesh government named the thana as sub-districts.

These basic ideas were accepted by the prime minister in October 1955, after consultation with the representative of the Ford Foundation in Pakistan on the possibility of external funding of some of the costs anticipated for the first few years. The government decided among other things to obtain the assistance of an American university to help with the further planning of the Academies and to provide continuing advisory assistance in the development of the Academy's programs. The services of Michigan State University were enlisted for this purpose, with the Ford Foundation financing (Raper, 1970), p.24-25).

In June 1956 a team of four faculty members, under the leadership of Professor Floyd W. Reeves, after intensive observations and consultations throughout Pakistan, prepared a draft "scheme" for submission to the government. The proposal provided for establishment of two Academies with substantially the same functions previously approved by the government. They were to be set up under a single board chaired by the prime minister and made up of ranking ministers and representatives from each of the two provinces — East and West Pakistan. The board was to be responsible for policy, with administration assigned to a director for each Academy, appointed by the board. Each Academy was to have a full-time staff of ten social scientists, two of whom would be specialists in research, and as many as six part-time subject-matter specialists.

The two directors and the initial staff members were to be highly qualified as to academic backgrounds and attitude. Worldwide recruitment and relatively high salaries were suggested to attract this type of Pakistani personnel. The training of the directors and staff members would be done over a period of a year, roughly nine months in an American University, preceded by six weeks of orientation in Pakistan and followed by six weeks of observation of rural development programs in selected Asian and European

countries.

The survey team proposed operational and capital budgets for the first four years (1957-1960) in the substantial amount of over 12 million taka.

This plan was presented to the government in August 1956. In June of the following year, memoranda of agreement were reached between the government, the Ford Foundation, and MSU for technical assistance to the Academies, including funding of more than one million dollars from the Foundation for both the Academies. On July 4, 1957, the government finally approved the "Scheme for Pakistan Academies for Rural Development — Peshawar and Comilla." The major differences between the approved plan and the MSU proposal was that the two Academies were set up under separate boards rather than a single national board under the prime minister. Between July and December, MSU appointed a campus coordinator of the project and a MSU resident representative in Pakistan; it also sent a second team of specialists, again headed by Reeves, to advise and consult with the government, officials of the Ford Foundation, and of the United States International Cooperation Administration, and to clarify numerous aspects of policy, organization, and administration of the Academies. The Greek firm of Doxiadis Associates was selected to design the Academy buildings. The architectural services were to be financed by the Ford Foundation and the construction, except for imported items, by the government. On December 19, 1957, two boards were established for the "Pakistan Academies for Rural Development East/West Pakistan" and their composition, powers, and related matters set forth (Raper, 1970, pp. 23-26).

THE COMILLA MODEL

From its original inception, the Academy was an institution for the training of government officials having present or potential responsibilities for development programs, and for the conduct of research on rural

development problems. It was claimed that something a good deal more than a traditional academic approach to training and research was contemplated, but the precise form which this new program would take was left to the imagination and efforts of those who would execute the program. At Comilla, the Academy from the very beginning conceived the idea of a pilot development program, with training, research, and demonstration integrated into the life of the rural community and the structure of the Pakistan bureaucratic service.

The key method for giving effect to the Academy's philosophy of development administration has been the use of a development laboratory. Three months after the Academy opened, the director, Akhter Hameed Khan, received permission from the V-AID administration to start demonstrating what a development laboratory might be like in an area designated by V-AID (80 square miles) as one of its "development areas." Four months later the chief secretary of East Pakistan designated the whole of the Comilla thana (107 square miles) as a development laboratory, and delegated to the director considerable latitude to conduct programs and administrative experiments in this already established unit of government (Raper, 1970, p. 37).

Role of Akhter Hameed Khan

Almost everyone who has been exposed to the program would agree that without Akhter Hameed Khan there would be no Comilla project in its present form. Being the central personality involved with the project, he not only contrived and elaborated the guidelines and policies of the Comilla project, but also devoted all his time and energy to engineer those guidelines and policies.

Khan obtained his Bachelors degree from Meerut College, India in history, philosophy and English literature in 1932. He did his masters from Agra

University on English Literature in 1934. Like some other bright students of his generation, he competed successfully for Indian Civil Service of 1936. He attended Cambridge University, Magdalene College, as part of Indian Civil Service training, specializing in History and English literature.

His connection with Comilla district began in 1938, when he was appointed as an Assistant magistrate there. In 1944, he resigned from the Indian Civil Service. Khan's interest in cooperative activity can be traced back to that time. After resigning from the Civil Service, he moved with his family to Aliqarh, United Provinces. There he worked as a locksmith apprentice for about two years to learn how the working men live. During this time he organized a cooperative workshop to manufacture locks and buckles.

Just prior to the partition he organized Khaksar, a political social reformist movement and coedited the weekly Urdu and English newspapers the organization. After that he started his career as an educationist and came back to Comilla in 1950 as the principal of Comilla Victoria College. His responsibility in the mainstream rural development activity began in 1954 when he served as the V-AID Administrator in East Pakistan. He was appointed as the first Director of East Pakistan Academy for Village Development in mid-1958. With a brief interruption, he performed this responsibility till 1968. He received Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from Michigan State University in June 1964 (Raper, 1970, p. 293).

Hypotheses

Although no precise formula was available to the Academy at the beginning of the program, several "working hypotheses" had been formulated as to how the peasants could be helped to increase their production, and thus secure a solid economic base for improvement of living standards. The hypotheses were:

1. A viable private economic organization was needed which could serve as a basis for collaborative effort, and through which mechanization and other improve methods could be introduced. The central need, initially, was for the creation of capital through savings.
2. The village would be recognized as the basic unit, with those families whose heads decided to do so becoming members of a local voluntary group.
3. Some linkage would be needed between these voluntary groups in the village and the Academy. Since it would be impossible to work directly with individual members of these groups, some form of representation would be needed. The method suggested was for each village group to select its representative, called the "organizer," who would serve as fiscal agent and learner-trainee. Soon thereafter one or two alert farmers and early adopters would be selected as "modern farmers."
4. A training method would follow logically from the above in which the organizers and model farmers would come to the Academy for weekly training sessions, followed by village meetings where the ideas learned would constitute the "lessons" for the villagers.
5. The early technical "inputs" would be furnished by the Colombo Plan, which would use the Academy's own farm and some land in nearby villages demonstration plots, and who would teach at the weekly meetings and work with the model farmers.
6. In as much as only the simplest techniques such as line savings and improved fertilization could be adopted at first by individual villagers (considering the size of land holdings and other available resources) early emphasis would be given to these

techniques and extended soon thereafter to joint planning, joint purchasing, credit and joint use of machinery (Raper, 1970 p. 46-47).

Putting the six hypotheses together it seemed best to develop the framework of cooperative principles which were known to the director, faculty, and advisors. The broad principles of the cooperative movement--savings, educational meetings, joint planning, and action--were adopted even though the past record of local cooperatives in the area was essentially a record of dismal failure.

Cooperatives

In March 1960 the Academy appointed a special officer for cooperatives. He had had more than a score of years of experience in organizing cooperatives and was willing to make changes. His activities included visiting the villages, joining the Friday Prayer in the Mosque and initiating discussions about the peasants' everyday problems. Initially the discussions were one way, since the villagers did not think they had much to say. But finally the villagers began to take interest when he and the director would meet with them constantly to talk about the need for organization, capital formation, credit, simple improvements in their agricultural practices, and especially about setting up low-lift pumps in the dry season, or opening clogged drainage canals to lessen the damage from the monsoon flood. But for the academy to help them, the Academy people explained, the villagers would need to do certain things. It was necessary to form a viable cooperative group, called a society. They should choose a chairman among the more elderly and respected members of the group; his position would be largely honorary, and would give moral support to the organizer, a younger, active man who would be asked to take part in pioneering activities.

Soon after mid-1960 the Academy standardized the conditions a local society would need to meet to be a part of the Academy's new cooperative program. In addition to choosing a chairman, the group should:

1. organize itself and later become a registered cooperative society;
2. hold weekly meetings with compulsory attendance of all members;
3. select a trusted man from the group and send him to the Academy once a week for training (he should become the teacher and the organizer of the group);
4. keep proper and complete records;
5. do joint production planning;
6. use supervised production credit;
7. adopt improved agricultural practices and skills;
8. make regular cash and in-kind savings deposits;
9. join the central cooperative federation;
10. hold regular member education discussions (Fairchild & Hussain, 1962, pp. 14-15).

The central objective of the cooperatives was expressed by Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan, as follows:

"Briefly the chief objective of this experiment would be to promote the formation of small cooperative groups of farmers who would adopt improved methods, implements, and machines. A small group cooperative would aim to become self-sustaining (Khan, 1961, p. 64).

Early in 1960 village-based cooperative societies were organized at South Rampur and Monsasan, two villages in Comilla thana and ten days later at Tongirpar, another village in the same administrative unit. Ten cooperatives were organized by the end of May 1960--seven village-based agricultural societies, a vegetable growers' society, a womens' cooperative, and a weavers cooperative (Raper, 1970, pp. 49-50).

Initially, the membership of the agricultural cooperatives were made up almost wholly of the smaller and middle-sized farmers. The larger farmers leased out their lands and often were moneylenders and so had little or no interest in becoming members of the local cooperative society (Raoer, 1970, p.50). It is mentionworthy that Dr. Khan and his associates were theoretically committed to the necessity of the maximum participation of the small and the middle peasants, instead of the big landowners in the cooperatives (Anwar, 1976, p.13). Initially, by virtue of their personal efforts, they were able to maintain the rural poor orientation of the project. As Blair (1978, p.72) described, in the early years administration of the credit programs in Kotwali thana were rigorously supervised from the headquarters at Abhay Ashram. Cooperative members had to contribute savings every week, submit detailed production plans in order to get loans, and meet repayment schedules. Inspector from higher levels regularly scrutinized the accounts maintained by the village cooperatives. Malfeasance was difficult, if not impossible. Yet at the same time, the operation was sufficiently small that the requirements of different groups and the needs of individual cooperatives could be taken into account. In other words, local men could be charged with administration as managers and inspectors, yet could be kept honest through vigorous supervision from above. All these factors naturally helped minimize bureaucratic risk.

Blair further showed that as the program expanded, however, things changed. This expansion came in three simultaneous directions. First the loan issue in Kotwali thana quintupled over a two year period from the 1965-66 crop year to the 1967-68 year. Second, production was expanding rapidly with the introduction of the new high-yielding varieties and the technology to go along with them. Third, the program itself expanded into new thanas, with

7 thanas beyond the original one taken up in 1965-66 and some 13 more in 1968-69. Since all these developments took an immense amount of time and energy, the care devoted to any one aspect of the operation necessarily diminished; the criteria for loans became less stringent; farmers were allowed to take out new loans without repaying old ones; administrative officers were given quotas for loan issue to be disbursed; cooperative managers were promoted to inspectors inspite of poor repayment records. The "enterprising" ones found that they were in a position to start new cooperatives with bogus membership so that a few men could get the loan money, and large subsidies began to flow into the area in form of irrigation tubewells and fertilizers for the new "miracle rice" technology. Officials found themselves preoccupied with a system that grew from 440 cooperatives and 14,000 members in 1965-66 to 1500 coops and 54,000 members just three years later. It was little wonder that the control of the coops at village level passed into the hands of local elites.

By the early seventees, most of the cooperative societies were dominated by the better off farmers, who, by dint of their control over the rural socio-politico-economic-cultural structures, directed the facilities offered by the cooperatives to themselves.

The Comilla model experienced further expansion after Bangladesh came into existence. In 1976, under the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), the Comilla model was extended to other districts and by 1977-78 there were 25,777 primary cooperatives in 250 thanas (Johnson, 1982, p.96).

COOPERATIVES IN ACTION: MEMBERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

As I already mentioned, one of the oft-heralded objectives of the Comilla Model was to help the low income peasant families, by helping them to use the improved technical facilities collectively. But the nature of the problem of technological dissemination was much more complex than it was assumed by the architects of the Comilla Model. There was a considerable amount of oversimplification in the ideas of Dr. A.H. Khan and the other coplanners when they thought that the benefits of the cooperative facilities can be reached by the bottom layer of the society without disturbing the existing stratification edifice. The report of the ministry of foreign affairs of the Netherlands correctly assessed the problem, when it stated later that in most cases the rural poor have not been reached by existing development services. The report further states that given the present social structure in rural Bangladesh it is somewhat naive to assume that scarce inputs will reach the small and marginal agricultural families, if no strong safeguards are being built in this delivery. The report, therefore, suggests an institutional framework for effectively reaching the target group (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands, 1978, pp. 16-17).

Building up a new "institutional framework" requires supplantation of the existing structural relationships, which constitute the foundation of the social system in rural Bangladesh. Although Dr. Khan seemed to be aware of the existence of elaborate stratification within the peasant society, and some studies were conducted by the Academy researchers on the class structure of the concerned villages, (e.g., Majumdar, 1976), I never found a systematic effort to address the complexity of the rural class problem in the Academy's program. As I will show later, instead of providing an alternative organizational structure to mobilize the rural poor in the development projects, the Comilla cooperative societies were

built on "natural social groupings" in the villages. The Comilla approach focuses on social groupings in the project area, but aims at bringing into being new social roles and new leadership groups consonant with a "modernization" in agriculture as well as other spheres of rural life.

There are obvious problems related to this approach. Efforts to reorient the old order to the new tasks and roles required by rural development and their first resistance in the structure of the old order itself. Opposition to the cooperative experiment, grafted as it has been into the traditional community structure, came precisely from those who perceived they might lose in the new change (traditional leaders who gained most from the indigenous system of rural credit). But once early opposition was overcome in many cooperative societies and the advantages of cooperation tied to access to irrigation facilities and new seed varieties become widely perceived, the benefits of development were also coopted by the traditionally dominant elements in the local villages (Bertocci, 1976, p.167). Empirical evidence on the membership and leadership pattern of the cooperative societies and its consequences will bear out my statement.

LANDHOLDINGS AND COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

Landless laborers and near landless peasants are either underrepresented or not represented at all in the cooperative societies. Akhter (1969) found that, in Comilla thana, the landless and near landless (those with less than one acre) made up over 45 percent of the total population, yet only 14 percent of the cooperative membership (Table 1). Majumdar (1976, p.190) in his study of the landholding pattern of cooperative members in a Comilla village found that landless peasants are not at all represented in the cooperative societies. The near landless category represents only 11.5 percent of the membership (see Table 2). The pattern of landholding of the members of 10 cooperatives in Narshigdi thana, situated in thirty miles from the Dhaka city, was

TABLE 1. Distribution of Total Population and Cooperative Membership by Farm Size in Comilla Thana, 1969

Farm Size In Acres	% of Total Village Population	% of Cooperative Members	% of Rural Population Who Are Cooperative Members
NIL	15.3	2	5
.01-1	30.5	12	15
1.01-2	24.2	43	68
2.01-3	14.4	18	47
3.01-5	10.6	16	56
Over 5	5.0	8	60

Source: Akhter, Farkunda, 1969, p.34.

TABLE 2. The Landholding Pattern of Co-operative Members in Village Mohajanpur, Comilla, 1974

Landholding Category	Number of Members	Percentage
Landless	NIL	—
Below 1 acre	4	11.50%
1-2 acres	20	57.40%
2-5 acres	6	17%
Above 5 acres	5	14%
TOTAL	35	100%

Sources: Majumdar, Mannan, A., 1978, p. 190.

studied by Rob (Rob,1982,p. 56). Rob found that no landless peasants were included as members of these 10 cooperatives and only 9.87% of the below 1 acre category are represented.

There are several reasons that may explain why the landless and near landless families are unrepresented or underrepresented in the cooperatives. First, the cooperative societies require that members make regular cash and in-kind savings deposits, which many families with low incomes would find difficult to do. Second, the loan policy of the cooperative generally excludes persons with less than one acre from taking its loans, and thus, the small landholders and low income families could not easily benefit from cooperative membership.

However, if one only takes the membership pattern according to landholding size in consideration, he might be tempted to conclude that the 1-2 acres peasant category is the dominant group in the cooperatives. Akhtar found that in Comilla thana, the largest single category of cooperative members (43 percent) were farmers with landholding from one to two acres. Of farmers with this size of landholding, 68 percent belonged to cooperatives. In Majumdar's study, 57.5 percent of the cooperative members own between one to two acres. According to Rob, 57.36 percent of the cooperative members belong to the one to two acre category. However, a further look at the problem will show that although this category constitutes the quantitative majority, it does not possess the dominant position in the cooperative societies.

COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP

The oft-mentioned thesis that a group of new non-traditional leaders are leading the cooperative societies mostly advocated by the Academy sponsored researchers, (e.g., Alam,1976) is based upon two assumptions: a) lineage is the predominant phenomenon in rural stratification in Bangladesh; and b) lineage is a rigid, inflexible conceptual category.

It is often suggested that since a significant section of the cooperative leadership comes from non-traditional* lineage background, cooperative societies are characterized by a new, "modern" leadership pattern. However, the aforementioned fundamental assumptions of this line of thinking do not reflect the actual situation in rural Bangladesh.

First, class position, not lineage status is more important in the peasant society of rural Bangladesh. Maloney (1974, p. 356) observes that the real basis of status differentiation in Bengali villages is landowning. According to Zaidi's (1970) survey in a Comilla Village, Muslims agreed that ranking of families is on the basis of land and wealth.

Second, it is likely that there will be a continually changing balance of strength between lineages. In this respect Bertocci (1970) has distinguished in his thesis between sardari lineages (having traditional high status) and non-sardari lineages which have acquired some economic strength and have thereby become politically important and in some cases dominant through money-lending and other forms of patronage. From this he infers a great deal of fluidity to the system in which different lineages rise to power as rich peasants, and where they are not from sardari lineages then acquiring status by marrying into sardari lineages. He refers to this process as a 'cyclical kulakism'. So, even where the cooperative leadership did not come from the traditional families, they belong to the "rich peasant" category and claim a traditional lineage title by dint of their control over wealth. This is largely possible because of the flexible lineage pattern in rural East Bengal. Blair (1979) notes that there is little conflict between the traditional and cooperative leadership in terms of their interest in maintaining domination

*Lineages which have been holding prestigious titles for a relatively shorter period of time.

over the rural areas. In the study of 10 cooperatives in Tangail district it has been conclusively found that although in the case of only one cooperative had the traditional village leader been the manager, there had hardly been any conflict between the traditional leaders of the village and the leaders of the cooperatives (Chowdhury & Haque, 1978).

Another study of 25 village cooperatives in Comilla found that leadership positions in these cooperatives have gone to the kinsmen and relatives of the traditional leaders and, therefore, there was no visible conflict between traditional and cooperative leaders (Amhed, 1972). In another case study Rahim (1965-66) found that the most influential person in the village was also the manager of the cooperatives and the cooperative leadership was in fact a weapon in village politics to further the interest and position of the rich peasants.

Reza (1982) found in his village studies that although all the decisions regarding cooperative farming are ideally supposed to be taken in an open meeting of the members, in actual practice the situation is altogether different. More often than not, it has been found that important decisions are taken by the president and the secretary himself, the general members remaining as mute spectators of the whole scene. The decision taken in the name of the members are communicated to them at a later date. The cooperative leaders stay in power year after year, despite the minimum requirement for the once-a-year election (Chowdhury, 1983, p. 175).

CONSEQUENCES OF THE RICH PEASANT'S DOMINATION

Johnson (1982, p. 92) observes that the cooperatives, as they work today, are institutions for competition for scarce resources and for enrichment of the few and powerful instead of for the protection of the poor. The survey of the cooperatives in Tangail district (Chowdhury & Haque, 1978) shows that the money received by these cooperative societies is distributed among 32.5

percent of the cooperative members. The major share of this money went to the chairman, manager, and model farmers who belonged to the "large" landowning category. Islam (1978) observes that the rich farmers proved powerful competitors in pre-empting resources of the cooperatives for their own use. They tend to borrow the largest amounts; they are also the most frequent defaulters and contributed the smallest percentage of savings mobilized by the cooperatives. It is mentionworthy that the middle peasants are the major contributors to the cooperative funds. Obaidullah (1971-2) found that between 1965-6 and 1973-4 the percentage of members who obtained access to credit declined from a high as 85% in 1965-6 to 12% in 1973-4. There was a decline not only in the percentage of the members of the cooperatives who secured loans but also in the absolute number of borrowers. At the same time there was an increase in the average size of loans over the years. Another study in the Comilla district found that 54% of the overdue loans were for less than Taka 500 comprising 15% of the total overdue loans, whereas 6% of the overdue loans were for Taka 2500 and more, amounting in total to 78% of the aggregate overdue loans. Moreover, the amount of the per capita overdue loans for the members of the managing committee was more than sixteen times greater than that for the ordinary members (Blaie, 1978).

That the "rich farmers" enjoyed a large share of the benefits of modern inputs which were also subsidized was also evidence from whatever data were available on the distribution of inputs by farm size. Wood's (1976) poor peasant respondents in a Comilla village referred to their inability to obtain adequate supplies of fertilizer, alleging at the same time the available supplies had been monopolized by the rich and powerful families in the village. Muqtada's (1975) study shows that the per acre use of fertilizer in the cultivation of the local variety of Boro (winter rice) was 29 pounds

for holdings below 2.5 acres; 38 pounds for holdings between 4 and 6 acres, and 45.5 pounds for holdings above 10 acres. In the case of the high-yielding varieties of rice, the average amount of fertilizer used per acre by all the sizes of holdings was generally higher, but again it was higher for the bigger farms, i.e., 56 pounds for farm sizes below 2.5 acres, as against 72 pounds for 4-6 acres.

Similarly, domination of the rich peasants is also evident in water resource distribution. It is the large and rich farmers under the irrigation scheme who benefit most, especially the few rich farmers who can collect the payment for irrigation water (Jansen, 1979, p. 78). The average area irrigated is positively correlated with the size of holdings (Alam, 1975, p. 17). The controller of the water pump, who is a rich farmer, in most cases, only gives water to farmers who pay well and to farmers who are "clients" (Jansen, 1979, p. 76). A number of researchers (e.g., Harrison, 1981) have suggested that handpump, instead of deep tubewell should be used in the "poverty stricken" agricultural economy of Bangladesh, because of its low cost, handiness, and labor intensiveness. But again, the social and distributional effect of the handpump depends very much on who gets access to the handpump. Jansen (1979) suggests that while deep tubewells often function as a means for strengthening the patron-client relationship type of social organization in the rural areas, the handpumps can function as a means to break up this pattern. But he notes that where the handpump has been introduced, rich farmers have threatened poor farmers and refused them any loans if they start to use handpumps for irrigation.

Blair (1974, pp. 60-61) following the research report of the Comilla Academy, points out that a very powerful manager of the cooperative society can steal money and juggle the accounts. Not being responsible to any organized hierarchy, he can afford to show incompetence in organizing joint projects. By directing credit, fertilizer, water resources, and fund money

TABLE 3. Percent Increase in Yield Per Acre, by Size of Holding, Comilla, 1972

Size of Farm	Percentage Increase in Yield Per Acre
Below 1 acres	78%
1 to 3.5 acres	125%
Over 3.5 acres	124%
Average	98%
Difference between smallest and largest farmers	-46%

Source: Rahim, S.A., 1972, p.36.

to themselves, the large farmers secure a larger percentage increase in yield per acre from high-yielding varieties than the smaller farmers as shown in Table 3. Operation of "Public Works Program", an important project of the Comilla Model has also been dominated by the locally rich acting as brokers and contractors with government and agencies seizing the opportunities for an extension of patronage and a new form of economic diversification (Wood, 1980, p. 11).

Thus, the cooperative societies reflect the differentiation pattern of the peasant society in rural Bangladesh. The myth of 'grass roots development' proven a failure to develop the lives of those who live lives of continual poverty, starvation, and helplessness.

VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL MOBILIZATION

From the perspective of the present work, the rural cooperatives are related to social, economic, political and cultural processes far more profound than the developments in the formal cooperative structures. Owing to this dependence, the cooperatives constantly interact with the broader social setting. Thus, the processes predominant in the objective conditions which govern society as a whole have to be explicated to answer the central questions of the present thesis—(i) how the rich peasants captured and maintain the leadership of the cooperatives and (ii) what is the potential for an organized protest from the rural poor against the rich peasant's domination over the rural cooperatives in particular, and the institutionalized structural relationships in general. These two questions are definitely interrelated and overlapping, and to isolate one from the other for analytical purpose is artificial. The continual dominance of the rich peasant and the erosion of the positions of the poor peasants both may provide the latter a grievance, but they also make horizontal mobilization in assertion of that grievance virtually impossible. The present chapter intends to examine six general processes which constitute the existing structural relationships in rural Bangladesh. The processes are networks, territorial organization, factionalism and clientelism, ideological domination, the role of the state, and the nature of the political parties.

KINSHIP NETWORKS

The study of kinship networks is very important for it forms the core of rural power structure in rural Bangladesh. Here in this sub-chapter I shall primarily deal with the role of kin-infrastructure in the area under question. In doing so, I shall discuss here the various institutions such as khana (household), paribar (family), bari (homestead), gushthi (lineage), and atmiya-svajan (kinsmen). The main basis of these institutions' formation is various sorts of kin-ties.

Khana or household is the smallest unit of social organization which is the basic unit of kinship group in rural Bangladesh. It is the primary unit of production and consumption. The members of a household take food from the same hearth, so, it is also called "chula", which means hearth group, especially in the Dhaka-Comilla belt. A family or paribar may consist of one or more households.

Paribar (Family)

Paribar (Family) is the social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. The families in rural Bangladesh may be divided in three categories, namely (a) joint, (b) extended, and (c) nuclear.

In joint families, the kin of three or more generations live under one roof and share all land and property owned. Such a family normally consists of brothers, their parents, sisters, wives and children. All the males here are co-owners of the land and property. They cook at a common hearth, store grain in a common granary and so on. The head of the joint family is the eldest male member or some other responsible male member of the family.

The extended family is a group of nuclear families and related individuals from several generations who reside together in the same household, but their civias (hearth) are separate. In this type of family, the constituting household units do not own land and property commonly. Major decisions in an extended family are, however, taken through consultation among the senior members of the household units.

A nuclear family consists of a husband and a wife with or without children. It may also be a family of a widowed mother living together with her unmarried sons and the like. In some cases, one or more individuals may reside with them. They usually live in one house and always have a common hearth.

Rob found that 63 percent of total families are nuclear, 22.1 percent are joint and the rest are extended in Dhaka district (Rob, 1982, p. 39). Bertocci shows that 51.9 percent of the total families in Comilla villages (studied by him) are nuclear (Bertocci, 1972, p. 33) and Elickson found 58 percent of the families are nuclear (Elickson, 1972, p. 33).

Bari (Homestead)

The next wider group is bari (homestead). A bari normally consists of several households, which usually share the same courtyard of the bari. There are kin relationships among almost all the members of the khans in a bari. In a recent study in the Matlab Thana of Comilla district, Aziz shows that in 75.40 percent baris (in his sample village) heads of households were patrilineally related; in 18.03 percent, at least one head of the household was officially related to the rest; and in 6.55 percent, at least one head of household was unrelated to the rest (Aziz, 1979, p. 24). Aziz found cooperation among the bari members and described the bari as a cohesive social unit. According to Wood (1976), most baris had an acknowledged head for Kotwali khana in Comilla district. Wood, of course, admits that small baris are often indistinguishable from larger neighbors and so their heads are not generally recognized as bari leaders in the village. It is worth mentioning that the most wealthy and prestigious families enjoy the dominant position in a given bari (Rob, 1982, p. 75).

Gushthi (lineage)

A group of baris may again comprise a gushthi (lineage). In such a case, all these gushthis are agnatically related with the exception of in-marrying wives and out-marrying daughters. A gushthi, therefore, consists of all the male patrilineal descendents of a male ancestor. Common ancestry provides a sense of belonging that binds together the members of a gushthi.

Gushthi is considered as a significant source of local prestige and high standing in rural society. This prestige is often reflected in the titles attached to a given gushthi. Thus, a gushthi often entitled "Chowdhury" indicate its past or present association with wealth in land, since historically the Chowduries were officials in the Mughal revenue system and often gained land, as well as their title, by participation in it. Such are also the cases with the Majumdars (another land-revenue gushthi) and Khandakar (a gushthi of priests who were important in the spread of Islam in Bengal). Bertocci (1974, p.106), in his sample villages, found that there were some dozen titles which denoted prestige of wealth, religion, or occupation. Nearly 75% of the instances in which they occur were in association with the gushthi and baris of peasants at the middle or well-to-do standard of land ownership we have indicated. Only 25% of their occurrence was associated with the gushthi and baris of poor or landless peasants. The distribution of prestigious titles tends, then, to correlate with the distribution of wealth.

But, for the sake of avoiding analytical errors, one has to keep in mind that these gushthi differences are by no means hardened into caste-like lines. Rather, it is the class, which dictates the term in rural Bangladesh. Writers on the Muslims of South Asia often quote the old Muslim proverb "Last year I was a Jolaha (a weaver of low status), this year I am a Shaikh, and if the crops are good next year I shall be a Sayyid" (Ibid). So gushthi mobility in the Bengali villages is basically a function of wealth. Bertocci found that if one discussed this subject with his sample villagers they would say that "if one's economic situation is good, his lineage's status is also good." Bertocci mentioned that there was truth in the claim, for it was possible for a poor but respected family to marry into one of more fortunate economic circumstances. It also often happens that a family of middle-level economic position may become well-to-do and begin to call itself by a title such as

Table 4. The Marriage Pattern in Five Villages in Dhaka District, 1981

Landholding category	Percentage of Marital Relationship Within Ten Miles of The Village	Percentage of Marital Relationship From Ten to Fifty Miles of the Village	Percentage of Marital Relationship Beyond Fifty Miles of the Village
Landless	73.6	15.3	12.1
Below One acre	71.5	17.2	11.3
1-2 acres	53.0	24.8	22.2
2-5 acres	29.3	32.3	38.4
Above 5 acres	17.9	23.7	58.4

Source: Rob, 1982, p. 52.

Majumdar or Chowdhury.

Gushthi plays an important political role by providing structural support for rich peasants' political dominance and attaching social prestige to the political leadership. It is noteworthy that the dominant (not necessarily traditional) gushthis possess the dominant positions in the traditional social organizational as well as the "modern" state sponsored institutions.

Atmiya-svajan (Kinsmen)

In rural Bangladesh, if an individual or a group of individuals is related to another individual or individuals either by blood or by marriage, these individuals are known as atmiya-svajan or kinsmen. A common ancestor is not necessary to become an atmiya. Atmiya-svajan is a very wide term which may include several gushthis and may extend over a wide geographical area.

The rich peasant's broad extension of kinship networks helps him to strengthen his political power. Marriage is so far the most effective way for extending kinship network in rural Bangladesh. It is evident from a number of studies (Reza, 1983, Rob, 1982, Hassan, 1982) that the higher lineages who were also richer peasants are able to sustain kinship links at a greater distance than the poorer families of their village, although, of course, local strategic marriages would also be made for alliance purposes. The importance of such extended kinship links for class consciousness and solidarity is self-evident. Table 4 demonstrates the marriage pattern in relation to landholding category in 5 villages in Dhaka district.

TERRITORIAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The rich peasant's control over the rural society is also possible through his control over the territorial social organizations. It is one of the most effective ways through which the rich peasant exercises his clout and authority

over the social, political, economic and cultural structure. The most important levels of these traditional organizations, each with a territorial dimension are *reyai*(homestead cluster) and *samaj*(society or association).

Reyai (Homestead Cluster)

The homestead in rural Bangladesh are often bunched in clusters, each of which is distinct from the others. It seems reasonable to suppose that over time, as settlement of a given area proceeded, the nearness of homesteads in clusters facilitated contact and interaction among their respective members to a greater extent than with others, at least on a day to day basis. Over time, many collective activities, both formal and informal, appear to have emerged which gave a sense of social solidarity to the inhabitants of one homestead cluster as opposed to others.

Within each homestead cluster, the families which are usually greater in wealth and population are looked to by the others for leadership in collective affairs and matters of common concern. In these families, certain men in particular assert leadership, especially in the settling of disputes. These leaders are called *Sardar* (leader) or *Matabbar* (chief, head, first man). Thus, growing out of the pattern of settlement, the homestead cluster emerges as a social grouping, in which the members of the group acknowledge the formal leadership of one or more *sardari* families. The group has a special name, *reyai*, derived probably from Arabic, *raiyah*, meaning "follower" or "citizen" (Bertocci, 1974, p. 91).

Samaj (Society or Association)

Samaj is a group of people living together which has a territorial boundary and which has a common-socio-political identity. Etymologically, *samaj* is rooted in the notion of "going together", although in its modern usage, it is rightly translated as "society" in general, or in more limited context "association". Bertocci(1979) found *samaj*'s in two villages of Comilla district to be composed of a number of a territorially contiguous *reyais*.

While the samaj continues to regulate intracaste marriages and delimit marriage circles for rural Bangali Hindus today, nearly everywhere for Bengali Muslims, the samaj form is both a symbolic and an organizational referent for the political and religious community.

Normally, a samaj grouping doesn't extend over a larger territory than a village. On the other hand, a village may contain several samaj groupings, with distinct statuses and life styles, in its territory. A samaj may consist of one or more gushthis.

Each samaj has its informal council of elders who influence its members. The council of members is usually composed of the leaders of the wealthiest baris and reya's, under whom a samaj is united in loyalty and under whose sponsorship, various religious and political activities take place.

The samaj pattern is taken as a significant frame of reference for social activities. Within the samaj, the members try to settle their own internal conflicts and disputes. Social control of individuals who are involved in activities against the social and religious tradition of the society is an important function of the samaj. Moreover, a samaj performs a variety of functions such as the approval of marriage negotiations, conducting the marriage ceremony including the invitations and cooking arrangement, serving food to the guests, etc. and organizing some other social and religious festivals.

However, the understanding of these kin and extra-kin organizations would be far from complete without a discussion of the process of factionalism.

FACTIONALISM AND CLIENTALISM

Factionalism

Ralph Nicholas' work in West Bengal has been pioneering in the analysis

of rural power structure in terms of factions. In his paper on the role of social science research in Bangladesh, he concludes:

"Villages, which appear to be the most "natural" of human communities and the most obvious basis for cooperative development organization, frequently prove to be cockpits of bitter struggle, factionalism and the very opposite of cooperation; no one has an effective remedy, but it is clear that rural development is severely hampered by the prevalence of such conflict. Social scientific research cannot solve any of these problems, but by identifying them and dispelling some of the general ignorance that prevails about them, it may provide policy makers with an initial basis for action" (Nicholas, 1963, p.26).

The term 'faction' is used to describe a pervasive form of peasant political interaction, especially in South Asia (For details, see Nicholas, Ranton, 1965, Swartz, 1966). The central point about this mode of politics is that factional alignments cut across class alignments. They thus form a vertical mobilization pattern, "organized and integrated by rank, mutual dependence, and the legitimacy of traditional authority" (Rudolph & Rudolph, 1967, p.24). In almost all the cases, faction leadership is provided by Sardars and Matabbars, the community leaders already referred to (Schandel, 1974, p.65).

Factional conflicts can emerge for a variety of reasons. There can be conflicts over land, wealth, and other forms of property. It has been observed that factions are also formed on the basis of unequal distribution of agricultural credits and inputs, relief goods etc. Factional conflicts also begin over the nomination, selection, or election of a person or persons in the local bodies like Union Parishad and local institutions like cooperatives. Conflict for the nomination for the most temporary organization, like a relief committee or a village committee, also sometimes strengthen factional feelings.

An important aspect of factional conflict is that rival factions are, in general, structurally similar, namely that they represent similar configurations of social groups, although that is by no means always the case. Where that is so, the factional model describes a segmental rather than class conflict. Such conflicts, therefore, do not have an ideological expression, because rival factions or faction leaders fight for control over resources, power and status within the existing framework of society.

Patron-Client Relationship

Patronage is a very important element which forms the foundation of factions in rural Bangladesh. The relationship between the leader and the followers of a faction can be termed as patron-client relationship. This relationship is based on reciprocity, a mechanism often alleged, to be for mutual benefit. An apt description of this is:

"A relationship involving an interchange of non-comparable goods and services between actors of unequal socio-economic rank"
(Powell, 1970, p. 412).

Patrons, the faction leaders manipulate things in favor of the clients, the supporters. The clients lend their support to the patrons in return. Whether it is in the distribution of agricultural credit or input, or in any other material resource, a patron distributes favors to the people who are likely to surrender their allegiance to him. In this system, the under-privileged learn that the only way to enjoy protection and other resources monopolized by the powerful is to return loyalty in place of benefits received. On the other hand, for the powerful, giving means a rise in the hierarchy of social authority. Where the market has not yet fully developed, and the exercise of state power is intermittent or in certain occasion the state action is marked by impotence, generosity is a rational form of investment.

Bailey (1969, p. 49) distinguishes between "core" and "following" of a faction. The 'core' represents an inner circle of allies with multiple relationships to the leader, usually involving close kinship links. On the other hand, the "following" represents the non-kin member of a faction. Only the core represents a permanent, corporate group, while the rest of the faction is essentially impermanent.

Factionalism facilitates horizontal mobilization at the top; at the bottom, factionalism severely inhibits it.

Mobilization Pattern

Bertocci (1970, p. 101) observes factionalism results in solidifying of some groups, and the splitting up and rearranging of the others. Seldom, if ever, are the landless and poor peasantry able to exploit factional rivalries among the surplus farmers to their advantage. The rich peasants have a vested interest in maintaining the present structure of domination. Although they are divided in factions by virtue of their control over the structures of rural politics, wealth and status they can effectively maintain that control. Thus their dominant class position counterbalances their internal strife. The rural poor lack such counterbalancing factors. Moreover, since the rural poor has an interest in transforming the present stratification arrangement, they need much more organizational strength than the dominants.

It is interesting to note that if there is any possibility of class mobilization among the lower strata, the faction leaders act collectively, although for the time being, to prevent that. In 1981, when I was working as a paid social worker in the Char (islet) areas of Noakhali district, I discerned this trend in the local villages. After the seasonal flood, a large amount of alluvial lands emerged from the river. These highly fertile lands were a significant source of rural conflict. Like many rural hinterlands, this area's incorporation in the state administrative and judicial structures was

far from complete and there is no consistent rule to determine the ownership of these lands. The local influential factions compete for them. Eventually, the ownership of the lands is legitimized by the muscles of the respective factions. In 1981, the local peasant association, backed by a leftist political party, attempted to mobilize the poor peasants and landless laborers to claim ownership of these lands. The community leaders, despite their factional conflicts, stood up against this attempt as a collective entity. When the peasant association submitted a memorandum to the district administration urging it to take necessary measures to distribute these lands among the poor peasants and landless laborers, the local factional leaders exercised their clout to have the bureaucracy turn a deaf ear to the rural poor's demand.

So we can safely state that the prevalence of factional politics in the villages, characterized by vertical cleavages dominated by rich peasants, hinders the emergence of class solidarity among the poor and landless peasants, and helps maintain the status quo.

STRUCTURE OF IDEOLOGICAL DOMINATION

Values: Fate and Effort

A combination of scriptural Islam, a set of Bengali values focused on the themes of fate and effort, and property concepts both colonial and precolonial constitute ideological supports for the present system of domination. Though sharing a common culture, dominant and dominated emphasize different aspects of this combination.

The central theme of the prevailing ideology among the dominated strata in rural Bangladesh is Taqdir, "Fate". In this specific cultural context, the term is a syncretized form of the scriptural dichotomy between man and God, and thus the question of predestination by divine will, and a set of little cultural values*, e.g., pessimism, fatalism, allegiance to

the existing system. Theoretically, Taqdir refers to the predestined limits and potentialities bestowed by "Allah" on each individual life (Bertocci, 1979, p. 52).

However, our generalization need some clarification. A number of detailed empirical studies have shown that peasants, far from being in some primeval state of traditionalism have good reasons for being fatalist or pessimist (Hutton & Cohen, 1975). It may be a realistic assessment of their circumstances in the face of severe natural and social constraints. Under these constraints, the dominated peasant acquiesces to his poverty and also to any political or social authority imposed on him.

This acquiescence is reinforced by the localized form of Islam. Religion in Bengal, whether Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, has been influenced by Tantrism (Bertocci, 1966, p. 7), which has a heavy emphasis on other worldliness (Sengupta, 1978, p. 18). The Sufi missionaries, whose doctrines were akin to the mysticism and tantrism already prevalent in this area were largely responsible for the other worldly and relatively passive nature of local Islam (Roy, 1971, p. 23).

But it would be erroneous to assume that Islam is interpreted by different classes in the same way. It is interesting to note how different classes justify their positions by using the apparently contradictory

* Robert Redfield (1956), in his book "Peasant Society and Culture", speaks of the culture of the peasant community as an aspect or dimension of the larger culture of the group of which the community is a part. He speaks of a "little culture", represented by the particular peasant community, and a "greater culture", characterized by something of what goes on in the minds of remote teachers, priests, or philosophers whose thinking affects and affected by the peasantry.

concepts of scriptural Islam. While Taqdir justifies the rural poor's helplessness, Tadbir, "Effort" functions as the predominant ideological theme for the rich peasantry.

"Tadbir" refers to the obligation of each individual to realize via maximum effort the fullness of one's given potentiality (Bertocci, 1979, p. 52). Thus individuals' relative social ranks and prestige are seen as outcomes measured by and following from their own efforts. In a resource-scarce society, "Tadbir" operates strongly on the rich peasants (and the ambitious section of the middle peasantry) who compete with each other for resources, power and status in local socio-economic-political arenas. It is weakest in the case of the poor peasants and landless laborers. Field studies indicate that they are either reluctant to play the game or aware of the impossibility in the absence of the necessary resources and linkage (Jahangir, 1980).

It would be erroneous to perceive the relationship between the ideology of the dominant class and that of the dominated strata as an "antagonistic contradictory" one. Rather these two ideological points of view are complementary and may be variously evoked according to circumstances or changes in them. This may be the way to interpret the findings of Inkeles and Smith (1974, Ch.13). As part of a cross-cultural social-psychological study of "becoming modern", they found that participation in the Comilla Cooperatives had a significant effect on attitudes by comparison with peasants who did not participate. Comparing cooperative members with men from other parts of their district of Comilla, Inkeles and Smith found that of the co-op members some 65 percent were classified as "modern men"⁶ whereas a mere 20 percent of the other Comilla villagers won that designation. Even within the same village, they found, those who were cooperative members proved to be more

"modern" than those who were not. Of the non-members in the cooperating villages, only 25 percent earned the designation of "modern" men, whereas 65 percent of the actual co-op members were so classified. However, it is possible that these men were not demonstrating some master trend toward "modernity" but a response to new opportunities. Possibly they were evoking more themes of Effort and less of Fate already there in their own culture because their circumstances had changed.

Perpetuation Through Religious Leadership

One of the effective media through which the existing structure of ideological domination is perpetuated is the informal institution of religious leadership. The leaders are known as Mullahs, Maulanas, and Pirs. The Mullah is the prayer leader (Imam) and religious functionary who performs various ceremonies, although his influence often carries over from the religious to the secular sphere. Maulanas are more educated in theology than the Mullahs, and serve as interpreters on religious matters. The Mullah may be able to support himself entirely through his religious occupation; he may receive a salary in cash or kind as prayer leader in the Mosque, and gifts or cash for performing ceremonies for village residents. But Maulanas generally earn most of their support from secular occupations (Bertocci, 1966, p.10). These individuals are usually included in the informal leadership of the village.

* Inkeles and Smith operated with the assumption that individual modernity could be considered as a syndrome of qualities. This approach to defining the modern man was, therefore, the development of a long list of themes, e.g., active public participation, calculability or work commitment, each of which they felt reasonably be reflected in the attitudes, values, and behavior of the modern man.

Pirs or Muslim saints play an important part in the religious life of Bangladesh. Unlike the other religious leaders, Pirs need not have any religious education. They collect a following on the basis of personal piety and charisma; quite often this following consists of Hindus as well as Muslims. Pirs are believed to possess great "barkat" (holiness), which can be passed from the Pir to another individual.. Thus if an ill person were to swallow water in which a pir had bathed, barkat would enter his body and enable him successfully combat his disease (Karim, 1955, p. 33).

Although scriptural Islam does not allow for an institutionalized priesthood, these religious leaders function as the moral and spiritual authority of the population. These religious leaders maintain close relations with the dominant families. The rich peasant is either the donor or founder of the village Mosque and "Madrasha" (traditional religious school), or hold the top posts on such committees (Jahangir, 1982, p.129). The Mullahs are associated with one or another dominant "bari" who provide food, shelter and salary to the Mullahs. In return, the Mullahs provide moral justification to the rich peasant's domination. I personally experienced in a number of villages in Muradnagar and Laksham Thana that the Mullahs and Maulanas praise the rich peasant families in the Friday Weekly prayer meetings. In case of factional conflict, Mullahs and Maulanas associated with each faction justifies the point of view of their patrons.

It is very common in the villages that the religious leaders justify the social stratification pattern by stating that "Hater Punch Angul, Shaman Hoy Na" (five fingers cannot be equal); here the five fingers are used as a metaphor for unequal classes. The religious leaders provide moral support to the rich peasant's material efforts by saying "Je nijara Shahajjaya Kore Na, Allah tare shajjaya kore na" (God does not help

anybody, if he does not help himself). They reinforce the belief of poor people in their own incompetence by preaching that "Ai jonme koshto kore porer jamme shukh haibi" (If you suffer in this life, you will attain happiness in the next life), or "Baralog-garib hawa kopaler likhan" (it is a matter of fate to be rich or poor). The Mullahs also deliver "waz" (religious discourses) supporting the policies of the existing government and/or dominant political party (Reza, 83, p. 194).

The religious leaders not only justify the existing system, they also attack the counter ideas which may cause threat to the system. In many Friday prayers and Annual Eid prayers the Mullahs or Maulanas vehemently attack revolutionary ideas as "nashtique and naforman" (atheist and sinful).

A Pir may be much more influential than a Maulana or a Mullah. His influence may extend beyond the local sphere. The Pir of Sharashina, who had his base in a northern-western district, was a distinguished personality in provincial politics during the Pakistani period.

The influence of the famous "Pir of Atroshi", who has his religious center in Faridpur district in Dhaka division, however, outpaced all previous examples. Many highranking government officials, leading businessmen and other influential figures are his disciples. The present President and Chief Martial Law administrator of Bangladesh is among his close disciples. In 1981, when there was a serious difference of opinion and conflict between the then civilian President Abdus Sattar, who is also the Pir's disciple, and the present President and the then Chief of Army Staff General Hossain Muhammad Ershad, it was the Pir of Atroshi who temporarily patched it up.

The local pirs, in the same fashion, have an important part in local factional politics. In many cases, factions have their own pirs who, with the help of "spirits and ghosts", including the "jin" (to which the English word 'genie' is related) of the Koran, are believed to damage the property, family, even life of the rival faction. Syed Waliullah, a prominent Bengali Literater, illustrates in his classic novel "Bahipir" how the local Pirs take advantage of the ignorance and naivety of the rural poor.

Communication Flows

Besides the institutionalized ideological structure of the Mullahs, Maulanas and Pirs, another important way to maintain the existing ideological structure is the rural elite's control over uninstitutionalized communication flow in the village. This type of control is basically maintained by the personal influence of a local notable on the people who look up to him for the explanation of almost everything.

Inspired by social science investigations in the west, the Rural Development Academy in Comilla sponsored a series of studies in the 1960s. These dealt with the diffusion and adoption process and the patterns of communication in the village. As a part of this program, Rahim (1965) attempted to analyze systematically the patterns of interpersonal influence, diffusion and adoption of agricultural practices. In Goalgaon, the village in Comilla district where Rahim conducted his study, people sought information and advice from influentials on production techniques, personal conflict, family feuds, criminal offences, even on major political issues.

From the data available Rahim draws the conclusion that the flow of influence in this village is from (i) younger to older persons, (ii)

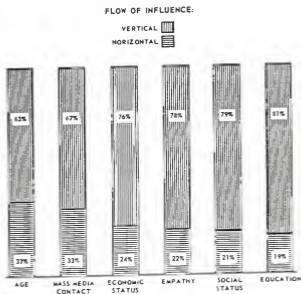
educated to illiterate, (iii) newspaper reader to non-reader, (iv) mobile person to less mobile person, (v) higher social status to lower social status holder and finally, (vi) within the same economic class of peasants. Among these, four flow-types are vertical flows of information in terms of economic class and social status. (ij, iif, iv, and v). In a society, where illiteracy rate is as high as eighty-five percent, access to education and newspaper indicates a stronger class position. Again, the rich peasants are in an advantageous position in terms of mobility.

Table 4 and Bar Diagram I, show the horizontal and vertical flow of influence by the six characteristics. The vertical flow of influence in Goalgaon is clearly the predominant type. Except in the case of age, the flow is from persons belonging to a higher level to persons belonging to a lower level.

Further detailed analysis indicated that the horizontal flow of influence showed considerable variation in different levels. A large majority of horizontal flow takes place between individuals belonging to higher levels. On lower levels horizontal flow of influence is less frequent. The distribution of total horizontal-flow-diads over high, medium and low levels are 74 percent, 18 percent and 8 percent respectively.

The predominantly vertical flow of influence helps the rich peasants to perpetuate the existing structure of ideological domination and reinforces the vertical mobilization. The high frequency of horizontal communication in the upper levels facilitates horizontal mobilization at the top.

BAR DIAGRAM 1
 VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL FLOWS OF INFLUENCE
 GOALGAON, COMILLA, 1965.



Source: Rahim, 1965, p.31.

Table 5. Horizontal and Vertical Information Flow in Goalqoon, Comilla, 1965

Characteristics of Persons in Each Diad	Horizontal Flow	Vertical Flow Higher-Lower	Vertical Flow Lower-Higher	Total	Total
1. Age	37	28	35	63	100%
2. Education	19	78	3	81	100
3. Economic Status	24	75	1	76	100
4. Social Status	21	78	1	79	100
5. Media Contact	33	65	2	67	100
6. Empathy	22	75	3	78	100

Source: Rahim(1965,p.30).

There is a connection between the issues of rural inequality and the nature of the state apparatus because of the way the state favors the classes on whose support it depends for survival. Thus our analysis of rural structural relationships must be considered in the wider context of the interconnections between classes in the countryside and the social base of the state in Bangladesh.

Nature of the State: A Theoretical Issue

There is an important theoretical issue which must be confronted at this point. Much of the conventional analysis of the rural political process treats the rural community as a set of isolated social structures, traditionally independent of other rural communities and of other national level institutions. This has encouraged a conceptualization of the development and nation-building process which assumes a dichotomy between the traditional and modern sectors in the society. It therefore views the process as one of incorporating the traditional structures and institutions into modern ones, thereby destroying the discrete social entities that characterize the rural social formation.

Underlying this approach is an elite-mass formation, with the elite (or part of it) as a modernizing force. The building of a new nation demands the integration of the society to the point where national institutions (the political party, the bureaucracy, the judicial process, the planning commission, etc.) become the primary focus of loyalty instead of the family, the royal, the samaj, village religious or linguistic community, and which become therefore legitimate. It is a stimulus-response model of political and social change, where the 'modernizing' elite both sets the goals and evaluates the extent of their achievement. But the goals and the evaluation derive from the assumption

that rural political and social structures are discrete and encapsulation of the village is the most significant ongoing process.

This theoretical perspective is considered here to be misguided mainly in two respects. Firstly, it treats the peasantry as an undifferentiated mass with no institutions of political, economic and social organization beyond the boundary of the village. In my opinion, the peasantry is neither an undifferentiated mass, nor is it composed of discrete social units which are co-terminous with the village. Rather the peasantry is characterized by distinct class boundaries. It is composed of sets of institutions which extend critically beyond the village to include the cities and ultimately the nature of the state.

Secondly, as Alavi (1973) shows, in the postcolonial societies the relation between the landowning class and the native bourgeoisie is different from that in the metropolitan countries at the time of the bourgeois revolution. It is also true of a rural elite developed in a minifundist agrarian context. In most of the postcolonial countries, the native bourgeoisie is not confronted with the historical task of subordinating the landowning class for the purpose of establishing the nation-state. So, not only does the state mediate the interests of these classes, there is furthermore an accommodation between them, as the dominant landowning class complements the political purposes of the native bourgeoisie in the running of the postcolonial state. It does this because it plays a key role in establishing links between the state at the national level and the local level power structures in the rural areas which it dominates. Locally, it contains potentially revolutionary forces and helps to maintain the "political equilibrium" of the overall national system.

This situation is even more obvious in case of Bangladesh, where the fragile nature of the urban political leadership, the inability of the urban elite to command independent resources and the limitations of administrative capacity make the state apparatus more dependent on the support of the rural elite.

Moreover, in a country numerically dominated by its peasantry, the state cannot be regarded as a fixed or even prior entity in the process of agrarian change. Structural change among the peasantry must inevitably alter the complexion of the state. If resources are distributed among the peasantry as part of the process of 'intervention' or 'penetration' by state, then it is important to understand not only the impact of the distribution but also why the state was associated with one pattern of distribution and not another.

The institutions of the state are themselves the result of political and economic forces, so the rulers of the state are likely to defer to those forces in their allocative decisions. In this way the institutions of the state cannot be opposed to the forces from which they derive, and these forces exist in the village as well as elsewhere. Seen in this way the notion of the state as being conceptually independent of the political and economic forces which constitute it is fallacious. This theoretical stance explains why the agricultural cooperative project, sponsored by the state apparatus, has to rely upon the "natural" social institutions rather than bringing new institutions and roles into being.

Bureaucratic Structure in the Rural Areas

Bangladesh, like many other capital-scarce, predominantly agrarian countries, lacks the essential resources to support a large bureaucratic structure. In other words, it is difficult to support an overdeveloped bureaucratic apparatus superimposed over a subsistence

economy, with satisfactory remuneration. Lacking the preponderance of a far-reaching and people-oriented ideology, which extends beyond the immediate hopes and aspirations of the citizens, the natural consequence is adoption of illegal means by the bureaucrats to generate capital and wealth. This unwritten license for corruption is not confined only in the upper echelons of the bureaucracy. Rather it has become institutionalized and a fact of life among the lower level officers, such as Tahshildars, Kanungos, Sub-divisional managers, and circle officer (revenue)(Siddique,1981, p.249).

This widespread corruption establishes a coalition between the rural elite and bureaucracy. The bureaucracy has established crucial areas of patronage through its monopoly over inputs and services to agriculture and rural development. Furthermore, ministries and agencies internally represent separate territories of patronage involving the reintroduction of an informal market in which the difference between the subsidized price at any level of distribution and the price at which the commodity or service is really sold does not return as public revenue to the ministry or state as a whole, but supplements individual incomes. In this process, classes of rural clients are affected differently: the poor have no access at all, while the rich pay for their access and have opportunities to pass on these costs to others and extract a profit. Bureaucratic allocation has certainly strengthened the position both of officials as well as the rural elite, and in so doing contributes to the process of polarization and differentiation in the countryside. The point is that the bureaucracy has a vested interest in preserving the existing arrangements for the distribution and supply of scarce goods and services — the basis of both mini-empires and the accumulation of wealth by some (Wood, 1980, pp. 23-26).

On top of distributing agricultural inputs and services, the coalition between the rural elite and the bureaucracy is evident in the functioning of the public works programs, which are supposed to provide rural employment. The operation of these programs has been dominated by the locally rich acting as brokers and contractors with government and agencies seizing the opportunities for an extension of patronage and a new form of economic diversification. This process is reinforced where no prior organization of the rural workers has been involved in the programs, and where funds are channeled through the local government bodies, which are dominated by richer farmers and local entrepreneurs (Alamgir, 1977).

Local Government Bodies

Besides the bureaucratic structure, local governmental bodies function as an institutionalized body to establish a liaison between the state and the rich peasantry. The most organized post-British local government institution was created under the framework of the "basic democracy", the controlled constitution process adopted by the then Pakistani President Ayub Khan.

The union council was the lowest tier of the "basic democratic" system. The union council in fact replaced the Union Boards which were set up under the Local Self-government Act of 1919. "Union Parishad" was established in independent Bangladesh in 1973 with similar composition and functions. The Union Parishad has been vested with the powers of taxation and is entitled to government aid and subsidy. It manages the local affairs such as maintenance of peace and of Chaukidars (village police). It also has to settle minor disputes in the village and distribute food and such other essential commodities as sanctioned by the government from time to time.

Evidence suggests that there is a concentration of the rich peasants in the local governmental bodies. Bertocci (1979, p. 40) found that the dominant lineages also dominate the Union Parishad in Comilla. He was referring to the Islampur Union Council of the Comilla district where he found that out of 12 Muslim U.P. members, 9 were Sardars or from Sardari lineages at the time of his research. In 1976, among the candidates for Union Parishad membership in Kotwali Thana, Comilla district, 57.86 percent came from the rich peasantry and 18.18 percent from the poor peasantry. There was no candidate from the landless category (Solaiman & Alam, 1977, p. 6). A recent survey conducted in 1981 of the Union Parishad leaders in three districts in the Dhaka-Comilla belt shows that about 81.3 percent of the Union Parishad leaders are from rich peasant background (Rob, 1979, p. 119).

Economic Diversification

Economic diversification is another process through which the rich peasant is integrated with the state. The conventional approach to agricultural diversification does not seem to take account of the possibility for richer peasants to prey on the misfortunes of others by acquiring other forms of rural economic activity like moneylending. Nor does it take account of the enhanced capacity thereby gained to establish sons in other forms of employment often with education as prior condition.

Evidence suggests that higher up the landholding range this diversification becomes more evident with most of the rich peasant families heavily engaged in off-holding economic activities. The issue of diversification extends beyond additional income and its impact on the immediate economic gain. If a family is involved in business, professional activities or certain types of service occupations, then these provide

connections and access to the various resources and items of patronage which are being distributed. Even the power to "lose a file" can be an important asset, and one which is convertible into hard cash, a loan or a fertilizer permit. Regular employment in the town naturally makes it easier to petition officers and lobby officials. And since education and literacy are highly correlated with business and professional activity anyway, the access of this class to the resources and patronage of the state is further enhanced. Such access does of course strengthen the position of the class within the village, lending it superiority in a variety of transactions in the courts, getting land registered, obtaining credit and fertilizer at subsidized rates, getting licenses to trade, etc.

This relationship is also reflected in the recruitment of political leaders from the village and the structure of political power between the state and the countryside. By being intimate with urban based entrepreneurs, the rich peasants become defacto agents of the state.

Relationship with the State Through Political Parties

Local political factions tend to polarize around the political parties of the country through a number of "brokers" and thus get connected to national political groupings. The functioning of the political parties in the countryside is closely associated with the issue of factionalism, discussed above. The factional leaders organize political groups out of followers who are either economically dependent (laborers, sharecroppers, and debtors) or who are obliged as a result of past favors and thus link them to the national parties.

From the third decade of this century, political parties in this region have been playing an important role in the rural political sphere. This role became intensified when development plans came into existence. Now the state is the source of all critical resources. But at the same

time the exercise of state power is intermittent. Now a representative political system has developed with attendant military intervention, but the people are not fully integrated in the system. Therefore, this system calls for protection and the protection is furnished on a different plane by the dominant/ruling political party (Lifschultz, 1979, Maniruzzaman, 1980). In terms of the rural areas, where resources are scarce, those engaged in politics get both material and ideological gratification. The situation is paradoxical. Parties have different ideologies, secularism and socialism in the case of the Awami League, nationalism and Islam in the case of the Nationalist Party or the newly formed Jondal (People's Party). Yet while in power, they all establish similar clientelist systems. In exchange for the services which party activists render to the organization, party leaders distribute favors of all sorts. This kind of process, in turn, is accompanied by "deideologization" of the party engaged in political competition.

The dependence of the political party leaders on the local notables (Sardars and Matabbars) is manifested in the latter's control over votes. The rich landholders control the local votes in Bangladesh (Alavi, 1973, p. 157) and the political parties though their crucial role in the decision making processes concerning resources like loans, fertilizer or HYV seeds (Jahangir, 1982, p. 94). The notables thus link up their supporters and the state resources in a way that reinforces their system of domination.

ABSENCE OF PARTIES OF PROTEST

As I have shown, the state in Bangladesh is reflective of the internal tensions and dialectics of the societal whole, of which the rural sector is a significant part. The state mediates between the urban and

rural dominant classes and thus patronizes the vertical mobilization pattern. So the issue of restructuring agrarian development strategies involves the issues of other social institutions as well.

The structure known as the political party performs the function of interest articulation and aggregation in a given political system. Parties stand at the juncture of social, economic and political relations which connect the village to the wider world. I have mentioned that the representative political parties in Bangladesh act to protect the existing system. Now we turn to the question of the development of alternative political party structures which can reflect the hopes and aspirations of the rural poor and initiate a structural reorganization. As Wolf (1973) maintains, peasants often harbor a deep sense of injustice but their sense of injustice must be given shape and organization before it can become politically articulated.

In a society, characterized by an extremely low literacy rate, it is somewhat unrealistic to expect the rural poor to develop their own political organization without the active help of sympathetic outsiders. These outsiders are likely to come from an urban educated background and to identify themselves with the rural poor's cause either from a sense of intellectual commitment, or from a realization of their material and moral insecurity in a rapidly polarizing society.

Despite a reasonably long tradition of political activism, the alternative political party structures have not prospered in Bangladesh. A close look at the growth of some of the political organizations, who have formally been committed to a non-exploitative political arrangement, will bear out my statement.

Communist Party (1919-1953)

Although a number of peasant movements took place under the leadership of the Communist party cadres in the British colonial period (Mukul, 1983, pp. 147-153), the movements were mostly concentrated in the northern districts. The Dhaka-Comilla belt was almost untouched by militant peasant activities. The fact that the northern districts were the focal points of the movements can be explained by the existence of big landlordism and a more visibly unequal distribution pattern in that region.

The Communist party suffered a severe setback in the South Asian subcontinent immediately after 1947. Under the influence of the ultra-left line pursued by Ranadive, the Communist Party of India called for an immediate socialist revolution aimed at overthrowing the bourgeois government. The result was a total disaster. Lacking sufficient organizational growth and following among the people who were still convinced that the independence was brought for the betterment of the general mass, the Communist Party underwent a severe repression from the authorities. Hundreds of leaders and cadres were imprisoned, their properties were confiscated and mass organizations were destroyed (Masud, 1974). The East Pakistan Communist Party, which followed the policies of their Indian counterpart, suffered the same destiny. Moreover, the Communist Party was outlawed in Pakistan, both East and West. (Haque, 1975, pp. 61). In 1950, the ultra-left Ranadive line was abandoned by the Communist Party.

Badarauddin Umar has pointed out several reasons for the failure of the early Marxists to have an effective base among the people (Umar, 1981). First, most of the early Marxists in Bengal came from a terrorist background. Although disillusionment over a method of struggle led them to join the Communist Party, it was not easy for them to get rid of the

psychological structure formed by terrorist practices. One of the essential aspects of terrorist thought and action is isolation from people and as Umar argues this method has proved a failure in several different countries. Secondly, most of the Marxist leaders since the 1930's came from landowners or petit-bourgeois background. Many of them couldn't shake off the influence of their class origin even after a long time involvement with radical political movement.

Finally, Umar attributes the responsibility of the failure of these early Marxists to a demographic fact. Till the 1950's most of the Marxist leaders came from a Hindu background. Since Islam is a crucial element in the dominant ideology of the East Bengali peasants, the religious identity of the Marxist leaders stood in the way of an effective communication between them and the peasants.

After abandoning the ultra-left political line the Marxists decided to form a legitimate, broad-based multi-classed democratic party and use it as their own platform. As a result, the "Gonotontroi Dal" (Democratic Party) was formed in 1953 (Umar, 1981, pp. 61). the new party, however, was never able to establish a strong organizational base.

Awami League

Besides the Communists, there was another group which attempted to work among the poor peasantry with some success. There were, from the outset, two traditions in the Bengali Nationalist Movement and its pioneering party Awami League: (1) A petit-bourgeois elitist tradition for those who hoped to rise to senior positions in the bureaucracy or to become members of the newly created business community in Bengal on the strength of governmental financial support and subsidy; and (2) a rural populist tradition that articulated the frustrations and aspirations of the long

suffering sections of the extremely poor Bengal peasantry. The two traditions were intertwined but remained distinct (Alavi, 1973, pp. 167).

In the early 1950's the Bengali Language Movement embraced both traditions. At the head of the elitist faction of the Awami League was H.S. Suhrawardy. As Prime Minister of Pakistan he was an ardent supporter of Western powers. He vigorously supported the Anglo-French-Israeli intervention against Egypt at Suez as well as the United States alliance with Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman was a protege of Suhrawardy and was schooled by him in politics. His political commitments were firmly with the elitist group (Ibid, p. 168).

On the other hand, the populist tradition flourished under the umbrella of Maulana Bhashani. The elitist leadership was largely concentrated in the towns and cities. The populists had large number of cadres among the middle, poor and landless peasants in the villages. Since the Gananatrik Dal did not have significant success in mobilizing people, the East Pakistan Communist Party^{*}, in its 1956 conference in Calcutta, decided to work within the frame work of the Awami League (Umar, 1983, p. 62).

National Awami Party

In February 1957, at the conference of the Awami League at Kagmari, the conflict between the elitist leadership and the populist cadres was brought to a head on the issue of Prime Minister Suhrawardy's pro-western foreign policy. This led to a break and to the ouster of the

* Although the Communist Party was outlawed, it maintained its clandestine organizational structure. It held its conference in Calcutta, West Bengal, because legally it was not possible for them to run any open political activity in Pakistan.

populists, who later formed the National Awami Party (Alavi, 1973, p. 168). The populist cadres, however, failed to rally their traditional rural supporters behind the new party. It is crucial to the understanding of the Awami League that, although its populist cadres were eliminated, its mass populist base among the rural people remained.

Two factors were important in the retention of the party's hold over the masses. First, the populist tradition, despite its strong poor peasant orientation, was never able to replace the factional mode of politics in the rural areas. Although the populist cadres organized a base among the middle, poor and landless peasants, they never initiated a process to politicize these social strata. Instead, they made compromises with the existing mode, either by including the existing factions within the party organization or by creating new factions. The Communists also could not make much progress, mostly because the Awami League was divided after only one year of their membership in the party. The populists had political appeal among the unpoliticized peasantry as long as they functioned under the auspices of the Awami League. But when the polarization resulted in the division of the party, the pro Awami League factional leaders did not want to run the risk of severing their organizational ties with the elitist tradition (Haque, 1975, p. 177).

Secondly, Sheikh Mujib's role as an individual is also important. Notwithstanding his firm commitment to the elitist group, his rhetoric and his personal style of life were populist in character. He was a man with whom the people could identify. Besides the factional mode of politics, "he bridged the gap between the elitist leadership of the Awami League and its mass populist base," (Alavi, 1973, p. 168). Thus, by a mistimed and badly managed precipitation of the party crisis, it was the populist cadres who were isolated from the political mainstream.

The large farmer bias of the dominant political parties is still a conspicuous phenomenon in the political panorama of Bangladesh. The macro structures of the political parties are closely related to the micro community structures through the rural nexus groups. The policies and the actions of the dominant national political parties, in the final analysis, are geared to protect and perpetuate the existing vertical mobilization pattern in the rural peripheries. Thus, programs of 'reform' and 'change', in most of the cases, are little more than lip service. The left wing parties, who have a pronounced goal to bring about fundamental transformation in the structural relationships, either have few resources, or when they do, are integrated to the existing system.

The poor peasant agriculturalists in the Dhaka-Comilla belt (and rural Bangladesh in general) are thus locked in a vertical mode of structural relationships. In a society where kinship networks and traditional organizations with territorial dimension are still overwhelmingly significant frames of reference, factionalism and clientelism are the predominant pattern of politics, a new horizontal ideology has yet to develop, the state apparatus has an obvious bias toward the elite and the political parties either identify themselves with the existing system or lack adequate resources to bring about a breakthrough, the problem of rural development has to be addressed with much caution. Individual effort, micro level participation or macro level policy formulation, none of these is adequate to build up an effective, rural poor oriented development strategy. A more holistic approach, which is committed to combine all these elements is required in order to bring about a qualitative change in the lives of the rural poor.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The central theme on which the present work has been developed is that the problem of development strategy cannot be considered in isolation, for it is intertwined with a complex milieu of the political, social, economic and cultural factors. A close look at the working of the Comilla Cooperative Model in the stratified peasant society of the Dhaka-Comilla belt bears out this thesis.

Although a flexible caste and class structure and an embryonic market economy existed in Muslim Bengal in the pre-colonial period, class differentiation in an institutional form is a result of colonial intrusion. Institutionalized landlordism, patronized by the British colonial government added a new dimension to the class arrangement in this region. Periodically during the nineteenth century, the British authority intervened to establish regulations designed to make revisions in the landowning relationship. Most significant among these was the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 which gave de jure recognition to the rights of others besides the landlords in the agrarian hierarchy. Though the Bengal Tenancy Act was many times amended after 1885, it was seldom implemented rigorously on behalf of weaker sections of the cultivating peasantry. In 1950, when big landlordism (zamindari) was abolished in East Bengal and the landlords, who were mostly Hindu by religion, left for India, the rich peasants occupied the power vacuum.

Comilla Cooperative Model is among the series of rural development strategies, formulated and implemented by the colonial and post-colonial governments. One can discern a common agenda in these programs--developing the countryside without restructuring the existing structural relationships. Furthermore, the Comilla Cooperative Model was an immediate result of the

process of revisioning the community development approach which was basically contrived as an alternative to the marxist model of wealth and income redistribution.

The Academy for Rural Development at Comilla has been originating and experimenting with programs since its founding in 1959 as the government's field training and research station for rural development in East Pakistan (and after 1971 Bangladesh). At the outset, the Academy had considerable success in introducing new production technologies, mobilizing rural credit and including the small farmers in the developmental organizations. The effort to raise rice production through supplying credit, inputs and extension education did quite well, and yields went up substantially.

Initially, the membership of the agricultural cooperatives were made up almost wholly of the smaller and middle-sized farmers. The larger farmers leased out their lands and often were moneylenders and so had little or no interest in becoming members of the local cooperative society. However, as the program expanded, things changed. Once the advantages of cooperation tied to access to irrigation facilities and new seed varieties became widely perceived, the benefits of development were coopted by the traditionally dominant elements of the local villages. By the early seventies, most of the cooperative societies were dominated by the better off farmers.

Although I noticed grievances and discontents among the poor peasants and landless laborers, over rich peasants domination, there is no organized protest against it. As one sociologist puts it—"widespread protest is still a distant cry in rural Bangladesh" (Jahangir 1981 p. 97). The central question I have attempted to answer in this thesis are (i) How are the rich peasants able to maintain their domination? (ii) Why is this domination not invoking widespread agrarian protest? In other words, why are rich peasants and landless laborers, "the class in itself" not being transformed to "the class for

itself"? My theoretical, thus methodological stance to answer these questions is to explore the broad structural processes in the countryside. Here I have connected the micro level problem of rural cooperative with the macro level problem of broad social structure. In this case, the micro level is closely intertextured with the macro level, and the macro level, as a superior issue, influences the subordinate issue, that is the micro level. The structural processes I discussed here are:

- (i) the kinship network;
- (ii) the territorial socio-political organization;
- (iii) the factional mode of politics;
- (iv) the structure of ideological domination;
- (v) the bias of the state apparatus to the dominant rural classes.

These processes combinely to create and reinforce the pattern of vertical mobilization in rural Banqladesh. I have suggested an alternative mobilization to substitute the existing one, in order to ensure the rural poor's effective participation in the developmental activities. The problem of establishing a horizontal mobilization is closely related to the problem of a qualitative reconfiguration of the existing socio-political-economic systems. The exoloitative relationships in the rural societies in the Dhaka-Comilla belt involve the state, the way in which it favors the classes which are responsible for inequality, poverty and lack of growth is obvious. Likewise, if present problems produce consciousness and discontent among the rural poor and dispossessed, we cannot ignore the pressure which they may bring to bear on government for the potential for their unity to overturn the present structure of political and economic power and reconstitute the state in their own favor. The problem of transformino

the nature of the state apparatus is closely related to the importance of a political organization, which can aggregate and articulate the frustrations and aspirations of the rural poor, and connect their demands to the structural transformation of the wider society. But such an organization is absent in present Bangladesh. So the sixth process which makes rich peasant's domination possible is (vi) absence of a political party which can carry the demands of the rural poor to a logical consequence.

We can thus conclude that unless a pattern of loyalty can be extended beyond the parochial social units (bari, reyai), unless the factional mode of power can be supplanted by a constructive integration of the poor peasants and landless laborers, unless a new ideology of distribution, right and human dignity can prevail; unless a system can be established in the national arena, which will actively formulate and implement policies in the interests of the rural and urban marginal classes; and finally unless an effective political party can be brought into existence to attain the aforementioned aims, any development strategy will continue to serve the vested, established interests.

The nature of the problem of rich peasants domination over cooperatives, is more complex than it is usually conceived by many researchers. In the cooperatives, the poor peasants and landless laborers might remain weak, even if the rich peasants are excluded, precisely because of their subordinate position in other structures of dependence which constitute the greater part of their lives.

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AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES AND RURAL POWER STRUCTURE IN BANGLADESH:
A STUDY OF THE COMILLA MODEL

by
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ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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The central theme on which the present thesis is developed is that the problem of the development strategy cannot be considered in isolation, for it is intertwined with a complex milieu of the political, social, economic, and cultural factors. A close look at the working of the Comilla Cooperative Model in the stratified peasant society in Bangladesh provides support to this theme.

Comilla Cooperative Model, although initially aimed at the middle and small strata of the rural peasantry, was finally taken over by the rich farmers. Although I noticed grievances and discontents among the poor peasants and landless laborers over the rich peasants' domination in the cooperatives, there is no organized protest against this. Against this backdrop, the central questions I have attempted to answer in this thesis are (i) How are the rich peasants able to maintain their domination? (ii) Why is this domination not invoking widespread agrarian protest?

My theoretical, thus methodological stance to answer these questions is to explore the broad structural processes in the countryside. The structural processes I discussed are:

- (i) the kinship network;
- (ii) the territorial socio-political organization;
- (iii) the factional mode of politics;
- (iv) the structure of ideological domination;
- (v) the bias of the state apparatus to the dominant rural classes;
- (vi) absence of an effective political party which can carry the hopes and aspirations of the rural poor to a logical consequence.