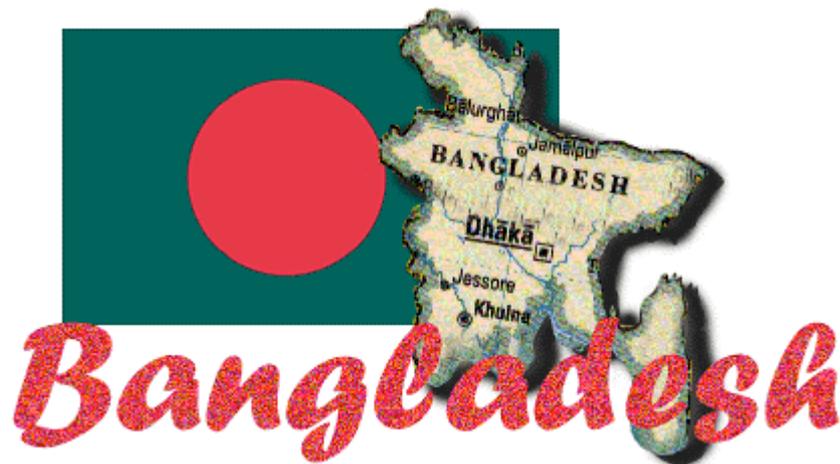


A State of Corruption?

An Anthropology of the South Asian State

Tone K. Sissener



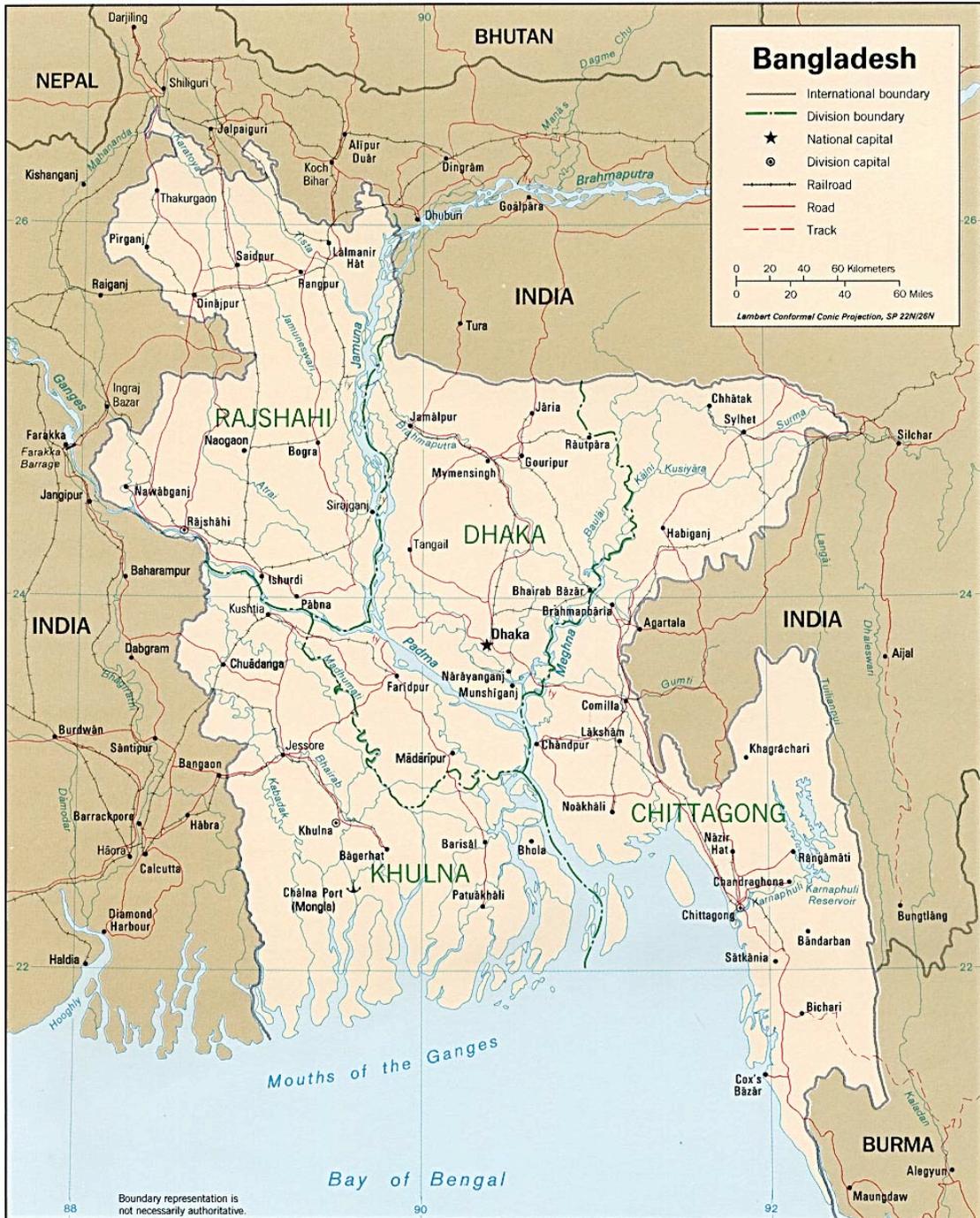
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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION	3
INTRODUCING THE STATE	3
<i>The universal and sovereign state</i>	3
<i>Culture, complexity and variation</i>	6
CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	9
<i>Chittagong</i>	9
<i>Dinajpur</i>	15
NOTES ON THEME, METHOD AND KEY FIGURES	19
<i>Theme</i>	19
<i>Method</i>	20
<i>Key figures</i>	23
METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	25
CHAPTER 2	
EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN STATE.....	29
TRADE AND POLITICS	32
GOVERNMENT IN THE MAKING	35
IMAGINING SOVEREIGN POWER	44
CONSOLIDATION OF BRITISH RATIONALITY	49
INSTALLING SOVEREIGN POWER: THE EMPRESS OF INDIA	57
OLD STRUCTURES – NEW ASPIRATIONS	66
NEW STATES EMERGING	71
ORGANISATIONAL FACTIONALISM	79
POLITICS AND BUREAUCRACY IN POSTCOLONIAL STATES	81
CHAPTER 3	
ENCOUNTERING THE STATE: CEREMONIES AS MANIFESTATION OF STATE POWER... 89	
THEORIES OF THE STATE	91
RITUALS OF THE STATE	97
<i>Inauguration ceremonies and a visiting Prime Minister</i>	97
<i>A book-release ceremony</i>	103
<i>Staging a ceremony</i>	104
SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT OF STATE POWER	107
<i>Accommodating a Deputy Commissioner</i>	108
<i>A Deputy Commissioner out of office</i>	110
IN THE NAME OF THE STATE	112
REALITY OF THE STATE	117
CHAPTER 4	
REALISING THE STATE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STATE POWER AND POWERFUL STATE AGENTS	121
BANGLADESH CIVIL SERVICE	129

<i>Recruitment, promotion, posting and transfer</i>	130
<i>Training</i>	133
<i>Central administration</i>	134
<i>Field administration</i>	136
THE ARCHITECTURE OF POWER.....	140
THE COMPLEXITY OF STATE POWER	145
<i>Agents of the state</i>	145
<i>Intermission</i>	146
<i>Agents of the state continued</i>	148
POWERFUL THROUGH THE STATE.....	153
DIMENSIONS OF POWER	157

CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGING THE STATE: SOCIAL ORDER BEYOND RATIONALITY OF THE MODERN STATE	161
LIVING WITH NEIGHBOURS	165
<i>Dangerous liaisons and futures at risk</i>	165
<i>Confirming relations and securing a future</i>	173
CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES	179
<i>In government service</i>	179
<i>The price to pay</i>	185
THE MODERN STATE.....	193

CHAPTER 6

IN CLOSING	197
-------------------------	------------

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	205
------------------------------------	------------

DISTRICT MAPS	207
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<i>Chittagong</i>	207
<i>Dinajpur</i>	209

LITERATURE	211
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1

Introduction

Introducing the state

In reality, it is tautological to argue that Western models of government are universal,
since of all political orders, only the state proclaims itself universal,
and it does so with a postulate it cannot divest itself of
since that postulate is perceived by everyone as
constitutive of its definition.
Bertrand Badie (2000:49)

While anthropologists from the time of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown renouncing the state as an object of study (Trouillot 2001:126) continued for long to avoid discussing the state, theories about the state have come and gone in political science and related social science disciplines, including everything from modernisation- and dependency theories and other state-oriented schools arguing for the state as the critical and direct agent of socioeconomic- and political change (Migdal 2001), to the more recent globalisation discussions of the 1990s making the state more or less irrelevant (Hardt and Negri 2001). As no longer seen as separate from culture or society, nor believed to be extinct as a social or economical force (Aretxaga 2003), seeing the state as a relevant object of study has indeed gained momentum also in anthropology.¹ The state is the subject of this thesis and the context is South Asia. To better place the anthropology of the state, let me first make some general observations about the state.

The universal and sovereign state

Theorising about the state there are two things to consider: first, the universality of the state, and second, its sovereign position. According to Bertrand Badie, science played an important role providing universal status to the rational-legal state model of the West through works of scholars such as Weber (*The Protestant Ethic*) and Durkheim (*Division of Labor in Society*).

¹ See Gupta (1995), Trouillot (2001), Hansen and Stepputat (2001, 2005), Fuller and Bénéï (2001), Ferguson and Gupta (2002), Aretxaga (2003), Krohn-Hansen and Nustad (2005), Kapferer (1988, 1997, 2004, 2005).

By presenting “Western culture as the chosen culture that draws its exceptional status from its exclusive capacity to attain the level of reason”, Weber apparently discounted the validity of comparing political systems based on the concept of culture (Badie 2000:50). What he did do was to ask: why, in other histories, the modern state could not form. The answer, he found in the exceptionality of Western rationality and the structure of behaviour (autonomous action spheres, see chapter 5). To Weber, there was a connection between cultures or forms of rationalities and state systems. Similarly, Durkheim, analysing the retreat of religion and the progressive triumph of a secularised state, appears to assume Western modernity as universal saying that, “the force of the cultural explanation [prevailed in *Formes élémentaires*] fades before an analysis in terms of the universal” (ibid:51). Thus, both Weber and Durkheim seem to assume a universal convergence between a particular kind of rationalisation of society and the modern state.

As a political and philosophical project going back to Hobbes’ *Leviathan* (1651), the state can claim nothing short of universality, and there can be no source of authority outside the state. This functional requirement is satisfied by the

covenant of every man with every man, in such manner as if every man should say to every man: I authorise and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition; that thou give up, thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner.

And this done,

the multitude so united in one person is called a COMMONWEALTH; in Latin, CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the Commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad. And in him consisteth the essence of the Commonwealth; which, to define it, is: one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all as he shall think expedient for their peace and common defence (Hobbes [1651] 2007).

The result is the modern state consisting of a differentiated political sphere and individualised social relations (with the impoverishment of communal structures), or as Weber put it: “the disenchantment of the world”; pointing to the combination of rationalisation and intellectualisation where power and authority is limited to certain spheres (Weber [1948]

1997:155). While both were talking about a contractual relationship between state and society (exchange of liberty for security), Weber was not referring to *the* universal state. Realising the difficulties of generalising from what the state do, Weber focused on *how*, defining the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory” (ibid:78), acknowledging the possibility and reality of variations (‘successfully’ in parentheses). Hobbes, on the other hand, left no doubt as to what was the role of the state: the complete control of the means of violence or force in the interest of peace as the condition of society.

Rather than confirming the Hobbesian ‘pact’, Badie argues, sociological analysis “shows the variety of social pacts, including as many individualist formulas as communal ones”. Moreover,

Far from disappearing, the latter are recomposing and redeploying, whereas actors seeking political effectiveness must seek to integrate rather than efface them. More precisely, non-Western models, and in particular the example of China, suggest that individualism and communitarianism can either complement each other or alternate with each other according to different political regimes, as in communist China (op. cit. Badie p. 55).

According to Badie, in Chinese imperial history, to install its power, each dynasty depended on a ‘pact’ or agreement between the new political centre and rural familial communities, which usually meant preservation of local autonomy and an imperial centre depending on communal structures. According to Yves Chevrier, the arrangement coming closest to the ‘Hobbesian pact’, the construction of a differentiated and sovereign political space and the individual’s direct allegiance to the political centre in the formation of a complex bureaucracy, “did not definitively succeed” (ibid:55). Especially under the Maoist system, depending on peasant mobilisation, constructing a differentiated and sovereign system seems like a contradiction. However, even a communist leader such as Deng Xiaoping, Secretary General of the Communist Party of China between 1956 and 1967, clearly relied on the modern state system. “Unless one considers these manifestations as residues of tradition that, as such, should be dismantled by modernization,” says Badie, “one has to admit that they form a competing model of allegiances not integrated into the Hobbesian construct and whose deficiency constitutes a direct attack on the legitimacy of the political system” (ibid:55). In the Hobbesian ‘pact’, state power is universal, sovereign and thus unchallengeable.

Culture, complexity and variation

Against the above, Badie is arguing for the need to consider cultural aspects in situations of what he calls importation-exportation of the Western state claiming that “the logic of exportation finds its limits in the logic of importation at work within the importing societies” (ibid:86).² According to him, exportation of the Western state model has depended on the following: the diffusion of the principle of territoriality, the diffusion of a normative system strongly marked by the Western conception of law, and finally, the diffusion of international rules of conduct. However, all three have been limited by two series of factors: the persistence of communal cultures that continuously challenge or alter the system; and second, conceptual differences at work within various cultures assigning different meaning to ideas developed and exported by Western culture (ibid:60) In other words, seeing the importance of culture in relation to state formation.

Also, the successful implementation of the Western model of political order has depended on a postulate of universality that could structure the concept of civil society. Historically, this included:

the differentiation of private social spaces from the political space; the individualization of social relations that thus confers precedence on citizenship; and the presence of horizontal relations within society that gives preference to associative logic over communal structures and that, consequently, marginalize particularist identification in favour of identification with the state (ibid:83).

Realisation depends on the ‘importer’ whose already existing logic of order, which does not necessarily mean either clear-cut or in singularity, makes a difference for the resulting order. “Forced Westernisation”, he concludes, “generates both order and entropy: it imposes universal rules without being able to make them work; it enunciates a unification of worlds without unifying meaning” (ibid:234). The state is thus seen as an invention and the creation of a very particular history that does not easily translate because of cultural differences. While his point about cultural variations enables him to go beyond simple oppositions between states and non-states, the approach assumes a clear-cut separation between the modern and the traditional (see chapter 6).

² See also George Steinmetz (1999) arguing for seeing states as effects of cultural processes, and Bruce Kapferer underlining the cultural formation of nation-states (1988).

Similarly, in *State in Society* (2001) Joel S. Migdal approaches the state as an invention and the result of a particular historical process. Dismissing both system- and state theories for favouring ideal type perspectives of the state, Migdal argues for a more context based approach. According to him, the way popular and academic discourses have presented the state, as a “coherent, integrated, and goaloriented body” (Migdal 2001:12), have made it difficult to talk about limitations. Migdal warns against uncritical use of the Weberian ideal type state that monopolize legitimate force and rule through rational law as it “gives scholars precious few ways to talk about real-life states that do not meet this ideal”.³ From this view, actual states can be nothing but deviations from the ideal or corrupted versions of the ideal (ibid:14). While Weber both recognised and expected variations⁴, taking his definition of the state as point of departure means that real states can be conceptualised and measured only as distance from the ideal type, undermining a cultural understanding of the state. Migdal says:

If real states fell short of the standard, as they were bound to do, all sorts of words had to be invented to express the gap between actual practice and the ideal. Terms such as corruption, weakness, and relative capacity implied that the ways things really worked were somehow exogenous to the normative model of what the state and its relations to society are, or should be. Comparison comes in specifying and measuring deviation from the norm or the ideal (ibid:15).

Migdal points out the problematic in assuming that only states create and enforces rules as it minimises and trivialises the rich negotiation, interaction, and resistance that occurs in every human society among ‘multiple systems of rules’: “It provides no way to theorize about arenas of competing sets of rules, other than to cast these in the negative, as failures or weak states or even as non-states” (ibid:15). Stressing the importance of recognising states as products of specific historical processes, Migdal brings to the attention the role of cultural differences in forming and informing states, but fails to shed much light on the enduring nature of the state-society duality, except for perhaps in theory.

Rather than taking the entity of the state for granted, presuming a certain state-society relationship, or ruling out the state altogether, an anthropology of the state ethnographically

³ Ideal type is “a methodologically overstated and one-sided abstraction presenting a specific analytical aspect in artificial purity” (Kantowsky 1986:179).

⁴ Weber’s concrete historical analyses from Germany, for example, show in detail, and from various standpoints, how an actual state differ sharply from the proposed model (Badie and Birnbaum 1983).

explores state realities in their proper contexts. There are several examples of how this has been done. Since my concern is with the South Asian state, I will in the following concentrate on the works of Gupta (1995), and Ferguson and Gupta (2002).

Akhil Gupta made an early contribution to the anthropology of the state with an article published in 1995 where he examines the discourses of corruption in contemporary India. By ethnographically exploring everyday encounters with the state at the local level, Gupta argues for the blurred boundaries between the state and society. In his account, the ethnography of the state poses an interesting challenge to Western notions of the state because of its cultural constitution, which is why it is “imperative that we constantly contextualize the construction of the state within particular historical and cultural conjunctures” (Gupta 1995:389). Although concerned with the historical, his interest in history appears to have more to do with historical moments (in a Foucauldian sense) than with continuity. While this kind of constructivist perspective can contribute towards a richer understanding of the state-society relationship than has been possible within the neo-statist paradigm, it tends to overlook structures, i.e. the circumstances under which negotiations occurs in the first place (see *methodology* this chapter and chapter 3).

Similarly, in another article published together with James Ferguson in 2002, the state is explored as a cultural construct. Looking at a maternal health project in India, the authors’ shows how the state is produced through routine bureaucratic practices arguing for the micro-politics of state production.⁵ While agreeing with the emphasis on practices for a richer understanding of the state, bringing in the past can help shedding light on collective practices otherwise ‘silent’ or taken-for-granted and therefore not captured by the cultural struggle perspective (Sharma and Gupta 2006).

To avoid the structuralist trap, locating ‘structuring structures’ in the unconscious mind leaving no scope for human strategising or the unintended historical consequences of conscious human action (Gledhill 1994), concepts such as *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) and *bio-power* (Foucault [1976] 1978) can help explain meaning of the past for present practices (reproduction of practices). The significance of these perspectives will be developed in later chapters. In my view, the state is more than a particular moment in history and its

⁵ I will come back to the implications of seeing the state as a cultural construct in the section on methodology.

manifestations are many. To explain its many faces, accounting for the possibility of both reproduction and change, I depend on different theories supported by various approaches.

Contrary to studies of the state arguing *either* for culture as produced by the state (Weberian accounts, cf. Steinmetz 1999), *or* for the cultural constitution of the state (Gupta et al 1995, 2002, 2006), I aim to show the different structures of the state manifested in different contexts. Following scholars that do not take the state as given, a distinct, fixed and unitary entity that defines the terrain in which other institutions function, I seek to bring together the ideological and material aspects of the state, and understand how the state comes into being, how it is differentiated from other institutional forms, and what effects this construction has on the operation and diffusion of power throughout society, as well as how it is itself affected. As the success of my argument depends on the convergence between approach and empirical evidence, I shall have to make clear my methodological position, which I will come back to after an introduction of the field sites, and notes on theme, method and key figures.

Context of the study⁶

Fieldwork for the thesis was conducted mainly in two places: Chittagong, located to the south-east, and Dinajpur, located in the north-western part of Bangladesh. The reason behind this choice of field sites I will explain later, limiting the following to more factual and historical information.

Chittagong

Chittagong Division, with an area of 33771.13 sq km, is bounded by Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and Tripura state of India on the north; Bay of Bengal and Arakan (Myanmar) on the south; Mizoram, Tripura states of India and chin state of Myanmar on the east; and Bay of Bengal, Barisal and Dhaka divisions on the west. As the rest of the country, Chittagong is divided by rivers, with the main being: Meghna, Matamuhuri, Titas, Dakatia, Gumti, Feni, Karnafuli, and Sangu. The islands Sandwip, Hatiya, Kutubdia, Maheshkhali and St. Martins,

⁶ Information gathered mainly from Banglapedia: <http://banglapedia.org/english/index.htm>, April 2007.

and the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari, Bandarban (Hill Tracts, established in 1860), are also administered as part of Chittagong Division.

The division further consists of a city corporation, 11 districts, 34 municipalities, six thanas, 97 upazilas, 923 union parishads, 7550 mouzas, 346 wards, 903 mahallas, and 14967 villages (ten different administrative levels). The districts are Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachhari, Feni, Lakshmipur, Comilla, Noakhali, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur.

Chittagong District (with an area of 5282.98 sq km) was established in 1666 and borders to Feni district and Tripura (Indian state) on the north; Cox's Bazar district on the south; Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari districts on the east; and Noakhali district and the Bay of Bengal on the west. The district consists of a city corporation, seven municipalities, six thanas, 20 upazilas, 197 union parishads and 1,319 villages. The upazilas are Anwara, Banskhali, Boalkhali, Chandanaish, Fatikchari, Hathazari, Lohagara, Mirsharai, Patiya, Rangunia, Raozan, Sandwip, Satkania and Sitakunda. The thanas are Chandgaon, Badar Thana (Chittagong Port), Double Mooring, Kotwali, Pahartali and Panchlaish. Due to its hills, rivers, sea, forests and valleys, Chittagong is quite different from other districts.

Chittagong City consists of six thanas, 68 wards and 236 mahallas. It has an area of 209.66 sq km and a population of 3,202,710. Chittagong is also called the commercial capital of Bangladesh and the main seaport is located at the estuary of the Karnafuli river. Chittagong City is not only the principal city of the district of Chittagong, but also the second largest city of Bangladesh. Historians have given various explanations as to the origin of the name Chittagong. According to the *East Pakistan District Gazetteers*, the British named the district Chittagong when they took possession of it in 1760 from Mir Qasim Ali Khan, Nawab of Bengal. Before that, the district was known as Islamabad, a name given to it by the Mughals after they had conquered the area in 1666 by defeating the Arakanese (Government of East Pakistan, 1970). Bernoli, in *Description Historique et Geographic de L'Inde* (1786), explains that the name Chittagong came from the Arabic word *Shat* (delta) prefixed to *Ganga* (Ganges), indicating the city at the mouth of the Ganges.

Being a port city from early times, Chittagong attracted people from various regions of the world. These international contacts left a lasting impact on the language, religion and culture of the city. Al Idrisi, writing in 1154, states that Arab merchants from Baghdad and Basrah

frequently visited an area near the mouth of the Meghna, which is now generally believed to be Chittagong. Other travellers and historians have recorded Arab contacts with Chittagong as far back as the ninth century. Apart from the merchants, many *sufis* and saints also visited and settled in Chittagong. The conquest of Bengal by Bakhtiyar Khalji in 1204 led to large-scale Muslim settlement in Chittagong.

The vast majority of the people of Chittagong today are Muslims, with a small percentage of Hindus and Christians also living in the city. In addition to places and people having Arabic names, there are a good number of Arabic words in the dialect spoken in Chittagong. Names of places like Alkaran (Al-qarn), or Sulek Bahar (Sulukul Bakulia) are of Arab derivation. Apart from Arabic words certain Arakanese, Portuguese, Pali and Hindi words are also found in the Chittagonian dialect, generally known as *Chatgaiyan Buli*, which the majority of the people in Bangladesh do not understand. Though the Chittagonians' spoken Bangla is different, their written Bangla is the same as in the rest of Bangladesh.

Of the Europeans, descendants of the Portuguese are still to be seen in Chittagong. Most of them married local women and are known as *Kala Firinghis* or *Matia* (earth coloured) *Firinghis* (foreigners). They are mostly Roman Catholic Christians. During the British period they enjoyed certain privileges and were given preference in appointments in certain institutions like the port and the railway, and to clerical posts in government offices. An area in the city known as *Firingi Bazar* is believed to be named after them. The most significant contribution of the Portuguese is the presence of many Portuguese words in the Bengali language that are still in daily use. A few examples are - *anaros* (pineapple), *pepe* (papaya), *padri* (clergyman), *fita* (ribbon), *alpin* (pin), *botam* (button), *chabi* (key) etc.

The early history of Chittagong is not very clear. Burmese chronicles speak of a long line of kings over the region of Arakan, which included Chittagong in the sixth and seventh century. The names of these kings invariably ended with the title Chandra. Historian Lama Taranath mentions a Buddhist king Gopichandra who had his capital at Chittagong in the tenth century. According to Tibetan traditions, Chittagong was the birthplace of the Buddhist Tantric Tilayogi, who lived and worked in the tenth century. Whatever might have been its early history, Chittagong's history becomes clear with the advent of the Muslims to the region.

Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq divided Bengal into three administrative units – Lakhnauti, Satgaon and Sonargaon. In 1338, Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah captured power at Sonargaon and soon after occupied Chittagong. He constructed a highway from Chandpur to Chittagong and adorned Chittagong with mosques and tombs. In 1538, the Arakanese regained possession of Chittagong after the fall of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Mahmud Shah at the hands of Sher Shah, but was conquered by the Mughals in 1666. During the period from 1538 to 1666, the Portuguese made inroads into Chittagong and virtually ruled it. In the period of Portuguese occupation, Chittagong city and port acquired great fame as centre of business and trade. With the gradual rise and development of Calcutta in the 18th and 19th century, due mainly to the trading activities of the East India Company (see chapter 2), Chittagong lost its importance in the region.

Chittagong once again came into prominence after the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the creation of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Due to the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway, which connected the port of Chittagong with its natural hinterland, Chittagong as a whole received a great boost and much of the development of the city in the first quarter of the twentieth century can be attributed to it.

The history of Chittagong shows repeated attempts by the people to free themselves from the colonial rule of the British. At the time of the Sepoy Revolt in 1857 (cf. chapter two), the 2nd, 3rd and 4th companies of the 34th Bengal Infantry Regiment were stationed at Chittagong. On the night of November 18, the three above-named companies rose in rebellion and after releasing all the prisoners from jail, the Sepoys left Chittagong carrying with them three government elephants, ammunition, and treasure. They marched along the borders of Hill Tippera into Sylhet and Cachar, but were either killed or captured by the Kuki scouts and the Sylhet Light Infantry, later known as the 10th Gurkha Rifles.

The *Khilafat*⁷ and Non-Cooperation movements were strongly supported by the people of Chittagong. Communal riots and massacre of Muslims in Calcutta and other parts of India in 1925, however, led the people of Chittagong to lend support to the Muslim leaders of Bengal who were fighting to uphold the interests of the Muslims.

⁷ The Khilafat Movement (1919-1924) was a political campaign launched mainly by Muslims in India to influence the British government and to protect the Ottoman Empire during the aftermath of World War I.

By 1923, Surya Sen, a prominent Hindu Bengali freedom fighter and the chief architect of anti-British freedom movement in Chittagong, had established a number of hardliner patriotic organisations (including Jugantar) in different parts of Chittagong district. Aware of the limited equipment and other resources of the freedom fighters, he was convinced of the need for secret guerrilla warfare against the colonial government. One of his early successful undertakings was a broad day robbery at the treasury office of the Assam-Bengal Railway at Chittagong. His subsequent major success in the anti-British revolutionary violence was the Chittagong Armoury Raid in 1930. On the night of April 18, 700 youths divided themselves into several groups and at a fixed time attacked the Armoury and the Magazine House of the Auxiliary Corps, occupied the telephone- and telegraphs offices, and removed railway fishplates at Dhoom, disconnecting all communications.

As a fugitive after the raid, Sen was hiding at a house near Patiya. A police and military force under Captain Cameron surrounded the house on 13 June 1932. Cameron was shot dead while ascending the staircase and Surya Sen along with Pritilata Waddedar (the first woman member of Surya Sen's revolutionary group) and Kalpana Datta (another female member of Sen's group) escaped to safety. Ultimately a villager revealed the hiding place of Sen and in the early hours of 17 February 1933, a Gurkha contingent surrounded the hideout and a soldier seized Sen while he was trying to break the cordon. Sentenced to death in August 1933, Surya Sen was hanged in the Chittagong Jail on 8 January 1934.

During the Second World War, the British used Chittagong as an important military base. Consequently it became the target of Japanese attacks. The aerodrome at Patenga was bombarded for two successive days in April 1942 and again on the 20 and 24 December 1942. As a result, Chittagong was declared a non-family area and the head-quarter of the Divisional Commissioner was shifted to Comilla, and that of the Assam Bengal Railway to Dhaka. All valuable government documents were shifted to Mymensingh.

The City of Chittagong also played a significant role in the War of Liberation of Bangladesh in 1971. It was from Chittagong that the first public announcement was made over the radio declaring Independence and the start of the War of Liberation. The people of Chittagong denied the occupation army of Pakistan access to the sea and the facilities for reinforcement of troops and replenishment of arms. The valiant freedom fighters sank a good number of ships in the channel of the Karnafuli River and thus totally blocked the port so that the Pakistani

Occupation Army could not use it. Consequently, Chittagong suffered enormous losses in terms of people and properties during the War of Liberation.

After the liberation of Bangladesh and the surrender of Pakistani troops, Chittagong needed a massive rehabilitation and reconstruction programme. This was carried out on a high priority basis, as the major outlet to the sea could not be allowed to remain out of commission for long. Within a couple of years after liberation, Chittagong became generally operational both as a city and as a port.

Present-day administrative functions of Chittagong are carried out by a melange of organisations. The City Corporation of Chittagong consisting of a mayor and several ward commissioners is the only elected body. Chief Executive Officer is a senior government official deputed by the government. There is no *de jure* focal point of control and coordination at the city level. Various agencies have respective lines of control, coordination, policy determination, and finance terminating in various ministries in Dhaka. The Mayor being the seniormost elected official at the city level occasionally operates as a *de facto* centre of coordination on some operational matters.

The City Corporation has a rather limited mandate and budget for carrying out the responsibilities of managing some basic civic services like street-lighting, conservancy, sewerage, city beautification, maintenance of city roads and mosquito eradication, and so on. Principal source of finance is municipal taxes and conservancy charges collected by the City Corporation. Other public functions are organised as follows:

- Maintenance of Law and order in the city is the responsibility of the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, both controlled and coordinated by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The District and Sessions Judge is the head of the judicial administration at the city level. Trials relating to serious public offences and all the civil offences are carried out in the court of the District and Sessions Judge, controlled and coordinated by the Supreme Court.
- The office of the Deputy Commissioner maintains land records and collects land revenue on behalf of Ministry of Land.

- The Power Development Board, The Titas Gas Co Ltd and the oil companies are responsible for the supply of electricity, gas, and fuel oil to the city, respectively. All these agencies come under the control and coordination of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources.
- The Department of Fire Brigade and Civil Defence, controlled by the Ministry of Home Affairs, provides fire fighting and emergency rescue services in the city.
- The Telephone and Telecommunication Department, controlled by Ministry of Post and Telecommunication, provides telecommunication services. A number of private telephone companies are also serving the area.
- Health services are mainly provided by hospitals run by the Health Ministry. The City Corporation has its own health services and hospitals which supplement the services provided by the government and the NGOs. There are a number of NGO-run clinics in addition to mushrooming private clinics, which are run on a commercial basis.
- The Ministry of Education, supplemented by services provided by the City Corporation, NGOs, and the private sector, substantially provides educational facilities in the city.
- Chittagong Port falls within the limits of the city of Chittagong. Hence all the basic civic services of the port fall within the responsibility of the City Corporation and various other governmental agencies serving in the area.

Dinajpur

Dinajpur District (Rajshahi division) with an area of 3437.98 sq km, is bounded by Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts on the north; Gaibandha and Joypurhat districts on the south; Nilphamari and Rangpur districts on the east; and the Indian state of West Bengal on the south-west. Main rivers are Dhepa, Punarbhaba, Kanchan and Atrai.

Population of Dinajpur is 2,617,942. Compared to other districts, Dinajpur have a relatively large Hindu population of approx. twenty percent (little more than ten percent nationally). In addition, there are several *Santal* and *Oraon* (tribal) settlements in the region. Dinajpur consists of six municipalities, 57 wards, 200 mahallas, 13 upazilas, 101 union parishads and 2142 villages. The upazilas are Birampur, Birganj, Biral, Bochaganj, Chirirbandar, Phulbari, Ghoraghat, Hakimpur, Kaharole, Khansama, Dinajpur Sadar, Nawabganj, Parbatipur.

Dinajpur District was established in 1786. Its previous name was Ghoraghat district. According to the *Bangladesh District Gazetteers*, the theory generally advanced and accepted is that the name 'Dinajpur' is derived from the name of some local chieftain or king of the name of Dinaj or Danuj. Raja Ganesh, the Chieftain of North Bengal, who became the King of Gaur in the early part of the fifteenth century, assumed the title of Danujamardanadeva and it is assumed that the name Dinajpur has been derived from his title.

According to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Ganesh was a baron of Dinajpur who had an independent and hereditary source of strength in his large ancestral estate and personal contingent of troops not in the Sultan's pay. In the end Ganesh usurped the throne (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (henceforth GoB) 1972:30).

Dinajpur was once a part of the ancient state of Pundrabardhwan. Since then, the district has been through periods of Guptas, Palas, Senas, Shahs, and Mughals; all the way to the British period from the eighteenth century (see chapter 2 for the general history of the British period). The area of the district was formerly much bigger than it was at the time of Independence and partition of Bengal in 1947, including as it did greater portion of the districts of Bogra and Maldah (India), as well as considerable tracts now included in Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Purnea (India).

When Dinajpur first came under British rule in 1765, it was known for the lawlessness of its inhabitants, and the ordinary district staff failed to cope successfully with the dacoits and the river pirates with which this large tract of country was infested. The area was, therefore, gradually reduced with the objects of improving the administration. During the year 1800-01, a large number of estates, hitherto included in Dinajpur, were made over to Purnea (India), Rangpur and Rajshahi. From 1833-1870, a large portion of the district was transferred to Bogra and Maldah (India). Finally, in 1897-98, the whole thana of Mahadebpur in the south of the district was transferred to Rajshahi (GoB:35).

As far as modern political agitation is concerned, people of the district mobilised for and against on the question of the first partition of Bengal in 1905, with Hindus opposing and Muslims supporting the partition.⁸ They also participated in a non-violent peasant movement

⁸ On the 8th July, 1905, a report was published informing that the Secretary of State had given his assent to the Government of India's new scheme of partition of Bengal into two parts to form a new province of East Bengal and Assam. This move of creating a new province where the Muslims formed a majority was strongly opposed by the Hindus of the district in meetings held on the 21st July, 1905. When the Hindus opposed the partition, the Muslims of Dinajpur called meetings in its support. Partition was proclaimed in September 1905, but was annulled in 1911.

in 1920 launched against oppression by the zamindar (landlord) in various forms⁹, arranged *hartals* (general strikes) against government policies and the arrest of Ghandi in 1930, causing Dinajpur to continue to figure in government reports as a troubled district, and took part in the *Tebhaga Movement*.¹⁰ The district also contributed significantly to the War of Liberation (1971), to mention some important events.

Regarding the economy, there were several indigo factories in the district in the early part of the nineteenth century, but the business does not seem to have ever been a very paying one, and the factories disappeared. Main occupation continues to be agriculture (42.85%), with paddy, wheat, sugarcane, jute, potato, vegetables, onion, garlic, and oil seed as the main crops, but with the majority of farmers being either landless (40%), or small farmers (30%), most people are poor and struggling to make ends meet. In addition to being an exporter of agricultural products, the district is also known for- and profiting from its mangos, litchis, and jackfruits.

In today's administration, deputy commissioner (DC) is the chief administrative and revenue officer of a district. The office of deputy commissioner traces its origin to the district collector system of the early phase of British rule. A district supervisor was appointed with limited functions in 1769 and Warren Hastings (first governor general of Bengal, cf. chapter 2) introduced the district collector system in 1772. The system was repealed the following year, but restored again in 1787 vesting the collector with the powers of a judge and magistrate, in addition to some authority over the police. With introduction of the permanent settlement in Bengal of 1793 (see chapter 2), the collector was stripped of all judicial and police powers, but by 1831 he was reinvested with judicial powers. Since then, the collector was known as district magistrate and collector, or just district magistrate.

After 1960, the district magistrate and collector came to be known throughout the country as deputy commissioner. During the early years, deputy commissioner's office was concerned with internal security and revenue administration. Over time, the office became increasingly occupied with the general welfare of the people in the district. To that end, deputy

⁹ Muslims and Hindus of the district took jointly part in the Khilafat Movement.

¹⁰ The Tebhaga Movement was a militant campaign initiated in Bengal by the Kisan Sabha (peasants' front of Communist Party of India) in 1946. At that time, share-cropping peasants had to give half of their harvest to landlords. The demand of the Tebhaga (sharing by thirds) movement was to reduce the share given to landlords to one third.

commissioner's role was conceived of as the general controlling authority for all other activities in the district. The universality of deputy commissioner's role since the early 20th century came to be affected by the introduction of elected legislatures and creation of specialised departments having their own officers in the districts. A deputy commissioner still function as the eyes and ears of the government in such areas as development, law and order, land administration, disaster management, and elections.

The deputy commissioner works under the general guidance and supervision of the divisional commissioner. Both are under the administrative control of the cabinet division, although the Ministry of Establishment makes postings and transfers. The deputy commissioner is drawn from the senior scale officers of the Bangladesh Civil Service (administration) cadre. He is the coordinator between local and central government and is assisted by five additional deputy commissioners (ADC literacy and development; ADC general; ADC revenue; ADC land; and ADC magistrate). Thus, the office of DC is the central government office of the district and his position the most senior one. I will return to the role of the DC in subsequent chapters, particularly in chapters 3 and 4.

Below deputy commissioner is the *upazila nirbahi officer* (UNO), who is the chief executive of an *upazila* (sub-district). Under pressure from the donor community, who felt that under General Ershad's 'autocratic and corrupt regime' a decentralisation effort was the only way to reach out to the vast majority of people living in the rural areas (Siddiqui 2000), the military government of Ershad (1982-1990) in 1982 constituted a committee for administrative reorganisation and reform. A major recommendation of the committee was to have a representative body called *upazila parishad* (sub-district council) under a directly elected chairman. The government accepted the recommendation and accordingly a post, designated first as *thana nirbahi officer* (executive officer) but later renamed as upazila nirbahi officer, was created in each of the existing thanas (later upgraded and renamed as upazila) outside the metropolitan areas. About the same time, all existing subdivisions were converted into districts. Responsibilities for all development activities at local level were transferred to the upazila parishad. It was also decided that the UNO should continue to act as chairman of upazila parishad till such time an elected chairman takes office. Till present, though, the only level of local government with elected members in the districts is that of Union Parishad. The role of the UNO will also be discussed in more detail later.

Dinajpur thana was established in 1899 and turned into a upazila in 1983. The upazila consists of 14 union parishads, 291 mouzas and 205 villages. As in the case of Chittagong, the system is highly centralised and most functions are financed and controlled by respective ministries in Dhaka.

Notes on theme, method and key figures

Theme

When I was identifying a theme for a doctoral project, the main interest fell on corruption and the question of what defines corrupt practices. The challenge was to find a way to approach the theme without right from the start directing or silencing the conversations. Even if I do not believe in universal opinions *per se*, the negative conception of ‘corruption’ as a result of global discourses appears to have made its impact invariably, whether in Norway or in Bangladesh. The difference, I thought, would be in terms of how or where to draw the line between corrupt and non-corrupt practices. Later I realised how limiting this appeared (cf. earlier discussion with reference to Migdal) and the necessity of rethinking my approach regarding the whole state-society relationship.

As point of departure, the study was to focus on actors trying to access resources within the field of education, selecting bureaucrats, teachers, parents, and students as main sources of information. The plan was to return to the same location as before and work with contacts from the previous fieldwork conducted over a period of eight months in Dinajpur in 1996. How the partly change of field site came about and how it affected the work I will discuss shortly. For now, let me just say that this choice also impacted on my general approach ending up focusing more on state and bureaucracy than families and educational institutions.

In the field, I decided not to present my study interest in terms of corruption because of its immediate negative connotations. The focus was rather presented as being on ways of accessing resources within the field of education, which was what it was really about anyway. Whether or not corruption would be a theme was a question of definition that I wanted to leave open. From earlier experiences, though, I knew corruption to be a popular

conversational theme among friends, generally talking about bureaucrats and politicians as corrupt. Whenever bringing up the character of a particular bureaucrat or politician, reference to his or her financial situation is always made. A lavish lifestyle usually indicates dishonesty in office, which is – in conversations at least – condemned. At the same time, insisting too much on the differentiation of private social spaces from official ones does not necessarily go home well either. Corruption as a discourse about morality ultimately extends to many other concerns as well, which I find more interesting than merely considering the legal aspects of state processes.

Thus, during the course of fieldwork, I found myself more interested in bureaucrats and bureaucratic processes in relation to the environment in which they have to function than merely the more technical question of access to resources. Admittedly, the question functioned as an entry point into the field: people's concerns about children's education makes them more than willing to talk about their experiences on the issue. It was also a way of remaining focused allowing me to follow up on a limited set of issues, but it was not enough to answer the much larger question of how the state works in Bangladesh. To approach this latter question I decided not to follow the flow of resources as such, but rather to focus on situations in which the state was emerging. Thus, this thesis is a result of wanting to understand the modern state and its powers and manifestations beyond the question of corruption as merely a legal matter.

Method

Fieldwork for this thesis was conducted over a period of about a year and mainly in two phases between 2001 and 2003. The plan was to leave for the field in August 2001, but being listed as a member of the Norwegian Resource Bank for Democracy and Human Rights (Nordem), I was asked to observe the parliamentary elections planned for early October 2001 as a long-term observer (cf. Sissener 2001).

Arriving in Dhaka in August 2001, the two Norwegian long-term observers (LTOs) expected to join the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM), but in the absence of an agreement between Norway and EU regarding election observation at the time, the EU EOM to Bangladesh 2001 refused to include the two observers belonging to a non-EU member state

in the mission. Instead, the United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat (UNEAS), established to offer logistical and administrative services to the international electoral observers but without intentions of carrying out any observation activities of its own, assumed responsibility for the two Norwegian observers. In practice this meant that we were, together with the EU observers, briefed by the EU EOM, but not being included in the mission we were not assigned by them. UNEAS decided to deploy us separately (observers usually works in teams of two), and to give us the chance to choose area of responsibility. My choice fell on Chittagong, which I had never before visited, and after being assigned assistant and car with a driver this is where I was heading. Being the only LTOs coordinated by UNEAS, our tasks were only vaguely defined except for being as visible as possible, which meant to cover as much ground as possible.

Over the next few weeks, I travelled all around Chittagong, including the three hill districts, meeting with election officers at every level. As is common for states arranging elections, organising the elections in the districts is the responsibility of civil servants. At the national level, the Election Commission (an independent constitutional body), assisted by a secretariat, is the controlling and coordinating body. At divisional level, divisional commissioner is responsible for the electoral process. At district level, deputy commissioner represents the election commission, and the upazila nirbahi officer at sub-district level.

The government had ordered all electoral authorities, including those responsible for security (superintendent of police for the districts and police commissioner in the city), to cooperate with and assist the international observers in their work. As a certified election observer, I therefore had easy access to everyone from divisional commissioner to the last polling station officer. Knowing bureaucratic hierarchy as rather rigid in Bangladesh I started at the top meeting the divisional commissioner, police commissioner, superintendents of police, and deputy commissioners working my way down the hierarchy and getting acquainted with all levels of the system. It was due to this experience that I decided to return to Chittagong also for thesis work.

The decision certainly had its pros and cons. On the positive side, I had already established a large network of important contacts, including deputy commissioners, superintendents of police, a police commissioner, district officers, and so on, who welcomed me back more or less like a friend. I could visit them in their offices any time and was invited to their homes for

dinner. Being senior officers, meetings and appointments with officials anywhere in the hierarchy was usually only a phone call away and all I had to do was to list the people I wanted to meet. Seen as a friend of this or that higher official I was never asked to explain anything either. People were curious to know about me, but they never really questioned my presence, which allowed me to ask for invitations and freely participate in meetings and events. As time passed, and I came to be known also as “the foreign researcher interested in Bangladeshi culture”, I was frequently requested to join in meetings and social gatherings. My language skills in Bangla, which I had acquired during my first fieldwork in Dinajpur, was an additional advantage in getting accepted, but in practical terms not as useful because people here spoke a locale dialect incomprehensible to outsiders (cf. above). Then again, English was in frequent use being the second largest city of Bangladesh. Besides, the government transfer system (see chapter 4) meant that most of my contacts were not themselves from Chittagong and did not speak the local dialect either.

Chittagong being a city and the centre of divisional and district administration all at once, allowed me to simultaneously work with different levels of administration. The fact that it was a large city also had its advantages in terms of greater social space and the opportunity to move between different social groups and classes. During the first phase of fieldwork I stayed alone in an apartment in a middle class area spending the time outside bureaucracy mostly with middle class families. On my next visit, I stayed with a Norwegian couple in a large and luxurious apartment in the posh area of the city getting to know also upper-class and noble families.¹¹

Drawbacks of working in a large city were first of all distances in terms of availability – geographically, professionally, and socially. Little is within walking distance and meetings usually take place according to appointments. Even if South Asians are generally more relaxed in that regard, city people here as elsewhere maintain a much busier schedule and chances of finding them in showing up unannounced is less than in the districts. Besides, locating people who are out of office is of course more difficult in a large city. Conducting fieldwork in the city also means more ‘bits and pieces’ information instead of the more ‘complete’ picture. The reason being that number of people, localities, and happenings are

¹¹ This second arrangement actually worked out better because I was then the niece of this couple instead of this strange foreign lady living on her own.

much higher than in smaller settings where the same people tend to be involved in the same events.

To fill in the 'blanks', I made frequent visits to Dinajpur staying with the same family as before (during my first fieldwork in 1996), in the same village taking part in everyday village life.

Key figures

Following anthropological convention, names of persons and more specific places throughout the thesis are pseudonyms, but some background information of key figures is necessary.

In Dinajpur, I stayed in an ethnically and religiously mixed village consisting of both tribals (mostly Santal and Oraon) and Bengalis; Muslims and Christians. Most families can be defined as lower to middle class engaged either in agricultural or social service work (mostly with the NGOs). The family I stayed with, and whose members (father or eldest son) used to accompany me to different events there, is a Christian tribal family. The father is a bachelor degree holder from a local university who all his professional life has worked with development within different NGOs. As both tribal and Christian, he holds twice a minority status, and as employed in the informal sector, he is regarded not particularly well off socially or economically. In this area where mainly politicians and civil servants enjoy high status in terms of occupation, differentiations appear primarily between office holders and non-office holders, as well as between higher and lower ranking officers, which is why both father and son whenever accompanying me to public ceremonies went for a place in the back and not up front among the more important guests (see chapter 3).

In Chittagong, as in Dinajpur, I had no regular assistant, but was accompanied and assisted by friends whenever needed. For instance, travelling to the Chittagong Hill Tracts to visit a deputy commissioner (DC) to learn more about his work, a Chakma (largest tribal group of the Hill Tracts) friend of mine who is from the area offered to accompany me. As a close relation of the Chakma Chief, and employed in one of the largest international private textile companies of Chittagong, my friend was more than familiar enough with relating to powerful

people, but not so much with those of the state, which may explain his reactions vis-à-vis the DC (see chapter 4).

Mr. GO, figuring mainly in chapter 3, is of a middle class religious family who was early told by his father to work hard and leave the rest with Allah. As his father, Mr. GO had joined a government job shortly after graduating from the university and as his father he too had believed in the integrity of the system. It was as a middle-level ranked civil servant I first met him. He was married with two children and lived in his father's house. After several years in the civil service, Mr. GO continued to work hard, but experiencing disillusion about aim and purpose of the system talked about leaving the civil service for a job in the private sector. He kept staying on in the service though.

I should also mention Alam, whom I interacted perhaps most regularly with in Chittagong. After completing a master's degree in accounting, Alam worked for an international company for a few months, but resigned after a quarrel with his boss. According to himself, there were several other private companies interested in hiring him at the time, but coming from a middle class family and with a father who used to be a civil servant before retiring, the family urged him to join a government job. When there was an opening with the Ministry of Education he applied and more than ten years later he was still in the same position. He was married, the father of two boys and living with his family in his father's house. On his government salary, Alam could barely support wife and children and depended on his father for economic support. Working for the government meant for him frequent travels, high work pressure and long working hours, meagre salaries and few perks (see chapter 4), which he often complained about. Alam too experienced disillusion regarding functioning of the services and on more than one occasion he talked about resigning, but instead of trying for something else he continued to work hard to maintain his government job properly (see chapter 4 and 5).

Several other characters' figuring in this thesis seemed to share a disillusion about the system (see Ahmed in chapter 4, the chairman and the professor in chapter 5), but some perhaps more than others. The reasons behind the disillusion will be discussed later, but that there are similarities between officials mentioned here and the way of experiencing the system seems clear from the different cases appearing in various chapters.

Methodology and structure of the thesis

In the introduction to *the anthropology of the state* (2006), Sharma and Gupta argues that an anthropological perspective allows us to pay careful attention to the cultural constitution of the state: how people perceive the state, how their understandings are shaped by their particular locations and intimate and embodied encounters with state processes and officials, and how the state manifests itself in their lives. They say:

Analyzing these cultural processes through which “the state” is instantiated and experienced also enables us to see that the illusion of cohesion and unitariness created by states is always contested and fragile, and is the result of hegemonic processes that should not be taken for granted” (Sharma and Gupta 2006:11).

Instead of assuming the entity of the state or a certain state-society relationship, then, anthropological analyses of the state begin with the counter-intuitive notion that states that are structurally similar may nonetheless be profoundly different from each other in terms of the meanings they have for their populations. According to Sharma and Gupta, it is cultural struggles that determine what a state means to its people, how it is instantiated in their daily lives, and where its boundaries are drawn. By paying attention to these cultural struggles, waged in the sphere of representation and in the domain of the everyday practices of state agencies, the cultural constitution of the state will emerge. While Gupta in particular is well known for this *everyday practices* approach to the state (see earlier references), his concept of *representation* has been rather limiting focusing mainly on the mass media (Gupta 1995). In their introduction, though, Sharma and Gupta acknowledge the many ways of knowing the state:

People learn about particular state agencies and officers at local and national levels through newspapers... they read government reports about topics such as population control... they discuss their experiences of particular bureaucracies and officials in different forums; they watch election-related propaganda on television or listen to speeches by elected officials at public rallies; they observe military parades, activities, and violence... and they participate in other ceremonial rituals staged by state officials (Sharma and Gupta 2006:18).

Employees of various bureaucratic institutions also come to understand the entity they work for as well as their place in it through the representational sphere. To illustrate, Sharma and Gupta mentions what they call “banal techniques of representation” such as official letterheads, seals, memos, images of official buildings, special uniforms, spatial arrangements

of offices, monitoring and surveillance visits by senior officials, cars with government license plates and official motorcades, personnel files and procedures for promotion, and organisational charts, which they claim play a key role in presenting “the state” and its organisational hierarchy to its functionaries.

The public circulation and dissemination of such images of “the state” and of state leaders and their actions enable people at different levels of the bureaucracy, as well as those outside these institutions, to imagine what the state is, what it is supposed to do, where its boundaries lie, and what their place is in relation to state institutions (ibid:18).

The argument that Sharma and Gupta develops in relation to their approach is one that sees states as ‘cultural artefacts and effects’, which reflects a postmodern argument tending to overlook structures in the flow, processes, and indeterminism of the human action described (Kapferer 1995). To become employees of the state, for instance, officials are systematically tested and trained before even considered for service. Such preparations are important means for the state to disseminate certain attitudes among its candidates. The cultural struggle perspective of Gupta seems rather more useful for explaining change than for explaining reproduction, as it captures the state as *contested* (diversity of positions) but appears to have less to say about the *consented* state (collective practices).

That the state is revealed and renders itself available to anthropological analysis through events of representation is a major point in Don Handelman’s work on public events (1998, 2004), but from a different position. Rather than neglecting structures, Handelman seeks to approach structures through events. Although influenced by the Manchester School and situational analysis, his interest in the complexity and difficulty encountered by human beings in constructing, establishing, and securing their social realities prevents him from falling into the pitfall of the subjectivism associated with Victor Turner (Kapferer op. cit.). In *Nationalism and the Israeli State* (2004), Handelman approaches the question of nationalism by exploring state ceremonies arguing for a mirroring relationship between public events and social order. Both underlying logic and historical contingency play a role here and it is this underlying logic, which he calls ‘bureaucratic’, communicated in public events that forms and informs the modern state social order, as well as nationalist sentiments. Focusing on routine activities and events of practice, Handelman suggests states forming social order and not the other way around, i.e. culture forming states as argued by Gupta et al.

In this thesis, I draw on anthropological perspectives for the ethnographic exploration of the state and for an understanding of state power and its manifestations. As pointed out already, my own position is that the state must be approached as a variety of structures and practices manifested differently in different contexts. In chapter 2, the state is explored as a historical project stressing transitions that have taken place going from the establishment of a trading company to the emergence of a powerful system of control: the modern state. It is a long and detailed chapter, with importance for subsequent chapters laying in the analysis of circumstances for state formation and its achievements. With reference to Max Weber (1978), the state can be understood as the development of an organisation growing larger and stronger because of its rational character. Approaching the state as manifested in the organisation of its system of control, which for modern states means bureaucracy, power of the state is seen to depend on form of rationalisation. The more rationalised the society in terms of a “rational matter-of-factness”, he claims, the more dominating the state. In case of the East Indian Company discussed in chapter 2, the advance of a rational bureaucratic structure did indeed have far-reaching consequences. How dominant this machinery became and what role it could continue- and continues to play is explored in this theses.

Focusing on public events in Victorian India, the approach of Bernard S. Cohn (1983) helps to understand the state as representation of power manifested in public ceremonies. Inspired by this approach (cf. chapter 2), which is similar to that of Handelman (see above), chapter 3 examines the state as events of representational practices manifested in public ceremonies. While Cohn seems to concentrate on the ideological (ability to present itself), I will be concerned also with its material aspects (ability to reproduce itself).

This representation of power perspective is also present in chapter 4 focusing on bureaucratic processes, but here the emphasis is more on the state as routine operations. Approaching the state as a system of power, the perspectives of Weber and Foucault are found useful for framing the discussion. While Weber argues for power as the institutionalised possibility of commanding others, Foucault is more concerned about power as embedded in persons and expressed in relations. To understand the meaning and dynamics of bureaucracy, bureaucratic processes as manifestations of power structures are explored.

While the major part of this thesis is concerned with state power and its manifestations, chapter 5 is more about its challenges. Following the micro-level approach of Gupta and

others, the presence of state rationality in habitual practices of everyday life can be explored. Looking at both familial and official routine practices, such as raising children and arranging marriages in the first instance, and dealing with requests for public services in the second, enables me to say something about rationalities at work and their cultural constitution.

Chapter 6 aims to draw it all together not in a conclusion, but in closing, as there are probably many questions left unexplored. What I hope to achieve, though, is to develop some perspectives that makes it possible to talk about dynamic social processes without having to choose between treating human beings as either free agents creating structures through interaction or automata merely enacting a program.

2

Emergence of the modern state

Modern societies are characterized by the emergence of exclusive legal domination, which is revealed chiefly through the formation and development of an institutionalized bureaucracy, literally the instrument of the contemporary state.
(Badie 1983:20)

According to Max Weber, the modern state is characterised by the way it is organised and its rational-legal bureaucracy representing the answer to efficient organisation. Sociologists still discuss (and disagree on) the role of bureaucracy and of its personnel in the development of the state. A common answer is that construction of the modern state, as an organisation of autonomous and adaptable political institutions, is greatly assisted by the development of a bureaucracy (Badie 1983). While I will argue that in the case of South Asia, state formation and development of bureaucracy have to be seen together, as two inseparable events. Establishing the order or impact of things at the outset thus seems less relevant. As events unfold, these processes appear to have reinforced each other to a point where it was no longer possible to do or think the one without the other, but exactly how remains to be seen.¹² Emergence of the South Asian state is the focus of this chapter. Since so much of academic thinking about the state has been, and continues to be, heavily influenced by Max Weber's rationality thesis, the chapter will start with some of his more general observations on form and function of modern bureaucracies before moving on to events of South Asian state formation.

Following Weber, modern bureaucracies are goal-oriented organisations designed according to rational (calculable and passionless) principles in order to attain their goals efficiently. Offices are ranked in a hierarchical order, with information flowing up the chain of command, directives flowing down. Operations of the organisations are characterised by impersonal rules explicitly stating duties, responsibilities, standardised procedures and conduct of full-

¹² As noted by Badie in the case of China: "the Chinese empire, despite the existence of a unified and coherent bureaucracy, exhibited little differentiation in its political and cultural systems. Among other things, this meant that there was only limited autonomy in the recruitment of officials and that a classical education counted for more than professional competence" (1983:46).

time working office holders. Offices are highly specialised and appointments to these offices are made according to specialised qualifications rather than ascribed criteria (Weber 1978).

This particular form of officialdom affects the position of the official in a number of ways. His job appears to him as the exercise of a profession linked to a specific body of knowledge achieved through specialised training. Office holding is neither in fact or in principle the source of fees or dividends, nor is it the object of a contract whereby the employee hires out his manpower. The particular character of the job implies that, in return for a secure existence, the functionary accepts the specific duty of loyalty to the job; he is at the service, not of a person, but of an objective and impersonal goal. This goal is built into the organisation to which he is linked; the state, church, community, party or enterprise and realises certain cultural values. Thus, an official in the service of a functional purpose appears at once impersonalised and ideologically sanctified. Stability of employment is normally assured, but a legal or actual life-tenure is not recognised as a proprietary right of the official as a possession. Protecting the official against discretionary dismissal or transfer is to serve the purpose of guaranteeing a strictly impersonal discharge of specific office duties. The official normally receives remuneration in the form of a salary determined by the nature of the job and, eventually, by the years of his service in the organisation. Within the hierarchy, officers move from lower ranking, less important paid positions to higher ones and the aim is for promotions to take place as mechanically as possible (ibid, Lefort 1986).

Subsequently, hierarchy and rank is instrumental for the effective working of the organisation and its rationality is limited to organisational operations. Officers are linked in a chain of instrumental commands with no bearings other than contributing to the realisation of the overall objectives of the organisation and with relationships of superior-inferior existing only in terms of official duties. Whether the work of managers, or the work of those who carry out orders, hierarchy and officers' place within it is relevant only in relation to the implementation of tasks of universal significance performed in a system indifferent to every other aspect of social reality.

Weber's interest in bureaucracy and bureaucratic behaviour was part of a larger project searching for the connection between modernity and rationalisation of social and political interaction. The image of the 'iron cage' is an expression of a particular development where *zweckrationalität* or formal rationality (calculability of means and procedures) as a value in

itself comes to dominate every aspect of social life. Just as capitalism can be seen as the rational form of economic activity; the passionless calculation of inputs and profits, the use of predictable procedures and accounting systems, the adoption of standard prices, the systematic ploughing back of profits for increased future production and so on, modern bureaucracy, founded on similar principles, is considered the rational form of administration. As Brubaker has pointed out, Weber is not justifying or defending a social order from a particular value standpoint, but is simply calling attention to social, structural and psychological ‘mechanisms’ enhancing the calculability of action. “Such purely formal rationality”, Brubaker says, “is an objective property of the social structure of modern society” (Brubaker 1984:37). Neither is Weber trying to make predictions:

One must in every individual historical case analyze in which of the special directions bureaucratization has there developed ... it must also remain an open question whether the power of bureaucracy is increasing in the modern states in which it is spreading. The fact that bureaucratic organization is technically the most highly developed power instrument in the hands of its controller does not determine the weight that bureaucracy as such is capable of procuring for its own opinions in a particular social structure (Weber 1978:991).

To Weber, bureaucracy works as “a concomitant of the rationalisation of society in the shift away from a *gemeinschaft* type of society, where social administration is informed by considerations of status, local custom, and patronage” (Stewart 1996:677).¹³

Modern South Asian bureaucracy was foreshadowed in the trading company of British colonial and imperial expansion in India from the seventeenth century onward. Starting as a monopolistic trading body chartered by the British Crown, and after securing lucrative trade and commerce rights from local rulers, the East Indian Company (henceforth the Company) pursued as a reckless plunderer of the country’s resources. In this plundering mood, company servants became busier enriching themselves than taking any organisational responsibility for the future of the Company, whose governance remained unattended by parliament until the enactment of the Regulating Act of 1773. Circumstances like the holocaust caused by the Great Famine (1769-70), rampant corruption among company officials, breakdown of civil authorities, collapse of the Bengal economy, and most importantly, near bankruptcy of the Company after territorial acquisitions forced parliament to intervene. Brought first within the

¹³ See also chapter 5.

regulative control of the Board of Control, and later the Crown, the organisation was changing in form, structure and aim. How this happened and with what consequences is the focus of this chapter.

For this purpose, events commencing with a trading company that became involved in politics and acted as an agent of British imperialism in India from the early eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century and ending in state formations in the twentieth century will be explored. For the early period, that is, before independence and separation of India and Pakistan, the focus will be on Bengal and Calcutta in particular because of its historical importance as administrative centre. After separation, first of India and Pakistan, and later of West and East Pakistan, focus will shift to the two wings of Pakistan and conclude with the independent state of Bangladesh.

Trade and politics

The first British contacts with India were in the final decades of the sixteenth century when a few merchant adventurers, interested in establishing trade connections, were successful in reaching India and returning home. On 31 December 1600, the British Crown granted a group of merchants a monopoly over the trade in Eastern Waters. Forming the East India Company, the merchants' first two expeditions took them to Sumatra, Java, and the Moluccas. A ship of the third expedition, between 1607 and 1608, under William Hawkins, went to Surat, the most important Mughal port on the West Coasts of India. Having arrived in Surat, Hawkins decided to go overland to Agra and to the Court of Jahangir and ask his permission for the company to trade in his domain, which he was granted. Thus, for the first one hundred and fifty years thereafter the British took little direct interest in India's political affairs. Company owners were for the most part merchants and traders interested only in securing the trade and their servants were commercial agents (Cohn 1966:87).¹⁴

¹⁴ According to Cohn (1966:88), "When in 1617 the East India Company raised £1,600,000 from 954 individuals, the owners of the stock included 313 merchants, 214 tradesmen, twenty-five foreign merchants, fifteen dukes and earls, eighty-two knights, twenty-six doctors of divinity and medicine, thirteen "ladies of title", eighty "widows and virgins", and 248 others".

The Court of Directors in London, the governing body of the East India Company, appointed company servants and applicants were either accepted or rejected depending on proven accounting skills. Company business was conducted through Indian intermediaries or brokers (*banyan*), who collected from Indian cultivators or farmers the goods and raw materials that were shipped to England. Banyans also disposed of the English trade goods in the Indian markets. “Not only was the trade of the company carried on through banyans,” Bernard S. Cohn reports, “but each civil servant had his Indian broker to conduct his own private trading operation” (ibid:91). Salaries of company servants were modest and the company allowed them to engage in private trade to earn a better living.

Until the 1740s, territorial rights were acquired as part of the company’s commercial activities and engagements in military and political activities were part of safeguarding business. Company servants’ diplomatic and military roles were secondary to their other roles. Within their limited territories, the Company servants acted as municipal judges and local administrators. Interactions with Indians were restricted to trading partners, with whom they maintained a purely contractual relationship.

The Europeans discovered their commercial activities could be furthered through trade monopolies by intervening in Indian politics and military affairs. In the early eighteenth century, Nawab¹⁵ Alivardi Khan established Bengal as an independent state with Calcutta as its centre. Alivardi granted the English East India Company, henceforth the Company, favourable commercial access through tax exemptions. Alivardi’s grandson and successor, Siraj-ud-daula, resented the growing influence of the British presence and decided in 1756 to have them removed by conquering Calcutta and imprisoning the representatives of the Company, which forced the British to flee Calcutta. For the Indian merchants and *zamindars*,¹⁶ this expulsion could not be borne long; their own interests had become far too closely intertwined with the fate of the Europeans who imported silver and bought their products and trade goods. The British and the alienated Bengali factions therefore plotted the nawab’s overthrow. From Madras, the British sent a relatively small company army led by Captain Robert Clive and with the help of the ruler’s uncle and commander of his forces Mir Jafar, were able to resume their position. After the battle at Plassey in 1757, Mir Jafar was

¹⁵ Nawab is a Mughal title that translates as ruler or governor.

¹⁶ Zamindar is the Persian word for “landholder” (Stein 2002).

installed as ruler as a reward for his support to the British. “This battle”, Burton Stein writes, “is often considered the true beginning of the British Empire in India, since it resulted in enormous properties falling into Company ownership” (2002:207). “Plassey indeed”, comments B. B. Misra, “put the Company’s trade on the road to politics without political awareness. The Company had not yet become a territorial power, although it had, even as a pure commercial body, set up an organizational framework which was capable of being transformed into an administrative instrument” (1977:41).

In the following years, the British gradually strengthened their position in the province by playing the game of several actors competing for influence with rulers constantly overthrown. By 1760, Clive had personally secured the position as *diwan* or tax collector placing him in a powerful position in relation to zamindars or landholders and earning him vast fortunes. In describing the personal payments he received, Clive made the following defence of his actions before Parliament.

Am I not rather deserving of praise for the moderation which marked my proceedings? Consider the situation in which I found myself after the victory of Plassey. A great Prince was dependent upon my pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, piled on each hand with gold and jewels! Mr. Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation (quoted in Cohn 1966:94).

Five years later, Clive returned to England. The consequence of frequent encounters was the establishment of the British colonial state of Fort William in Bengal in 1765 under the camouflage of the acquisition of the Diwani of Bengal by the Company.

Bengal, which had probably been the wealthiest province of Mughal India¹⁷, proved an extraordinary prize for the British. The massive land revenues secured by good natural irrigation could be used to pay for the Company’s fast expanding army, in addition to putting the Company and its servants at an enormous advantage in dealings with all other states and economies in India. From 1772, the Company also assumed governorship of Bengal.

¹⁷ Mughals refers to an empire that ruled greater parts of India between sixteenth and eighteenth century and is by many considered to be the precursor for, and in a sense the cause of, the rise of the successor empire of the British colonialist (Stein 2002).

The first British administrators were drawn from merchants and factors (mercantile agents) of the Company, applying the technique of the ledger, of profit over loss, to the management of cities and provinces. As a result of the company's affairs in India gaining in scope and complexity by mid-seventeenth century, recognition of varying levels of responsibility and seniority among company servants in India emerged. Assistants or writers were responsible for routine work, while factors were of a more senior rank and responsibility. At first, writers and factors sent out from Leadenhall Street in the City of London were reluctant to take on the actual task of administration. Ten years after Plassey, Clive wrote to the directors of the Company, urging a policy of non-intervention: "To do any act by an exertion of the English power which can be equally done by the nabob, would be throwing off the mask and declaring the Company soubah [governor] of the province" (Tinker 1966:23). According to Hugh Tinker, the servants of the Company were sent out into the districts as collectors of the revenue and, incidentally, as the "guardians of the public good" because of the failure of all attempts to rule Bengal by indirect means more than from any positive impulse. Still, for some decades, the outlook of the Company and its servants was determined by the ethos of trade.

Government in the making

From 1714, applications for company appointments had to be accompanied by endorsement of a member of the Court of Directors. It was then laid down in a Court of Directors minute "that in future all petitions for employments in the Company service, either at home or abroad, be presented by some gentleman in the Direction, and that they speak to the same" (Sir William Foster 1926, quoted in Cohn 1966:92). However, it was not until after 1750 that positions in India became highly sought after: "The East Indies were not 'til of late years, considered a quick road to wealth; formerly, appointments in the Company's service were not objects of general solicitation" (ibid:94). Outright purchase, although a spectacular indication of the demand, appears to have been comparatively rare, but all manner of personal influence and connections were used to try to secure appointments in the East. The Court of Directors developed a system for dividing the patronage among themselves (Cohn 1966). According to Tinker, concerns about the power generated by the cornucopia of Indian patronage becoming the means of dominating the political life of England, motivated reforms (Tinker 1966).

Company servants of the early eighteenth century were traders and businessmen dealing both for the Company and privately, but such private engagements were soon to be regarded as opposed to the political responsibilities acquired by the Company. Besides, as individuals were making fortunes for themselves, the Company itself was in dire financial straits. The financial problems of the Company came to public prominence in Britain in the 1770s when the Company first, defaulted on payments for use of British armed services, and then had to ask the British government for a one million pound loan to keep the Company going. Many in Britain were incensed that so many company servants were coming back incredibly wealthy while the Company needed bailing out by the British government.¹⁸ The Company was important to Britain because of its trading monopoly in India and many influential people were shareholders. The loan was granted to the Company in 1773, but it had strict provisions that directly involved the British government in company affairs. A Supreme Court was established in Calcutta and the Crown appointed four members to Supreme Council to advise the newly created post of Governor General of Bengal. Warren Hastings was the first incumbent (1773-1785). The Governor General, Councillors and Judges were to receive fixed salaries and were prohibited from receiving gifts, presents, or any other pecuniary advantages.

As a consequence of the Regulating Act of 1773, Governor General Warren Hastings established 'the Covenanted Service' forbidding company servants appointed for justice and revenue administration to engage in private trade and to accept gifts or presents. Trade was thus separated from the function of governance and the old practice of private trade was restricted to those who carried out the Company's commercial business. However, the measures did not immediately stop company servants from engaging in both private trade and gift taking. Three years after his retirement, Hastings was himself impeached for corruption and violation of rights of prominent Indians.

A second important step to regulate the affairs of the Company in India was taken by the British Parliament by appointing members, selected from the cabinet, to a Board of Control under Pitt's India Bill of 1784. Until then, the Court of Proprietors (shareholders of the company) had exercised considerable powers over the Court of Directors, whose members were elected annually by the Court of Proprietors. Such control by profit-seeking shareholders

¹⁸ The Bengal famine of 1769-70, in which up to a quarter of the population perished and many of the survivors were made vagrant, severely diminished production and therefore also abridged revenues.

became politically unacceptable under the company's increasing administrative responsibilities. Under the Regulating Act and Pitt's India Act, parliament curtailed the powers of shareholders over the Court of Directors by shifting their controlling authorities to the Board of Control. The proprietors could now only discuss the policies of the directors, but could in no way annul or amend them. Under Pitt's India Act, the Court of Directors became the representative agency via the Board of Control. No revenue or political resolutions were to be taken without the express consent of the Board of Control. The Court could however, retain the privileges of patronage in spite of the recent changes. Recruitment of members to the covenanted service remained the absolute privilege of the Court of Directors until the Charter Act of 1853 when the privilege was abolished and a new system of recruiting civilians by competitive examinations introduced (Islam 2006).

More specifically, Pitt's India Act extended the authority of the governor general of Bengal over the other two presidencies, Bombay and Madras, provided for definite scales of pay and emoluments, laid down the principle of promotion by seniority, and fixed the age of admission to the service of writers or military cadets at fifteen to eighteen years. The renewal of the company's charter in 1793 further defined the position: to members of the covenanted service were reserved the principal civil offices of India below the rank of member of council. Appointments made by the Court of Directors in London went frequently to "the sons of deserving servants of the company" (Tinker 1966:26). The 1784 Act vested in the court the nomination to the offices of governor general, governor, and high military command; but in practice, these nominations were usually made by the British government of the day (Tinker 1966).

As governor general from 1786 to 1793, Charles Cornwallis, further professionalized, bureaucratized, and Europeanized (Europeans in all responsible positions) the Company. Lord Cornwallis arrived in India with strong backing from the Court of Directors and Parliament to establish "an efficient and honest administration for the company's territories" (Cohn 1966:96). He outlawed private trade by all company employees, separated commercial and administrative functions, and remunerated company servants with generous graduated salaries. All levels of administration were reorganized. A Board of Revenue endowed with wide ranging powers and with one of the members of the Council as its president, was set up to lead his reform programme. District officials were placed under direct supervision and control of the Board of Revenue. A new authority, called the Board of Trade, was established

to look after trading activities of the Company independent of civil administration. Implementation of reforms was the result of an administration attempting to discipline itself and in the process British authority was extended to include areas that had formerly enjoyed some autonomy, such as management of law and order.

Lord Cornwallis attached highest priority to the administration of justice and police. A four-tiered judiciary was established beginning with the *Munsef Adalat* at the lowest level and the *Sadar Adalat* at the top. The two intermediate tiers were *zila adalat* and the court of circuit. Every court had two wings: *diwani adalat* (civil court) and *nizamat adalat* (criminal court). The highest court was the Sadar Adalat with its two divisions, *Sadar Diwani Adalat* and *Sadar Nizamat Adalat*. A regular police system was developed to help the judiciary in administering justice and to maintain law and order in the country.

The High Court originated historically from the High Courts Act of 1861. During Company rule, the Supreme Court in Calcutta represented the British Crown with jurisdiction over Europeans living in Bengal, in addition to native citizens of Calcutta. The Sadar Adalat represented the Company and judges were the members of the Covenanted Civil Service. Though judges of the Adalat consisted of Europeans, laws they administered were essentially Indian. The Sadar Adalat had no jurisdiction over the Europeans, nor did the Supreme Court over natives outside of Calcutta. Such a duality of jurisdiction was abolished, together with the Company, in 1858 when the Crown assumed responsibility for governing British India.

Cornwallis' efforts to reform and restructure various branches of the administration were influenced by one abiding consideration: making administration efficient and corruption free. Believing both Anglo-Indians and natives to be corrupt; the latter group incorrigibly so, Cornwallis found it prudent to exclude natives from all responsible positions in the interest of establishing honesty and efficiency in the administration. The fact that hitherto, all rulers had shared powers and privileges with the local elite was ignored. Even during early British rule, native participation in administration was quite extensive. Cornwallis resolved to keep administration an all-white affair making civil service the exclusive preserve of Europeans. Local people were left with only ministerial and semi-ministerial jobs.¹⁹

¹⁹ Sources: Stein (2002), Zaman (1980), Misra (1977), Sirajul Islam (2006).

Cornwallis' underlying assumption that Indians were dishonest and hence incapable of ruling in their own best interests, "combined with the orientation of an English Whig, led him to try to build a government 'reduced to the minimal functions of justice and protection from violence'" (Cohn 1966:96). Through his land policies in Bengal, he hoped to develop an Indian landed aristocracy to stabilise the country. The system in vogue when the British were granted the diwani of Bengal was that of *zamindari* or tax farming. The peasant paid a share of his produce, in cash or kind, to the zamindar and the zamindar paid the ruling power. The general rule was for the peasant to pay one-third of his gross produce and for the zamindar to pay nine-tenths of what he received, but it could be more or less. This right to collect taxes was a hereditary right and on succession, a fine or fee was paid to the ruler. Failure to pay the full assessment could be met by fines, imprisonments, or floggings, but never by confiscation. The zamindars of Bengal formed a provincial aristocracy as revenue collectors, magistrates, local magnates, and men of substance, but they were not landowners or a landed aristocracy in the British sense. The zamindari system had its own checks and balances. The zamindar was too close to the peasant to be deceived about his capacity to pay, but if a zamindar was too rapacious, the peasant could leave the estate for another, or band together against extortion. Severe repression would ruin the zamindar as he had only his own levies to rely upon (Stein 2002).

The uncertainty with regard to land tenures prevailing in Bengal was unbearable for British administrators desiring predictability. Hastings' report to the Court of Directors on the affairs of the Company as early as 1772 provides testimony to the felt urgency for reforms towards a more "uniform and regular Establishment":

Though 7 Years had elapsed since the company became possessed of the Dewanny, yet no regular Process had ever been formed for conducting the Business of the Revenue. Every Zemindaree and every Taluk was left to its own peculiar Customs. These indeed were not inviolably adhered to. The Novelty of the Business to those who were appointed to superintend it, the chicanery of the people whom they were obliged to employ as their agents, the accidental Exigencies of each District, and not unfrequently, the just Discernment of the Collector, occasioned many changes. Every change added to the confusion which involved the whole, and few were either authorised or known by the presiding Members of the Government. The Articles which composed the Revenue – the Form of keeping Accounts, the Computation of time, even the Technical Terms, which ever form the greatest part of the obscurity of every science – differed as much as the soil and productions of the Province. This confusion had its origin in the Nature of the Former Government (Hunter 1897:382).

Under the Permanent Settlement of 1793, landlords were awarded permanent ownership rights on the condition that they punctiliously paid a fixed revenue demand. In a single enactment, a small group of landowners, still called ‘zamindars’, was created and the rights of other cultivators on the land that they tilled were abrogated. The zamindars were expected to see that the agrarian resources they owned were maintained and improved and were liable to dispossession if revenue obligations were not fulfilled. The role of the district collector was stabilised into an office whose responsibility was overseeing the collection of revenue due from the landholders. As the revenue obligation of the landowner was permanently fixed, the job of collector was assumed a supervisory one.

Lord Cornwallis introduced the Permanent Settlement in the hope that the new system would impel zamindars to become improving landlords like their counterparts in England. It was expected that in their own interest the zamindars would encourage agriculture and uphold the interests of *raiyyats* (agriculturalists). Cornwallis hoped that the operation of Permanent Settlement would finally lead to industrial revolution via an inevitable agricultural transformation in the country. Such a transformation never occurred and the countryside remained as neglected and poor as ever before (Sirajul Islam 2006).

Reforms initiated by Cornwallis set the development of the colonial state in British India for the next generation. Almost everywhere, a rural elite was consolidated or attempts were made to create one. Company policy was stability and the Permanent Settlement was primarily a device for guaranteeing revenue and military stability in times of war. From 1793 and until annexation of Oudh in 1856, company territory grew extensively until covering three-fifths of pre-partition India. According to Cohn, Cornwallis’ hope of a minimal government proved illusory: “The assessment and collection of taxes alone led to the development of an extensive bureaucracy, and these tax duties, combined with the administration of justice, accounted for much of the work of civil servants” (Cohn 1966:98).

As indicated above, ultimate supervision, control, and what was in effect the legislative function of the governing system were all centred in London, where there was dual control exercised by the Company and by the Board of Control. Company shareholders could attend meetings of the General Court of Proprietors and, depending on shares in the capital stock, were entitled to votes. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were more than two thousand proprietors (*ibid.*). The major function of the proprietors was the election of the

twenty-four directors; collectively known as the Court of Directors (the executive and decision-making body of the company). According to Cohn: “The direction of the company was essentially a self-perpetuating oligarchy. To be elected the first time was an expensive and arduous task, but once elected a man served for life” (ibid:99). Cohn argues for a strong connectedness between directors, who he says “formed a tight society, bound by culture, economic interests, and social relations” (ibid:109).

Committees did the work of the Company after Court of Directors had made their decisions. Chairman and deputy chairman, serving one-year terms, were the court’s most important positions. The court and company was further served by a secretariat in which the higher posts were significant for making policy on administration in India. As government of India was carried out by correspondence, the crucial office was that of the Examiner of Indian Correspondence where “all non-secret reports, minutes, and letters from India were read and digested for the members of the Court of Directors. In this office, dispatches which approved, disapproved, commented on, or innovated new policies were drawn up to be sent to India in the name of the Court of Directors” (ibid.).

Cohn says that there was a theoretical possibility of adversarial relations between the Board of Control and the Court of Directors due to the formers superior position, but that in practice this was not a problem.

When disputes arose between the two bodies, policy appears to have been determined by compromise, “just as in the matter of appointments [governor generals, governors of Presidencies, chiefs of army commands] both sides had in effect a power of veto. So also, in discussion about policy, neither body cared to provoke the other over much save in exceptional circumstances” (quote from H. H. Dodwell 1929, in Cohn 1966:100).

The reason, he suggests, was that many of the influential shareholders and directors of the company were also important in politics. In parliament, a number of members had served as king’s officer or in company service in India, and there were those in parliament who had financial interests in the company. “Given the kind of political interconnections existing between Parliament and the company, it is not difficult to see that compromises could usually be worked out if there were any conflicts between the two. Commissioners on the Board of Control frequently had extensive Indian experience” (ibid:101).

A civil servant at the district level in the first half of the nineteenth century had a large but somewhat attenuated formal superstructure over him. His actions were subjected to questions and revisions at any of the following levels: regional, provincial, at the presidency, and in London at the Court of Directors and the Board of Control and ultimately in parliament. Policy affecting a civil servant's actions could be set at any one of these levels, but in reality servants in the field enjoyed considerable autonomy due to distance and difficulties of communication: "it often took two or three years for matters originating in a district to be commented on in London" (ibid.).

Thus, British establishment in India commenced with a few merchant adventurers succeeding in establishing trade connections in India, and the Company was formed as a result of being granted monopoly over trade in the Eastern Waters. For the first one hundred and fifty years, the Company's major concern was to secure trading rights and run a profitable business. Until the mid-eighteenth century, engagements in military and political activities were limited to safeguarding merchant interests of the Company rather than any positive impulse to direct political developments in India. As pointed out by Bruce Kapferer: "They acted like predatory states with virtually no moral obligations except to make money. In this they were much like modern corporations" (2005:290). As a result of company affairs in India gaining in scope and complexity, the organisation was changing into a rational bureaucracy in the Weberian sense; ever more differentiated and accountable to a public body (parliament in London).

The first initiative to rationalise came under Hastings when the function of trade was separated from the function of governance by forbidding company servants appointed for justice and revenue administration to engage in trade. Under Lord Cornwallis, administration both at the centre as well as at district level was reorganised. For the rational administration of justice and police, a four-tiered judicial body was established. District officials dealing with revenue and trade were placed under the direct supervision and control of respective boards. Although set on keeping government to the minimum, administration of taxes and justice alone required extensive resources. Rationalisation of company functions was costly requiring a regular flow of capital to be secured through systematic taxation facilitated by permanent settlements. To keep company servants employed to perform administrative functions from engaging in private trade or gift taking, they were remunerated with generous salaries thus divorcing public money and equipment from the private property of the official, which is an

important point in Weber for the rational functioning of a modern administration (see Weber 1978).

At the central level in London changes also occurred through the shifting of powers over the Court of Directors from shareholders to the newly established Board of Control, whose members were appointed by the cabinet. The governor general position of Bengal was strengthened, while made accountable to a supreme council established in Calcutta by the Crown. The governor general, councillors and judges were also to receive fixed salaries and prohibited from engaging in private dealings.

Appointments were still by patronage and controlled by the Court of Directors, but those selected for service had every possibility of pursuing a line of career, which was mainly determined in India. According to Cohn, no adequate work has been done on the career lines of civil servants, but the impression that “connections did help, especially in relation to first and second postings, does not seem unwarranted” (1966:102). Cohn finds a close connection between Company postings and relations with India. By 1854, “the Court of Directors became entirely Anglo-Indian” (H. Morse Stephens, 1900, quoted in Cohn p. 106) and the number of civil servants appointed from families with Indian experience was high.²⁰ In addition to providing posts for relatives, political considerations were important in the allocation of patronage, both in maintaining friendly relations with government and in getting members of the Court of Directors elected to the House of Commons (ibid.). Thus, once appointed, aspiring company servants in India could look forward to directorship in the Court of Directors, or even a career in politics as Member of Parliament. “From 1784 to 1834,” Cohn observes, “forty-five of the 110 directors served in the House of Commons” (ibid.).

Although extracting resources by ensuring exclusive rights to trade and territories was still the main objective of the Company, governing came to play an increasing role. As the British government became more involved and politics came to play an increasing role in company affairs, it could no longer operate as the independent freebooting trading company of the past. The main aim was still to make money but, brought within regulative control of the Board of

²⁰ “Anglo-Indian” was used in the nineteenth-century sense as a Britisher who had lived and worked in India rather than in the twentieth-century sense as the offspring of a European and Indian marriage (Cohn 1966).

Control, the Company assumed a clearer bureaucratic form (cf. Kapferer 2005). With such a powerful instrument at hand, political ambitions increased.

Imagining sovereign power

In a famous dispatch to the Court of Directors in 1800, Cornwallis' successor, Lord Wellesley (1798-1805), expressed the changed reality of the functions of company servants in India, who were no longer commercial agents, but governors expected:

To dispense justice to millions of people of various languages, manners, usages, and religions; to administer a vast and complicated system of revenue throughout districts equal in extent to some of the most considerable Kingdoms in Europe; to maintain civil order in one of the most populous and litigious regions of the world (Cohn 1966:111).

Sir John Shore, immediate successor to Cornwallis, followed a policy of non-intervention in the affairs of native states, which resulted in the Nizam (ruler of Hyderabad) employing French officers to train his army. The Marathas and Tipu Sultan also sought the help of the French, thus decreasing English influence. Shore looked after company affairs until 1798 when he was recalled due to failure in tackling army trouble after the mutiny of Bengal army officers in 1785.

Lord Wellesley was educated at Harrow, Eton and Christchurch, Oxford and well versed in classical languages. A Member of Parliament for several years and of the Board of Control from 1795, he was appointed Governor General of Bengal on 18 May 1798. His seven-year tenure is an important period in the development of British power in India. His policy was to remove all kinds of French influence from India and to make the British the paramount power of the subcontinent, which he implemented through wars as well as by more peaceful annexations. Wellesley reversed his predecessors' policy of non-intervention and adopted a policy of *Subsidiary Alliance*, forcing Indian powers under British protection by suspending non-British European officers, maintaining a contingent of British troops within their states, and surrendering foreign affairs to the British. In return, the Company guaranteed internal freedom of the states and promised to protect them against foreign attacks (Mohsin 2006).

In theory, the governor general of Bengal was by this time under supervision and control of the Supreme Council in Calcutta and Board of Control in London, but with Wellesley in office, the governor general *was* the Indian government, effectively taking policy decisions and managing administration. Lord Wellesley never received backing from home authorities for his aggressive policy in India, or for his thorough reorganisation of government, but he achieved much through patronage and reorganisations in Calcutta. Through his brother Arthur, Commander of the British Indian Army, and a loyal Commander-in-Chief, Gerard Lake, he laid a firm hand on the army. He kept control of the administrative services through his private secretary, who happened to be his other brother Henry, and circumvented the Court of Directors in London by appointing his own men creating his own private governor general office. To direct training and appointments for the whole of the British Indian civil service, he founded Fort William College in Calcutta.

Wellesley reasoned that to carry on their work in the judicial, revenue, political, and financial departments, company servants needed a new range of skills in languages and law in addition to a broad education to help them develop standards of judgement. Under the system in use at Wellesley's time, young civilians, who were mostly between fifteen and seventeen years of age, were posted to districts without receiving any institutional training in local history, languages, or the art of administration. Wellesley held these civilians to be incompetent for the tasks required and set about a remedy by establishing a college of Fort William in Calcutta, arguing that the necessary education for service in the East did not exist anywhere in England. The idea of making a permanent institutional arrangement for the regular training and higher education of civil servants was expressed in his Minute of 10 June 1800: "Duty, policy and honour require that [the Indian empire] should not be administered as a temporary adventure and extended by fortunate accident ... it must be considered as a sacred trust and a permanent possession". The answer as to how this should be accomplished was not in "the instruments by which kingdoms are overthrown, revolutions are accomplished, or, wars conducted", but in a civil service capable of "an inexhaustible supply of useful knowledge, cultivated talents and disciplined morals" (quoted in Misra 1977:66). In his notes to the Court of Directors in July 1800, Wellesley explained the need for a college as follows:

Their education should be founded in a general knowledge of those branches of literature and science, which form the basis of the education of persons destined to similar occupations in Europe; to this foundation should be added an intimate acquaintance with the history, languages, customs and manners of the people of India;

with the Mohammedan and Hindoo codes of law and religion... their early habits should be so formed, as to establish in their minds such solid foundations of industry, prudence, integrity and religion, as should effectually guard them against those temptations, with which the nature of this climate, and peculiar depravity of the people of India, will surround and assail them in every station, especially upon their first arrival in India (Cohn 1966:112).²¹

A department was established for each of the major languages: Sanskrit, Persian, Hindustani, Bengali and Arabic, and for each department there was a professor and assistant teachers. Distinguished scholars and Orientalists were appointed to the faculty. In addition to language work, there were courses in Hindu and Mohammedan law, jurisprudence, English law and the regulations of the Company. For general education, students received instruction in political economy, geography, mathematics, Latin and Greek and modern European languages, and European and Indian history. Students were required to spend three years at the college, during which time they were examined regularly, before being posted. “Civil servants for all three Presidencies were to be trained at the college, and successful completion of the course was to be a prerequisite for civil appointments” (ibid:113).

The departments employed a number of pundits (Sanskrit teachers), maulavis (Arabic teachers), and munshis (Persian, Bengali and Hindustani teachers), making up the native element of the college staff. The staff pay scale was inequitable; while European faculty members received salaries from 1500 to 3000 rupees a month, their Indian colleagues, who were their language tutors and assistants, received salaries ranging from 40 to 200 rupees. A college council consisting of faculty professors administered the college. Matters of discipline were entrusted to two Church of England clergymen; the provost and the vice-provost. At the apex of the college administration was the governor general himself. Members of the Supreme Council and judges of the Sadar Diwani Adalat functioned as governors of the college. The governor general made faculty appointments while higher civil administrators managed the college. Wellesley, himself a classical scholar, had a dream that “his college would be so productive in the cultivation of arts and sciences that someday it should flower into the ‘Oxford of the East’, as he put it metaphorically” (Sirajul Islam 2006). Even though Wellesley’s early plan did not succeed, “it did give an added professionalism to the service, and it would appear that there was some correlation between success in the language school and in service” (ibid:114). Among those who had achieved top honours at Fort William in the

²¹ From “Extracts from the Governor-General Notes for and official despatch, to be forwarded to the Court of Directors, with Respect to the Foundation of a College at Fort William”.

first eight years of the college, several rose to administrative high-level positions thus rewarding professionalism.

Before him, Lord Cornwallis had excluded Indians from responsible administrative positions believing them to be “incorrigibly corrupt” and incapable of honest behaviour. According to the Evangelists, India’s problems stemmed from its “wickedness and immorality” holding Christianity as its only salvation (Cohn op. cit.). Wellesley, as a man of science, resorted to education. Through education, servants of the company were to learn “the power and dignity of the state, the morality of conquest and British racial superiority” (Bayly 1988:81). Wellesley’s expansionist activities, combined with educational efforts, arguably represent the beginning of an attitudinal change from seeing Indians as autonomous trading partners to subjects of British rationality. Not only were company servants to be instructed in how to rationally carry out work in the judicial, revenue, political, and financial departments, they were also to be taught “the art of government” (Foucault 1991:87), motivated by a belief in the superiority of British morals. The task of creating morally responsible individuals Wellesley left to clergymen such as Claudius Buchanan, an Evangelical chaplain in Calcutta, who thought of Indians as follows: “Their general character is imbecility of body and imbecility of mind. Their moral powers are, and have been for ages in a profound stupor... The Hindoo mind seems at present to be bound by a Satanic spell” (Hugh Pearson 1834 as cited in Cohn 1966:113). Through “useful knowledge, cultivated talents and disciplined morals” (Misra op. cit.), British possessions in India were to expand. Wellesley’s political ambitions were not only high but, according to C. A. Bayly, absolute.

All the same, for Wellesley and his supporters it was essential that the Company and particularly the governor-general should stand forth as sovereigns in dealing both with Indian powers and their own servants. The governor-general ‘should have the power of summoning a privy council and should act in it as the King or the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland’. The ancient corporate nature of the Company councils with their near equality between members should be dispensed with for these ‘had the character of an aristocratic republic rather than a monarchy’. It is notable that though Wellesley’s successors discountenanced the semi-royal character of the governor-generalship, they nevertheless stressed the need for the Company to be seen as an Indian sovereign in matters such as public ritual and the creation of irrigation works, kingship’s traditional duties (Bayly 1988:82).

Although sovereign in Bengal, in India the Company was still competing with other rulers for authority; appearing like “a national power *within* the state system” (Cohn 1983:170).

Rather than deposing the Mughal and proclaiming themselves rulers of India in succession to the Mughal empire, the British were content, on the instructions of Lord Wellesley, their governor general, to offer the Mughal 'every demonstration of reverence, respect, and attention' (ibid:170).

The Weberian bureaucracy model is useful for understanding processes of rationalisation towards a more effective organisation, but has less to say about power struggles and conflicting situations arising as a result of individual ambitions. In the Weberian thesis, political ambitions are external to the development of a rational organisation. "The bureaucracy", Claude Lefort observes, "is essentially indifferent to the interests and values defended by a political regime. It is an organ at the service of dominant groups" (1986:98). In India, I would argue, political ambitions originated in the very development of a powerful apparatus. Thus, British increasing influence in India must be seen in connection with the political beliefs and ambitions of individuals like Lord Wellesley taking advantage of his position to become ever more powerful and with little or no concern about home authorities (board of directors and parliament) and British official policies.

Wellesley's policy for further aggressions and annexations embarrassed the home authorities and he was recalled in 1805. Back in England, Wellesley was forced to defend his imperialistic (and expensive) employment of the British forces in India, but the fact that he had left the British in a military supreme position at the time of his home return was a situation to be followed up (by further strengthening the British position in India) rather than reversed.

The political theory and practice of the Wellesley circle represented the first coherent imperial policy in British Indian history. Wellesley and his circle asserted Britain's right to India by conquest, arguing that the Company "had saved Bengal by its military protection" (Bayly 1988:81). A second order of legitimation found its reasoning in the view that "most contemporary Indian rulers were tyrannical usurpers of previous dynasties and rights, and could therefore be dispensed with at will so that 'this ancient and highly cultivated people' could be 'restored to the full enjoyment of their religious and civil rights'" (ibid.). Truly, the Company refrained from intervening in peoples' religious beliefs and missionaries were not allowed to use any state facilities in their Evangelical activities or even to operate freely in India. When this policy was lifted in 1833 allowing missionaries open access it was still without state support. Even if Indian religion was seen as contaminating for the exercise of

proper conduct, as expressed by Evangelical clergymen, preaching or religious conversions was not considered necessary for the establishment of social order. Rather, the British, with their “inexhaustible supply of useful knowledge, cultivated talents and disciplined morals”, assumed to guarantee freedom to a people suffering from lack of rational leadership. Indeed, such a schema recalls Hobbes political thought and theory about sovereign authority. In this view, the only way to guarantee peace, as the ultimate goal, under circumstances of the constant threat of competing powers overthrowing each other is by absolute authority. During Wellesley, administration thus acquired “its own dynamic and intrinsic goal” encompassing “the ultimate political and economic decisions in its sphere” (Lefort 1986:100). British rationality was to save Indians from their own corrupted and immoral nature.

Fort William College was not in function for as long as Wellesley had intended. By 1805, “Wellesley was somewhat out of favour with the Court of Directors for his championing of private trade interests, his policy of military expansion, and his general attitude of superiority to his colleagues” (Cohn 1966:114). Eager to maintain influence, authority and patronage, the Court decided to establish an institution for the education and training of covenanted servants in England. In 1804, the Committee on Correspondence was given the responsibility of drawing up a plan for such an education and in 1806, six years after the establishment of Fort William College, a new college was opened in temporary quarters at Hertford Castle twenty miles from London. The college moved to its own buildings at Haileybury two miles away in 1809. However, pattern of education introduced by Wellesley; language training and legal training with “good Christian overtones”, reappeared in the curriculum at Haileybury (ibid:116).

Consolidation of British rationality

At first, the Court of Directors wanted to abolish Fort William College, but it continued to function, essentially as a language training school, after Haileybury was established. Perhaps not exactly as intended by Wellesley, the college was in many ways moving towards becoming the “Oxford of the East”. In collaboration²² with the Asiatic Society of Bengal,

²² Asiatic Society (1784) was the first learned organisation in Bengal to study Asian civilisations scientifically. The idea of founding an association for pursuing systematic research on Asia in general and South Asia in

college staff well versed in oriental civilisations contributed significantly to the development of modern Indian languages and modern forms of scholarship in India. Students matriculating from the college became renowned Orientalists, such as W. W. Bird, Holt Mackenzie, Henry T. Prinsep, and C. Metcalfe. Although language teaching was under the direction of Europeans, distinguished Indian scholars functioned as tutors producing materials for the students. Among the most celebrated Bengali staff members of the College were Ramram Basu, Tarinicharan Mitra and Mrittunjoy Bidyalankar. With the help of these pundits, Fort William professors experimented with standardising and making authoritative what were thought to be ‘classics’ of Indian thought and literature. It was with the encouragement and co-operation of the College of Fort William that the technology of printing and publishing vernacular books began and collaborative learned institutions established. The Serampore Mission Press was launched in 1801, the Hindustani Press in 1802, the Persian Press in 1805, and the Sanskrit Press in 1807. These printing presses were the first visible mark of an intellectual and technological change in Bengal. Responsible for these innovations was the College of Fort William, which was indeed, fast becoming the ‘Oxford of the East’ (Sirajul Islam 2006).

In the early days of the Permanent Settlement Act discussed earlier, a large volume of land rights were brought onto the market, as proprietors were unable to pay the high and inflexible revenue demand. The gainers were very much the sorts of people who had rapidly increased their wealth over the previous hundred years. Literate and high-caste servants of the older proprietors, particularly Brahmins and Kayasthas of the writer caste, bought up zamindari rights, as did banyans or merchants of the British. Pressure on the great estate owners, descending from the servants of the nawabs, led to the creation of many subordinate revenue rights. Though they were more likely to remain in the hands of one family, this was not a markedly different form of property and profit from the proliferating revenue farms from before the British. The effect on Bengal’s peasantry is seen as more obscure: “Certainly, the provisions of the Settlement gave few rights to tenants, concerned as it was to stabilise a land-owning class. But the prosperity of the ordinary farmer continued to be determined more by ecology, price levels and population growth than by administrative fiat” (Bayly 1988:66-67). Bayly claims that despite administrative reformations, “social relations based upon share-

particular first came from Sir William Jones (1746-1794), who joined the Calcutta Supreme Court as a Puisne Judge in 1783 (Sirajul Islam 2006).

cropping and control of credit, which were already well-established at the beginning of the eighteenth century, were perpetuated within the wider world of colonial trade” (ibid.). The creation of a wider market in land did not bring about the far-reaching changes the British had hoped for and political power, historical status, influence and other resources remained for the most part within the same lineages.

Of greater impact on Bengal society was company demand for certified knowledge and standardisation of education arising from this demand. Fort William was established as a modern academic institution with the aim of transmitting specialised bodies of knowledge by own research, to prepare young persons to do such research, and to qualify them to practice a wide variety of professions. Indians continued to be excluded from the covenanted service for several decades, but in certain circles there was a growing interest in European education.

According to Hugh Tinker, the Indian Civil Service was foreshadowed in the mansabdari imperial service of Akbar (1556-1605), the great Mughal Emperor.²³ This was an aristocracy of service and not one of noble blood, or of feudal strength, and not even an indigenous aristocracy. Some 70 percent of Akbar’s chief officers were of central Asian origin: Turks, Afghans, and Persians, but alongside this Islamic elite there were Hindu leaders.

Raja Todar Mal, architect of Akbar’s revenue system, was a Kayastha of the clerical caste. Of the 416 mansabdars of Akbar’s empire, forty-seven were Rajputs. Above them all, Raja Man Singh of Ambar had the supreme dignity of five thousand horses, was brother-in-law to the emperor, and was given the posts of greatest trust and danger – such as governor of Kabul and of Bengal (Tinker 1966:52).

Entry into the covenanted services depending upon directors’ nominations, together with enforcement of a covenanted monopoly, virtually deprived Indians of any hope of either entering the service or rising to the higher levels of administration. This is also how it was more or less throughout company rule in India. With a British middle class civilian dominated administration, members of traditional official families became marginalised.

²³ Emperor Akbar instituted a strong centralised government and divided the empire into several *subah*, with Bengal constituting an important subah. His provincial government was organised on the model of the central government. Bengal was subdivided into 19 *sarkars*, and sarkars into *parganas*. Through the introduction of the *Mansabdari* system Akbar remodelled the army organisation. Under the system, every officer held a mansab (rank) and was to maintain a quota of horses, elephants, beasts of burden, carts etc. They were paid either in cash or land grants (Karim 2006).

Persian was the language of the courts and of administration throughout all areas which had come under Muslim rule. From the late 1830's, Persian began to give way to English as the language of the courts, and it was generally abolished by 1845. On the revenue side of the administration, Persian was discarded in Madras and the North-Western Provinces in favour of the vernaculars, and later Urdu and Bengali were substituted in Bihar and Bengal for Persian. Kayasthas and Brahmins of the official classes very soon acquired a knowledge of English, just as earlier they had mastered Persian, as a necessary qualification for employment. Muslims of the official classes clung to their Persian and Arabic as the foundation of their culture and so began that shift in the balance of strength among the official families, Hindu and Muslim, which was to have such incalculable consequences in the twentieth century (ibid:53).

By the nineteenth century, the political destiny of Bengal as well as who would be in positions to manage that destiny was controlled by the British. According to S. N. Mukherjee, however, there was another area of collective activity engaging the Calcutta elite, beyond the control of British administrators: "In this area caste rules were important, particularly those rules concerning marriage, pollution and inheritance" (Mukherjee 1970:34). During the eighteenth century, matters related to caste were settled through "caste cutcherries" and leading families in Calcutta of high caste origins like Datta and Nubkissen competed to control such "cutcherries". A century later, "cutcherries" were replaced by *dals* consisting of men of various origins who had made their fortunes through British presence. The most economically successful would use their newly acquired wealth to become *dalapatis*, i.e. leaders of dals. These men of fortune dominating upper and middle part of the social and economic pyramid of Indian society in Bengal of the nineteenth century were commonly referred to as *bhadralok*, which literally means big men.

The *bhadralok* broke with the past by combining control of land in a capitalist property market with literacy and tenuous commercial connections to the world economy. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a much more stratified society had emerged based on the control of landlords' rents both within and outside the city. Some banyans had made money from the Permanent Settlement and become landlords in the districts adjoining Calcutta. Other families of middle-level literate estate servants had used landed property in the interior as a basis for invading the city in search of service in the expanding British administration. The rising value of land in Calcutta encouraged the development of an Indian urban landlord class. Magnates built large suburban palaces and became rack-renting landlords of the tenement buildings surrounding them.

One approach to understanding the events of the nineteenth century is to focus on economic and political changes as the result of a class interest. In his article *Class, Caste and Politics in Calcutta, 1815-1838*, Mukherjee argues that changes taking place in Bengal during that period were a consequence of a common interest “not only to protect the landed interest but also to press for the political and economic advancement of the class” (1970:78). According to him, “economic and administrative changes in Bengal brought about a social erosion” most significantly affecting Calcutta, “which witnessed the rise of a new urban class” (ibid:77). Bhadrakol can be seen as a class struggling to secure economic and political interests with the British, but there were other issues and concerns beyond materialistic ones at stake as well. Interests of the bhadrakol were much more diversified than can be accounted for by treating them as an economic class.

Western education being the means to not only gain control of areas of power controlled by Indians in the British administration and for negotiating with the British for greater autonomy, but also a means to sociocultural influence, new institutions were starting to take form. Rammohun Roy took the first initiative in 1815 establishing the *Atmiya Sabha* (Society of Friends), a political organisation agitating for religious and social reforms. In the wake of this, many *sabhas* and *samitis* (societies) for educational reforms, literary discussions and political agitation were established. The Calcutta School Book Society of 1817 and the Calcutta School Society of 1818 played a prominent part reforming primary education by printing new textbooks and opening new schools following the English curriculum. Annual examinations were held in English, mathematics, geography, natural sciences, and English history. The most famous schools and institutions for higher English education established in the first part of nineteenth century were Bishops’ College, Hindu College, Oriental Seminary, Sanskrit College, and Calcutta Medical College. An Indian press both in English and in vernacular languages was also established.

Rammohun Roy (1772/74-1833)²⁴ was born into a conservative Brahmin family in Radhanagor, West Bengal and received the traditional education of his time.²⁵ From early youth he showed proficiency in several oriental languages such as Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian,

²⁴ Information on Rammohun Roy is mainly gathered from A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, *Banglapedia* (2006).

²⁵ Radhanagor is in the Hooghly District some twenty kilometres north of Kolkata. Hooghly is a small town located west of the Hooghly River and the region was one of the commanding posts of early colonial powers in the 17th century. Hooghly town was originally founded by the Portuguese in the year 1537.

besides Hindi and his mother tongue Bangla, and he was well versed in Hindu religious scriptures. Through close contact with Muslim scholars and officials of the revenue and judicial departments of the Company, he gained knowledge of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. He was also acquainted with the rudiments of ancient Greek philosophy and science. “A comparative study of Islamic and Hindu theological scriptures and acquaintance with the works of the *sufi* mystic poets of Persia, together with a knowledge of Aristotelian logic, had enabled him at an early age to develop a somewhat revolutionary approach towards the traditional religions” (Ahmed 2006, http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/R_0232.htm).

Rammohun was economically independent having acquired property and engaged in business enterprise. He remained in close contact with European officials and merchants and became acquainted with leading Indian scholars associated with Fort William College and the Sadar Diwani Adalat (court of appeal) in Calcutta. Rammohun had already learnt English and, through English friends, he learned about contemporary European thought.

By the middle of 1814, Rammohun settled down in Calcutta and decided to devote his life to the cause of social and religious reform. Within a year of his arrival in Calcutta, he established the Atmiya Sabha, an association of like-minded individuals. The members met regularly at his residence to discuss religious and social problems of the day. Rammohun was soon able to gather around him a small but influential circle of friends, both Indian and European. Among his close Indian friends were Dwarkanath Tagore²⁶ and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, two leading and wealthy zamindars who had close commercial links with European traders. Although not fully sharing Rammohun’s radical views on religion, they supported his endeavours for promoting social reforms and Western education.

Rammohun Roy is said to have inaugurated the age of Hindu reform. His religious views were to some extent influenced by Islam and Christianity denouncing idolatry and enjoining worship of one universal God. In 1828 he founded the *Brahma Sabha* (later *Brahma Samaj*) or Society of God, which emerged as a new sect of Hinduism. In 1821 he brought out a Bangla newspaper, *Sangbad Kaumudi*, and in 1822 a Persian newspaper, *Mirat-ul-Akhbar*, for the propagation of reformist and liberal views. Through public opinion, which he was able to

²⁶ Dwarkanath Tagore is also remembered for being the founder of the great Tagore family, which included the great Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941).

arouse against the practice of *sati* (widow cremation), he influenced the government to decide against *sati* through special legislation in 1829.

Rammohun contributed much to the growth of national consciousness in the subcontinent. In his political views, he was greatly influenced by the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (English utilitarian philosopher). Rammohun and other Bengali leaders who followed him were loyal supporters of the British Raj believing that in course of time political privileges enjoyed by the British people would be extended to the people of British territories overseas. They strongly resented, however, the various kinds of discriminatory practices by the British government towards Indians. When, for instance, Governor General John Adam imposed restrictions on the Indian Press in 1823, Rammohun and his friends protested by submitting a memorial to the Privy Council. The memorial was rejected on the ground that a free press could not exist in a country that did not enjoy political freedom. At the initiative of Rammohun Roy and his friend Dwarkanath Tagore, a signed petition on behalf of the Hindu and Muslim citizens of Calcutta was sent to the British parliament protesting against certain discriminatory clauses of the Indian Jury Act of 1826.

Rammohun and his friends submitted another petition on behalf of the zamindars of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa to Governor General Lord William Bentinck in 1829 protesting against the revenue policy of the government adversely affecting their interests. In these public protests against the policies of an alien government, organised chiefly by Rammohun Roy, could be discerned the early manifestations of national consciousness. Rammohun watched with enthusiasm the progress of the reform movement in England and the liberal and nationalist revolutions in Europe. He confidently believed that “enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be successful”, as was revealed in his letter of 11 August, 1822 to James Silk Buckingham, an English author and traveller who established the *Calcutta Journal* publishing papers critical of the Company.

The *bhadralok*, represented among others by Rammohun Roy, were very active in public affairs in the first half of the nineteenth century applying the techniques of modern politics using press, public meetings, petitions, and associations to stir up public opinion for their demands. What this Western-educated middle class wanted was to obtain a more equal footing with the British middle class covenanted civilians. More specifically, their demands were to sit as jurors on the grand and petty juries, work as Justices of the Peace and to have

some saying in the running of local government in Calcutta, to be selected as collectors of revenue or to be promoted to similar high posts in the district headquarters or in the revenue and judicial departments. Through protest meetings and petitions, the bhadrakolk were successful in imposing many of their demands. In 1826, a Jury Act deemed “all good and sufficient persons resident within the limits of the several towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay... capable of serving as jurors on Grand and Petty Juries and upon all other inquests” (Mukherjee 1970:64). Indians were however, still prevented from sitting on grand and petty juries for the trial of Europeans. Recognising how closely their own interest were tied to the colonial set-up, that is, interest in working within the framework of the British-Indian administration, “no one wanted to rock the boat” (ibid:62).

Just as important, though, was to position themselves amongst their own, which could be done through schools and school societies. Men active in educational and social reform controlled opportunities offered by the British administration. Thus, competition to gain control of schools and other societies was keen for several reasons. Within the bhadrakolk again there was rivalry between groups, which is often presented as a division between ‘liberals’ led by Rammohun Roy and Dwarkanath Tagore in the Brahmo Samaj, and the ‘conservatives’ led by Gopimohun Deb and his son, Radhakanta Deb.

Radhakanta Deb (1784-1867), an accomplished scholar like Rammohun, was a strong upholder of social conservatism. He became leader of a party of orthodox Hindus opposing liberal-minded Hindus like Rammohun Roy. Although a loyal supporter of the British government, Radhakanta was opposed to any interference by the government in the social and religious life of the people. Although sati was not practised in his own family, he came forward to defend this custom when the government contemplated its abolition. When Lord William Bentinck’s government had finally abolished sati; Radhakanta Deb along with conservative Hindu friends formed a society called *Dharma Sabha* (Society of Devotion) to protest against this measure. A petition was presented to the governor general on behalf of the orthodox section of the Hindu community. However, like Rammohun, Radhakanta showed marked interest in promoting education, particularly English education among the Hindus. He played a leading part in the establishment of the Calcutta Hindu College in 1817, which he actively directed for over thirty years. Radhakanta took keen interest in promoting the cause of elementary education in Bengal; he was actively involved in the establishment and activities of the Calcutta School Book Society and the Calcutta School Society, in addition to

advocating female education. On the establishment of the British Indian Association in 1851, Radhakanta Deb was elected its president, a position he held until his death. Despite conflicting views on social and religious practices between ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’, collectively they welcomed and laid the foundations for a new educational system.

As seen, British land laws and trade offered opportunities to men of various origins who used their wealth to become *dalapatis* or leaders of dals. From about the end of the eighteenth century, disputes concerning caste rules on pollution, marriage, status within the *jatis* (caste groups), and sometimes even disputes over inheritance of property, were settled at courts held in dalapatis’ houses. Through dals, economically leading men in Calcutta acquired social and political recognition. “While the British managed state affairs, the dalapatis ‘ruled the society’”, claims Mukherjee (op. cit. p. 71), but such interests were of course, not totally separated. Through forming associations such as the Brahma Samaj and Dharma Sabha, organised according to principles of political organisation in the West and consisting of dalapatis and members of various dals, the Western-educated bhadralok functioned as arbiters between the British government and society on a number of issues of diverse character; political, religious, cultural, social, as well as economical.

Installing sovereign power: the Empress of India

On 2 August 1858, and less than a month after Lord Canning proclaimed the victory of British arms in the Sepoy Revolt²⁷, parliament passed the Government of India Act transferring British power over India from the East India Company (whose ineptitude was primarily blamed for the mutiny) to the Crown, “vesting in their monarch the sovereignty of India” (Cohn 1983:165). The merchant company’s residual powers were vested in the Secretary of State for India, a minister of Great Britain’s Cabinet, who would preside over the India Office in London and be assisted and advised, especially in financial matters, by a Council of India. The Council consisted initially of fifteen Britons, seven of whom were elected from among the old company’s Court of Directors and eight of whom were appointed by the Crown. Though some of Britain’s most powerful political leaders became secretaries of state for India

²⁷ The Sepoy Revolt or Mutiny refers to the widespread military and civic revolt that spread through much of India between 1857 and 1858.

in the latter half of the nineteenth century, actual control over the government of India remained in the hands of British viceroys and their apparatus of approximately 1,500 Indian Civil Service (ICS) officials posted “on the spot” throughout British India (Encyclopædia Britannica 2003).

The Cornwallisian covenanted civil service (CCS) was designed to administer the Company’s Bengal state, but the colonial state subsequently underwent dramatic changes. The vast territorial conquests from the time of Wellesley (1798-1805) to Lord Amherst (1823-1828), abolition of the company’s monopoly from 1813, abolition of the company’s trading right, the policy of liberalisation of the Bentinck administration (1828-1835), among other changes made the Cornwallisian bureaucracy most unworkable. What was needed was a clearer differentiation between politics and administration.

Under the Charter Act of 1793, the Court of Directors enjoyed the privilege of recruiting members of the CCS, a privilege that came under severe public criticism after abolition of Company monopoly right in 1813. The system of patronage and apprenticeship was designed to run the affairs of the Company when it was only a commercial organisation, but this system was found inadequate for governing a state. Lord Wellesley reformed the recruitment and training system of the civil service, but in practice, the system of patronage continued until 1853 when parliament decided to set up a five-member committee, headed by T. B. Macaulay, to make recommendations on the nature of future recruitment and training of civilians for the CCS (Sirajul Islam 2006).

Queen Victoria’s promise of racial equality of opportunity in the selection of civil servants for the government of India in 1858 had theoretically thrown the ICS open to qualified Indians, but examinations for services were given only in Britain and only to male applicants between the ages of 17 and 22 (in 1878 the maximum age was further reduced to 19). Furthermore, examination syllabi focussed on European languages, literatures and histories, subjects in which Indian students were less proficient. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that by 1869 only one Indian candidate had managed to clear these obstacles to win a coveted admission to the ICS. Bureaucrats posted “on the spot”, fearful of losing privileges, subverted British royal promises of equality in actual implementation and Indians continued to be excluded from all high offices.

Most viceroys came to India with little knowledge of India or about the workings of the government of the colony. Below the viceroy, higher officials of the Raj rose through the ranks of the civil service, which meant twenty to thirty years of experience and well-entrenched relationships throughout the bureaucracy, as well as, according to Cohn, “a highly developed capacity for political intrigue”:

Viceroy complained bitterly about the frustrations in implementing their plans and policies, dictated by political position in England. It fell to the viceroy’s private secretary to articulate the viceroy’s office with the bureaucracy. Questions of appointments, promotions, postings and honours initially fell through his hands. Viceroy was dependent on the private secretary’s knowledge of personal relationships and factions within the bureaucracy, and their capacity to utilize viceregal power effectively in relation to the civil service (Cohn 1983:186).

Brought firmly under control of government, the viceroy’s position became more constrained, which also appears to have affected his control and dealings with bureaucracy.

As regards to recruitment to posts filled by Indians, the British attempted different strategies of competition and nomination with the main concern of promoting a support staff without risking competition for their own positions. Even if British attempts to promote men of a certain background in administration fell through, such as those of Viceroy Lord Lytton’s (1876-1880) to patronise the aristocracy by appointing to the civil service young men from wealthy and noble families regardless of educational and professional fitness, the open competition foisted a *corps d’élite*. Competing for admission and appointments required university degrees and diplomas available only to those with access to Western education.

In Bengal, this generally meant the *bhadralok* referred to above, but at the end of nineteenth century Muslim leaders succeeded in persuading the government to offer special facilities for education and jobs for Muslims, also allowing a Muslim middle class to grow in Bengal. This growing Muslim middle class consisted mostly of peasants with substantial holdings that could not be cultivated solely by their own labour. By having the holdings cultivated by sharecroppers recruited from the ranks of impoverished peasants, more land could be acquired. These Muslim landholders, known as *jotedars*, could afford the cost of higher education for their sons and provide them with capital to invest in businesses. Even so, the urban population, the educated community, the landed interests, and the civil service of Bengal remained predominantly Hindu.

From the times of Hastings and Cornwallis, the Company mainly concerned itself with assuming a bureaucratic form for the rational administration of its mercantile interests. Lord Wellesley, as seen, aspiring more, initiated a more coherent imperial policy but settled for less than absolute power. Before the mutiny, policy was to stay on the good side of local rulers and avoid conflicts. On the event of British army successfully suppressing the mutiny in 1858 and the transfer of British authority in India from the Company to the Crown, relationships between British rulers and individuals and groups in Indian society remained to be adjusted to the new situation. “In conceptual terms,” writes Cohn, “the British, who had started their rule as ‘outsiders’, became ‘insiders’ by vesting in their monarch the sovereignty of India” (Cohn 1983:165). In her dispatch of November 8, 1858, Queen Victoria announced that “all would be done to stimulate ‘the peaceful industry of India, to promote works of public utility and improvement’, and that they ‘should enjoy that social advancement which can only be secured by internal peace and good government’” (ibid.). To justify the sovereign position, the British presented their rule as the solution to a divisive social and political situation rooted in an indigenous diversity in culture, society and religion, promising “equity and prosperity to the Indian people” in exchange for loyalty. The challenge was how to convince Indians to go along with it and subject themselves to imperial rule.

In his illuminating article *Representing Authority in Victorian India*, Bernard S. Cohn explores the relationship between the British monarch, her Indian subjects and the native princes of India, its constitution and representations, by focusing on ritual events. “[I]n the first half of the nineteenth century”, he argues, “there was an incompleteness and contradiction in the cultural-symbolic constitution of India” (Cohn 1983:173). From the times of the Mughals, relations of authority were observed during durbars and enacted in the form of prestations. While the subordinate offered *nazar* (gold coins) and *peshkash* (valuables and precious objects), the superior presented a *khelat* (clothes, jewels, arms and shields, horses and elephants). What and how much was presented depended on rank and status of both giver and receiver thus positioning them and arranging the proper relationship between them. According to Cohn, these were acts of incorporation whose meaning was not just of demarcating positions of superior-inferior, but also of mutual recognition of each others’ interconnected position.

Those thus incorporated were not just servants of the king, but part of him, ‘just as the eye is the main function of sight, and the ear in the realm of hearing’. *Nazar*, the term applied to gold coins offered by the subordinate, comes from an Arabic and Persian word for ‘vow’. In its typical form it is offered in the coin of the ruler, and is the officer’s acknowledgement that the ruler is the source of wealth and well-being. The offering of *nazar* is the reciprocal of the receipt of the *khelat* and part of the act of incorporation. These acts, seen from the perspective of the giver of *nazar* and the acceptor of the *khelats*, were acts of obedience, pledges of loyalty, and the acceptance of the superiority of the giver of the *khelats* (ibid:168-69).

During durbars, everything and everyone got their designated place according to one’s status and relationship with the ruler and “the closer one stood to the person of the royal figure, the more one shared his authority” (ibid.). Being robed by the ruler or one of his officials was to receive a right to a future share of his wealth and status, which was passed on from generation to generation. The British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on the other hand, tended to “misconstrue these acts by seeing them as economic in nature and function”, where *nazar* and *peshkash* were seen as paying for favours and *khelats* were construed to be “utilitarian goods which were part of their system of trade” (ibid.). *Nazar* being seen as bribery and *peshkash* as tribute, company servants of the late eighteenth century were not allowed to engage in durbars because of the exchanges made, defined as ‘corruption’, thus prohibiting them from “participating in rituals and constituting proper relationships with Indians who were their subordinates” (ibid:171). Realising that loyalty had to be symbolised to be effective, the British all the same engaged territorial rulers in the practice of presenting *khelats* and accepting *nazar* and *peshkash* in formal meetings that could be recognised as durbars. However, by keeping accounts of what was received and giving instructions on the value of what could be presented, the meaning of the ritual became contractual, symbolising ability to engage in economic exchanges.

Mughal ritual might seem to have been retained but the meanings had been changed. What had been, under Indian rulers, a ritual of incorporation now became a ritual marking subordination, with no mystical bonding between royal figure and the chosen friend and servant who was becoming part of the ruler. By converting what was a form of present-giving and prestation into a kind of ‘economic exchange’, the relationship between British official and Indian subject or ruler became contractual (ibid:172).

Interesting to note is how the British engaged in Indian rituals, but with other intentions, which is exactly Badie’s point about import-export discussed in the introduction. According to Cohn, contractual relations regulating economic and territorial rights and obligations thus marked British presence in India during the first half of nineteenth century, but with no means

to usurp or replace indigenous authority, they remained outsiders. Although presenting themselves as Indian rulers, authority remained unclear.

The contradictions and difficulties in defining a symbolic-cultural constitution are traceable in the efforts made during the first half of the nineteenth century to construct a ritual idiom through and by which British authority was to be represented to Indians. The continued use of the Mughal idiom caused continuing difficulties, such as arduous negotiations between British officials and Indian subjects over questions of precedence, forms of address, the continued rights to use Mughal titles, the Mughal's continued receipt of the *nazar* from both Indians and British officials, and his granting of *khelats* and issuance of *sanads* (royal charters) at the succession to the *masnad* in Indian states (ibid:176).

These contradictions, he argues, were resolved by the mutiny of 1857/58, which led to the transformation of power to the Crown politically establishing Queen Victoria the monarch also of India in 1858. In the past, by participating in *darbars*, the British attempted to “fit in” and establish themselves within an existing social and political order defined by the Mughal emperor. As long as the Mughal emperor retained authority, however, British authority continued to be defined vis-à-vis the emperor. His defeat represented a fresh start to constitute a new order with the British monarch as the sovereign ruler. “This new order required a centre, required a means by which Indians now could relate to this centre, and the development of the ritual expression of British authority in India” (ibid:179). The British had already tried *darbars* the Mughal/Indian way²⁸ without much success. To make the Imperial Assemblage of 1877 into a “ritual expression of British authority in India”, Indian sociology had to be sorted out first.

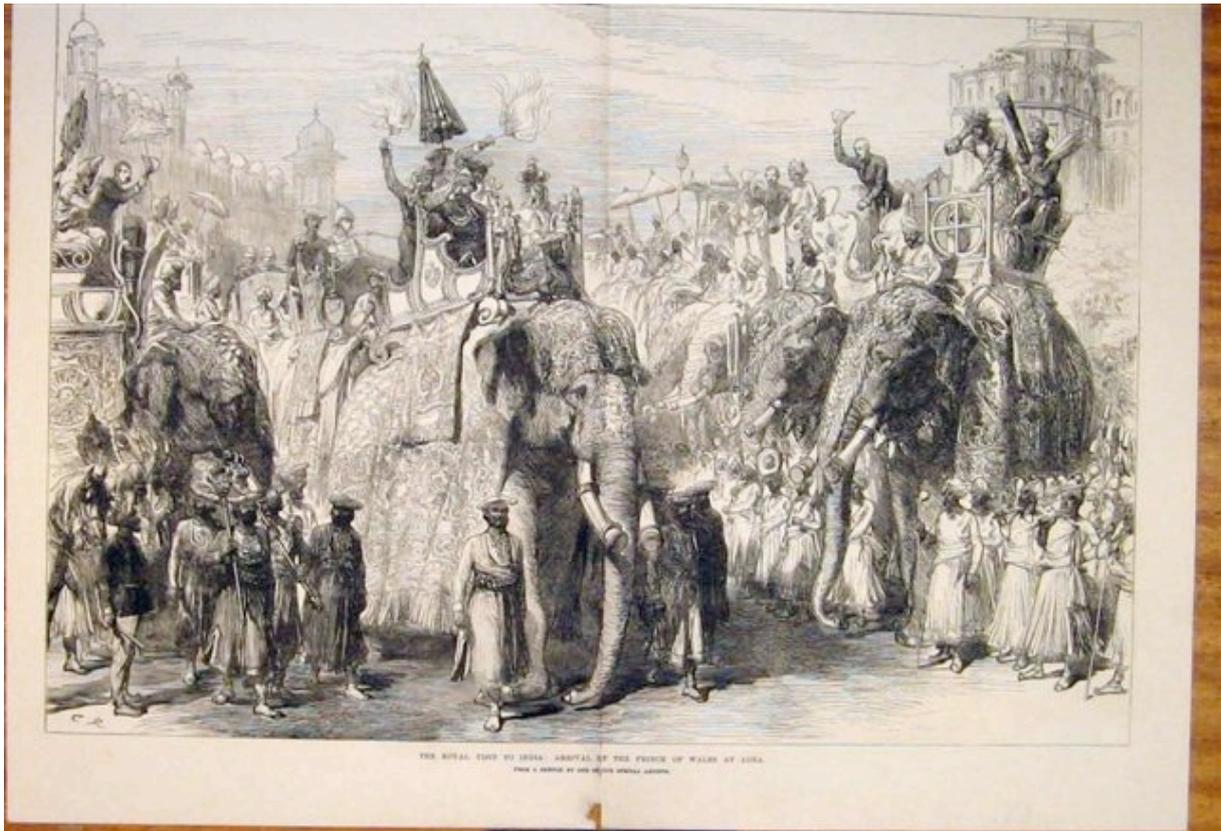
The Indian princes now were Queen Victoria's ‘loyal Indian Feudatories’, who owed deference and allegiance to her through her viceroy. The governor general and the viceroy, being the same person, was unequivocally the locus of authority in India, and all the British and Indians could be ranked in relation to him, whether it be by office held, or membership in various status groups. The British operated in India with an ordinal theory of hierarchy, in which individuals could be ranked by precedence – this precedence being based on fixed and known criteria, established by ascription and succession, or achievement and office (ibid:180).

British taxonomies, established to decide how semi-autonomous rulers were to be ranked, included the size of a prince's state, the amount of their revenue, the date at which they had become allies of the East India Company, the history of their families, their standing in

²⁸ Both Hindu and Muslim Indian rulers of the eighteenth century used *darbars* to establish authority relations.

relation to the Mughal empire and their acts of loyalty towards the British. Once rank of rulers had been established, their status was represented at durbars held by governors or lieutenant governors of the region, or when the viceroy-governor general went on a progress. Code of conduct and recommended appearance and behaviour for each and everyone attending had all been decided beforehand. Similarly, Indians under direct British rule, leading men of districts, Indian officials and employees of the imperial or provincial government, as well as the Indian masses were all ranked according to prescribed criteria. With the Queen of England as the 'fountain of honour', titles and honours were organised and orders established for the purpose of rewarding respect for and loyalty to British royal power, which was a prerogative of the Crown. While honour and titles were "closely tied to the expressed goal of the new governmental order, 'progress with stability'", investiture and holding of chapters of an order "added an important European component to the ritual idiom which the British were establishing in India" (ibid:181).

To mark the relationship between the Crown and India, representatives of the former started touring the country. Lord Canning, the first viceroy of India, undertook a series of extensive tours throughout North India to make manifest the new relationship proclaimed by the queen. Members of the royal family also went on royal tours to India, like those of the Duke of Edinburgh in 1869, and the Prince of Wales in 1876.

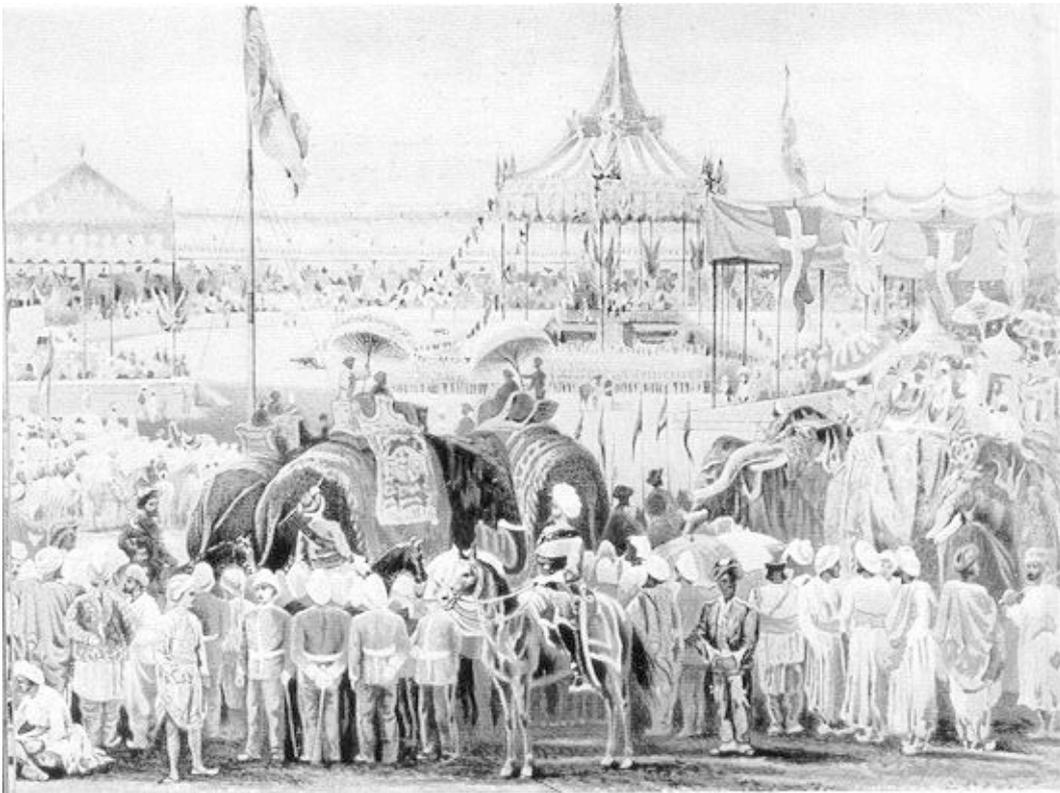


The Royal visit to India: Arrival of the Prince of Wales at Agra in 1876 (image source: Columbia University, New York).

As a result of these latter tours, and reports of *happy and loyal Indian subjects*, Her Majesty “deemed it an appropriate time to make an addition to her Royal Style and Titles” (ibid:184). Prime Minister Disraeli was all for declaring the Queen, Empress of India, arguing that to govern a diverse country such as India, with little to hold it together except for “the integrating system of the imperial crown”; an imperial title would enable a clear and unequivocal hierarchic order. Together with Salisbury, Secretary of State for India and the newly appointed Viceroy Lord Lytton, Disraeli set out to design an assembly that could codify a ritual idiom “created to express, make manifest and compelling the British construction of their authority over India”, while at the same time avoiding questions of precedence or territorial claims potentially disturbing the image of orderly relations among and between princes and princely states and the imperial power.

According to Cohn: choice of city, preparations of guest lists and invitations, classification and placement of everyone attending, organisation of camps, entrance procedures, seating arrangements, timing of events, granting of audiences, and prestations, were all carefully planned in a feudatory manner. The proclamation of the new title symbolising imperial power

and the viceroy representing imperial power were the centre of attention. Throughout, the role of Indians was to be present as “recipients of largesse and honour given them by their empress, and to be spectators to the British acting on her behalf as the Indian monarch” (ibid:202). In his speech stressing the empire’s role in bringing progress and stability to India, Lord Lytton made clear how this was to be achieved; namely through the “supreme supervision and direction of their administration by English officers’ who must ‘continue to form the most important practical channel through which the arts, the sciences and the culture of the West...may freely flow to the East’” (ibid:206), thus maintaining the political might of British rule in India.



Imperial Assemblage of 1877 in Delhi (image source: www.hinduwisdom.info)

In his conclusion, Cohn poses the question of what was achieved by the assemblage and says that, as an immediate effect, it kept being referred to by Indians and Europeans as “a kind of marker, a before and after the event” and that it “became the standard by which public ceremony was measured” (ibid:207-208). More generally, Cohn suggests that the ritual idiom used by Indians in their nationalist struggle was the same as that employed by the British and that, although interrupted by the First Non-Cooperation Movement of 1920s led by Ghandi and motivated by the full-fledged and widespread rejection of British authority, the British

idiom “may still be alive in various forms” (ibid:209). What role the new ideas and structures have come to play on South Asian realities is also an empirical question to be explored in subsequent chapters. For now, let me just continue on this historical exploration aiming to understand how, under what conditions, and in what form(s) the modern state was emerging in South Asia.

Old structures – new aspirations

British policy in India, though liberal and progressive on the whole, lacked until 1917 a sense of direction. Conditions which had made the establishment and continuance of British rule possible in India were fast changing – mainly as a result of that rule itself. There was, however, little conscious effort to direct these changes to a definite and preconceived goal. Concessions were made to the demands of Indian nationalists, but no attempt was made to think out and work out a policy of continuous advance. The reforms of 1892 and 1909 did not shift the foundations of British rule; they merely adjusted the machinery of British government to the changed circumstances in India. They aimed at associating Indians more closely with the administration and allowing them better opportunities of influencing it, while retaining intact its foreign and autocratic character (Mehrotra 1963:71).

Indians continued to agitate for greater participation in government and the civil service, and in 1912 a royal commission recommended that Indians be allowed to take the competitive examination held in England. It also recommended that, “a fourth of the superior posts should be filled by Indians – partly by direct recruitment and partly by promotion – from the subordinate services, and the rest to be filled through the holding of competitive examinations in India” (Zaman 1980:7). The Montagu-Chelmsford Report²⁹ of 1919 went even further recommending that one-third of the superior posts reserved for Europeans should be filled by Indians, and that the percentage should be increased yearly for a gradual Indianisation of the service. “These recommendations were not well received by the Europeans,” Zaman argues, “and a good number of them opted to retire from the Indian Civil Service” (ibid.). Recommendations of the report were embodied in the Government of India Act of 1919, also introducing partial responsible government in the provinces.

²⁹ Named after Edwin Samuel Montagu, Secretary of State for India (1917-1922), and Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India (1916-1921). The report was considered to be the first comprehensive study on the whole problem of Indian government.

These reforms represented the maximum concessions the British were prepared to make at that time. The franchise was extended, and increased authority was given to central and provincial legislative councils, but the viceroy remained responsible only to London. Changes at the provincial level were significant, as the provincial legislative councils contained a considerable majority of elected members. In a system called “dyarchy”, the institution-building departments of government; agriculture, education, public works, and the like, were placed under ministers who were individually responsible to the legislature. Executive councillors, who were often British and responsible to the governor, retained the departments that made up the “steel frame” of British rule: finance, revenue, and home affairs. In 1921, another change recommended by the report was carried out when elected local councils were set up in rural areas.

Meanwhile, the process of Indianisation in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) moved slowly, which in part was due to keen competition from the intellectual elite of British universities with Oxford maintaining the lead.³⁰ By 1924, the entrance examination was the same for ICS as for the Home Civil Service, the Eastern Cadetship of the Colonial Service, and the Foreign Service, yet many of the best candidates chose the ICS. After raising the age of entry to between 21 and 23 in 1892, the Indian rate of success doubled. Even so, by 1909, only around five percent of ICS officers were Indians. According to Tinker, most Indians in the ICS found life on the executive side “frustrating and even humiliating” and many chose as a result to enter ‘judgee’ where they were “relatively aloof from the trammels of British higher officialdom” (Tinker 1966:61).

After the First World War, new ICS recruits were needed, but changed Indian circumstances such as the introduction of dyarchy, the upheavals of Amritsar, and Gandhi’s first civil disobedience campaign negatively affected the number of interested British candidates. “There was no longer security and unchallenged dominion,” Tinker says, “but uncertainty and civil strife” (ibid.).

During the period 1918-1923, 150 British candidates, most of whom were veterans of World War I, were selected by nomination. This was the first departure from competitive entry for almost sixty years. The regular examination was resumed, but British university candidates were few and of uneven quality... Also during the early

³⁰ In 1910, thirty-six of the fifty-eight successful candidates were Oxford men (Tinker 1966:60).

1920's, some senior civilians claimed that the famous covenant between the secretary of state and the civilian had been breached by the introduction of dyarchy, so that there was no longer absolute security of tenure (ibid.).

According to Tinker, the situation led to a number of premature retirements of senior British officials in the 1920s under provisions to retire prematurely on a pension proportionate to length of service. During the 1930s, competition among able young university graduates was again as intense as it had been in the great days of the 1880s and 1890s as professional opportunities, both in Britain and India, were severely limited from about 1929 with the onset of the depression.

The principle of simultaneous examinations was at last accepted when, in 1922, the civil service commissioners, responsible for holding all British public service examinations, supervised the holding of the ICS examination in Allahabad. While Allahabad entrants were required to spend two years at a British university before taking up duty, London examinees were required only to spend one year at Oxford, Cambridge, or a London university, thus giving the London entrant a year's head start as service senior (Tinker 1966).

Against this backdrop in 1923, another royal commission, consisting of an equal number of Indian and British and chaired by Lord Lee, was appointed to make recommendations on the future of the services in India. Considering the racial composition of the superior Indian public services of the government of India, the Lee Commission proposed that forty percent of future entrants should be British, forty percent Indians directly recruited, and twenty percent Indians promoted from the provincial service. The effect of the proposals, it was calculated, would be to make the ICS half-Indian and half-British by 1939. Thereafter, the British component would wither away, but no terminal date was set for a complete Indianisation. These and other recommendations made by the Lee Commission were accepted in full by the secretary of state. By the date of independence in 1947, more than half the service of about one thousand members was Indians, many with long experience and holding higher positions (ibid.).

Another important recommendation of the Lee Commission was for an independent public service commission to be created and entrusted with the task of recruitment for the higher civil services to safeguard against political and personal influences over the selection of civil servants.

The Commission expressed the view that wherever democratic institutions existed, experience showed that to secure an efficient civil service it was essential to protect it as far as possible from political and personal influences and to give it that position of stability and security which was vital to its successful working as the impartial and efficient instrument by which Government, of whatever political complexion, might give effect to their policies (Raheem and Husain 1980:312-13).

In 1926, a Public Service Commission (PSC) consisting of five members detached from all political associations was set up. The responsibilities of the commission included recruitment of personnel for public services, establishment and maintenance of proper standards of qualification for admission to the public service, and quasi-judicial functions. The latter consisted of giving advice to governor general and secretary of state on appeals received by them from civil servants regarding discipline, recruitment, and conditions of service, and so forth (Mattoo 1980). In 1928, the PSC (India) held the ICS examination at Delhi (capital of British India from 1911) on behalf of the (British) Civil Service Commission. Renamed the Federal Public Service Commission in 1937, this body now took over responsibility for recruitment to the All-India Services for which entry was by examination (Tinker 1966).

With the increasing momentum of the independence struggle, both violent and non-violent, the British were gradually giving in to the demands for more self-rule and “responsible government in India”. The Government of India Act of 1935 was a great leap in this direction. A federal system of Government was envisaged, with more powers to the provinces. The act made certain provisions relating to the services. It defined the rights and status of the all-India officers in the proposed federation and provinces, and guaranteed the existing privileges regarding pay, promotion, leave, pension, and so on. Providing for a federal public service commission and provisional service commission, it resembled the former division between the covenanted and uncovenanted services, which from 1892 were called the Indian Civil Service and the Provincial Civil Service.

The Government of India Act of 1935 marked the beginning of the process of self-government by Indians and transfer of power. Elections were held and governments with elected representatives were installed. Politically, the situation was tense because of differences between two major communities; Hindus and Muslims. Occasional confrontation also occurred between the elected governments and governors in the provinces, and at times with the federation. This was further complicated by the outbreak of the Second World War in

1939, during which time the struggle for independence intensified and culminated in the *Quit India Movement* in 1942. After the Second World War, the British Government decided to transfer power by agreeing to a partition of India conceding to the demands of the Muslims for a separate state. “In the circumstances”, writes Ramkrishna Mukherjee, “the Bengali Muslim middle class envisaged a quicker and easier way to further its interests by responding to the call of the All-India Muslim League, which was steadily gaining strength with the demand for a Muslim homeland. In this way it expected to secure a territory and government of its own, as well as its own market in goods and services” (Mukherjee 1973:497). With the Indian Independence Act of 1947, two states, the Indian dominion and Pakistan, were created with West Bengal awarded to the Indian Union and East Bengal to Pakistan. Both states adopted a constitution under the Government of India Act of 1935, which was federal in character and with a parliamentary system of government (Zaman 1980).

By the time of independence, British rationality had indeed marked state and politics in India. ICS may have been “Indianised” in terms of personnel (Tinker 1966), but in terms of organisation it had been through several phases of bureaucratisation and appeared perhaps even more bureaucratic than other so-called ‘modern’ administrations, whether in Britain or in any other European country. Let me to some extent quote B. P. R. Vithal who points to exactly how rational the system was.

After the ancient Chinese system, this was, perhaps, the first Civil Service to be deliberately and consciously constituted on the basis of recruitment by means of examination. The role conceived for this service was also unique because it heralded the transformation of the British administrator from ruler to guardian. When Indians were taken into the ICS, the initial screening and separation from their origins and their admission to a new culture was effected through the educational system and, subsequently, their training in the Oxbridge milieu. The Services succeeded, by and large, in building up a tradition of integrity and professional competence that helped to impart to it a unique aura (Vithal 1997:208).

Instead of continuing to discuss developments in the state of India, the focus will now turn to what, as a result of partition, was first a wing of Pakistan and after 24 years, emerged as the independent state of Bangladesh.

New states emerging

Pakistan came into existence as two entities; West and East Pakistan, and as a dominion within the Commonwealth in August 1947, with Mohammed Ali Jinnah as governor-general, and Liaquat Ali Khan as prime minister. In his inaugural speech to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, delivered on 11 August 1947, Jinnah announced his concept of the new nation.

Work together in a spirit that every one of you, no matter to what community he belong... no matter what is his caste, colour or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges, obligations... I cannot emphasize it too much. We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority communities... will vanish... You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the State. We are starting with the fundamental principle that we are all citizens, and equal citizens of one State... Today you might say with justice that [in Britain] Roman Catholics and Protestants do not exist: what exists now is that every man is a citizen, an equal citizen of Great Britain and they are all members of the nation. Now, I think that we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims; not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual; but in the political sense as citizens of the State (Tinker 1963:161).

Only 13 months after independence, Jinnah died.

Pakistan's first Constituent Assembly was made up of members of the pre-partition Indian Constituent Assembly representing areas now within Pakistan. Leaders of the new Pakistan were mainly western educated lawyers with a strong commitment to parliamentary government. They had supported Jinnah and his Muslim League³¹ in the struggle against the Indian National Congress not so much because they desired an Islamic state, but because they had come to regard the Congress as synonymous with Hindu domination. Some adhered to Islam the basis of personal behaviour within a modern, democratic state. Others saw it as a tradition, the framework within which their forefathers had ruled India. Yet others held Islam as a total way of life. Thus from its inception, leaders of the new nation faced two overriding questions: the role of Islam in the new state, and the relations between East and West wings and the central government.

³¹ The Muslim League, established in December 1906, initially led by Aga Khan and ultimately by Jinnah, was instrumental in creating public opinion in favour of Muslim nationalism and finally in achieving Pakistan in 1947 (Banglapedia 2006).

Liaquat Ali Khan, Jinnah's lieutenant, inherited the task of drafting a constitution. Having entered politics via a landlord party, Khan was a moderate subscribing to a parliamentary, democratic, secular state. Conscious about his own weak power base being a Muslim refugee from the United Provinces (the Indian heartland) Khan sought the support of religious spokesmen; the mullahs or the ulama (religiously learned men). He issued a resolution on the aims and objectives of the constitution holding Allah as the only sovereign and emphasising Islamic values. His leadership ended abruptly when he was assassinated in 1951 and into his place as prime minister stepped a Bengali aristocrat, Khawaja Nazimuddin. Nazimuddin had followed Jinnah as governor general under the interim constitution in 1948 and was succeeded as governor general by Ghulam Mohammad, a Punjabi from the civil service. The twin pillars of power thus represented the two main regional power bases in West and East Pakistan (Encyclopædia Britannica 2003).

A constitution did not evolve until February 1956. Until then, the country was governed under the 1935 Government of India Act, somewhat amended and modified. Over the next two decades, regional feelings, political rivalries and intrigues created a state of instability in the government paving the way for army take-overs, martial law, and new constitutions. "None of the constitutions framed in Pakistan", claims Zaman, "had the approval of the majority of the people of East Pakistan, and none of the administrations which were wholly controlled and dominated by the people of the West Pakistan gave a fair deal to the people of East Pakistan in administration, trade, commerce, and industry" (Zaman 1980:9). This view that Bengali Muslims were barred from top government is supported by Mukherjee who says that "Bengali Muslims were permitted rather easy access to the lower and middle ranges of economic activities, especially to the professions of lawyer, teacher, doctor, etc.; but the top governmental, commercial, and industrial positions became virtually the monopoly of West Pakistanis posted to Bengal from the center of gravity of Pakistan in Sind and West Punjab" (Mukherjee 1973:409). While Bengali Muslims filled the middle stratum of administrative and economic activities, mainly non-Bengali Muslims filled the upper stratum.

The main features of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1956, were as follows: It had a lengthy preamble wherein it was declared that Pakistan would be an Islamic Republic where all authority was to be subject to the supreme power of Allah. The constitution laid down certain directive principles of state policy, but without the force of law. It contained a bill of rights embodying all rights as found in the constitution of western democracies. Government was

declared a federal one with the judiciary acting as guardian of the constitution. The Supreme Court of Pakistan was to interpret the constitution and uphold the fundamental rights of the citizens. Both Urdu and Bangla were declared state languages of Pakistan. The President, who had to be a Muslim, was to be head of state. A parliamentary form of government was provided for with the National Assembly as Parliament. It consisted of 300 members, 150 members elected from East Pakistan and 150 members from West Pakistan for a period of five years. In addition, there should be 10 women members, 5 of whom should be from East Pakistan and 5 from West Pakistan. The Constitution provided for the Supreme Court of Pakistan and two High Courts for the two provinces. These courts were authorized to issue writs for the enforcement of fundamental rights. As guardian of the constitution, the Supreme Court could declare any act passed by the National Assembly *ultra vires* if violating the constitution. The nature of the provincial government provided for by the 1956 constitution was more or less similar to that of the central government, with a governor and a cabinet headed by a chief minister. Provincial Assembly was to consist of 300 members to be elected from single-member constituencies for a five-year term. In addition, there were 10 more seats reserved for women for a period of 10 years (Ahamed 2006).

Operation of the 1956 constitution was characterised by political instability at the centre as well as in the provinces. On October 7, 1958, President Iskander Mirza abrogated the constitution by declaring martial law. The central and provincial governments were dismissed and all political parties were banned. General Mohammad Ayub Khan made himself Chief Martial Law Administrator. Mirza announced that the martial law period would be brief and that a new constitution would be drafted. On 27 October he swore in his new Cabinet. General Ayub became prime minister and three lieutenant generals were named to the Cabinet. The eight civilian members included businessmen and lawyers. On the same evening, the new military ministers called on the president, with contingents of armed soldiers, and informed him that he was to resign. Within three weeks of the proclamation of martial law, Mirza was removed from the office of president and General Ayub Khan assumed both presidency and the office of chief marital law administrator.

In January 1951, Ayub Khan had succeeded General Sir Douglas Gracey as commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army, becoming the first Pakistani in that position. Although Ayub Khan's military career was not particularly brilliant and although he had not previously held a combat command, he was promoted over several senior officers with distinguished careers.

Ayub Khan was probably selected because of his reputation as an able administrator, his presumed lack of political ambition, and his lack of powerful group backing. Coming from a humble family of an obscure Pakhtun tribe, Ayub Khan also lacked affiliation with major internal power blocks and was, therefore, acceptable to all elements.

Within a short time of his promotion, however, Ayub Khan became a powerful political figure. Perhaps more than any other Pakistani, Ayub Khan was responsible for seeking and securing military and economic assistance from the United States and for aligning Pakistan with it in international affairs. As army commander-in-chief and for a time as minister of defence in 1954, Ayub Khan was empowered to veto virtually any government policy that he felt inimical to the interests of the armed forces.

Ayub Khan sought to retain certain aspects of his dominant authority in the 1962 Constitution, which ended the period of martial law. The document created a presidential system in which he remained contemptuous of lawyer-politicians and handed over power to his fellow army officers. Ayub Khan used two main approaches to governing in his first few years. He concentrated on consolidating power and intimidating the opposition. He also aimed at establishing the groundwork for future stability through altering the economic, legal, and constitutional institutions.

Efforts were made to popularise the regime while the opposition was muzzled. Ayub Khan maintained a high public profile, often taking trips expressly to “meet the people”. He was also aware of the need to address some of the acute grievances of East Pakistan. To the extent possible, only Bengali members of the civil service were posted in the East Wing. Previously, many of the officers had been from the West Wing, knowing neither the region nor the language. Dhaka was designated the legislative capital of Pakistan, while the newly created Islamabad became the administrative capital. Central government bodies, such as the planning commission, were instructed to hold regular sessions in Dhaka. Public investment in East Pakistan increased, although private investment remained heavily skewed in favour of West Pakistan. The Ayub Khan regime was so highly centralised, however, that in the absence of democratic institutions, the development that took place during his regime remained more or less a West Pakistan affair.

Pakistan remained under an authoritarian system of government from 1958 to 1962. With a view to restoring their own brand of democracy, the regime introduced a scheme of local self-government known as *Basic Democracies*. When elections were held under the new system in January 1960, President Ayub Khan sought a vote of confidence from the 80,000 elected basic democrats, as they became known, securing a mandate to frame a new constitution. The President accordingly appointed a constitutional commission to examine parliamentary government in Pakistan and recommend measures for the future constitution. The commission submitted its report to the President in May 1961, and the President, after having the report discussed by different committees of the cabinet and examined at a governors' conference, put it to a drafting committee. A new constitution was thus promulgated on 1 March 1962.

President Khan did not see parliamentary democracy as suitable for Pakistan. Instead, the *Basic Democracies*, as the individual administrative units were called, were intended to initiate and educate a largely illiterate population in the working of government by giving them limited representation and associating them with decision-making at a "level commensurate with their ability". Jurisdiction of Basic Democracies was limited to local government and rural development with the intention of providing a two-way channel of communication between the regime and the common people, allowing for gradual social change.

The system of Basic Democracies did not have time to fulfil Khan's intentions before he and his system fell in 1969. Whether a new class of political leaders equipped with some administrative experience could have emerged to replace those trained in British constitutional law was never discovered. Neither did the system provide for the mobilisation of the rural population around institutions of national integration. Its emphasis was on economic development and social welfare alone. Authority of the civil service was augmented in the Basic Democracies, and the power of landlords and big industrialists in the West Wing went unchallenged.

In 1969, a mass movement against General Ayub Khan was on the rise. A situation of near civil war prevailed, the army once again stepped in, and Ayub Khan was removed from power. General Yahya Khan took over with the promise to hold elections in 1970 and to transfer power to elected representatives. The new administration formed a committee of deputy and provincial martial law administrators that functioned above the civil machinery of

government. The generals held power and were no longer the supporting arm of the civilians, elected or bureaucratic, as they had been throughout much of the country's history. In the past, every significant change of government had relied, in large part, on the allegiance of the military. However, Yahya Khan and his military advisers proved no more capable of overcoming the nation's problems than their predecessors. The attempt to establish a military hierarchy running parallel to and supplanting the authority of the civilian administration inevitably ruptured the bureaucratic-military alliance, on which efficiency and stability depended.

The first general election conducted in Pakistan based on one person, one vote, was held on 7 December 1970; elections to provincial legislative assemblies followed three days later. Yahya Khan kept his promise of elections and voting was heavy. The Awami League won a massive victory in East Pakistan, for it was directly elected to 160 of the 162 seats and thus gained a majority in the National Assembly. The Pakistan People's Party won a large majority in the West Wing, especially in Punjab and Sindh, but no seats in the East Wing. In the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, the National Awami Party won a plurality of the seats. The Muslim League and the Islamic parties did poorly in the west and were not represented in the east.

Thus, any constitutional agreement depended on the consent of three persons: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Mujib), accredited leader of East Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of West Pakistan, and Yahya Khan, as the ultimate authenticator representing the military government. In his role as intermediary and head of state, Yahya Khan tried to persuade Bhutto and Mujib to come to some kind of accommodation. The effort proved unsuccessful as Mujib insisted on his right as leader of the majority to form a government, a stand at variance with Bhutto, who claimed "two majorities" in Pakistan. Bhutto declared that his party would not attend the inaugural session of the assembly, thereby making the establishment of civilian government difficult.

On 1 March 1971, Yahya Khan, who earlier had referred to Mujib as the "future prime minister of Pakistan", dissolved his civilian cabinet and declared an indefinite postponement of the National Assembly. In East Pakistan, the reaction was immediate. Strikes, demonstrations, and civil disobedience increased in tempo until there was open revolt. Directed by Mujib, Bengalis declared that they would pay no taxes and would ignore martial

law regulations on press and radio censorship. The writ of the central government all but ceased to exist in East Pakistan. As a reaction to Yahya's act, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared virtual independence of East Pakistan at a mammoth gathering in Dhaka on 7 March 1971. A civil disobedience movement was launched from the following day.

Mujib, Bhutto, and Yahya Khan held negotiations in Dhaka in late March in a last-ditch attempt to defuse the growing crisis. Simultaneously, General Tikka Khan, commander of the Pakistani forces in East Pakistan, prepared a contingency plan for a military takeover and called for troop reinforcements to be flown in via Sri Lanka. In an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion, the talks broke down and on 25 March, Yahya Khan and Bhutto flew back to West Pakistan. Tikka Khan's emergency plan went into operation. Roadblocks and barriers appeared all over Dhaka. Mujib was taken into custody and flown to the West Wing to stand trial for treason. A regime of genocide was launched on 25 March by attacking universities and other places of resistance and indiscriminately killing teachers, students, and political workers. The tempo of violence of the military crackdown during these first days soon developed into a full-blown War of Liberation resulting in the emergence of independent sovereign Bangladesh (Asha Islam 2006).

After war broke out, the remaining Awami League (AL) leadership fled the country to form a government-in-exile in Calcutta. About 500 civilian government employees from the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP), the Pakistan Police Service (PSP), the East Pakistan Civil Service (EPCS), and a number of lower ranking employees joined the government-in-exile for the duration of the nine-month war. When the Pakistani army surrendered to the joint command of the Indian Army and *Mukti Bahini* (Liberation Army), political leadership and administrative personnel could return to Dhaka. On independence, the Awami League formed the government and its charismatic leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, assumed government leadership taking office as the country's first prime minister. Ruhul Quddus, a senior civil servant, organised the administration as the first secretary general.

According to Talukder Maniruzzaman, about six thousand government employees, including former CSP officers, lost their jobs on charges of "collaboration" with the Pakistani military regime. A quota of all new appointments was reserved for the members of the Mukti Bahini and a special civil service examination was held for the recruitment of freedom fighters. Other freedom fighters that could establish connections with AL leaders were recruited as hard-core

members of the *Jatio Rakkhi Bahini* (National Security Force) established by the government. “In the crude competition for scarce jobs”, claims Maniruzzaman, “many of the supporters of the Awami League managed to secure fake certificates of participation in the liberation war to take advantage of the quota system” (1979:48). Thus, Mujib’s government practiced a policy of favouring pro-AL officials serving the government-in-exile. The government also found it necessary to appoint business executives to manage the industrial and financial agencies nationalised during 1972-73 as part of Mujib’s attempt to create a socialist state. These appointments also followed party political lines.

In 1972, the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee (ASRC) was set up to determine the policy regarding fresh recruitment to government services, and the principles of integration of the personnel of various services in a new structure. The Committee felt that the inherited structure of the services was neither adequate, nor appropriate for fulfilling the needs and aspirations of a country that was independent, socialist, and unitary. It recommended a single civil service structure covering all the services in ten grades stressing that: 1) there should be no reservation of posts, 2) all persons with proven talent should have equal opportunity for advancement to top positions, and 3) senior officers at the national headquarters should be periodically exposed to changing problems at field administration units. A National Pay Commission (NPC) was also appointed and asked to “suggest scales of pay in the light of the government’s declared objective of the establishment of a socialist society” (Maniruzzaman 1979:51). To match the ten service grades, the Pay Commission recommended ten national scales of pay.

Recommendations of the ASRC and NPC were controversial causing no immediate action. What was acted upon, however, was the 1972 constitutional directive (Presidential order No. 9). This denied the protection civil servants had enjoyed in the past, especially in Pakistan under the 1956 and 1962 constitutions. It provided for the dismissal of officials without right of appeal stipulating that, “the civil servants ‘shall hold office during the pleasure of the President’” and that “the decision thereon of the authority empowered to dismiss or remove such person or to reduce him in rank shall be final” (Ahamed 1980:153). Consequently, principles regulating recruitment and conditions of services incorporated in earlier constitutions were omitted. “As early as January, 1972”, states Emajuddin Ahamed, “53 senior civil servants were removed from office. From July to November 30, 1974 over 300 government officials were dismissed” (ibid:154).

Organisational factionalism

According to Maniruzzaman, policies regarding appointments, promotions, and dismissals were generally contested creating conflicts, factionalism, and sectarian discontents within the civil service. One dimension of conflict was that between the “patriots” and the “non-patriots”, i.e. recruitment of those involved in the liberation war. Another was “the jealousy and rivalry between the former members of the EPCS and former members of the CSP” (Maniruzzaman 1979:47). The CSP or Civil Service Pakistan was the all-Pakistan service at the helm of the national bureaucracy and the EPCS or East Pakistan Civil Service was the regional administrative service functioning in the area that became Bangladesh. The dispute was mainly about who should form the nucleus of the top administration. EPCS argued for length of service as criterion for promotions, while former CSP members emphasised merit arguing that, “EPCS men, having lost the competition in the Central Superior Service Examinations and having entered the provisional service, ‘were designed at most to reach certain levels in the government’” (ibid.).

The EPCS men, however, found a lever in Syed Hossain, the newly appointed joint secretary of the Establishment Division – the Division directly under the Prime Minister and in charge of appointments, transfers, and promotions. Syed Hossain, a brother-in-law of Sheikh Mujib and a junior member of the old EPCS, was a section officer (higher grade clerk) at the time of independence. Within two years he was catapulted to the position of joint secretary. In the highly personalistic system developed by Sheikh Mujib, Syed Hossain, even before his appointment to the post of joint secretary, was more powerful than the secretary of the Establishment Division, and in proposing appointments to higher posts favoured his former fellow of the EPCS (ibid.).

After the fall of the Mujib regime in 1975, the new regime first abolished Presidential Order No. 9 of 1972, which had provided for the dismissal of officials without showing cause.³² Those who had lost their jobs under this order after liberation were allowed to appeal their cases and General Zia placed many such civil servants in key positions, while some pro-AL officers were either dismissed or demoted. By reinstating former CPS officers who had been removed from the service, General Zia sought to re-establish the bureaucratic order prevalent of pre-independent days Mujib had wanted to do away with. According to Ahamed, Mujib

³² Mujib was killed in a coup and after a counter-coup; Major-General Ziaur Rahman (General Zia) emerged as the effective head of the government.

often became livid with anger when he denounced bureaucracy and Presidential Order No. 9 testified to his lack of credence towards professionalism (Ahamed 1980).

Another controversy, surfacing during Mujib but gaining momentum after the takeover of General Zia, was one between generalists and specialists. Specialists had for long been dissatisfied with the subordinate positions they occupied vis-à-vis generalists and indeed with the whole administrative system left behind by the British placing 'all-rounders' at the top. Former EPCS and CSP officers may have disagreed about the reorganisation of former provincial and national civil services, but maintained a united front whenever specialists tried to enter secretariat posts.

A new Pay and Services Commission, with a similar mandate to that of earlier commissions, was appointed by General Zia's military regime. The general position of the Commission was that "the generalist Indian Civil Service (ICS) was 'the one great political invention of nineteenth century England'" (Maniruzzaman 1979:52). The Commission recognised the changed situation resulting in changing needs since the nineteenth century and that technocrats would necessarily form an important part of a modern administration, but expressed indifference to claims made by specialist groups that their function was more important than other functions. The Commission was also against earlier practices of reserving key posts to a single service holding that "all service groups, whether generalist or specialist, should have an opportunity to move up to general policy level positions, subject always to the paramount need of superior ability for the type of job in view" (ibid:53). The Commission was aware of tensions within the civil service and the main recommendation was of equal status and pay for the development of "a spirit of partnership and cooperation in the Civil Service" (ibid:54). However, the announcement of the new national grades and scales of pay only exacerbated the tensions because they were so much at variance with what had been expected based on the Commission's recommendations. Instead of equal status and pay, the generalists' predominance was assured in the shape of higher pay and grades. Protests were many, resulting in meetings, strikes and demonstrations. The generalists also organised themselves, disagreeing with the new grading system and arguing that generalist field officers had been downgraded vis-à-vis secretariat officers. Students at the universities also joined the protests, which went on for months, finally forcing the government to a retreat. The government responded with announcing new scales of pay and the abolition of the grading system.

Over the years, a number of commissions and committees have been appointed to study the public service and to recommend measures for improvements, but modifications have been minor. Whenever reports have been published, opposition from within the services has proved strong enough to shelve most of them and maintain the status quo. The system of a unified civil service was designed to create a 'classless' structure treating all services as equal, but in practice generalists continued to monopolize key positions at the expense of other services contributing to the sustenance of a distinct and privileged class of elite civil servants. The creation of a Senior Service Pool (SSP) in 1979 and that of Upazilas in 1983 only aggravated the situation further as neither improved the position of specialist. The SSP was to enable "competent and experienced officers of various service cadres ... to participate at the highest policy-making level of the Government" (Zaman 1980:33). Members of the SSP would ultimately fill all posts in the secretariat, but selection criteria for the pool were in favour of members of services already dominating such posts. The new level of administration, Upazila, headed by the Upazila Nirbahir Officer (UNO) also favoured a structure of inequality between services. Agriculturalists, engineers and medical officers at the local level resented the executive role of a UNO appointed from a single service. Along with a demand for the withdrawal of the supremacy of one single service, the three services demanded equal opportunities for all services. A strike was again called, but was avoided when the government reached a mutual understanding with leaders of the specialists where the government promised to appoint another committee to look into the situation. The committee forwarded its recommendations, but the controversy continued with more strikes and appeals to the president.

Politics and bureaucracy in postcolonial states

Bangladesh was under military rule more or less continuously for 15 years. First under General Zia, and later under Lieutenant-General Hossain Mohammad Ershad (Ershad) who seized power in 1982 after the coup and murder of General Zia the previous year. Ershad appointed a number of martial law committees led by brigadiers and consisting for the main part of high-ranking army officers with mandate to recommend improvements in the organisational set up of ministries, divisions, directories, and statutory corporations. The outcome was mainly that of reducing numbers of organisational bodies and manpower in addition to fixing the lowest and highest salaries for officers and employees of government,

semi-government and autonomous bodies. A number of high-level committees and cabinet sub-committees were also constituted between 1985 and 1987 to review critical problems afflicting the functioning of the civil service. Membership of these committees was confined to cabinet ministers, top military brass, and senior civil servants although the President approved only a few of the recommendations. These included: 1) abolition of the SSP, 2) deputy secretaries and joint secretaries to be promoted based on quota reservation for various cadres, and 3) no quota reservation for any cadre to the posts of additional secretaries and secretaries (Khan 1998). Thus, the question of appointments and promotions to the top echelon of administration remained unresolved and continued to be a main issue.

In 1990, Ershad was forced to step down and Khaleda Zia, widow of late President Zia, became prime minister in 1991 after her party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), won the majority of seats in the parliamentary elections held that year under the supervision of a caretaker government. Since then, the country has been democratic in form and the main contestants for the office of prime minister have been the two ladies, Sheik Hasina (AL) and Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP), a daughter and a wife of former heads of state. Neither of them have appeared particularly interested in administrative reforms with the result of few formal changes being made, but both have shown keen interest in taking charge of administration by selecting people for key positions. In 2006, Khaleda Zia ended her second term as prime minister after a cessation between 1996 and 2001 when Sheik Hasina was the prime minister. New elections, planned for January 2007, were postponed and it is uncertain when fresh elections will be held. In the meantime, a civilian emergency government runs the country.

As seen, the gradual expansion of British dominion in India was followed by a proliferation of administrative tasks believed to require specialised agencies and a certain type of personnel to manage the various activities. A twofold service system was also established: covenanted and uncovenanted. The former was the higher administrative service recruited in England; the latter a lower executive service recruited in India. Indians already connected with the Company as brokers or factotums were employed in the low-ranking, poorly paid uncovenanted service and with no or few prospects for promotions, deprived of any authority and merely carrying out orders from British officers. Though appointed to respectable departments, such as revenue and judicial, Indians were not allowed to rise above subordinate positions. Requirements to those appointed were nevertheless very high in terms of education and skills, and total loyalty to the service expected. Officers to the covenanted service, on the

other hand, belonged to a world apart where appointments were personal, salaries and other perquisites were generous, and where promotions were certain. When in 1835, the British first provided for open competition, selection criteria continued to protect British interests as candidates had to go to England and pass the required examinations there. Age limits and educational requirements were effective measures for preventing Indians from actually competing for admission, as candidates had to be educated according to English educational standards and at that time should be no older than seventeen or eighteen years of age (see Misra 1977). This twofold principle of classification was retained throughout British rule. In 1892, the services were renamed the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and the Provincial Civil Service (PCS).

The gradual provisions of allowing Indians some responsibility and finally the opportunity to compete for higher positions came not as a result of a technical requirement within the organisation and certainly not because Indians at any point came to be recognised as equals. Increasing social segregation and the fact that British officers in India opted to resign at the prospect of having Indians as colleagues, or even worse as superiors, defy that notion. More likely, it came about as a result of mass agitation. To stay in control, the British depended on the support and cooperation of prominent Indians who in return demanded more equitable treatment. The opportunities open to Indians were controlled by a small group of people, referred to as *bhadralok*, whose interests were so much tied to the colonial set-up that in order to protect their own interests sought to draw support for the established order. As *dalpatis* or members of important *dals*, the *bhadralok* managed to take control of important areas of power, such as settling social disputes, granting them respect and authority to act as representatives of Indian interests. When the British left, public affairs in India were left in the hands of these very people.

Hamza Alavi (1973) argued in the article *The State in Postcolonial Societies* for a relatively autonomous role played by bureaucracy in Pakistan after independence from India. Alavi raises questions primarily with reference to the Marxist thesis of the state, but finds the relationships between the state and social classes are found to be far more complex in postcolonial states than explained by Marxism and the hegemony of a *single* ruling class.

[T]he state in the postcolonial society is not the instrument of a single class. It is relatively autonomous and it mediates the competing interests of the three propertied

classes – the metropolitan bourgeoisies, the indigenous bourgeoisies, and the landed classes – while at the same time acting on behalf of all of them in order to preserve the social order in which their interests are embedded, namely the institution of private property and the capitalist mode as the dominant mode of production” (Alavi 1973:148).

Interests at stake for the so-called “propertied classes” are identified as follows. First, Alavi suggests that capitalist development in Pakistan took place under the “corrupt patronage and close control of the bureaucracy” (ibid:157) as business opportunities were restricted to a privileged few who managed to establish the necessary relationship with the bureaucracy. In the absence of direct political representation through a political party, however, the influence of the business community on the conduct of public affairs is seen as primarily through such direct contact with and influence on the bureaucracy itself. Second, Alavi claims that through recruiting their senior officers largely from wealthy rural families, landowning classes are not only afforded a built-in position within the bureaucracy, but bureaucrats have a direct stake in the privileges of the landed classes. To reinforce this link, officers were granted land and thereby became substantial new landowners in their own right. To justify this claim, the exemption of agricultural income from income tax is mentioned as an example of how landowners have been able to pursue their interests effectively. “Nevertheless”, he says, “landlords as a class, despite their close and effective links with the bureaucracy and their dominant role in party politics, cannot be said to have command over the bureaucracy” (ibid:158). The price policy of raw cotton, which worked to the disadvantage of the landowners and to the benefit of the business magnates who owned textile mills, is provided as an example in which the interests of landowners have been subordinated to those of the indigenous bourgeoisies. Last is the question of metropolitan bourgeoisies’ interests and their achievements. Although foreign businessmen, reinforced by governmental pressure, managed to enforce policies in Pakistan in support of foreign business to the detriment of domestic interests, Alavi does not see the metropolitan bourgeoisies as in complete command of bureaucracy either.

Bureaucracy is found to be *relatively* autonomous because the common commitment, uniting all the three competing propertied social classes, for the preservation of a social order based on the institution of private property situates bureaucracy *within* the matrix of a class society. Bureaucracy is described as relatively *autonomous* as no single class can be said to have exclusive command over it. The role of bureaucracy then is both to preserve a certain social order and to mediate between the competing demands of the three propertied classes. Whether

one goes along with Alavi's claim for such a threefold class-based competition between major interests, his analysis nevertheless reveals an important aspect, namely close-knit relations between powerful social actors and bureaucracy, from which Bengalis were mainly excluded. Being excluded from important areas of social and economic life gave impetus to the Bengali movement for equitable treatment.

As the Bengali movement progressed, reluctantly – but inevitably – the dominant Punjabi bureaucratic elite yielded some of the demands of the movement for a fair share of jobs and promotion. As a consequence, by the late 1960s, the provincial administration in East Bengal was almost wholly staffed by Bengali civil servants at all levels. Bengali progress was less remarkable in the central government. It was not until 1969 that for the first time a few Bengali officers were installed as secretaries to the central government, at the head of some minor ministries. The bastions of power – the Ministries of Defence and Finance, the Planning Commission, and the Establishment Division – were still retained securely in trusted West Pakistani hands (ibid:168).

When the war broke out, leaders of the Awami League leading the independence movement and a number of civil servants crossed the border to India to form a government-in-exile. According to Khan and Zafarullah, it was from this experience bureaucracy came to be “enmeshed in politics” (1991:657). As the politicians lacked prior administrative experience, the civil servants played a vital role in organising the civil administration and the activities of the government-in-exile. After the war, these civil servants, seen as patriots for their contribution to the independence movement, were rewarded with key positions in the new administration. Those who remained during the war and continued their work, irrespective of personal feelings toward the cause for independence or attitudes toward the Pakistani military regime, were seen as collaborators and dismissed from the services. Determined to keep the civil service under its control, a large number of senior civil servants were forcibly retired under a special presidential order that provided for dismissal of any officer without the right of appeal. Another move in this direction was the lateral induction of a large number of party supporters with little or no prior administrative experience to high ranks in the civil service. By the end of 1974, however, the growing economic crisis, the increasingly violent role of radical political parties, and the ineffectiveness of the Awami League due to factional strife made it difficult to maintain the popularity and support needed to stay in power. In an attempt to remedy the situation, the multiparty parliamentary system was replaced by a one-party presidential system concentrating all powers in the chief executive. To enforce the transformation, high-ranking civil servants were inducted into the highest policymaking

bodies of the party, appointed governors of administrative units at sub-national level, and selected for various political positions.

For more than a decade after the fall of the Awami League regime, the country was either under military rule or its 'civilianised' version. Senior bureaucrats were appointed members of presidential advisory councils immediately after the two military takeovers in 1975 and 1982. They also sat on important advisory committees and made members of reform planning bodies positioning them to influence almost all governmental decisions.

By appointing a number of official groups to work out reform plans, successive governments since independence have shown commitment to bring about reforms in the administrative service. Certain basic changes to the structure were recommended and measures were outlined to develop an integrated public personnel management system encompassing a rational selection process based on merit, long-term career planning, coordination of institutionalised training, and a promotion system based on merit and seniority. To remove discrepancies among different services, uniform scales of pay were proposed along with equitable scope for advancement, and the creation of an elite cadre at the top of the hierarchy drawing on personnel from all over the civil service structure. While initiatives to work out reform plans have been plenty, implementation was modest, maintaining for the most part the status quo, which only intensified tendencies of rivalry within the service while making it more vulnerable to political interference.

One aspect of this rivalry was that between the members of the Civil Service of Pakistan and the East Pakistan Civil Service, another between the generalists and the specialists. With the passing of time, the first dissolved into the second as the services were amalgamated into the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) and both were generalists with a common interest to counter the growing strength of specialist civil servants. From the time of the British, policymaking positions have been reserved for the members of small and distinct groups. Europeans subordinated Indians and West Pakistanis subordinated East Pakistanis. After independence, non-generalists envisioned that the erstwhile dominating tendency of one service group over other segments of the bureaucracy would end and that a system would emerge wherein equity for all civil servants in terms of their career advancement and prospects would be ensured. Reform planning bodies suggested reforms much along the same lines, but the generalists

have only consolidated their position and continued their domination over important public agencies.

According to Hugh Tinker, as part of imperial legacy, the British left “the nucleus of a capable national Civil Service”. The problem was that India was not prepared to deal with the new political situation. He claims that

the need to transform the public service from an imperial to a national elite (the process known in these days as “-ization”) was nowhere anticipated sufficiently early... Equally, however, it may be argued that nowhere in Southern Asia did Britain utterly fail to leave as part of the imperial legacy the nucleus of a capable national Civil Service... The clash between politicians and administrators is one of the most general features of the process of “decolonialization”. In some cases the main struggle came before, in some cases after, the formal transfer of power. British policy, although far from consistent, made a fairly general effort to provide a bridge between foreign “absolute” rule and national “popular” rule by a partial transfer of authority, both at the upper levels of power by some form of dyarchy, and at the lower levels by the gradual development of institutions of local self-government (1966:79-80).

Under British rule bureaucracy, at least the Indian part of the civil service serving as it did foreign interests, was definitively separate from any individual social or political interests. While the British maintained, almost throughout, a system of patronage for appointments and promotions of their own, the natives were, as shown, carefully selected based on proven skills and expected to be one hundred percent loyal to the system. Seen from the Indian point of view during foreign rule, politics and bureaucracy were indeed differentiated in the most rational manner: the British made decisions, which Indians executed. To back its decisions, the British had built a strong and loyal army ready to execute government orders, of whatever political complexion. With the transfer of power, however, politics and administration no longer belonged in two different worlds.

In the cases of both Pakistan and Bangladesh, there are long-standing traditions of proximity between the army and the civil service with both serving as the supporting arm of government. Throughout much of the continent’s history, every significant change in government has in large, relied on the allegiance of the armed forces. In Pakistan, attempts to establish a military hierarchy running parallel to and supplanting the authority of the civilian administration, as a result of army take-overs and martial rule, have inevitably ruptured the bureaucratic-military alliance. Bangladesh has managed, despite instances of army take-overs and martial rule, to maintain the alliance. The situation in Bangladesh has rather been one of

the army striving to retain some autonomy and bureaucracy struggling to balance politics and autonomy.

Thus, the British initially established and developed an organisation with the purpose of serving British trade interests. As the Company grew and expanded its functions, phases of adjustments followed. In service to the British Crown and parliament, in place of merely commercial interests, the organisation became ever more bureaucratic. As long as serving foreign interests, politics, bureaucracy and native interests were necessarily separate. After partition, and with the emergence of independent states, the relationship between government, its support system, and society became more complex facing new challenges. What this means in present day Bangladesh will be the focus of subsequent chapters starting with a closer look at the state as an object of study.

3

Encountering the State: ceremonies as manifestation of state power

There was a farmer who used to drink a lot. Once when he was going back home he was so drunk that he had trouble walking. Coming out from the house where he had been drinking he asked where the road had gone. The people said not to worry because he was standing on it. But then he fell into the drain. Puzzled he asked, "From where the drain has come here?" For a long time he just lay there wondering. Passers-by started asking what he was doing there and he answered that "I am trying to find the way back home and I don't know from where the drain has come". After a while he stood up and started walking again. He then hit a tall pole. He fell down and, looking up at the pole, declared, "I never before saw such a tall man standing before me". Again passers-by started asking what he was doing there and he answered, "I have never before seen such a tall man". Then he said, "This is my problem and I cannot go from here without the answer". The people answered, "Yeah, when you are sitting there the pole is much taller than you". He got up and started walking again. After a while he saw a ladder standing against a wall with cow dung on top. Again he cried, "This is another problem in front of me" and his question was how any cow could leave dung on top of a ladder. "How big was the cow?" he wondered. He stood there thinking, but found no answer. Again passers-by started asking what he was doing there. And he said, "See here; there is cow dung on the top of the ladder, but how that is possible? How big was the cow?" The people answered that when a cow left this dung the ladder was on the ground. Later, a farmer came and put the ladder up against the wall and that was why. The explanation satisfied the drunken man who said that "Yeah, now I got the answer" and he started walking again. Then there was a king. He came along riding on an elephant. Seeing a man balancing on the road the king ordered him to get out of the way. "Give me way to pass", the king shouted. "Who are you?" asked the farmer. "Can you not see that I am the king?" Imitating the king the farmer said, "I am the king and I don't know you. I am the king", he repeated. The king became very angry and told his servants to arrest the man and take him to the palace. And so they did. Later on, and after sobering up, the farmer was presented before the king. The king wanted to punish him and inquired, "Why you have done this? You were standing in front of me disobeying my order and refusing to give way". The man answered that "The guy who was standing there in front of you, he has gone and this man now standing in front of you is another man. The former did not see and could not realise the situation". The king laughed and was not able to punish him anymore. Instead he told the farmer to go home.³³

A friend, fond of using proverbs and anecdotes in his discussions, narrated the story. We were talking about how alcohol affects judgement and the potential dangers. In the story, a drunken farmer angered a king by refusing to recognise his position and the king had him arrested. Facing his prosecutor, the sobered up farmer made a providential escape by acknowledging the mistake and the king decided to accept the circumstances and let him go unpunished. The situation of a sovereign king in possession of an apparatus ready to execute orders by use of

³³ The story is written as it was told and without editing.

force makes him, according to classical theory, the state.³⁴ That the question of the state is much more complex than merely the king's power is what this chapter is about.

“There is no such thing as the power of the State” A. R. Radcliffe-Brown declared over half a century ago, “there are only, in reality, powers of individuals – kings, prime ministers, magistrates, policemen, party bosses, and voters” (Radcliffe-Brown [1940] 1987:xxiii). To him, the idea of the state did nothing but create mystification, and he argued that “concepts of government and politics were all that are needed for an adequate grasp of the ‘political’” (Fuller and Harriss 2001:1). What Radcliffe-Brown and his contemporaries (see Fortes and Evans-Pritchard [1940] 1987) sought to escape was the idea of the state “as being an entity over and above the human individuals who make up a society” (Radcliffe-Brown op. cit.). The state was specifically rejected as an object of study. This ‘death by conceptualization’, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot (2001) aptly termed it, scarcely encouraged anthropologists to engage critically with the state. Several decades later, Philip Abrams took a similar stance towards the state noting that, “the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is” (Abrams 1988:82). According to Abrams, there is a state-system *and* a state-idea, but that “[w]e are only making difficulties for ourselves in supposing that we have also to study the state – an entity, agent, function or relation over and above the state-system and the state-idea” (ibid.). Even after fifty years of asking what the state is, or taking it for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis, its nature has remained, he said, “quite spectacularly unclear” (ibid:59).

In the previous chapter, the focus was on the emerging state as an organisation striving to establish itself as the stronger among competing powers and become sovereign. In this chapter, I will continue pursuing the question of what the state is and how it can be approached. As indicated by Abrams, although the state and theories about it have occupied centre stage for centuries already, attempts to arrive at an adequate definition are continuous. What most definitions about the state have in common, though, is the convergence with power, whether seen as that authority with the legitimate monopoly of physical force over

³⁴ Classical theory refers here to Weberian conceptualisation whereby the state is “an organization, composed of numerous agencies led and coordinated by the state’s leadership (executive authority) that has the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people as well as the parameters of rule making for other social organizations in a given territory, using force if necessary to have its way” (Migdal 1988:19). See also Max Weber (1946:78).

defined territory (Weber); as a political force promoting capitalist interests (the Marxist vein); as an ideological project producing submissive subjects (Abrams op. cit.); or as a space composed of varied relations of power and the mentalities they embody (the Foucauldian perspective). Although difficult to define, as argued by Bruce Kapferer, “it is nonetheless a hard, if often different, shifting and uncertain, imagined and felt reality in the experience of most” (2005:286). So, if not merely an ideological superstructure, then what else and how can ‘it’ (whatever it is) be approached? As in the colonial days, I argue, ceremonies are important for the constitution of state power, and as before, they are arenas for power struggles, which I will come back to later in this chapter.

Drawing on anthropological perspectives discussed in the introduction (Gupta 1995, Ferguson & Gupta 2002, Sharma & Gupta 2006, Handelman 1998, 2004), the state can be explored as a ritual project seeing public ceremonies as manifestation of state power. As seen in chapter 2, the British in Victorian India used public events to visualise power and consolidate its sovereign position (Cohn 1983). This chapter will show how ceremonies are still used for arranging power. By engaging the past, changes and continuity in state order is discussed. Since my argument here rests on the notion that the state is all at once system and idea, real and illusory, process and structure, raised above, yet inseparable from society, it makes sense to begin with some general observations about theories of the state.

Theories of the state

To have a chance to really think a state which still thinks itself through those who attempt to think it, then, it is imperative to submit to radical questioning all the presuppositions inscribed in the reality to be thought and in the very thought of the analyst.

Pierre Bourdieu et al. (1994:2)

The analytical distinction between state-system and state-idea has played and continues to play a major role in scholarly thinking about the state. According to Abrams, one reason why political sociology seldom studies the state directly, or ends up explaining it away, is its ‘commonsense nature’, that is: “the commonsense functions of the state – the determining and implementing of goals, the enforcement of law, the legitimation of order, the expropriation and allocation of resources, the integration of conflict” (1988:65), in other words; its rational intentions. This tendency has perhaps most evidently to do with taking the Weberian

definition of the modern state for granted, that is, as a rational organisation with “the ability or authority to make and implement the binding rules for all the people” (Migdal 1988:19). What were being studied were processes of grass-roots socialisation for political mobilisation. The result, Abrams says, was that “although a sense of the state was there the state was not treated effectively as part of the problem to be investigated” (Abrams op. cit:67). Even if the state has not been directly addressed, what such socialisation studies have done according to Abrams is to “establish the existence of a managed construction of belief about the state and to make clear the consequences and implications of that process for the binding of subjects into their own subjections”. And even if this binding process is not shown as a state effect, it proceeds in terms of the creation of certain sorts of *perceptions* of the state (ibid:68). The state thus emerges as ‘an *ideological* thing’ that can actually be shown to work like that because what is offered is “an account of political institutions in terms of cohesion, purpose, independence, common interest and morality without necessarily telling us anything about the actual nature, meaning or functions of political institutions. We are in the world of myth” (ibid.). From this Abrams concludes that one thing we can know about the state is that it is ideologically powerful, but is it more?

The Marxist problem, claims Abrams, is that it remained trapped by reification of ‘the state’, as its authors “have both perceived the non-entity of the state and failed to cling to the logic of that perception” (ibid:69). Marx, Engels and Lenin are all listed as contributors to such an ambiguity, “assuring us that the state is somehow at one and the same time an illusion and ‘an organ superimposed on society’ in a non-illusory way; both a mere mask for class power and ‘an organised political force’ in its own right” (ibid.). Marxist writers added to the list of authors contributing to this ‘distinctive Marxist ambiguity’ are Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas, although in more complex and ambiguous ways than most. Abrams suggests that the reason for such an ambiguity could be an “unresolved tension between marxist theory and marxist practice” (ibid:70), in which integration of class societies is explained by the existence of the state as an abstract-formal object, while Marxist practice needs the state as a real-concrete object as the immediate object of political struggle. More than an ambiguity, the problem with Marx is perhaps that he did not really take interest in the state as such treating it essentially as an instrument of class rule, i.e. a political power, which is what many of his successors seems to have done as well.

With a focus on the salient dimensions of contemporary political life, Miliband's (1969) work demonstrates well how it is possible to study the cluster of institutions of political and executive control and their key personnel, as well as to trace their effects, but according to Abrams it does not explain how the state is constructed as an 'illusory general interest'. Telling us that "'the state' has been the 'main agent' that has 'helped to mitigate the form and content of class domination'" the state "reappropriates a unity and volition which at the outset the author had been at pains to deny" (Abrams 1988:71). Instead of 'unmasking' the state and its ideological powers, the state is granted a type of existence beyond explanation.

Like Miliband, Poulantzas (1973) proclaimed the unreality of the state saying that it is not a 'real, concrete singular' object, not something that exists 'in the strong sense of the term'. Rather, it is an abstraction, the conceptualisation of which is "a condition of knowledge of real-concrete objects" (Abrams 1988:72). Poulantzas goes far in recognising the state as an ideological project, attempting to uncover the structure hidden behind the concrete, but his insistence on the state as *the cohesive factor within the overall unity of a social formation* prevents him from going all the way. Seeing the state as the 'cohesive factor' implies a political function, but the nature of this function is rather inconsistently explained. According to Abrams, such a function has to involve the creation of 'a place' and the question is what sort of place it is; abstract-formal or real-concrete. Speaking of the actual political-judicial structures of 'the state', of 'the political structures of the state', 'the institutional power of the state', 'the state as an organised political force' and so forth, Poulantzas diverges from a consistent functionalism bringing the state back in as a real-concrete: "So function becomes place and place becomes agency and structure – the specific structures of the political". If the state is nothing more than the name of the place and the agent of the function of maintaining unity in a situation of class struggle, Abrams questions "whether the centrality given to the state in that analysis is really a service to understanding" (ibid:73). The idea of a state with a political function of maintaining unity is in itself rather conventional, but to identify it as 'the global role of the state' is seen as a confusion between what the state does and what it is (confusing function with agency). Having recognised that "large parts of the process of cohesion, and of the condensation of contradictions, are not performed within commonsensically 'political' structures at all but are diffused ubiquitously through the social system" undermines any claim for the state as a unique constitution of functions. Furthermore, such a 'global functionality' suggests a global structural existence of the state, "a sense of its immanence in all structures perhaps" (ibid.). Thus, what prevents Poulantzas, and for that

matter Miliband, from going all the way, Abrams argues, is the failure to see the state as a historical ideological construction.

Abrams' suggestion, then, is for the attention to be directed to "the manner and means by which the *idea* of the existence of the state has been constituted, communicated and imposed" instead of clinging to the view, as many Marxist writers have done, that "the existence of the idea of the state does indicate the hidden existence of a substantial real structure of at least a state-like nature as well" (ibid:69). According to Abrams, internal and external relations of political and governmental institutions, the 'state-system', can be studied effectively without postulating the reality of the state. So in particular can their involvements with economic interests in an overall complex of domination and subjection. "But studies proceeding in that way", he claims, "invariably discover a third mode, dimension or region of domination – the ideological" (ibid:75). For Abrams, the state emerges as 'a third-order object', 'an ideological project', 'an exercise in legitimation', and the particular function of the ideological is to "misrepresent political and economic domination in ways that legitimate subjection" (ibid.).

The assumption here is that there is no such thing as 'a common cause' or 'disinterested domination' because every institutional field has a history as a field of struggle. Historically, the outcome of political struggles has been institutionalised and causes of the struggles turned into the constitution of the state whereby partial interests are presented as common interests. As part of the process, formerly autonomous agencies, such as administrative, judicial, educational, and so forth, are turned into state agencies for the concentration of state power. And, as noted by Engels, once the state emerges an independent power vis-à-vis society, it produces an ideology – "an ideology in which the reality of the state is taken for granted" and the connection with, as in the Marxist thesis, economic facts "gets lost for fair" (ibid:76). According to Abrams, it is the production and reproduction of the *idea* of the state as an independent moral entity that needs to be dismantled and "attend to the senses in which the state does *not* exist rather than to those in which it does" (ibid:82, my italics). Doing this, he claims, will reveal the state as it really is: an assembly of uncoordinated practices and claims. Abrams thus shifts the focus away from the state as an object, to a far more diffuse field of power relations where the state becomes an ideological object that is used by the state-system to give it legitimacy (Krohn-Hansen & Nustad 2005).

Although inspired by Abrams, Timothy Mitchell argues for the non-separation of the material forms of the state from the ideological, or the real from the illusory: “The state-idea and the state-system are better seen as two aspects of the same process” (1999:77). The process in question is the creation of ‘the structural effect’, that is, the effect of practices that make state structures appear to exist. While for Abrams the state comes forth as a particularly powerful symbolic construction, internally linked to aspects of more complex power relations but with no reality beyond the ideological, Mitchell insists that “the idea of the state is itself a form of symbolic capital that enters into the material power of the state-system and is reciprocally upheld by it” (Fuller and Harriss 2001:5). According to Mitchell, it is not the ideological alone creating the idea of the state, but participation in the state-system; armies, schools, bureaucracies, and so forth creating the effect of a state structure external to processes producing them. What appears is a ‘machine’ greater than its individual parts (Krohn-Hansen & Nustad 2005:14). Abrams and Mitchell appear to be at variance in terms of how the idea of the state is produced, but in agreement on what it does: enforce social order. For Abrams, as noted, subjection is a question of historically constructed presentations of the state as a ‘common interest’, while for Mitchell it is a matter of Foucauldian disciplining techniques. For both, however, the state is a matter of creating notions of a powerful system of control.

In the much-celebrated article *Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State* (1995), Akhil Gupta reaches a similar conclusion about the ambiguous nature of the state, but from a different position. In his view, the state appears as little more than its everyday practices; the endless negotiations taking place between representatives of the state and the citizenry, in more or less familiar settings, making use of more or less familiar problem solving methods. Approaching such encounters as patterns of individual negotiations, the analysis shows how perceptions of the state are produced. What it does not do is explain the circumstances under which negotiations occurs in the first place. The problem of political sociology mentioned above also appears to apply here, namely that “although a sense of the state was there the state was not treated effectively as part of the problem to be investigated” (Abrams 1988:67). While Gupta deftly demonstrates the pertinent problem of drawing a fixed line between state and society in an Indian village, illuminating our understanding of what the state is not, he does not tell us much about the Indian state, except that it is a corrupted one. As important as his point about blurred boundaries may be, locating local village officials at roadside tea stalls and at home rather than in the office during working hours, government buildings and offices are a fact, and “nobody imagines that

the endless cups of tea and coffee drunk in India's government buildings turn them into tea shops or homes" (Fuller and Harriss 2001:23). Except for images traced in news agencies, which mostly present the state as contested, Gupta has little to say about the 'the imagined state' that after all allows for an existence as something more than individual experiences over time.

Gupta's problem of conceptualising the state reflects perhaps the limitations of ethnographic methods favoured by anthropologists for the study of the state and for that reason "perhaps anthropologists have been well-advised in steering clear of it" (Fuller and Harriss 2001:1-2). Then again, having observed how the 'The State' creates some real effects by its very being, both as system and idea, the challenge remains to demonstrate and explain what it is.

In making sense of the modern state in Bangladesh, it is vital to recognise that formally it is precisely that; modern and a state, possessing all the characteristic institutions of an army, a judiciary, a school system, and a bureaucracy. And, as noted by Fuller and Harriss in the case of the Indian state, through all these characteristics and in all these respects;

the state can and often does appear to people... as a sovereign entity set apart from society by an internal boundary that seems to be as real as its external boundary. A local administrative office, a government school, a police station: to enter any of these is to cross the internal boundary into the domain of the state, whose conceptual separation from society is perhaps most ubiquitously symbolized by all its special-purpose buildings with their painted notice-boards outside (2001:23).

Although structurally established as modern and rational, power of the state cannot be taken for granted, as pointed out in the introduction of the thesis. In the previous chapter, the South Asian state was emerging as a site of sovereignty, a centre of political will, and as a power above partial interests. To communicate its position, and trying to follow an old tradition for establishing power relations, the British arranged grand public ceremonies aimed at ritually establishing the Crown as the single superior power supported by all (Cohn 1983). As Michael Walzer says, "The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen, symbolized before it can be loved, imagined before it can be conceived" (1967:194). Public ceremonies are still used, I will argue, as a mean to establish the state not only as a power, but as a particular system of power relations. "Through rituals", claims David Kertzer, "aspiring political leaders struggle to assert their right to rule, incumbent power holders seek to bolster

their authority, and revolutionaries try to carve out a new basis of political allegiance”.³⁵ In what follows, it will become clear that rituals play an important role in realising state order.

Rituals of the state

For the analysis of the power of the state, I will present some cases of public ceremonies organised in the interest of the state, starting with the Prime Minister’s visit in Dinajpur. In this case the state emerges not only as powerful, but even sovereign. In addition, and as in the past, the state appears as a power hierarchically organised, but now in two distinct ways: one based on positions dividing between higher and lower; the other as separate powers dividing between the political and the bureaucratic. The selected cases enable the analysis of both.

Inauguration ceremonies and a visiting Prime Minister

I had been back in Dinajpur, my first fieldwork site, for a few days and was riding around on a rickshaw with Mr. V.³⁶ Mr. V. is the male householder of where I stayed in 1996 (see introduction). Passing the state guesthouse, Circuit House, I noticed all the people busy with maintenance work of the buildings, attending the garden, and painting the walls surrounding the premises. This was not the only place getting a face-lift and tools and paint were put to good use on walls and buildings all along the main road. What was this sudden stir about? It was the obvious question since maintenance work is seldom prioritised in public places. The answer was even more obvious I was told. The Prime Minister (henceforth PM) was coming for a visit the day after and the so-called ‘beautification projects’ were part of paying her due respect. PM Begum Khaleda Zia was born and raised in Dinajpur and her mother, Mrs. Toiuba Majumdar, still lives there. Her sister, Khurshid Jahan Haque, Women and Children Affairs Minister, often travels to Dinajpur to attend political party meetings or smaller scale inaugurations, but this time the PM herself was coming.

³⁵ The term ‘rituals’ is used in a more general sense indicating “symbolic behaviour that is socially standardized and repetitive” (Kertzer 1988:9).

³⁶ Following anthropological convention, names of persons and more specific places throughout the thesis are pseudonyms.

Later in the afternoon government cars passed at high speed on the otherwise tranquil roads and Mr. V. said that all government officials from the Deputy Commissioner down to the last peon would be working frantically to get everything in order to receive the PM. According to his information, she would arrive by helicopter in the morning and travel by car to various destinations in the region. In Dinajpur, she had been asked to first inaugurate, “work on a 250-megawatt coal-fired thermal electricity plant being set up at Barapukuria” and “commercial lifting of coal from the Barapukuria coal mine”,³⁷ and second, Dinajpur Government Veterinary College. I decided this to be a good opportunity to observe the response such a visit created. After inquiring about the programme and getting different answers to where she would be when, it was difficult to decide which schedule to be the more reliable. Since the new college was closer to Mr. V’s house, timing for, and activities around this inauguration could be most easily observed.

Rumours had it that the PM would arrive at the college around noon the following day and from early morning people started gathering along the main road. Local party members from the PM’s Bangladesh National Party (BNP) went door-to-door to farmers, fishermen, and other poor people of nearby villages distributing small paper flags printed for the occasion and partly requesting, partly demanding them to be present to greet the PM. On the occasion of a visiting leader, the local machinery usually works hard to gather as many people as possible to give the impression of popularity. “To show the general mass their artificial popularity”, Mr. V. humorously commented. A few taka³⁸ and free snack for everyone attending is promised, but perhaps equally effective ensuring sufficient attendance is the use of threats. People in already deprived situations will usually not need much persuasion knowing their refusal to participate can have severe consequences, ranging from neglected public services such as water and power supplies, telephone connections, sewage and drainage systems, road constructions, and so forth; to court cases being filed with false accusations requiring resources beyond imagination to counteract. Besides, it was not everyday a PM was traversing this relatively remote part of the country and people are curious.

³⁷ Phrasings in quotes are taken from a local newspaper reporting on upcoming events 22 April 2003, and the inauguration was for the *work of setting up*, as production on the power plant was not expected before 2005.

³⁸ 100 Bangladeshi taka equals about 8,99 Norwegian kroner (<http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>, 12 June 2007).

For hours and hours, and under the surveillance of a large number of police officers, people stood along the roadside under the glaring hot sun, with flags in hands, patiently waiting. Assuming the PM would have lunch at the Circuit House around one o'clock, Mr. V's son (see *key figures* in the introduction) and I delayed our own departure for the college until the afternoon and set out by rickshaw around four. All along the road, people greeted us; waving their flags, smiling and shouting. The armed police officers kept everyone in place. Provisional gates with banners welcoming the PM to Dinajpur succeeded one another on the road and we passed about a dozen on our short rickshaw ride. A few minutes before reaching our destination, a police officer ordered the rickshaw to a halt; blowing his whistle and gesticulating, we were asked to step down. A motorcade was approaching. At high speed and under ear-splitting sirens, accompanied by the noise of violently blown horns, came first two police pickup trucks crowded with armed officers. About twenty vehicles – minibuses, jeeps, an ambulance, and trucks – packed with heavily armed service personnel followed. Among the jeeps there were four identical black ones with darkened windows so as not to disclose the one transporting the PM. Everyone cheered and waved their flags. After passing, our rickshaw, together with buses, motorcycles, and rickshaw-vans, were allowed to continue and we joked about how perfect our timing was as VIPs should always arrive last. However, only a few minutes later, a policeman's whistle, accompanied by gestures, again signalled the traffic to clear the road as the motorcade was returning. The PM herself had taken an early departure, but I was assured that other VIPs would still be present. The problem was that we were not in possession of entry passes. Looking European, though, usually works as an entry pass and we proceeded, as the crowds along the road started to disperse. The PM had come and gone and normality could return.

Reaching the college, we found ourselves again amidst a crowd waiting outside a closed gate, but not for long. Seeing the foreigner, an aide of the college guarding the gate took immediate action and invited us in. Inside we met a teacher who insisted on giving us a guided tour. While walking, she explained that when the PM came all she did was cut a red ribbon, shake a few hands, and smile to the cameras before hurrying back out to the waiting jeep; no speech or anything. An organising committee had worked for weeks to prepare the visit and to make sure all was in order at this very important event. Having been shown around the premises, we were asked to stay for tea. Refreshments were served outside the main building, but we were told to join the more important guests in the principal's office. The seating arrangement in the office followed a familiar pattern: three rows of chairs in front of the desk, as well as one row

along each side. Behind a solid desk sat the principal together with the guest of honour, who for the occasion was a Joint Secretary. Teachers were seated to the left, a little removed from the desk, and the Director General of Department of Livestock Services in Dhaka and Assistant Director of Power Cell under the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources to the secretary's close right. In front were other government officials and some businessmen. I was told to take a seat in front of the desk. Mr. Joint Secretary, Mr. Director General, and Mr. Assistant Director had all accompanied the PM first to the power plant and later to the college, but someone had to stay behind for tea on behalf of the PM. Mr. Joint Secretary talked energetically on the phone when we entered giving the impression of a busy man with many commitments. By the time tea was served the room was bustling with conversation – only interrupted by the principal constantly pressing the buzzer on his desk calling for the peon who was running back and forth making sure guests were properly taken care of.

On returning to Chittagong and meeting up with a government official (GO), who I regularly interacted with, I decided to tell him about the event of the PM's visit to Dinajpur. The conversation proceeded as follows:

Anthropologist: We were coming down the street on a rickshaw and (he interrupts)

GO: You will find colourful banners there.

Anthropologist: Many. There were more than a dozen banners on the street and lots of people standing there with (interrupted again)

GO: Placards.

Anthropologist: Flags.

GO: Flags and placards; like that.

Anthropologist: Bangladeshi flags. BNP party members had been distributing flags. We were on a rickshaw when a policeman stopped us and told us to get off the rickshaw. Twenty cars were passing.

GO: Yeah, ministers' cars.

Anthropologist: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia came, twenty cars passing, and all the people standing at the roadside waving their flags. She was opening the veterinarian college in Dinajpur and we were on our way down there to see. She passed us on the road and we had only a few minutes before reaching there... Few minutes later they all came back; she hurried inside, cut the ribbon, and hurried back out.

GO: She has got cameraman with her.

Mr. GO (see *key figures* in the introduction) needed no explanation of what had happened; he already knew the procedures. His many years in service had taught him and on several occasions he had been involved in similar events. What was his comprehension then?

Anthropologist: I was thinking about what the people standing along the road could have been thinking; twenty cars coming like that and like you said [in a prior conversation] they are

hungry and their stomachs are empty. She is coming with twenty cars, police force and (interrupted again)

GO: So many people. Just then you were seeing twenty cars and policemen, but before that, one week or two weeks before; NSI (National Security Intelligence), helicopters, air force people coming looking for places to land, and SSF (Special Security Force). If they give green signal, before riding helicopter also, then she moves. Other ways she never moves. If she likes to come to [Bagerpur³⁹] you will be surprised, but if you don't see it is not possible for me to make you understand. All of the officials of Chittagong Division and every district officer pending will all be planning where she should land; what will be the heliport; even toilets they make for one or two hours. This is a poor country and toilet is made in places where it cannot be used in the future. In that way toilet is made, heliport is made, and everybody working day and night for this – 24 hours working.

Anthropologist: This is what I mean; when people standing at the roadside seeing all these things; what are they thinking? The money spent on (interrupted)

GO: These poor people all are, sometimes I become excited and say that, all these fucking people they are all happy and they just wave their hands to the PM and they become happy. I use to say that waving your hand fulfils your stomach? Sometimes I say to the people that you are waving to the PM like this then stomach fulfilled? Then they just become surprised because people are actually not supposed to say like that – like me – but sometimes out of excitement, curiosity, and frustration I say such things. Why I should stop here? PM is also waving. She is staying in AC car, in a very cool car, with air freshener, and in a mosquito free zone and you are under the sun. Who told you to stand-by here? For the last two or three hours you are standing here. Who says? You go for your work and that will give you food in your stomach. Waving to the PM does not give you food in your stomach. People say, why you are saying like that, and I am saying that this is reality. Try to understand; go and think and then have some sound sleep at night. Think about me and what I said and later on you can understand. Tomorrow you will have to fight for your life. Tomorrow the PM will not come and you will not get the chance to wave your hand and your stomach will not fulfil. This is past and time is yours. Days already past, but tomorrows feeding you have to manage yourself. Nobody is coming then.

From my position, the whole state spectacle appeared amusing and worth narrating, but to Mr. GO there was nothing amusing about it. He was annoyed about the extravaganza surrounding such events and criticised politicians for lack of responsibility allowing for what he saw as careless spending of limited government resources. In his bureaucratic way of thinking, a poor country could not afford such display of power and people would be better off caring for themselves than playing along with it.

On more than one occasion, Mr. GO expressed contempt for politicians and their priorities. In his view, politicians and civil servants share a responsibility for the people and for their welfare. Spending vast resources improving the infrastructure only to accommodate a visiting PM he saw as contrary to such responsibilities. Mr. GO appeared to have not only accepted the whole colonial idea about serving the state discussed in the previous chapter, but even

³⁹ The name “Bagerpur” is a pseudonym for an upazila in Chittagong.

incorporated it, a claim that I will explain in a later chapter. For now I will concentrate on the power structures of the state as manifested in ceremonies.

Whereas in British-colonial times bureaucracy in India *was* the state, the post-colonial situation brought about the separation of powers dividing the state into a political and a bureaucratic order (see chapter 2). In today's Bangladesh, the chief political figure is the prime minister. The president is the head of state, but in a parliamentary system where the president is elected by the legislature this is a largely ceremonial post with limited powers. The prime minister as the head of government holds real power. This power structure, though, demands no reality in itself and its existence is in its enactment.

As in the colonial days, ceremonies are important for the demonstration of state power, and as before, they are arenas for power struggles (see discussion of Cohn's article *Representing Authority in Victorian India* in chapter 2). While in the past, these were struggles between foreign and native powers, the struggle is now between the political and bureaucratic. Whereas politicians are elected for limited periods, civil servants are civilian career public sector employees working for a government department or agency. To stay in office, politicians depend on being re-elected, while bureaucrats have life-long career patterns. Nevertheless, it is the political that sets the agenda and subordinates the bureaucratic, which is, as expressed by Mr. GO, not completely straightforward. I will return to this shortly.

In the case described, the hectic activities around the PM's visit functioned as a general notification of an important upcoming event; the topmost political leader of the country was coming. She was not, however, travelling alone. Along with her came senior civil servants representing the respective authorities of the places visited stressing the relationship between the political establishment and bureaucracy. Participation of the different levels of administration stressed its hierarchical structure. Mobilisation of different societal segments, from the farmers and fishermen waiting by the roadside to the VIPs having tea in the principal's office, allowed for the spectacle to unfold and for the state to emerge. Parading the streets before the crowds completely hidden inside cars, cutting ribbons before invited guests behind closed gates, having tea in seclusion, and so on is a demonstration of state power in all its complexity, which is a theme also for the next case.

A book-release ceremony

Functions are indeed many in Bangladesh and government officials are regularly called on to participate. Mr. GO expressed weariness about having to partake, but said he had no choice because it was part of the job. Once he tried to turn down an invitation to a publishing ceremony. The writer was releasing his latest book of poems and government officials had been invited to ‘grace the occasion’. Head of district administration, Union Nirbahir Officer (UNO), and the magistrate were both attending and requested Mr. GO to join them, but he wanted to be excused. He said: “I don’t like ceremonies very much and I don’t understand poems. I am very much realistic and my equation is straight cut: I’ll work hard and earn money. I’ll look after my family, sleep, and then I’ll work again. This is my equation. I don’t like to go through poems and other things for thinking”. They kept sending for him and he finally went. His presence was required in order to make the spectacle complete.

Magistrate gave me the book and they brought me up on the stage, but I am not prepared for what is going on or what the poems are about. I don’t understand very much. This one poem I understood very easily where the subject is hand. I said “I understand only one poem and that is very easy. By hand we can do very good things and we can do bad things”. This one could be understood and I conveyed some of the message to the writer. This also came in the daily newspaper with my name. I said that I want the writer to write with his pen about our society, about our dishonest people, about those people who are suffering as they are honest. For their suffering his pen should move. His pen should not move to bring some moneymen here with their crowd to make it sell more. That should not be his motto or his objective. Then he also became surprised. I said that, “You just write so many poems there, certainly you called me, but I don’t understand all the poems. I don’t have much time to go through all the books so I just picked one poem that I understood, which is related with the hand. Those hands can do good things, but they can do bad things also”. With this poem about the hand I just started my speech. People were laughing. People were actually laughing at the time when I was delivering my speech. Usually they don’t hear this kind of speech from the official because the officials they never utter this kind of thing: malpractice, dishonesty, or bribery. They never utter this kind of words in that way. Look like they are all angels, but people are all bad. They all pretend to be angels; they are doing what they are doing and this is all correct. They act as if what they do is right and they see it as their job to give guidelines to the audience. I say that first give the dais people guidelines. The audience is ok and they are not making any harm to the other people ... At the dais there maybe three to eight persons sitting down to deliver speeches before the audience. Audience is so many people and guest speakers are only a few. Looks like the situation is that only the speakers are the talented ones and they are the only persons that are very good; they are honest and they are intellectual. When I go to some meetings I find that people, especially our officers in bureaucracy, never talk about the real things. When they sit down their attitude is like that; that we are all angels seated here and all the devils and all the culprits are in the audience. So we have to say something good for them.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. GO knew what was expected of him but decided to address his audience differently. According to him, he took everyone by surprise talking about dishonesty

in the services with the result of people laughing. On the other hand, the way the story was narrated bears testimony to a felt responsibility to do exactly what he accused his colleagues of doing, that is, acting as an authority person telling others what to do. Being present as 'special guest', taking his seat on the dais and, although hesitantly, delivering a moral speech, Mr. GO played his part in demonstrating power.

On this occasion, and by virtue of his position as head of the district administration, Mr. UNO had been invited as the Chief Guest, but his superior position could only be realised through the attendance of subordinates. On arrival, Mr. GO was immediately placed on the dais next to Mr. UNO and Mr. Magistrate and entrusted to speak first, as the lowest ranking officer among the three. As a bureaucratic system, the state is a hierarchically ranked order ranging from a ministerial secretary in Dhaka to the last peon in the local administration. On its most local level, UNO is the highest-ranking officer and everyone else will be arranged according to his superior position. On occasions of secretaries or other senior civil servants visiting from Dhaka, UNO is no longer the central figure and will take the role of subordinate. In this way, the state is continuously (re)forming itself according to the position of the highest-ranking officer present, but the fundamental order remains the same, namely hierarchical. I will now go to the next case which is also, as mentioned above, about the question of hierarchy, only this time in relation to the state as separate powers: the bureaucratic and the political.

Staging a ceremony

In particular, politicians tend to arouse people's curiosity and whenever a minister is present there will be large crowds gathered to see what is going on. To Mr. GO, representation meant more than cutting ribbons and shaking hands in front of cameras. The welfare of the people were at stake and the very thought of taking advantage of that he found appalling, which was why he resented politicians.

Last time I was not with that programme, but I was in the audience. I saw somebody coming to dance at the stage, but there is no *karen*, no light, and flashlight is given by a cameraman. There is no sound either. People [on stage] are coming and going, coming and going, but no speeches are delivered. I'm asking some people [from the audience] what is happening and are told that the minister is there. Later on when the magistrate came down from the stage I asked

him “Mama⁴⁰, what happened there? I saw you people just coming and going, coming and going, but no delivering of speeches”. He said, “You didn’t understand? This is just acting to show us on TV”. Without sound this was going on and I said that “We are foolish and the audience is here to see this kind of thing”. He was laughing and saying that “Mama, you have nothing to do. As the minister instructed me I did”. I said, “If the minister told you to go right to the toilet, and you don’t need to go to the toilet, you should go?” Again he is laughing and I said, “Mama, this should not be”. I felt deeply shocked on that day. I said that “We are all waiting to hear what speech our minister and our officers will deliver, and we are eagerly waiting, but you were just coming and going.” He said “We were just acting. The meeting had finished already”... This country is really an interesting country and I think in my old age, if I get time, maybe I will write a book [about it]... In the newspaper you can read about the minister distributing relief material to the poor... That is the same thing. Maybe four or five people are given. They just distribute and come back. They are directing the cameraman to get ready. The minister is saying “Are you taking my picture or not?” “Sir, I am getting ready.” “Oh, ok. May I start?” “Yes, Sir, you can start.” And he starts giving, saying that “Come on you are a good man, trying to work hard”. After two or three he says “Stop, stop. Go and give it to the TV. I am leaving”. What kind of country is this? This is not affection to the people and this is not his duty. This is... only for exposure... and people’s empty stomach is not important.

Examples of a minister in search of media exposure might not strike one as remarkable, but rather quite mundane in the world of politics. Presidents and ministers from all over the world can regularly be seen inaugurating new projects such as industrial plants, schools, and hospitals; engaging in community work; or charring meetings, in short, engaging in any event promising publicity. In Mr. GO’s clearly rationalistic way of thinking, the people elect politicians and their main responsibility should therefore be towards the electorate. Finding ministers more concerned about media exposure than their responsibilities as elected leaders angered him. Sitting with the audience he felt disillusioned to see how the programme went on without electricity and with no regard to the people who he believed had come to be addressed by the minister and other officials expressing some visions for the future. As soon as the television crew had finished recording, the minister left and the event was over. Although resentful towards a minister behaving in such a way, worse yet, in Mr. GO’s opinion, is how he and his colleagues were expected to take part.

You know what our minister does? When some development work is going on [in his constituency] he wants to inaugurate the programme. When he sees that sunset is coming, its getting late, and it will not be possible to telecast this news to the TV then he just bring the people; UNO, Magistrate, and other officers. He calls all the officers to come. “Sir, what’s happening?” they ask. “You just go in front of the microphone and you just move your mouth.” “Why?” “It will be on TV.” Why should I act like this? I don’t understand and I feel shy. The cameraman will take the picture and he will spread this news. Why should I act like this? Peculiar, this country is peculiar.

⁴⁰ *Mama* is a familiarity term literally meaning mother’s brother (see also footnote nr. 56).

On the one hand there is bureaucracy, consisting of professionals employed according to proven skills and for an indefinite period of time to perform specific tasks. On the other is the political system, consisting of representatives of political parties elected for a limited period of time and espousing a certain policy direction. From a political point of view, the state is that pliable apparatus entrusted in the hands of political forces committing itself to the task-of-the-day. At the same time, the state, going back to the times of the British, was instituted as something larger and more durable than the prevailing regime in power at any one time. To transcend its own temporality, political forces seek alignment with the more durable state system by subordinating bureaucratic order to political authority. Acting on its own, that is, ceremonies without the political presence, bureaucracy arrange itself according to its own principles. In the presence of the political, bureaucratic authority is made dependent on unpredictable political behaviour, an unpredictability that is in direct opposition to its very constitution.

This temporal aspect of political interests, seen as both opposed to, and dependent on, the more permanent and enduring character of a state apparatus, is a potential source of tensions between bureaucracy and the political, as expressed by Mr. GO. As a bureaucrat, Mr. GO had to deal with people's needs and demands, on a daily basis, but was acutely aware of the gap between political promises and the limited means available to fulfil them. The minister's apparent lack of interest in the welfare of the people, using bureaucrats merely to support a political strategy showing a minister pretending to be interested in development work, angered Mr. GO. His resistance can be taken as an indication of change not only in relation to the function and idea of the state (question of interests to serve), but also in relation to the very order of the state.

As a civil servant, Mr. GO has been trained by a system developed under different circumstances and serving different ends. As seen in the previous chapter, bureaucracy went through several stages as British interests in India kept changing, but maintained a certain degree of autonomy throughout the colonial period. After independence, first from the British and last from Pakistan, the political was becoming increasingly dominant, subordinating the bureaucratic to its interests, while the self-contained spirit of the services remained more or less the same (see chapter 2). The struggle between the political and the bureaucratic continues, as seen in the case of Mr. GO and his contempt for politicians, but during

ceremonies the political encompasses the bureaucratic. On the more daily bases though (and as in the colonial past, see chapter 2), bureaucrats represent the state and encounters with the state usually mean bureaucracy, as discussed below.

Spatial arrangement of state power

In the case of the PM's visit to Dinajpur, having confirmed that she would come to inaugurate the two new projects, the whole local machinery was put to work. More specifically, the place had to look nice and considerable resources from an otherwise acutely strained local economy were spent on preparations. The bustling atmosphere informed of an important upcoming event. Everyone asked answered that it must be some important government official visiting and that it was probably the PM. The sudden need to improve the condition of the Circuit House and its surroundings was an indication of who was coming. Then there was the act of BNP party members' making sure there were people at the roadside to observe the spectacle. People stood there for hours in the heat only to wave at the passing motorcade assuming the PM would be in one of the jeeps, but unable to see because of the darkened windows. At the destination, huge walls and the massive closed gate kept the uninvited out. For those standing outside, what they experienced was a brief glimpse of a PM confined between armed guards when entering and leaving. Inside, everyone invited could take part in the main ceremony, but only a few were invited to have tea in the principal's office. The particular seating arrangement in the office with the guest of honour in the principal's chair behind the desk played its part in evoking a sense of hierarchy. When entering the office with my assistant, a young student with an unimposing family background (son of Dinajpur family, see *key figures* in the introduction), we both waited for someone to let us know where to sit. Being told to sit in front of the desk visibly distressed my assistant who was, considering himself inferior to those present, ready to take a seat at the back.

So far I have discussed ceremonies as the structure of state power and argued for a hierarchical order where type of office, bureaucratic or political, and position, higher or lower, decides authority. During ceremonies, people are categorised and ranked and through rituals made more or less powerful. As seen in the old durbar traditions discussed earlier, and in the cases discussed above, ceremonies are very much about making power visible and to this end spatial arrangements are important. From the above, changes in the order of the state came

into view (relationship between the political and the bureaucratic); the reminder of this chapter focuses on ceremonies as the reproduction of state order.

Accommodating a Deputy Commissioner

In a meeting with a Deputy Commissioner (DC) I was told about a letter he had received from the Ministry of Education containing new instructions regarding procedures for public examinations. “Irregularities and students adopting unfair means in the SSC (Secondary School Certificate) examination have been a problem for many years and there is now political will to take it seriously”, he explained. In the letter from the ministry, the local authorities were instructed to make sure the new procedures were implemented and the DC had called on all the Union Upazila Nirbahir officers of his district to arrange for meetings, inviting local political leaders, community leaders, school headmasters and teachers, social workers, and parents to participate. Over the next few days, the DC would attend the meetings together with the Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) for education and the Superintendent of Police (SP) to inform those present about the new procedures and reactions if not followed. The DC called them ‘motivational meetings’ and invited us to join the first to be held.⁴¹

On returning to the DC’s office the next day, there were several official jeeps waiting outside, including a couple from the police. The DC travelled with the SP asking us to go with two of his office staff, as he could not be seen travelling in the same car as a female foreigner. The meeting was held in an open field next to UNO’s office under a large tent put up for the occasion and had already started by the time we arrived. Mr. Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Superintendent of Police and Mr. Additional Deputy Commissioner were shown to their chairs at the dais behind a large, flower-decorated table. A lot of people had turned up for the meeting and most seats on the floor were occupied. At the immediate front, which is where important guests are placed, all seats were taken. At a peon’s request, two seats were vacated and I was asked to sit. Seeing that my friend had not followed I turned to look for him and

⁴¹ State schools in particular were infamous for mass cheating during exams. In 2002, the government decided to do something about it and ordered stern action against anyone responsible for what was termed as ‘indiscipline’ in the examination halls. Students caught in, or even only suspected of, cheating could be expelled and teachers “neglecting their duty in the examination hall”, i.e. failing to keep students from cheating, risked salary suspension or even indictment.

found him seated at the back. Shortly after, he was collected by the peon and placed next to me, but not without objections. His attempt to resist, claiming he would be fine at the back, was politely overruled by a gesticulation in my direction and an explanation that it would be better for the two of us to sit together. After the peon had gone, he said he did not expect to be seated in ‘the special chairs’, adding under his breath that someone else was even asked to give up these chairs for us. Practices of seating arrangements are common knowledge, but inexperienced in accompanying a DC to meetings, he did not anticipate the special treatment. Under normal circumstances he would have been just another ‘invisible’ spectator taking his seat in the back. The attention left him bewildered.⁴²

Invitation to lunch was not something he had anticipated either, but after the meeting we were asked to join the DC, the ADC, the SP, local political leaders from the two main political parties Awami League and Bangladesh National Party, and community leaders for lunch in UNO’s residence. Conversations taking place in UNO’s residence drew my attention to how the sequence of the speeches effectively discerns the hierarchy of authority. Everyone praised the DC for his initiative in arranging the meeting and for giving such an inspirational talk. The DC was the last to speak and he had questioned the argumentation of some educators speaking before him.

These educators, working in semi-governmental schools, had raised the issue of unequal working conditions between government and semi-government teachers, implying the stakes to be higher for the latter group, which they claimed could explain teachers trying to help students through exams. If the government was serious about making improvements in the examination system, the same conditions should apply to all teachers, they said. In semi-governmental schools, unless forty per cent of the students pass the SSC exams, teachers’ salaries are suspended. The government does not manage these schools, but having received recognition from the local board of education, salaries are paid by the government. The teachers said irregularities during exams in semi-governmental schools can be explained by the forty per cent rule and they questioned both its existence and the fact that it only applies to particular schools. The DC had answered that he did not see the relevance of comparing the conditions between the different kinds of schools because “there are many, many classes of people in the society”. Varying conditions would always persist, he claimed, as there has

⁴² I will come back to practices of seating arrangements later.

always been and will always be differences between people. “Yes, I am the DC. I have one way of life and a salary that is not comparable to any of your salaries. So what are you trying to compare?” he had said frowning. His colleagues praised him for claiming his space of authority as the chief administrative officer of the district.

Later, when discussing the meeting and the lunch conversations, my friend said he agreed with the teachers arguing for equal conditions, but that he was not surprised to hear the response. He said, “Government officials do not like to be challenged because they think of themselves as the ones to be giving directions and not the other way around”. In the meeting, teachers and headmasters had been given the opportunity to express their opinions, but speaking last, it was up to the DC to conclude the discussion however he saw fit. Although having found the DC’s behaviour in the meeting typical for government officials claiming the last word, my friend also found him unconventional in the way he had welcomed us in his office and included us in his programme. Besides talking to me with only the three of us present, the DC had also chatted with him without keeping the expected distance and instead treated him as a special guest. To be met with that kind of hospitality and friendliness was apparently not to be expected from someone of DC’s rank.

A Deputy Commissioner out of office

A similar observation was made on another occasion when meeting the same DC, but accompanied by someone else. This time I had been invited to learn about government projects initiated by the DC for a better environment. Travelling in separate cars was again required, but reaching the destination and walking together at the location, conversations were informal. On starting out on our trip my friend (a Chakma from the Hill Tracts, see *key figures* in the introduction) had already expressed concerns about spending much time with a high-ranking government official and was anything but enthusiastic about staying the night at the state guesthouse. On returning to the Circuit House late afternoon, my friend said he had expected the DC to act formally, keeping a certain distance, but had on the contrary found his behaviour rather unpretentious and friendly. However, before going to dinner, the DC asked us to “please understand that it will be a formal dinner” and that we would be joined by colleagues from the city. Seeing my friend wearing shorts and t-shirt, the DC asked him to go back to his room and change into something more formal, as required when staying at the

state guesthouse. Looking stunned, but without a word, my friend did as he was told. Later, he expressed anger towards the DC for embarrassing him like that, giving him orders all of a sudden. While earlier that day the DC had conducted himself humorously sharing personal experiences, coming back to the guesthouse he immediately became serious. All through dinner he talked to his colleagues about government policies and official duties. As the highest-ranking officer, he was seated at the one end of the table with colleagues arranged next to him according to rank, and with the two of us (my non-government friend and myself) at the further end. Taking command of the conversations from the start, the DC stayed at the centre of attention the whole time, with his colleagues merely supporting his conclusions.

In addition to such spatial arrangements for the visualisation of state power, government officials are granted certain privileges promoting their position. On the transfer system, civil servants in Bangladesh serve a maximum three years in each place, but usually less. The higher-ranking officials are offered accommodation, transportation, and a number of personnel at their service. The Superintendent of Police in Chittagong told me that there were nineteen people serving the government house where he was residing during his term there, including housekeepers, cooks, cleaners, gardeners, drivers, and guards. His wife and children stayed in Dhaka and he was living there alone. With the gates outside his house constantly guarded, uninvited visitors were kept at a secure distance. Whenever he left the house, it was in a jeep with darkened windows. He was also protected against unnecessary contact with the public at the police station. His office was at the end of the corridor and most of the time visitors were told to present their cases to his subordinates. If allowed to continue down the corridor and before entering the office, visitors had to first pass an anteroom where they were asked to submit name, position, and purpose of visit on a piece of paper which was taken to the SP for approval. Depending on circumstances, people could be kept waiting for hours only to be told at the end of the day to come back another day.

The enclosed atmosphere created around government officers, the comprehensive procedures prior to any visits, and the exclusive treatment when figuring in public are all examples of state behaviour that are very much part of people's everyday experiences. The procedures described are one way the state practices regulation and control by exposing itself as a higher authority with a capacity to create order and whose authenticity is confirmed through being enacted by those embodying and encountering the state. Even when private institutions

manage traditional functions of the state such as education, as will be seen in the next case, the state still plays a major role in how the event is organised and what it means.

In the name of the state

Education is commonly a state responsibility of wide public interest and a field where the state gets to practice its order. Education in Bangladesh is basically state financed. Government allocations to the education sector out of its revenue and development budgets primarily finance educational expenditures. Given the low revenue/GDP ratio, the government is however heavily dependent on external sources for financing its development budget. External aid finances more than 50 percent of government development expenditures on education.⁴³ Despite vast spending, the government is far from reaching its goal of providing education for all (Compulsory Primary Education Act of 1990).

By 2000, the number of NGOs involved in education programmes was more than 450 facilitating around 2.5 million learners. Among the major NGOs offering non-formal education are BRAC (employing about a hundred thousand people!), PROSHIKA, Ahsania Mission, Friends in Village Development Bangladesh, Village Education Resource Center, CONCERN, Peoples Aid (GSS), and Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service. BRAC alone, runs over 34,000 Non-formal Primary Schools and other providers take that figure up to well over 50,000 schools.⁴⁴ A study has shown that NGOs' education programmes covered about eight percent of total enrolment in 1998, playing a complementary role alongside the main stream primary schools of the country, and that about eight percent of primary schools are run by NGOs (Education Watch Report, 1999).⁴⁵ In addition, the number of international schools is rapidly increasing. Hence, the function of providing education in Bangladesh is, to an increasing extent, taken up by a number of non-governmental institutions, as well as private actors, subjected to varying degrees of state regulations depending on type of institution.

⁴³ Source: National Policy Review Forum 2003, United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/APCITY/UNPAN018224.pdf>, June 2007.

⁴⁴ Information gathered from BRAC's own home pages on the internet: <http://www.brac.net/index2.htm>, January 2007.

⁴⁵ No recent figures available.

There are a growing number of private English medium schools in Chittagong and women of wealthy families manage many of them. Child Paradise School is an example of the wife of an influential businessman opening an English medium school. Starting with a kindergarten in 1999, a year later Mrs. Murshid was running a school with forty-five students between class one and four. In 2005, the school expanded to a hundred students up to class seven, employing thirteen teachers and twelve support staff. The curriculum follows the national English medium standard and the school prides itself as a member of the British Council. Her husband helped finance the school, but Mrs. Murshid assumed the overall responsibility as the school's founder and principal. Towards this type of school the government generally exerts minimum control practicing a rather liberal policy.

In the tradition of state schools, Child Paradise School also has a yearly one-day function where the children compete for awards by participating in games, performing traditional songs and dances, reciting verses, solving jigsaw puzzles, memorising numbers and words, and so forth. The immediate families of the students attended the "Unique Day 2003" and, to grace the occasion, the Minister of Food was invited as 'Chief Guest'. The 'Special Guest' was a professor from the University of Chittagong and member of the school's advisory body. In their separate ways, both were esteemed members of society holding responsible positions and their attendance, especially that of the minister, had been widely announced in advance.

The programme was supposed to start in the morning, but was rescheduled to the afternoon due to a busy minister and his many commitments. At three o'clock, preparations were still ongoing and Mrs. Principal was concerned about getting everything ready in time for Mr. Minister's arrival. A government officer with years of civil service experience had arrived early to advise on protocol for official visits. His wife had requested him to assist the principal with formalities. Although this was to be a relatively small and private function, concerns were many because at stake was the position of Mrs. Principal and her school.

At three forty, Master of Ceremony welcomed the guests, announced the occasion, and called on the Convenor of Sports to declare the games opened. Singing, dancing, and other activities followed rapidly to give the evaluation committee time to complete the final result sheets prior to the minister's arrival. Shortly after six o'clock, Mrs. Master of Ceremony announced the arrival of the guest of honour who was asked to sit "in the special chair" close to the stage. Mrs. Principal was asked to accompany him. The 'special chair' referred to sofas up front, as

opposed to the plastic chairs arranged behind. Mr. Minister was accompanied by a number of assistants and security personnel – all dressed in white Islamic shirts and pants. Police officers assigned to escort the minister to his various functions guarded the building.

A teacher presented the Chief Guest with a flower ribbon that was then pinned to his shirt and the VIPs received bouquets of flowers. A student recited a verse from the Koran to open the closing ceremony, which continued with the national anthem and children singing ‘patriotic songs’ commemorating the liberation of Bangladesh. The cultural show of more music and dance performances continued for about an hour, only interrupted by a ten-minute break to serve the minister, his companions, and other important guests refreshments in the school’s reception room while leaving the audience waiting in the venue. After the entertainment, speeches followed. The Chief Guest, the Special Guest, the principal, and the advisors were seated behind a grand, decorated table on stage with the minister in the middle sitting in much grander chair than the others. Speeches were addressed to “Honourable Chief Guest and Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Special Guest, Principal, Advisors, respected parents, guests, journalists, students, and all others” in that order ranking everyone in accordance to the position of Mrs. Principal as friend of the minister. The message of the speeches, which for the occasion were performed in English, can be seen to have served the same purpose.

Advisor 1: Values and other part of our life are associated with the school. Here a total education programme is given by the principal Mrs. Murshid and I congratulate her. I am very proud to read the motto written here that the children one day can be free from fear and have their own thoughts (gesturing at a banner behind him). I believe that the way this school is run, one day all the children, those who will be the future citizens of this country, can be able in the future to express their thoughts without any fear, which is required now in this country. Not only for Bangladesh, but for all over the world. We are passing through transition that requires good citizens. Last of all I want to say one thing that our minister he gave us such ample time. He has not only honoured us but inspired children not only in this school, but children all over Bangladesh. In these critical times he spends such a long time with the children and letting us enjoy. May Allah bless him and bless all the children and light our lives. Thank you.

As hostess, and someone able to invite a minister to a school function, Mrs. Murshid had to be acknowledged. Her devotion to children and their education was mentioned, praising her for assuming a communal responsibility. In the presence of a minister, the adviser stressed the importance of a liberal education system for the production of ‘good citizens’. The statement is interesting as recognition of the state as an agent of equality and individual rights while taking part in a ceremony stressing inequalities and the power of the state.

Advisor 2: I am very much honoured to be here as a Special Guest and thankful to the principal of this school. Today is the “Unique Day” and the audience and I enjoyed very much so many events; annual sport, culture programme, and last very nice veritable dishes the school provided. I feel very homely and very friendly ... Ladies and gentlemen; a whole day programme like this must have exhausted the children. The teachers are very much spirited. Especially the most senior teacher, but also the other teachers, worked hard. I am also very much moved to see and observe the dynamic leadership of this school’s principal, Mrs. Murshid. She is very courageous, bold and innovative. God bless her and I wish for the school to prosper in a very short span of time. The inception of the school is not very long. I think from 2002 or 2001 (looks around for confirmation). It started in 2001 and I am very much lucky that they invited me as their Special Guest and I have been working as the advisory body. I wish good luck to the school and thank you very much for giving me this chance. Thank you.

In addition to honouring the hostess, the second advisor took the opportunity to point out his own capacities for the day, not only as advisor, but also as ‘Special Guest’.

Advisor 3: Thank you for this “Unique Day”. It is very nice for me to be here on this occasion. All have worked hard under the excellent leadership of Mrs. Murshid. She is very unique and proud to have this kind of school and I wish her good luck with this school. The children here are doing very nice considering this school is not very old. It started in 1999 I guess (receives recognising nods from the principal). I wish good luck I guess, as the advisor of this school. Thank you.

The third advisor was briefer in his address, but also referred to his own position in regard to speaking on the occasion.

Advisor 4: It is very good luck for me to say that I am in this dais in a school that is mainly created by my student. She is really a creative woman who has taken the light of giving education to young children. She has showed a commitment to the society. Actually she didn’t need to create a school to make a school, but she thought about the kids of our country who will be the future citizens of this country to give them proper education; proper training; proper cultural knowledge and everything. From three o’clock this afternoon I am sitting here observing her and observing her activities and the activities of her teachers. We know that a school is teamwork between the leader and the teachers. She has got a good team to run the school properly. Not only giving knowledge to the students, but she has got the ability to give every type of cultural training also to the students, that is Bangladeshi culture. Today’s function I have observed and it is all Bangladeshi culture. There is no foreign culture and I am very happy to see all these things because now-a-days most of us are very interested in foreign culture. In this school, although it is English medium school, foreign culture is not injected among the students, which is very nice. We hope that this school will flourish – although it is very young – but that it will flourish under the able leadership of Mrs. Murshid and also from the eagerness of the teachers. I bless you all. I think that after a period of time this school will be the best school in Chittagong. I hope so. Thank you.

As Mrs. Murshid’s former teacher, in addition to the function as advisor, the last speaker also claimed her space. Generally, all guest speakers placed themselves in relation to the principal

whose position was important enough to invite a minister as chief guest to a small school function. As the organising principle of the ceremony and the authority of the event, Mr. Minister was the last of the guests to speak. The minister started to get up, but had to wait to be properly introduced by Mrs. Master of Ceremonies.

On this delighted day the honourable minister has come to share our feelings and to understand the interaction between the students and teachers and to realise the relation between the teachers and guardians. We are really fortunate that the honourable minister has given his kind consent to be our Chief Guest. We express our deepest gratitude to the honourable minister. We expect that our honourable guest will give us a new direction; which way should we sprint. Being a politician he understands the sufferings of most people and as a food minister his prime responsibility is to maintain a good food nutrition system countrywide. The minister and Child Paradise School have the same visions, but work in different directions. Being a teacher we try to understand the students suffering of gaining knowledge and we try to enrich the values of the students. Now I would like to request our honourable Chief Guest, honourable [Mr. Minister], to focus his valuable views to the audience. Dear audience get your hands together please (round of applause).

Just as Mr. Minister took the stand, a nearby mosque called for *namaz* (prayer). Anticipating for a few seconds with a look of uneasiness, indecisive as to how to proceed; the minister started his speech despite the *adhan* (call to prayer).

Bismillah hirRahman nirRahim (in the name of Allah; most gracious, most merciful). This is a unique day and not only for this Child Paradise School, but this is a unique day for me also (applause). Mrs. Murshid she is my relative; my close relative.

The minister switched to Bengali and spoke for about fifteen minutes, mostly delivering a political speech focusing on the importance of education, as well as government policies, but he also praised ‘Mrs. Murshid *bhabi*’⁴⁶ on her dedication and efforts. Educational advice for the parents was naturally offered and the minister stressed their responsibility as parents of ensuring ‘fair and proper education for the children’.⁴⁷ The tone was as soft and authoritative as expected from someone in his position, granting him admiration and respect. Mrs. Murshid was visibly pleased with his performance. Finally Mrs. Principal took the stand, greeted the guests in the proper order starting with Mr. Chief Guest, and said:

⁴⁶ *Bhabi* translates to brother’s wife, but is commonly used as a familiarity term indicating the closeness of the relationship.

⁴⁷ Once cheating was officially on the agenda, the importance of a fair examination system was a popular topic. That the school in question was not part of the public examination system did not seem to concern the minister.

Child Paradise School strives on its mission to achieve a few things. It strives for the highest level of academic achievement to develop skills necessary to become a contributing member of our democratic society; to instil a respect for the right of other people and their culture; and to promote the importance of learning as a life long need. In the effort to achieve our mission we monitor and evaluate the continual process of being an effective school. Today, the “Unique Day”, is a combination of a lot of activities, which you have enjoyed. They will receive the awards and we will have a magic show.

The speech was cut short by a power cut, which is not unusual, and after a few minutes it was decided to go ahead with the prize giving ceremony. The first, second, and third student from the various events were announced and Mr. Chief Guest, assisted by the Special Guest, advisors, principal and teachers, awarded the prizes. After about thirty minutes, electricity returned and students’ handshaking with Mr. Minister upon receiving their prizes could finally be photographed. ‘Student of the Year’, ‘Best Student’, ‘Disabled Student of the Year’ (for loss of spirit!), ‘Best Teacher’, ‘Best Student Attendance’, ‘Perfect Student Attendance of the Year’, and many more awards were distributed offering most students a chance to shake hands with the Chief Guest while smiling to the cameras. A raffle draw closed the ceremony and the evening came to an end. Mrs. Principal thanked Mr. Minister for coming to grace the occasion. She said: “I think this has been an opportunity for us to show to the government people how deeply we are engaged with the social consent; how deeply we are dealing with the people; and how deeply we are concerned with the children, their education, and their upbringing”. Lastly she thanked the honourable guest, special guest, advisors, parents, journalists, students, and teachers for their attendance. The ceremony was over and ‘the state’ took its leave first, allowing no one to move before minister, assistances, security personnel, and lastly police officers guarding the building were out of sight.

Reality of the state

According Abrams, the only reality the state can claim is as a ‘false consciousness’, the denial of the fragmented reality behind relations of power, and as such, ‘the state’ should be treated as nothing more than an ideological construct waiting to be dismantled. Mitchell proceeds along similar lines, but inspired by Foucault approaches the state as the effect of modernisation and the production of new techniques for domination. The perspective offers a way of connecting micro- to macro-level, appearance of structures as the result of modern technologies of power, but fails to take fully account of the reproduction of “objectified

structures” (the taken-for-granted, Bourdieu 1977). This is what I argue ceremonies do, as a kind of the *habitus* of the state going back to at least British colonial times, lending significance to state power through ritualisation. According to Bourdieu et al., it is “in the realm of symbolic production that the grip of the state is felt most powerfully” (1994:2).

In the case of the PM’s visit, the effect of the event depended on the contribution of many: a large number of people standing at the roadside waving; masses waiting outside the closed gate; people inside finding their places close to or far from the dais; majority of invited guests taking tea outside while allowing for the few to meet in the principal’s office, and so on. All along people are categorised and ranked; creating distance and separation between state and society, as well as between state branches (political and bureaucratic) and agencies (within bureaucracy), and segments of society. Being the object of special attention, the state comes forth as the apex of authority subsuming all others within its hierarchical order, which is realised through various techniques involving invitations, seating arrangements, order of speeches, and so on. Although people may have objections, no one openly protests. On the contrary, during ceremonies, people submit to state authority and find their places according to formal positions. Even in situations where the state is not present, as the case of the private school function discussed above, the state materialises in the organisation of the event. Thus, the rites of ceremonies can be seen as instrumental for the (re)production of the reality of a powerful state, structured as a hierarchical order, but constantly rearranging itself according to situation (office and rank of officials present). The state makes its appearance and is met with submissive behaviour.

To overcome the problematic distinction between state powers as material order, on the one hand, and a separate sphere of meaning, on the other, Bourdieu says the following:

In order truly to understand the power of the state in its full specificity, i.e., the particular symbolic efficacy it wields, one must, as I suggested long ago in another article, integrate into one and the same explanatory model intellectual traditions customary perceived as incompatible. It is necessary, first, to overcome the opposition between a physicalist vision of the social world that conceives of social relations as relations of physical force and a “cybernetic” or semiological vision which portrays them as relations of symbolic force, as relations of meaning or relations of communication (Bourdieu, Wacquant, Farage 1994:12).

Seeing acts of submission and obedience as cognitive acts involving cognitive structures (how perception is structured, and principles of vision and division), Bourdieu argues for the

deconstruction of such cognitive structures (how knowledge, practical and tacit, of the familiar world is obtained). In this perspective, the state is the producer of “a shared principle of vision and division, identical or similar cognitive and evaluative structures... a tacit, pre-reflexive agreement over the meaning of the world which itself lies at the basis of the experience the world as ‘commonsense world’” (ibid:13). To account for this experience, Bourdieu suggests that we critically explore not only the mere existence of “common forms and categories of perception and appreciation”, but also the ongoing production of “social frameworks of perceptions” and “the contribution of the state to the constitution of the principles of constitution that agents apply to the social order” (ibid.). To fully understand the immediate submission that the state order elicits, Bourdieu argues for a break with the intellectualism of “the neo-Kantian tradition to acknowledge that cognitive structures are not forms of consciousness but *dispositions of the body*”.

That the obedience we grant to the injunctions of the state cannot be understood either as mechanical submission to an external force or as conscious consent to an order (in the double sense of the term). The social world is riddled with *calls to order* that function as such only for those who are predisposed to heeding them as they *awaken* deeply buried corporeal dispositions, outside the channels of consciousness and calculation (ibid:14).

The suggestion of keeping dispositions of the body separate from forms of consciousness is perhaps questionable, but the point is that according to Bourdieu, individuals are disposed for collective action through socialisation. These corporal dispositions Bourdieu terms *doxic*. “Submission to the established order”, he argues, “is the product of the agreement between, on the one hand, the cognitive structures inscribed in bodies by both collective history (phylogenesis) and individual history (ontogenesis) and, on the other the objective structures of the world to which these cognitive structures are applied” (ibid.). This idea of a *doxic submission*, attaching individuals to the established order as an immediate and tacit agreement, together with the notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977), processes of internalisation and objectification of structures, can explain the ease with which domination can be practiced both materially and ideologically, i.e. state power as taken-for-granted, although more useful for explaining reproduction than for explaining production.

We may thus talk about a ceremonial habitus causing a doxic submission, a habitual agreement or adjustment to the order of the state manifested in ceremonies, but without presuming total submission to state order as such because these are only selected cases of

state domination; situations in which the state assume complete control and appear as a dominant social force. In situations such as seen in this chapter, state power is taken for granted and its order immediately and completely enacted, but this does not mean that its reach is complete or power is total, which is evident in chapter 5. That the state is also a place where people seek assistance, go to work, are evaluated, draw their salaries, get promoted, and so on is the focus of the next chapter arguing for the state as more than ceremonial reproduction or situational power.

4

Realising the State: the relationship between state power and powerful state agents

In *Economy and Society* (1978:53), Max Weber made the following distinctions: “‘power’ (*Macht*) is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which his probability rests. ‘Domination’ (*Herrschaft*) is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons. ‘Discipline’ is the probability that by virtue of habituation a command will receive prompt and automatic obedience in stereotyped forms, on the part of a given group of persons”. He exemplified the difference of domination by mere power with the case of monopolistic control in the market where the dictate of a market is complied with by virtue of interest constellation. “Through many gradual transitions, this relationship [between customers and a monopolistic enterprise] may be transformed into domination proper, that means, by virtue of the authoritarian power of command... Domination exists insofar as there is obedience to a command; in general, obedience is due to a mixture of habit, expediency and belief in legitimacy” (ibid:XC). For Weber, “*Herrschaft* is a structure of superordination and subordination sustained by a variety of motives and means of enforcement” (ibid.), and he is interested in the historical persistence of structures of domination; their forms, enforcement, and legitimacy. Although motives for obeying are often complex and varying, the most stable structures of domination he finds when accompanied by a general belief in legitimacy; belief in a ruler’s right to command and subjects’ obligation to obey.

For comparative reasons, three pure types of legitimate domination or authority (as a special case of domination) were identified: rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic. Rational-legal authority is based on a system of rational rules and founded on a belief that the leader, chosen through legally correct and accepted procedures, can rightfully issue commands to be obeyed; obedience to norms rather than persons. Traditional authority rests on appeals to the sanctity of immemorial traditions that persist as long as commands are seen to be in the interest of maintaining tradition; obedience to some particular person who enjoys personal authority by

virtue of inherited status. In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation and his heroism or exemplary qualities as long as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma. "[T]he continued exercise of every domination", claimed Weber, "always has the strongest need of self-justification through appealing to the principles of legitimation. Of such ultimate principles, there are only three" (ibid:954). Thus, domination is made dependent on justification of authority.

Power, therefore, works through individuals' motivation in following orders and authority is institutionalised power hierarchically structured in a chain of command, i.e. power as obedience or disobedience. Whether domination by virtue of interest constellation, as in a monopolistic market situation, or by virtue of authority, as in patriarchal, magisterial, or princely power, power is seen as a result of an interest situation where one enters into power relations 'willingly' agreeing to follow the will of others. "The difference between the two", writes Warren, "turns on the extent to which an individual's subjectivity is defined by the relationship" (1992:29). It is when "interests are defined through the relationship itself, and individuals lose, as it were, the cognitive competence to identify their distinctive interests", and "[t]heir subjectivity is molded in the image of the power relation" (ibid.), that the relation of domination is no longer based solely on material interests but on authority.

It is not always clear what Weber means by 'interests'. In terms of ascribing meaning, interests are never just 'material' but also affective, ideal, rational, and so on (ibid:30). Even though Weber appears to spend much time on material interests, he argues that relations of domination founded on 'constellations of [material] interests' alone are unstable bases of organisation as material interests are never enough to constitute 'meaning', that is, to orient or constitute the self in such a way that institutional practices can and do continue. "Subordinate parties obey", recapitulates Warren, "because their 'ideal interests' are engaged and defined through the system of attributes that legitimizes the power relation... Insofar as subordinate parties orient their activities and explain their lives through these identities [as a member of a family or a tribe; as an instrument of god, the nation, or a leader; as an official, a legal-judicial person with rights], the power relation is legitimate and justified" (ibid:31). In other words, structures of domination are most effective and stable when the command is accepted as a 'valid' norm, i.e. meaningfully combining a consistent system of values with actual behaviour (Weber 1978:946). For Weber, man is the ultimate creature of structures through

meaningful behaviour and power is the means to realise values. It is the recognition of common (although not necessarily same) values that produce subordination, materialised either in norms or persons, or both, and manifested in institutions. One obeys because doing so provides meaning, an identity, a place, and a purpose. Interests, then, have more to do with meaningfulness in a wider sense than merely material rewards, requiring a rather high level of consciousness to be involved.

In contrast, domination within bureaucratic hierarchies violates an interest in, and potential for, rational agency. Bureaucracies provide identities for their members through status, offices, rational codes of conduct and the like; identities that are not integrated into the content and goals of their own actions since their actions serve the ends of the organisation, dictated by processes over which the bureaucrat has little control. The rhythm of bureaucracy is thus likened to that of a machine where wheels keep turning and the whole is moving in one or another direction without any of the involved necessarily knowing, or even bothering to know, how or why. There are individual functions, but each functionary is “shorn of his natural rhythm as determined by the structure of his organism; his psycho-physical apparatus is attuned to a new rhythm through a methodical specialization of separately functioning muscles, and an optimal economy of forces is established corresponding to the conditions of work” (Weber [1948] 1997:261-62). Each engages in specialised functions according to education and training and, as stated by Brubaker, “the more closely a bureaucratic organisation approximates a technically efficient machine, the greater the danger to individual freedom and dignity: the individual official is reduced to a ‘small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march’” (Brubaker 1984:22). Individuals marching in step with objectified, supra-individual forms of rationality embodied in the social structure have no will of their own and relationships, including those of power and authority, and activities are marked by impersonality and objectivity. Without this ‘discipline’ and ‘self-denial’ the whole apparatus would fall apart. Hence, each and everyone have a place in a predefined hierarchy of positions where others, such as political leaders, decide aim and purpose. “Bureaucracy”, says Brubaker, “induces an ethic of adjustment (*Anpassung*), of ‘adaptation to the possible’, an ethic that discourages the value-oriented striving that Weber sees as central to the development of autonomous moral personality”

(ibid.).⁴⁸ Bureaucracy is the ‘iron cage’ of modern societies; founded on a formalism that constrains individuals from without, determining existence with irresistible force (Weber 1978).

The notion of ‘an ethic of adjustment’ also appears in Michel Foucault’s analytic of power, which he first started to address explicitly in *Discipline and Punish* first published in 1975. For Weber, the calculable, disciplined control over men exercised by modern bureaucracy was established with the help of an ethos of rigorous self-control derived from Puritanism (a particular configuration of religious doctrines of salvation, of institutional practices of salvation, and of the religious interests of the faithful that resulted from them, Schluchter 1989).⁴⁹ In an effort to clarify the relation between social structure and personality, Weber supplements institutional with social psychological analyses by emphasising the historical connection between new forms of institutionalised discipline and self-discipline. Foucault’s studies of the hospital, prison, and school can be seen to ground Weberian formal analysis in the history of various social techniques for the administration of corporeal, attitudinal and behavioural discipline. According to Foucault, discipline is “the generalisation and interconnection of different techniques themselves designed in response to localized requirements” (1991:80). While Weber is concerned about the conscious cognitive processes and individual interests involved in discipline and self-discipline, Foucault goes beyond individual reasoning in explaining dominance and exercise of power.

To understand how power works in Foucault, there are two main sources – *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* – exploring two different, but simultaneous forms of power, namely pastoral power and disciplinary power respectively. While *Discipline and Punish* ([1975] 1977) can be seen as an attempt to analyse the way power works on the body through external controls, *The History of Sexuality* ([1976] 1978) analyses the way it does so through internal controls. The former work looks at the rise of the modern system of surveillance in prisons, schools, factories, hospitals, and so on. Modern power relying on constant supervision and control of individuals in accord with a certain concept of normality

⁴⁸ According to Brubaker (1984:62-63), “Personality, for Weber, is constituted by that which every prophecy demands: ‘a constant and intrinsic relation to certain ultimate “values” and “meanings” of life, “values” and “meanings” which are forged into purposes and thereby translated into rational-teleological action’. Without a value-orientation, it is impossible to have a genuine personality”. Only those whose actions are guided by norms of own convictions are seen to have personality.

⁴⁹ See also chapter five.

Foucault calls disciplinary power. The latter work looks at the extension of a confessional technology of the self from a religious domain to social life as a whole. Individuals policing themselves by examining, confessing, and regulating their own thoughts and behaviour in accord with a certain concept of normality is seen as pastoral power. According to Mark Bevir, the crux of Foucault's position is clear:

[S]ociety, conceived as a specific regime of power/knowledge, defines the subject, conceived in terms of both the norms by which we try to live and the techniques by which we try to ensure we do so. The individual is the arbitrary construct of a social formation. Society gives us the values and practices by which we live... Even when individuals appear to live in accord with commitments they have accepted for themselves, they really are only examining and regulating their lives in accord with a regime of power (Bevir 1999:66).

Most of Foucault's writings have concerned the kind of power that subjects (agonistic force relations) at the expense of the idea of the self-constituting subject. For instance, his historical studies of biopower, of how modern power controls our bodies, tell a story of the ceaseless and unlimited domination of social power over individuals. "In his early work," Bevir observes, "Foucault portrayed the subject as a construct of social languages or epistemes. Later, however, and especially following his research for *Discipline and Punish*, he portrayed the subject as a product of regimes of power/knowledge, the will to power, and other such things" (ibid:65). Declaring that, "it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research", and saying that his objective was "to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (2002:326), Foucault appears to efface the possibility of self-constituting subjects altogether. Following Bevir and his reading of Foucault, however, this need not be the case.⁵⁰

Distinguishing between violence and power, Foucault admits some space to individual choice by defining the former not as a relationship of power, but as that which forces, bends, destroys, or "closes off all possibilities" and thereby denying the other the ability to act. A

⁵⁰ Besides, in one of his lectures Foucault made the following modification: "Of course, if one wants to study the history of natural sciences, it is useful if not necessary to take into account techniques of production and semiotic techniques. But since my project was concerned with the knowledge of the subject, I thought that the techniques of domination were the most important, without any exclusion of the rest. But, analyzing the experience of sexuality, I became more and more aware that there is in all societies, I think, in all societies whatever they are, another type of technique: techniques which permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, on their own souls, on their own thoughts, on their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, modify themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, of happiness, of purity, of supernatural power, and so on" (Foucault 1993:203).

power relationship, on the other hand, “can only be articulated on the basis of two elements that are indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that “the other” (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognised and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up”. Foucault does not exclude use of violence or, for that matter, the obtainment of consent for the establishment of power relations; “no doubt, the exercise of power can never do without one or the other, often both at the same time”, but he sees neither as the constituting principle or basic nature of power (ibid:340-41). While violence controls people by acting directly and immediately upon their bodies, forcing them to conform, power is “exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” by which he means “individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realised” (ibid:342). According to Bevir, discipline can loosely be identified with violence and pastoral power with power as influence.

Whereas biopower, the discipline of the body, can control the subject without his collusion, pastoral power has to pass through the consciousness of the subject, and, in doing so, it necessarily creates a basis for resistance (Bevir 1999:72).

Operating not as a direct, immediate form of domination, but rather as a type of influence, it works by ‘convincing’ the other of the rightness of certain acts. Following Bevir, power or pastoral power recognises the value of the subject as an agent, whereas violence or discipline attempts to extinguish the capacity of the subject for agency, which is why power, unlike violence, also entails a capacity for resistance. “To treat someone as an agent, one has to recognise that they can do other than one wishes – they can resist”, which is why they have to be convinced (ibid:73). In modern society, however, individuals typically use their agency only to regulate themselves in accord with social norms. “Far from resisting the normalising effects of power, they act so as to promote them” (ibid:75). Foucault’s view on modernity can thus be compared to that of Weber’s. Where Weber talks about ‘iron cage’, constraining individuals from without and determining existence with irresistible force, Foucault talks about ‘biopower’ as that force which both constrains and promotes certain behaviour (productive power). I will come back to this later in this chapter.

According to Foucault, then, relationships of power can, on the one hand, only exist where individuals are able to act and react to action, action upon action, which also opens up

possibilities for resistance: “There is no power without potential refusal or revolt” (Foucault 2002:324). On the other, seeing the exercise of power as a “conduct of conducts” and “a management of possibilities” (ibid:341), seriously limits the field of possible action in which a subject must act. Rejecting the idea of a “sovereign, founding subject” (Bevir 1999:67), Foucault similarly rejects the idea of autonomous subjects with the capacity of founding and ruling themselves uninfluenced by others, but without ruling out possibility of agency.

Although agents necessarily exist within regimes of power/knowledge, these regimes do not determine the experiences they can have, the ways they can exercise their reason, the beliefs they can adopt, or the actions they can attempt to perform. Agents are creative beings; it is just that their creativity occurs in a given social context that influences it (ibid.).

If we understand power as ways of influencing behaviour according to certain norms, and power relations as the way some act on others, disciplinary techniques taking the form of surveillance in schools, factories, hospitals, and the like can be seen as means to ‘convince’ individual bodies to behave in accord with those very norms. This way we may be able to overcome what, by some, is seen as a problem of incompatibility between techniques of discipline and technologies of the self, as suggested by Giorgio Agamben:

In one of his last writings, Foucault argues that the modern Western state has integrated techniques of subjective individualization with procedures of objective totalization to an unprecedented degree, and he speaks of a real “political ‘double bind,’ constituted by individualisation and the simultaneous totalization of structures of modern power”. Yet the point at which these two faces of power converge remains strangely unclear in Foucault’s work... where, in the body of power, is the zone of indistinction (or, at least, the point of intersection) at which techniques of individualization and totalizing procedures converge?... Confronted with phenomena such as the power of the society of the spectacle that is everywhere transforming the political realm today, is it legitimate or even possible to hold subjective technologies and political techniques apart? (Agamben 1998:5-6)

It is enough to read *The Subject and Power* (2002) to understand that Foucault did not necessarily see them as separate. On the contrary, by defining strategies of power as what agencies do in practice in exercising power, operationalising programmes and technologies, both subjective technologies and political techniques are treated as “mechanisms one can direct, in a fairly constant manner and with reasonable certainty, the conduct of others” (Foucault 2002:347). In closing, Foucault says that, “what makes the domination of a group, a caste, or a class, together with the resistance and revolts that domination comes up against, a central phenomenon in the history of societies is that they manifest in a massive and global

form, at the level of the whole social body, the locking-together of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction” (ibid:348). In other words, Foucault does not locate transformations, but treats them as the result of processes of interaction. Government is that ‘zone of indistinction’ or ‘point of intersection’ constituting that space in which “the negative and positive dimensions of power come together: it is a space in which technologies of domination work through the individual acting on himself, and in which the technologies by which individuals act on themselves coalesce to form structures of coercion” (Bevir 1999:350). “Governing people”, Foucault says, “is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself” (Foucault 1993:204).

For as much as Weber and Foucault can be seen to share a view on power as the ability to assign identities and exercise discipline, for the latter this is just a point of departure. While for Weber, bureaucratic rationality represents an end in itself structuring relationships and directing behaviour for common causes, for Foucault it is merely a tool for the more subtle formation of structures of coercion. “Power”, he says, “consists in complex relations: these relations involve a set of rational techniques, and the efficiency of those techniques is due to a subtle integration of coercion-technologies and self-technologies” (ibid.).

To explain the complex nature of power relationships and how power works, we need more than a definition describing power as individual commitments (Weber [1948] 1997) or as agonistic force relations (Foucault [1976] 1978). In fact, the aim here is not to arrive at any neat and clear-cut definition of power as such, but rather to show the dynamic relationship between, on the one hand, power of the state and, on the other, powerful state agents. For this purpose, I will draw on the insights of Weber and Foucault, as well as making use of Bourdieu as discussed in previous chapter, and suggest ways of modifying and expand these perspectives.

Continuing from previous chapter, spatial techniques are useful for visualising power and in this chapter I will show how buildings and offices are used to promote certain behaviour, i.e. the habitus (Bourdieu 1977) or disciplinary techniques (Foucault [1975] 1977) of the state. Starting with a description of the bureaucratic system, a structure dating back to British colonial times as the ideal type of rational organisation and hardly altered since (see chapter

2), the purpose is to show the principle behind habitus of the state primarily concerned with hierarchy and positions (Weberian institutional power). Furthermore, the descriptions of procedures behind recruitments, promotions, postings, transfers, training, and so on that state officials are through as part of service preparations relates to a later discussion arguing for the incorporation of the state in the subject (Foucauldian biopower). However, as different people can be seen to adopt different strategies against the background of the same structures (as seen in this chapter), buildings and authority structures alone cannot explain the complex meaning of power and its production. Rather, what this chapter shows is a dynamic relationship between power of the state and powerful state agents.

Bangladesh Civil Service⁵¹

In 2005, the public sector in Bangladesh numbered around one million people, with around seven hundred thousand employed in various ministries/divisions, departments/directorates, and other government offices comprising the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS). The rest are employed in various public enterprises. Presently, BCS officers staff forty-one ministries and fifteen administrative divisions, in addition to the offices of the president and prime minister.

One of the major characteristics of the administrative system of Bangladesh is a rigid pattern of rank corresponding to a specific occupational type. In the early days of British rule in India, there were two major types of civil servants, covenanted and uncovenanted. The former filled the superior positions. The members of the covenanted service entered into a covenant with the East India Company to serve the latter with ‘loyalty and honesty’, which is why they came to be known as members of the covenanted civil service. The other category of civil servants in subordinate positions did not enter into any covenant. Hence they belonged to the uncovenanted civil service consisting of both Europeans and Indians. The uncovenanted civil servants were posted mainly to junior positions in the revenue and judicial establishments.

In the formative phase of the civil service, appointment, posting and transfer of covenanted civil servants was notified in the official gazette series, printed and published by the government. One of the earliest references to the gazette traces back to the late eighteenth

⁵¹ Sources: Ali (1982, 1993, 2004), Banglapedia (2006), DFID (2005), Zafarullah et al (1997), Zaman (1980).

century. With the growth of bureaucracy, and consequent upon the Indianisation of the services, the distinction between covenanted and uncovenanted services disappeared. A new distinction was introduced wherein members of the civil service came to be known as gazetted and non-gazetted. Appointment, posting, transfer and other career incidents of the gazetted officers were required by law to be published in the official gazette series, indicating their superior rank and status in the service in relation to the non-gazetted government servants.

BCS has several features in its organisation, composition, and divisions. The service is divided into two broad categories, cadre and non-cadre services.⁵² Cadre Service basically refers to the organization of civil servants into well-defined groups, services or cadres and with recruitment and promotion rules. Recruitment to cadre services is made through the Public Service Commission (PSC), a constitutional body established primarily to recruit persons for various services and posts in the government, based on open competitive examination. Non-cadre services, on the other hand, are mostly based on position, with no definite structure of mobility either horizontally or vertically. Those belonging to cadre services can move from one department to another as against non-cadre people who stay within the department of recruitment. All positions in the BCS are horizontally divided into four classes: Class I, II, III, and IV. These divisions are made on the basis of levels of responsibility, nature of work (administrative and executive), method of recruitment, and so on. All Class I, and most Class II, government servants are gazetted officers.

Recruitment, promotion, posting and transfer

In addition to recruiting government personnel, the Public Service Commission is also involved in decision processes relating to other service matters such as promotion, posting, transfer, discipline, and appeal of government servants. The main purpose of constituting such a body, designated in most countries of British heritage as ‘civil’ or ‘public’ service commission, is to ensure that all decisions relating to recruitment and other service matters are made consistent with principles of merit and equity. It is supposed to be a body independent

⁵² A cadre simply specifies the posts reserved for the members of the service concerned.

of the executive branch of the government. In practice, it has remained as an advisory body, its executive function being limited to holding of tests and examinations.

Composition and functions of the Commission are defined in the constitution mandating the president (in practice on the advice of the prime minister) to appoint the chairman and members for five-year terms, or for periods not exceeding the appointees' age of sixty-two. The number of members to be appointed is not constitutionally specified, but should, according to a presidential decree (1977), be between six and fifteen, including the chairman. There are no special qualifications for appointment except the requirement that at least one-half of the members must have held offices in the government service for at least twenty years. Normally, the chairman and members who come from government service are senior officers and those from outside are mostly senior academicians. A member from the government service is not eligible for further government service employment, including in the PSC, after retirement, except the chairman who is eligible for re-employment for one additional term as chairman, and a member who may be re-employed in the PSC either as a member or as chairman. According to the Warrant of Precedence, the chairman of PSC ranks as a full secretary to the government while members rank as additional secretaries.

The Constitution specifies that PSC shall conduct tests and examinations for selection for government service appointments, advise the president (government) on certain matters on which the commission is consulted, and perform such other functions as prescribed by statutes. Matters on which the president is obligated constitutionally to consult the Commission include methods of recruitment, principles of appointment and promotion, principles of transfer, terms and conditions of service, and discipline. In practice, however, the responsibility of PSC is not as extensive as it may appear, for the president may, by order made after consulting the Commission, exclude any of the constitutionally specified matters from the Commission jurisdiction. Moreover, while the president is otherwise obligated to consult the Commission, there is no obligation to accept its advice in all cases. In fact, a number of presidential orders issued so far have progressively excluded important categories of employment from PSC jurisdiction.

In summary, the PSC usually performs the following functions: (i) conducts competitive examinations and/or interviews for direct recruitment of persons in government service, (ii) conducts psychological and intelligence tests for candidates who qualify in the competitive

examinations seeking selection to various civil service cadres, (iii) conducts tests and/or interviews for promotion of government servants from one service to another, for instance, from class II to class I, (iv) selects candidates from among temporary government servants for appointment to permanent posts, (v) endorses ad hoc appointments made under various ministries/divisions, (vi) advises on matters in respect of framing necessary recruitment rules, as well as principles to be followed in making recruitment, promotions and transfers in government service, including determination of *inter se* seniority position of government officers, (vii) examines and approves rules and syllabi of various departmental and professional examinations, as well as conducts such examinations for government servants, (viii) advises on matters affecting the terms and conditions of service of government servants; and (ix) advises on disciplinary and appeal matters affecting government servants. In addition, PSC also performs functions in the field of personnel research, such as compiling data and statistically analysing aptitudes, including academic, socio-economic, regional, and institutional backgrounds, of persons seeking government employment.

All vacancies in the civil service are not filled on the basis of overall performance in the several components of BCS examination. Forty-five percent of positions are reserved for top-performing candidates while the remainder is distributed among the sixty-four districts on the basis of population. Further, the allocated number of each district is again distributed among freedom fighters (30%), women (15%), and tribal population (5%). The district quota was introduced to remove disparity in civil service representation among different regions of the country.

To assist PSC in discharging its functions, there is an establishment called the Public Service Commission Secretariat. Structurally, it is part of the ministry of establishment, a ministerial portfolio of the prime minister, and is accorded status of a ministerial division. Business in the headquarters of PSC, located in the capital city, is conducted in ten functional sections, including establishment section; accounts section; examination section; recruitment section; psychology section; research section; and library section. In addition, there are six zonal offices of which five are located in the outlying five divisional headquarters, while Dhaka division is accommodated within the headquarters of the PSC Secretariat. These zonal offices act in effect as liaison offices. The secretariat has an officer designated as secretary who acts as its chief executive officer. The officer is an additional secretary to the government placed

in PSC on deputation. The secretary's senior aides include a joint secretary, controller of examinations, chief psychologist, two deputy secretaries, and seven directors.

Training

There are about 150 training institutes in the country belonging to different ministries, divisions, and public statutory bodies. The Public Administration Training Centre (PATC), the apex-training institute in the public sector, emerged as an autonomous organisation in 1984 by amalgamating existing institutions (Bangladesh Administrative Staff College, National Institute of Public Administration, Civil Officers Training Academy, and Staff Training Institute).

Since inception, PATC has trained government officers and officers of autonomous and non-government organisations. Among courses conducted by the Centre are: the foundation training course for new entrants to BCS, the advanced course on administration and development for deputy secretaries and equivalents, and a senior staff course for joint secretaries and equivalents. In addition, the Centre conducts a number of short courses. Objectives of these courses are to make officers aware of government policies, rules and regulations, and to inform them about recent changes in the field of public administration. A senior secretary installed as rector heads PATC. Below him are five member-directing staff of the rank of joint secretary, who are responsible for supervising the following five divisions: management and public administration, programme and studies, and regional centres, development economics, research and consultancy, and development projects. Each division consists of a number of departments headed by a director of the rank of deputy secretary. Below them are deputy directors, assistant directors, evaluation officers and research officers. The Centre also has four regional centres called Regional Public Administration Training Centre (RPATC) at four divisional headquarters. Regional centres are mainly for staff training and a deputy director heads each. The twelve-member Board of Governors chaired by a minister provides general policy directions as and when required. The Board is composed of the following members: Cabinet Minister nominated by the government to act as the chairperson of the Board, Cabinet Secretary, Rector, Ministry of Establishment Secretary, Finance Division Secretary, Education Division Secretary, Vice-Chancellor of a university nominated by the government, Defence Services Command and Staff College Commandant,

Bangladesh Federations of Commerce and Industry Chairman, Chairman of Department of Public Administration from either University of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi or Jahangirnagar by rotation in that order, and two persons nominated by the government, including one woman.

After the establishment of PATC, the need for a separate academy for the administration cadre was keenly felt. Established in 1987, the Civil Service Administration Academy is responsible for imparting training to young and mid-level officers belonging to the BCS administration cadre. A senior member of the administrative cadre designated as the director general and holding the rank and status of an additional secretary to the government head the Academy. Under the director general, there are three directors of the rank of deputy secretary. Faculty members act as directors, co-ordinators and assistant co-ordinators of courses run by the academy. Generally, trainees of the administrative cadre attend the Academy's prescribed professional training course on completion of the compulsory foundation training-course with new recruits of all other cadres from PATC. The Academy conducts various courses for training, covering subjects such as law, administration, office management, and land management. Participating in the training are assistant commissioners/assistant secretaries; magistrates; district magistrates; additional deputy commissioners; upazila nirbahi officers; revenue deputy collectors; land acquisition officers; and general certificate officers.

Central administration

The ministry/division is the national level units of administration organised as parts of Bangladesh Secretariat for the conduct of business of the secretariat. In the Rules of Business of 1996, division is defined as a self-contained administrative unit responsible for the conduct of business of the government in a distinct and specified sphere and declared as such by the government. Ministry is defined as the division or a group of divisions constituted as a ministry. Generally, larger ministries have more than one division, such as ministries of finance and planning consisting of three divisions each. Secretaries work under ministers or, as in some cases, state or deputy ministers' and head the divisions. Business of the government is allocated among the different ministries and divisions. The responsibility for allocation of business rests with the cabinet division. Under each ministry/division are the departments headed by director generals, subordinate offices (territorial unit of a department

acting as its field establishment), and parastatal bodies set up to perform specialised public functions or implement specific tasks.

There are no fixed rules about who will head a ministry. This is left to the discretion of the prime minister who alone is responsible for deciding about appointments of ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers. He or she is also the final authority for allocating minister portfolios. Allocation is also subject to change at the discretion of the prime minister. Again, it is left to the discretion of the prime minister to reorganise ministries by merger or separation.

The secretariat is the nerve-centre of the administrative machinery and all government activities. Functions of the secretariat include policy formulation, planning, evaluation of plan under execution, legislative measures, assisting ministers in the discharge of their responsibilities to the parliament, top level personnel management, and such other matters as may be determined by the prime minister from time to time. For efficient disposal of business allocated to a ministry/division, it is divided into 'wings', 'branches' and 'sections'.

A wing is a major self-contained sub-division of a ministry/division for conducting specified duties of a distinct nature and headed by a joint or additional secretary. A branch means several sections grouped together and headed by a deputy secretary or an officer of equivalent rank, whereas a section is the basic working unit headed by an assistant secretary or senior assistant secretary. The secretary is the administrative head of a ministry/division responsible for its administration and discipline, and for proper conduct of business assigned to it. A secretary is also responsible for careful observance of the Rules of Business in the ministry/division and attached departments and subordinate offices, and for keeping the minister-in-charge informed of working of the ministry/division.

Members of various cadre services hold posts of secretary, additional secretary, joint secretary, and deputy secretary. In 1980, the government introduced a unified career service with 28 cadres and sub-cadres. Subsequently, BCS was reorganised and the number of service cadres increased to 29. Before creation of BCS, an apex service cadre called the 'Senior Services Pool' (SSP) consisting of members of the former Civil Service of Pakistan, East Pakistan Civil Service and East Pakistan Secretariat Service staffed all top administrative posts in the secretariat, as well as a certain percentage of administrative posts in different

executive departments, and district and divisional offices. To accommodate officers of other service cadres to top administrative posts of the secretariat, the government abolished the SSP in 1989 and introduced reservation of quota for the posts of deputy secretary and joint secretary for all cadre services.

The posts of secretary and additional secretary remained open for officers of all service cadres. Initially, sixty and sixty-five percent of the posts of joint secretary and deputy secretary respectively were reserved for the BCS administration cadre. In 1998, the government decided to keep seventy and seventy-five percent of the same positions for the BCS administration and the rest for officers of other cadres. Junior posts below deputy secretary, such as assistant secretary/senior assistant secretary, are filled mainly by officers of BCS administration cadre, but also by officers drawn from the non-cadre secretariat service. The posts of deputy chief, senior assistant chief/assistant chief and research officer are reserved for officers of BCS economic cadre. Officers of BCS information cadre are also posted to every ministry as information officers. Apart from officers mentioned above, the different classes of employees are also recruited to every ministry/division for the posts of administrative officer, personal officer, steno-typist and messenger.

Field administration

Below the central secretariat, divisional commissioner ranks highest among all the field level officers in the administrative structure. In fact, a division is the apex field level administrative unit. Its creation dates back to 1829.

In 1828, it was felt that there was no effective control over the district revenue administration and no coordinating authority to supervise operation of the judicial and revenue system as a whole. It was thought expedient to abolish the Board of Revenue and to create the post of commissioners, each in charge of a division comprising a number of districts. Bengal was divided into twenty divisions, each under a commissioner. Each division again consisted of three or four districts. At the time of partition in 1947, the area constituting what was then known as East Bengal had three divisions, namely Dhaka, Chittagong, and Rajshahi. Later, Khulna division was created out of Rajshahi division. During the 1990s, two more divisions,

Barisal and Sylhet, were created, increasing the total number to six. In terms of districts the country now has sixty-four, each headed by a deputy commissioner.

The divisional commissioner's primary role is to act as the supervising authority over deputy commissioners in respect of revenue and judicial work carried out in the districts, but is also associated with development work. Usually, a divisional commissioner is appointed from amongst the senior joint or additional secretaries who have previous experience in district administration.

Ranked as deputy secretary, the deputy commissioner is the chief administrative and revenue officer of a district. The office of deputy commissioner traces its origin to the district collector system of the early phase of British rule. A district supervisor was appointed with limited functions in 1769 and Warren Hastings introduced the district collector system in 1772. The system was repealed the following year, but restored again in 1787 vesting the collector with the powers of a judge and magistrate, in addition to some authority over the police. With introduction of the permanent settlement in Bengal of 1793, the collector was stripped of all judicial and police powers, but by 1831 he was reinvested with judicial powers. Since then, the collector was known as district magistrate and collector, or just district magistrate.

The term deputy commissioner was used during British colonial days in a different context to describe the chief revenue and executive officer of districts in what was known as non-regulation provinces. Regulation provinces signified the settled areas of Bengal where a legalistic system based on comprehensive acts or regulations governed the working of the district administration. Non-regulation provinces meant newly acquired territories that because of unstable conditions demanded a more authoritarian pattern of administration. In East Bengal districts, appellation district magistrate and collector was uniformly used.

The designation district magistrate is used in the criminal procedure code to denote the principal magistrate of the district. The term 'collector' is derived from land revenue laws. The designation district magistrate- and collector was used during the British colonial days for districts except in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, as a non-regulation district, where the term deputy commissioner was used. After 1960, the district magistrate and collector came to be known throughout the country as deputy commissioner. During the early years, the deputy commissioner's office was concerned with internal security and revenue administration. Over

time, the office became increasingly occupied with the general welfare of the people in the district. To that end, the deputy commissioner's role was conceived of as the general controlling authority for all other activities in the district. The universality of the deputy commissioner's role since the early 20th century was affected by the introduction of elected legislatures and creation of specialised departments having their own officers in the districts. Deputy commissioners are still looked upon as the eyes and ears of the government in such areas as development, law and order, land administration, disaster management and elections.

The deputy commissioner works under the general guidance and supervision of the divisional commissioner. Both are under the administrative control of the cabinet division, although the ministry of establishment makes postings and transfers. Deputy commissioners are drawn from the members of the BCS administration and selection is made through a committee consisting of the cabinet secretary as chairman, and secretaries to the ministries of establishment; home; and land as members.

A deputy commissioner has five additional deputy commissioners (ADC) to assist him as coordinator between local and central government: ADC Literacy and Development; ADC General; ADC Revenue; ADC Land; and ADC Magistrate.

The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) is the chief executive of an upazila (sub-district), a newly created post in accordance with a decision made by the military regime of General Ershad. Under pressure from the donor community, who felt that under Ershad's 'autocratic and corrupt regime', a decentralisation effort was the only way to reach out to the vast majority of people living in the rural areas (Siddiqui 2000), the Ershad government in 1982 constituted a committee for administrative reorganisation and reform. A major recommendation of the committee was to have a representative body called upazila parishad (council) under a directly elected chairman. The government accepted the recommendation and accordingly a post, designated first as thana nirbahi officer (thana executive officer) but later renamed as upazila nirbahi officer, was created in each of the existing thanas (later upgraded and renamed as upazila) outside the metropolitan areas. About the same time, all existing subdivisions were converted into districts. Responsibilities for all development activities at local level were transferred to the upazila parishad. It was also decided that the UNO should continue to act as chairman of upazila parishad until such time an elected chairman takes office.

UNOs are normally posted from among the senior scale officers of the administration cadre of BCS. The charter of duties of UNO stipulates that he performs such functions as to: (i) act as staff officer to the elected chairman of upazila parishad and thus in that capacity assist the chairman in implementing all policies and decisions of the parishad, (ii) assist the parishad/ chairman in supervising all upazila level administrative/development work and in preparing a coordinated upazila development plan, (iii) exercise powers under section 144 of criminal procedure code and sit in court to perform functions such as taking cognisance of cases, hearing bail matters, granting adjournment etc. when the upazila magistrate is unable to attend the court, (iv) initiate annual confidential reports of all upazila level officers except the munsiff-magistrate (assistant judge), (v) attend emergency duties such as relief work following natural calamities and receive food and other materials for distribution under the direction of upazila parishad/chairman, (vi) supervise and control revenue and budget administration, (vii) ensure observance of all government directives on upazila administration, (viii) co-ordinate all upazila level training activities, (ix) grant casual leave and countersign travelling allowance bills of heads of all functional departments, except that of the munsiff, (x) act as drawing and disbursing officer vis-à-vis officers and staff working directly under him, (xi) supervise activities of the officers and staff working under him, (xii) protocol duties, and finally, (xiii) perform such other functions as entrusted to him by the government or the upazila parishad/chairman. Appointed functionaries of different departments (health and family planning, education, agriculture, fisheries, social welfare, engineering, rural development, etc.) assist UNOs.

It should be noted that the designation ‘upazila nirbahi officer’ changed to ‘thana nirbahi officer’ consequent upon the abolition of the upazila system by the BNP government in the early 1990s, but was changed back to ‘upazila nirbahi officer’ after the AL takeover in the late nineties. The Local Government Commission formed by the AL government recommended a four tier local government: Gram Parishad (village council), Union Parishad, Upazila Parishad (sub-district council) and Zila Parishad (district council), but it was never fully implemented. At present, the only level of local government with elected members in the districts is that of Union Parishad. In the municipalities, the mayor and commissioners are directly elected to a city corporation and wards, but the City Corporation has a rather limited mandate and budget. Administrative functions are carried out by a melange of agencies with no de jure focal point of control and coordination at the city level. The various agencies have respective lines of control, coordination, policy determination and finance terminating in various ministries in

Dhaka. While the system continues to be highly centralised in terms of policymaking, its everyday manifestations still depends on local offices, which I will discuss next.

The architecture of power

Anyone who has entered a government building in Bangladesh and spent some time there observing the activities cannot help but notice what I will call the disciplinary power of architectural techniques structuring the behaviour of anyone entering. Walking into a public building, one immediately senses the reality of strictly maintained hierarchical authority. The first indication of rank is found in the physical location of offices. The support staff occupies the most accessible office space and offices of high-ranking officers are usually the most secluded ones located on the upper floors of the building. Clerks and peons are usually placed in an open-space office structure in the central area and a desk designates each employee to his or her workstation. The highest ranked officer is usually to be found at the far end of the last corridor and the office next door will belong to the immediate subordinate. To enter the office of first in command, visitors first have to pass an anteroom where they are asked to submit name, position, and purpose of visit on a piece of paper to be taken to the officer for approval. Doors will be closed and no one will be allowed to enter without permission. Clients are asked to take a seat in the waiting room where they can spend a whole day waiting to be called, but at the end of the working day most of them are told to come back another day (see also chapter 3).

Most often, on entering an office, the room is already crowded with other visitors, clients, clerks and assistants either competing for the office-holder's attention or patiently waiting to be heard. In the case of commissioners, for instance, work schedules are busy and appointments hard to come by. Situated behind a large desk fronting the door ensures control with the room and everyone in it. Friends and well-wishers are immediately invited to sit nearest 'The Boss' allowing for private consultations to take place during conversations with clients. Important clients can approach directly once in the room and take a seat at the immediate front. Less important clients are expected to stay in the back and sit quietly until called. Attention is not easily attained and clients commonly bring along all the support they can gather, preferably someone connected with the commissioner. The mode of address – 'Sir, Sir' – leaves no doubt about the superior position of the person in the chair.

Following up on an invitation to visit a deputy commissioner (DC) I knew from before when he was working in another district and who on earlier occasions had helped me understand the intricacies of bureaucracy, the first challenge was to locate his office in a multi-storey building and with corridors in all directions. There were office clerks taking files from one office to the next, men in suits carrying briefcases, women accompanied by male relatives, and labourers in their work outfits – *lungis* – passing in all directions. Eventually my companion (Chakma friend mentioned in *key figures* in the introduction) and I found his office at the end of the busiest corridor. Since the commissioner was expecting us, we entered directly after a light knock on the door and found him seated behind a solid desk in a spacious office; extravagantly furnished with an air conditioner, solid wood furniture, wall-to-wall carpet, private bathroom, and so on. Barely seated, the DC rang the buzzer and a peon immediately appeared from behind the curtain behind his desk, humbly approaching the boss asking, ‘Sir?’ The DC requested tea for his ‘special guests’ and the peon came back serving fruit, samosas, biscuits, soft drinks and tea. The DC particularly wanted us to try the samosas, a local speciality, repeatedly insisting we eat more. Usually, visitors are offered tea and biscuits, but on special occasions other food items are offered in honour of special guests. By the mentioning of ‘special guests’ the peon knew what to serve. In between talking to us, the DC signed papers, answered phone calls, buzzed for the assistant and passed instructions, and so on, generally looking busy and important. Colleagues from another district arrived and my companion and I were asked to go with Assistant Commissioner Ahmed to the Circuit House (state guesthouse) where the DC would join us after meeting with his colleagues.

The guesthouse was located on a hill in a peaceful, lush green natural environment shielded from the usual hustle and bustle. The only road leading to the guesthouse was closely guarded and it would be difficult to enter the premises unnoticed. Buildings and gardens being in remarkable good condition reinforced an impression of overall orderliness. Ahmed said the DC had arranged for me to be in the VIP room, which is where the prime minister stays during visits. It was the only room with air conditioning, a hot shower, and a separate seating area. Ahmed was eager to practice his English and appeared rather outspoken without his boss present. When the DC’s car arrived, Ahmed excused himself and went to meet him. After the DC joined the conversation, Ahmed either kept quiet or commented in support of his boss. For instance, when discussing development work and I voiced my disagreement with the DC’s views, Ahmed interrupted on behalf of his boss to stress his authority, both in terms of intellectual capacity and personal dedication. Not only had he written two or three books on

the issue, but he had also, on limited resources, initiated a number of “successful development projects for the benefit of the people”, he said. In fact, whenever challenged on his views, Ahmed intervened to praise his boss and explain on his behalf. During lunch, Ahmed faced competition from the magistrate with both of them trying to finish the DC’s sentences. Now and again they interrupted with misinterpretations, but the DC did not seem to mind and continued talking unaffected. Later Ahmed explained that it is all part of *bossing*. This was of course not a first time experience of this kind of submissive behaviour, but it was the first time I was offered an explanation.

Throughout the stay Ahmed ran back and forth looking after things. Waiting for lunch, Ahmed disappeared every ten minutes or so to confirm its progress. Arriving at the lake to see some of the DC’s development projects, Ahmed went on in front to arrange for a boat. Stepping ashore again on the other side of the lake, Ahmed had arranged for refreshments at the local café and made sure the cars were waiting outside ready for departure by the time we finished tea. Back at the guesthouse the DC instructed Ahmed to “take care of things” while he made a brief stop back at the office. Ahmed saw him off and walking back he mentioned the importance of bossing, a concept he expected me to be familiar with “having spent all that time doing research on bureaucracy in Bangladesh”. He said he would explain after seeing about dinner for the evening, which he continued to do throughout our conversation.

I will explain to you what it means to be a good government official. The single most important quality is the ability to please the boss and find out what he wants without him saying anything. This is the custom. It is very different from student life and requires different skills than we learn in university. You can be a top student, standing first, but unless you are good at bossing your future as a government official is bleak. You must know what the boss thinks and wants, and do it without him telling. Bosses have a big ego, but this is the custom.

Ahmed said his primary goal was to work for the people, but that he was willing to sacrifice ideals for ambitions. He said he sometimes faces dilemmas between what the boss demands and what he believed to be in the interest of the people, which to him meant compromising. “You have to consider the total situation”, he said. Bosses are to be obeyed and respected. Besides, refusing to do so could cause the boss to write an unfavourable Annual Confidential Report (ACR).

This is important because if it [ACR] goes to the ministry I will be finished. What would you think if you got a report about an uncooperative officer? Actually it does not matter what you think because everyone else would think of me as incompetent. All the other officers are able to work with their bosses, they would think, why not this one? Must be something wrong with him they would think and send me for a lifelong service in Banderban or any other punishment post. It matters what the boss thinks and the only way is to please him if I want to make a career as government officer.

Ahmed wanted to climb to the top to hopefully one day become a minister secretary. I asked him about his career choice and he said he actually wanted to become a politician, but changed his mind considering ‘anyone’ could become a politician. To become a service holder, on the other hand, candidates face many tests and tough competition. Politicians may hold the power to make the decisions, but depend on service holders for guidance and implementation. For this reason, he reckoned, “service holders can be even more powerful than politicians”. Ahmed said that, even if he does not necessarily agree with the concept of bossing, he believed that by the time he gets the chair, he will expect the same because he will be accustomed to it.

Whoever sits in the chair is the boss. Right or wrong, he is the boss and must be pleased. Sacrifices are made and orders executed even if you know that what the boss is demanding is not for the betterment of the people. If you have strong objections to how the boss is running his office you may approach the higher authority, but you will have to convince them first. I believe that the man, who sits in a higher chair, his eyes are more open. He can see even against the wall... He can understand all those untold things... I don’t think you ought to be diplomatic to do the job in your country. I don’t think you need to be diplomatic like us in our country. You see, you must know how to work in this country. That is very important and because of this type of culture that we face every day, it was unnecessary for me to study psychology because ultimately the situation taught me.

After dinner, the DC told us to get rest and be ready to leave early next morning. He was taking the day off to take us sightseeing, but we had to leave early because the place he wanted to show us would take some time to reach. Coming out after breakfast there were several jeeps waiting to take us to the interior. Refreshments and lunch had been arranged for and we were told to just sit back and enjoy the trip. Back at the Circuit House at the end of the day I asked Ahmed when the DC was not there, worried about offending his hospitality by offering payments, how to convey my appreciation. Ahmed said that, “You see, he is very positive to you I observed because he spent a day for you and I did never see this before. So you are lucky enough that you are getting my DC”. When I agreed he answered, “Thank you. Perhaps you have that much eyes like the boss of whom I was telling – higher chair have more eyes. You are keeping more eyes because you understand those untold things. He spent

a lot of time for you”, he said. As head of the district administration, the DC remained inaccessible to most, but for me, the foreign guest, he had spent time and resources showing me around. Apparently, expressing my gratitude towards the DC, sincerely thanking him for spending his valuable time like that, I had acknowledged his position as an important man.

From the architecture of government buildings and offices to superiors commanding behaviour and the submissive behaviour of subordinates, the impression is the same, namely that of a structured system of authority founded on formal positions, just as Weber described it. Ahmed’s statements and behaviour clearly indicates the habitus of the state and can only be understood in the context of the formal order of the state, i.e. bureaucratic order. Running back and forth looking after the needs of the DC, Ahmed recognises his own position vis-à-vis the DC’s in a hierarchically ordered system. Always trying to be ahead with his services, he recognises that there are certain skills necessary to do the job properly. Setting aside his own opinions on behalf of those of his superior, he recognises the importance of order of command for the system to work, and worrying about his ACR, Ahmed recognises the requirement for making a civil service career. If subordinates such as Ahmed can be said to do more than just recognising the system and how it works, i.e. subjecting to the power of the state by reproducing it, I will come back to shortly.

Similarly, immediately upon entering a government building, clients and visitors looking for government officials are made subject to this system of rank. Obstacles are many in the corridors of power and high-ranking officers are commonly inaccessible. Waiting rooms outside closed doors and seating arrangements inside offices are used to distinguish important clients and visitors from the less important ones indicating that there is no such thing as universal service. Either you are in a position to directly approach the person in charge, or you are left negotiating with his subordinates about rules and regulations. Inexperienced clients will usually do the latter, but most of the time people try to find ways of overcoming formal procedures, as seen in the next chapter.

At the same time as there are some ‘blocks’, in Foucault’s phrase (Foucault 2002), demanding particular behaviour in certain situations, there must also be an ‘undecided space’ (Bevir 1999) where individual subjects decide what beliefs to hold and what actions to perform for reasons of their own because different people can be seen to adopt different strategies against the background of the same structures, as this chapter demonstrates. That buildings and

formal authority alone cannot explain the complex meaning of power is evident from the following cases showing the dynamic relationship between state power and powerful state agents.

The complexity of state power

The Annual Confidential Report referred to earlier, is a performance evaluation report of a public servant written by his immediate superior. In addition to performance, it contains specific observations on the character, conduct and integrity of the officer reported upon. As of 1990, the following grading system has been in use: outstanding 95-100; very good 85-94; good 61-84; average 41-60; and below average 40 and below. The report is to be countersigned by an officer immediately superior to the reporting officer.

This system of evaluating the performance, conduct and character of public servants goes back far. Until 1834, promotion was wholly based on seniority, determined by the date of entry in the service. An order of the governor general in council passed in 1834 laid down that appointment to a vacant post would no longer be on the basis of seniority alone, but also in consideration of competence and qualifications. This order laid the foundation for annual confidential reports previously known as character rolls. In the beginning it was an open official record, later made secret, and finally confidential. Except for a few modifications, such as choice of language (English or Bangla); provision for annual medical examination; and introduction of a new grading system, the system of ACR has remained the same. The system is also applicable for non-gazetted officers and employees, excluding the lower subordinate service, but the form is different from that of gazetted officers (Ali 2004).

Agents of the state

As prospects of promotion, training, salary increase, and so forth, depend on officers performance, a favourable ACR is of utmost importance. During my fieldwork, Alam's (see *key figures* in the introduction) immediate superior, Madam, was transferred to another district. The transfer was described as normal and expected after four years in the same chair. She received the transfer order with mixed emotions; unhappy about leaving people she had

worked with for the last four years, but pleased about having been granted her request for the next station. Alam was anything but pleased about the transfer. He was concerned about getting a new boss.

A few days before departing, Madam, Alam and I, as on many previous occasions, were chatting in her office. The door was open allowing anyone to enter without asking permission or first being announced. Students would come to talk about problems at school, parents to discuss enrolment, and teachers to complain about trouble at work. Madam would listen and consider solutions. The atmosphere and mode of address was generally relaxed and informal. When only the three of us were present, even support staff would join the conversations jokingly telling stories about different types of bosses causing loud outburst of laughter when imitating gestures. Madam behaved with Alam and the others more as a colleague than superior causing no one to engage much in bossing. Alam said that although she is the boss, she had never behaved like one. Her office door was always open and her attitude sincere. If she needed something she would ask for it. She refused to be the centre of attention and instead of taking praise she gave it. Talking about her departure, the support staff expressed concern about the new boss and his character (*charitra*). Madam said they asked about how they would manage to work for him because they had already heard that he was 'hard'. "He says one thing and does another. He talks all the time and yells", one of them said.

Intermission

The obvious question is perhaps if women in general are different from men when it comes to leadership. A woman principal I knew, for instance, conducted her office very different from male principals I met. The first time I visited the college I walked into a spacious and attractive room furnished with the usual executive office furniture, i.e. solid desk and tall chair facing the room. Seeing this tiny woman sitting beside the desk on an ordinary chair like a visitor, I asked for Mrs. Principal. Being told she was the principal I asked about her seating arrangement. Evidently she was not comfortable behind that large desk and preferred not to sit there. In fact, never even once coming to her office did I find her behind the desk or seated in the tall chair. She kept phone and office supplies within reach and used only the right side drawers. Instead of pressing the buzzer, she softly called the peon by his name asking him to

“please bring some tea and biscuits”. If she wanted a file from another office she would not hesitate to go and get it herself instead of shouting for others to fetch it for her.

After class, all the teachers would gather in her office to chat and to read newspapers. She paid close attention to the teachers’ work, which she enthusiastically praised. People would casually come and go without being asked the purpose of their visit and Mrs. Principal engaged with all excluding no one. Anyone was welcome to sit in the tall chair and use her phone, causing confusion to visitors about whom to address first. Admittedly, high-ranking female officers are not all that common, but during fieldwork I met more than enough to make a comparison and few complied with the above description. For instance, Madam’s immediate superior was a woman, but the atmosphere surrounding her was as formal as that of any male colleague (see below). Rather, what it does show is the reciprocal relationship between the power of the state and powerful state agents. Refusing to sit in the chair and behave authoritatively, Mrs. Principal not only undermined her own powerful position, but also that of the state. No one in her office engaged much in ‘bossing’ and she and her colleague was never prioritised to represent the state either publicly or privately.

In the case of Madam and Mrs. Principal, both are in superior positions, but with none of them involving in the rituals of the state neither were considered particularly powerful and neither were engaged much for ceremonial purposes or seen as representatives of state power. As pointed out by Ahmed earlier, though, most officers not only accept the special treatment, but expect it when in superior position, as seen in the previous chapter and as can be seen from the following case, which by the way involves a woman. The example is from the time when I accompanied an officer on one of her many commitments as deputy director of secondary schools (Madam DD).

On our way back to her office, having been present at a school function, I made a comment about how organised it all appeared. The occasion was the annual sports day at a government high school and Madam DD, in her function as controller of the school, had been invited as chief guest. Arriving by car in the afternoon, four boys from the Bangladesh National Cadet Corps, dressed in light kaki-brown uniforms and military boots and berets, took their position and marched Madam DD from the parking lot and into the school building. In the headmaster’s office, she was seated in the tall chair behind the desk surrounded by the headmaster, an ex-headmaster present for the occasion, schoolteachers and inspectors. Lunch

was served followed by tea and *mishti* (sweets). After a brief update on the school situation in general, the Cadet Corps marched Madam DD out onto the arena and over to the dais where she climbed the stairs to be seated behind a large table decorated with fresh flowers. All guests received bouquets, pictures were taken, the national flag was hoisted while the national anthem was played and a seventh grade student performed prayers. After the inspector and headmaster had said a few words, Madam DD declared the games open and four teams named after the four main rivers – Padma, Meghna, Karnaphuli, Jamuna – were ready to compete as soon as the ‘Olympic Flame’ had been lit. Competitions had been going on since morning and only the finals were left. After less than an hour the games finished and the prize-giving ceremony could start. Winners were announced and Madam DD handed over the prizes. The headmaster thanked the honourable Madam DD and her foreign companion for coming and the Cadets marched us back out to a waiting car. Madam DD responded to my comment about how organised it all appeared by saying that it is important to teach the students to “respect the national anthem, observe and comply with formalities, and respect honourable guests”. In virtue of her position, Madam DD was honoured and could appear as the authority of school activities. Following formal procedures, Madam DD re-created both state power and her own powerful position as an agent of the state.

Agents of the state continued

Returning to Alam and his new boss, he started researching his boss-to-be weeks before he actually arrived by calling colleagues asking for information. According to Alam, there were four types of officers: honest and efficient (HE), dishonest and efficient (DE), honest and inefficient (HI), and dishonest and inefficient (DI). His new boss, even before arrival, was categorised as DE, which was the most challenging. Alam said nobody cares about honesty as long as you are efficient at pleasing the boss and his career depended on his ability to satisfy his boss.

I need it because he will write my ACR. I have to be much closer to him. As I am closest to him, he will not be able to write a bad ACR. Maybe out of a hundred he may give me forty or fifty, but I will not give him the chance to write on my ACR such poor marks. Since I joined this job I have got no less than ninety-four. So I have to remain this and keep it up and not give him any chance to write against me or do anything against me. This is very important. If he gives me poor marks it will be harmful for me and for my career in the future. [Superiors] will always take into consideration my ACR. My future depends on my ACR. Suppose they will send some officials abroad for training, foreign training, at that time they will go through

my ACR first. They will not go through other people although other people know that I'm a good and honest man, but they will have nothing to do as he has got the power. This way I have to carry on and I have to tactfully tackle the situation.

Alam's workstation was in the sub-district several kilometres out of town and travelling back and forth in one day was inconvenient, which is why he usually stayed in the sub-district for days at a time. After his boss arrived, Alam travelled back to the city more regularly trying to spend as much time with him as possible doing all sorts of odd jobs after regular office hours. Hearing about a shop owned by his boss, Alam decided to offer his assistance in an effort to gain some goodwill. None of his colleagues knew about the shop and Alam said it was important that it remained a secret. For one, government officers are not allowed to be involved in private business and running a shop is against service rules. By getting involved, Alam was hoping to be seen as his trusted accomplice. Also, by keeping it a secret he was hoping to keep colleagues equally concerned about their relationships with the new boss, from showing up. Alam's strategy was clear; involve with the boss beyond official matters for the purpose of establishing a more personal relationship with him than otherwise possible.

As mentioned, Alam categorised the boss as efficient and dishonest. By this he meant that the boss was on good terms with superiors and that he allowed monetary transactions to decide relations with subordinates. According to him, dishonest colleagues do not work extra because with a boss that accepts cash all they do is pay the right amount. He, on the other hand, had "no other way to make him satisfied. To maintain my career good I have to go on like this way – on this track", he said. Besides helping out with the shop, Alam made hospital arrangements when the boss' wife was giving birth, he arranged for doctors appointments when his child was sick, picked up train tickets and took the boss' family to the station when travelling, buying them sweets and drinks for the journey, among other things. Talking to him months later, when he was his way to submit the two months delayed ACR, he said he had made little progress in swaying the boss.

Actually this is the first time I'm giving him my ACR because he has joined just [...] last year. Previously Madam gave my ACR, but she has given me 99, 96, 95, extraordinary. This time I don't know what he will give me. He might make a delay or he might put it off in the table and take time. But I'm thinking that I must say that if you don't take it and send it off to Dhaka office then it will be harmful for me. There is an efficiency bar and I have crossed my efficiency bar. So in that case, if you don't sign this and send it in proper time, already two months passed as I'm supposed to submit it on January 1st and it is little bit late as today is March 3rd, I will not get the increment. I have to send it as early as possible.

Looking over the report with Alam he explained that it covers both professional and personal skills and that each of the twenty-five questions is marked between one and four. The first part asks about professional knowledge: quality and quantity of work, quality of supervision and guidelines, relationship with colleagues, efficiency in taking and executing decisions, interest and efficiency in supervising subordinates, communication skills, interest shown in submitting ACR in time and having it signed by the higher officer, and sense of responsibility. In the second part of the form, the reporting officer is asked about the subordinate's personal qualities, such as behaviour with the public, ability to cope with demanding situations, ability to take action and carry out orders, interest in the work, sense of responsibility, dependability, punctuality, co-operation, personality, intelligence and judgement, and grade of discipline. Separate space is provided for mentioning of training, promotion and any other career relevant comments. "It's like a character description", said Alam, "reporting on my ideology, morals, and to what extent I am good and intelligent". He wanted his boss to appreciate his extra-official efforts and consider him as more than just another subordinate.

With his previous boss, Alam always knew how he had been evaluated. After completing the form, Madam used to ask for his approval, but that was because of the kind of relationship they had, interacting on a more personal level. He did not know what to think about this new boss or how he would be evaluated. Although concerned about marks, Alam appeared just as concerned about the evaluation report being further delayed. Depending on the marks, to pass the efficiency bar and receive his due increment the report had to be sent and countersigned by the project director in Dhaka.

In November, the report was finally sent to Dhaka, but Alam seemed dismayed. By giving him ninety marks he did not get 'outstanding' as expected. For months Alam had tried to get him to complete it explaining about his much overdue increment. He had worked hard to please his boss, but without achieving what he was hoping for. After all else failed Alam became angry and threatened to write to the department with a complaint, but instead he waited. Shortly after, his boss called him to his office to see the completed report.

Previously, out of a hundred Madam gave me ninety-nine, but this time I have done a lot for him. But he just gave ninety saying that "I have given you much more marks". I said that I don't care whatever it is because again it will be evaluated in Dhaka – my Dhaka office. They know me very well. I said that my [previous boss] has given me 99, but you should make it 98

or 99, like that – extraordinary. My lowest marks previously were 94 and highest marks were 99. This time this [boss] is corrupted and all the people know. I cannot make him satisfied even if I did lots for him because it is quite impossible to match with this kind of dishonest bloody people.

In this context, ‘corrupted’ was used to condemn action believed to have been decided by money. Alam thought his career could be decided by his efforts to please the boss, but was disappointed. He did not receive top scores and blamed his failure on a corrupted boss more concerned about making money than recognising his efforts. His boss, on the other hand, behaved as if informing Alam that his efforts had indeed been recognised by letting him see the report and pointing out the generous marks. Although obviously disagreeing on the value of Alam’s efforts, neither questioned the definition of a superior-subordinate relationship and the fact that superiors evaluate their subordinates according to some given criteria. Trying to please his boss for the purpose of scoring high on his ACR, Alam also recognised the system of performance evaluation report as criteria for his future career. The same can be said about his colleagues, but by different methods, which in this case proved more effective. Although to Alam there was a right and a wrong way to go about pleasing bosses, no doubt the boss had to be pleased. His efforts not only benefit him personally when successful, but also constitute the very power of the state. Alam’s efforts in pleasing bosses did not stop with immediate superiors and he spent much time entertaining important visitors.

When superiors call from Dhaka informing about planned visits, Alam take it that what they actually want is to bring their families and spend the time either sightseeing in the hills or relaxing at the beach. Alam arranges for transportation, feeding and lodging making sure they are properly looked after. Back in Dhaka superiors claim travel allowances, while subordinates are the ones actually paying for everything. To compensate, government officials have invented a fund popularly known as the ‘LR fund’. Alam said jokingly that LR is short for “light refreshment” or “light requirement” and claimed its existence to be an open service secret known all the way to the top, even at the secretariat. Apparently the money is collected from the public in exchange for signatures on official documents and used for entertaining visitors. Alam said that some of his colleagues maintained LR funds, but not him. He saw it as corruption because money is unofficially collected from the public and secretly maintained. At the same time, such extra-official expenses were too frequent for him to manage privately and had to be retrieved somehow.

Ministers and parliament members visiting their constituencies to maintain popularity also expect to be entertained properly and expenses for arranging security, dinner parties, public meetings, leisure trips, and so on are covered by the hosting party. UNO is mainly responsible for receiving visitors at this level, but draws on the support of subordinates. The many visits mean that Alam spends a lot of time and money entertaining. “In that case officially I am not honest”, Alam admitted. “Then I say to my accountant that the boss came and I had to spend two or three thousand taka so you have to manage this. I don’t know from where you will manage. I have nothing more than that to do with it. No source is there.” Later he explained about this monthly budget allowance of 1000 taka to spend on office supplies, which he regularly supplemented. If he wants to spend more than the one thousand a month, a committee of three should approve it. Instead of going through a committee, he gets UNO to approve supplementary funds. On paper three names will appear, he explained, but in practice the money is disbursed without going through a committee. He suspected the office staff of using this fund to also cover entertainment expenses.

Yeah, in government job, especially in our country, it is too tough to keep the job properly. Its requirement is actually too tough to keep your chair unaffected. If you fail then you will be affected. I am honest, but this not acceptable to my bosses and I have to tackle them. I have to tackle them tactfully. I shouldn’t say to them time and again that, “Oh Sir I am honest so I cannot bring this suit for you or arrange for you good accommodation”. I cannot say a lot of bloody things. This will not make sense. At that time even if he doesn’t say anything, which he will not, when he go back to head office in Dhaka he will not on behalf of me submit any report. He will just submit that this officer is ok or he is not up to the mark, he is not efficient, like that he will write. But if I entertain them properly and give them good respect, if I entertain them perfectly and spend much money for them they will be happy. When they want to go to Rangamati I have arranged a car and I say that don’t worry about money; money does not matter. In that case they are happy. If I fail they don’t like to understand. They know that I am just honest. They know very well which officer is honest and which officer is dishonest. They know and they have the information because from the upazila so many people they write against them – against dishonest officers. When they get two or three letters, or four or five, they get in their mind that this officer is not good. Sometimes when they go to the office they see the papers and going through the papers they can understand that this officer is not honest. In my case they know that I am honest, but when they come they say that I want to go to your upazila and I want to visit your upazila. I say that you are most welcome Sir. When would you like to come? Then they say that your *bhabi*, that means his wife, she also likes to go there. When does she like to go? She likes to visit Chittagong. Then I say ok, let bhabi also come to Chittagong. Then he is asking me what you can do. It is a terrible question. What I can do; I will say no, what do you need? Then he is just delivering that your bhabi she wants to visit Rangamati and Cox’s Bazar, and she wants to go to Kaptai and Bandarban. Then I just say that ok Sir, you just come. And my wife she becomes crazy; you are just entertaining your boss, but you never even took us to Rangamati, your kids and me, you never took us. But you are taking rental car for them and you are paying money for them – from your own pocket. From your salary you will carry on your job. I am saying that I have nothing to do. In that case I have to do something wrong and officially I am not honest. Government rules and regulations actually is like that I cannot remain myself honest.

What Alam says here is that it is practically impossible to remain ‘honest’ in the service because of all the unofficial expenses. Hospitality is important in Bangladesh and visitors are commonly treated with generosity. Anyone visiting will experience this, but in this context there is more to it than just hospitality. Subordinates acting upon bosses presumed needs, presumed because most of the time nothing in particular is actually asked for, are seen as efficient and loyal. Failing to do so is easily seen as inefficient and disrespectful and nobody cares for whatever reason.

By doing whatever he can to please superiors, such as helping out with the shop, taking care of family needs, spending vast amounts of time and money entertaining (which his wife accuses him of not even doing for his family), Alam can be seen as a case of how power works on the subject. Looking to please superiors, he recognises the order of the state and the structure of the system as described earlier. In this system subordinates carry out orders from superiors, but the system may at any time reconstitute its order depending on positions of those involved, as seen in the previous chapter (chief guest today, but only special guest tomorrow). Besides, the concept of a superior-subordinate relationship is constantly reinvented through various ways of interpreting (what a boss is), absorbing (what it will take to please the boss) and rearticulating (what is actually done to please the boss). This means that it is not only power working on the subject, but even the subject working on power, which can be more or less successful. In Alam’s case, the struggle concerned morally acceptable or unacceptable methods (cf. Alam’s description of different types of officers in terms of honest/dishonest and efficient/inefficient) for accomplishing the same. Before discussing type of power at work with reference to Weber, Foucault and Bourdieu (see earlier), let me continue some more with Alam and the way power works.

Powerful through the state

Reporting directly to district education officer, Alam said that his office worked independent of that of the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO). Nevertheless, meeting for lunch one day, he said he had been engaged with UNO until almost nine the night before. Not feeling well in the office, UNO had called on him to arrange a doctor’s appointment.

He is a very big doctor and appointments must be made six or seven days ahead, but it is impossible for us to stand on a line and take a ticket. Instead I made contact with the doctor personally and said that “we are government officials and you should excuse me and take this into consideration”. Then he said ok and to bring the UNO. I had to bring my UNO there and after seeing the doctor he went back to the upazila. But this is not my job – official job – but I have to keep him also satisfied because my seal is also on him.

Alam explained that he depend on UNO for getting a casual leave granted or travel allowances reimbursed, but for that he did not need to spend an evening taking him to the doctor, or attending to any other business of his. He wanted UNO to see him as a friend and as such support him vis-à-vis higher authorities if needed. “Admin people” (from administration cadre), he argued, “rule BCS because they are in leading positions in all departments”.⁵³ UNOs, being posted from among the senior scale officers of the administration cadre, have contact with other admin people. UNOs become DCs, who eventually move on to secretariats and work with ministers. Alam reasoned that with UNOs having access to people in high places, friendly relations with a UNO could be useful.

In principle, employment in the service automatically offers security in terms of tenure, definite structure of mobility and fixed salaries, but in practice this may not be so simple. Considering lower-ranked officers only earn around nine thousand taka a month, and without benefits such as free housing and transportation, few can afford delayed wages. In Alam’s case, family expenses are manageable because his father owns the building he resides in and he does not have to pay rent, which otherwise would amount to four or five thousand a month. His father had retired from his job, but renting out part of the building for government purposes adds to the family income. Additional sources come from his father’s business involvement and the family does not depend on Alam’s income alone to manage living expenses. In contrast, some of his colleagues have to pay house rent, tuition for children or siblings, and other household expenses from their salaries as sole provider of the family. Waiting for overdue pay checks is not an option for most officials. Alam, on the other hand, allowed twenty months to pass without getting paid before deciding to do something about it. Apparently, the government was discussing continuation of donor support and until funds had been released he was not receiving his salary. As it turned out, his problem not only relied on the outcome of government discussions with donors because after donors had disbursed the funds, he was still not getting his wages.

⁵³ BCS consists of 29 cadres, each undertaking a specialised function (administrative, auditing and accounting, agricultural, foreign affairs, health, education, engineering, etc.).

Salary I will manage. Salary I will have to go to Dhaka and I think I will have to give bribery to somebody. I already contacted somebody. No other way.

That is the only option?

Yeah, there is no other way. Otherwise to suffer because other people they are doing it and no other alternative. This time I am thinking that I can become a hundred per cent efficient in all works of life – I must be. So I already contacted them and they said that ok, Sir you come and we will make everything ok for you. So I have to spend maybe a little bit for them.

So you have to spend money to get your salary?

Yeah, to bring fund from them. Nothing else to do because now [my wife] is not also doing anything and this is very important. I am not taking any money from the people in dishonest way. Except from my salary there is no other source of income.

You are not getting your salary automatically?

No. I was supposed to get everything earlier, but last time my amount was very poor. They have given me 35,000, which is the lowest, because another upazila they gave 166,000. I went to the project director's room and asked "what happened? They are working, but I am also working. So why did one get 166,000 and I only 35,000? Make it clear." Then he asked how it happened. Have you sent your requisition properly? I said that everything was in order.

The project director promised to look into it, but nothing happened. It is the same when he goes to Dhaka for official meetings and is entitled to travel allowances. First, the claim goes to central office for approval. If approved, it is passed on to the sub-district accountant who is supposed to pay him the money. When Alam sent his claim to Dhaka after completing a three weeks training course, the file remained on the accountant's desk for weeks. Next time he went to Dhaka he made some inquiries and ended up paying five percent of his claim for having it signed and passed on to the sub-district. After the passing of more weeks waiting for his money in the sub-district, Alam decided he wanted his money and he went to the UNO with his problem. "I was so angry", he explained, "I said I would beat up the accountant for not giving me my money". UNO told him to sit down and have a cup of tea while he rang the buzzer to tell the peon to get the accountant. When the accountant came, UNO asked why he had not paid Alam his money, instructing him to do so immediately. Alam said the accountant was probably waiting for him to offer the usual ten percent for his service. Alam was not ready to pay money for the accountant's service and trusted instead the UNO, as friend and colleague, to use his authority vis-à-vis the accountant. Having the accountant unconditionally provide the service and pay Alam the full amount on the spot, UNO helped him out by exercising his superior position. This system of files being moved from desk to desk for countersignatures is to ensure correct procedures, but is in practice an opportunity for civil servants to exercise power. Keeping cases pending for weeks and months can be an effective mean for making some extra money or gaining/repaying a favour (see also chapter 5).

Alam often claimed to have friends in high places, but he did not seem to benefit much from whatever connections he may have had. After finishing his master in accounting, he started out working for an international company, but resigned after a few months during a quarrel with the boss. In his own account, he was a clever student and several companies were interested in hiring him after graduation, but his family urged him to find a government job.

He applied for a job with the ministry of education and was employed directly but, without going through PSC, he was not 'encadred'. He was promised encadred service later, but after ten years in service that had still not happened. In 2003, he had held the same position for the last seven years and often complained about the inconveniences of commuting between workstation and home (see earlier account). If he had friends in high places, why was he still in the same position? He turned the question around saying that on several occasions the department had tried to have him transferred, but he had managed to avoid it. Positions available to him would be even more inconvenient than the one he was holding. Either the position would be less important, with reduced number of support staff, or even more remotely located. If he wanted to remain within the same line of work there were not that many options in terms of workstations and he did not want to give up any authority.

On a district level, Alam was the lower-level officer ranked after deputy director and district education officer, but in the sub-district he was the head of office, instructing the work of six office staff, accountant, typist, sweeper, watchman, caretaker, and peon, all addressing him as 'Sir'. In his main function, Alam was responsible for distributing student stipends, but he also had a number of other functions of public interest. During exams he worked as sub-district invigilator with the authority to interfere with irregularities in examination halls. In cases of cheating, he could expel students and have teachers indicted for neglect of duty. He was also regularly nominated for committees representing the government during appointments of teachers to non-government schools. His signature of approval could qualify schools hiring new teachers for additional subsidies. As the executive officer he was recognised as a man of certain influence and people would approach him on all sorts of issues besides official ones. Although subservient in most situations, in his office Alam was the boss. Believing in the system as a system of authority based on formal positions, Alam insisted on a strict order of command in his own office and not like Madam neglecting procedures and refusing to be an agent of the state.

Dimensions of power

According to Weber, bureaucracy in its most developed form is the 'iron cage' of modern societies because of a formalism constraining individuals from without and determining their existence with irresistible force. Bureaucracy, defined as a system of control based on technical knowledge, and its rationality consisting of officials engaging in routine work emerges as an end in itself. Bureaucracies providing identities for their members through status, offices, rational codes of conduct, and the like thus violate an interest in, and potential for, rational agency because these identities have limited relevance. Merely serving the ends of the organisation, actions are dictated by processes over which each bureaucrat has little or no control or interest. Hence, the iron cage; a field of possible action defined by bureaucratic rationality and limited to organisational activities.

For Foucault, it is society, conceived as a specific regime of power and knowledge, defining the subject in providing both norms to live by and means to do so. While Weber worried about individual freedom being lost in the advent of bureaucratisation, Foucault saw no autonomous subjects to begin with as in his view, all human action occurs in already defined contexts influencing and directing its subjects in distinct ways. Power to influence behaviour through assigning identities not being limited to organisational activities, but something occurring anywhere at all times, Foucault is arguing for a far more diffuse field of power relations. While earlier forms of power were public and intermittent, he says, modern power is local and continuous taking the form of the gaze (normalisation through surveillance in schools, factories, hospitals, and the like). In fact, modern beings regulate and normalise themselves in accord with the modern regime of power. "The only effect of all our liberationist discourses, with their impossible, liberal view of freedom", Bevir recounts, "is to mask the way in which modern power thus dominates us" (Bevir 1999:70). In other words, people merely take part in already defined social realities providing them with directions and the means to follow. At the same time as power is ineliminable in a way that undermines the very idea of the autonomous subject, power can only be exercised over 'free subjects', by which he means situations where "several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse compartments may be realised" (Foucault 2002:342). Although individuals in modern societies typically use their agency only to regulate themselves in accord with social norms, he says, power is productive as there are several possible ways of relating to the same norms.

Far from resisting the normalising effects of power, however, people act to promote them. Thus, it is not the organisation and its rational enforcement – as for Weber – defining modernity. Rather, it is social norms, accepted at any given moment in time and seen as altogether natural, self-evident, and indispensable part of the social order. This modern type of power Foucault calls biopower, by which he means the field of possible action defined by the contemporary regime of knowledge and reproduced by individuals.

As in British colonial times discussed earlier, order is hierarchically organised and depends on respect for bureaucratic authority to function properly. Indians taken into the Indian Civil Service were screened and separated from their origins, and their admission into a new culture was effected through the educational system and service training. These Indians were subjected to rule-based, rational control and expected to be one hundred percent loyal to the system. Employment was stable, but career opportunities were limited to positions belonging to the lower-levels of the services. ‘Iron cage’ thus seems the appropriate term to describe the relationship between Indians and their British masters, leaving little room for self-creation in the colonial machinery. Although maintaining the formal structure of this colonial system (cf. description of the BCS), the post-colonial situation indicates a much more diffuse field of power relations with the enmeshment of the political and the bureaucratic, and of the public and the private (involvement of interests beyond those of the organisation). In other words, the rigorous structure is maintained, but its operation appears less rigid than before. Not only is the system reproduced, power working on the subject; it is simultaneously constantly recreated by individual inventiveness, subject working on power.

We may talk about a dynamism, then, between power of the state and powerful state agents, materialised in the use of buildings and offices, yet depending on internalisation of state order. Alam and his colleagues different ways of satisfying the boss for achieving the same, that is, high marks on the ACR as criteria for future career opportunities, suggests inventiveness beyond iron cage and closer to Foucault’s notion of biopower. I say ‘closer to’ because arguing for career opportunities and prospects of becoming boss as reasons for reproducing the system I have also explained “the real dynamics of production” (who or what drives the system), which Foucault has been criticized for having neglected (Hardt and Negri 2001:28). On the one hand, a distinction can be made between formal and practical order. On the other, the practical order seen in this chapter makes sense *because* of the existence of the formal order.

In this chapter I have engaged concepts such as iron cage, habitus and biopower to discuss power and power relations within a state system, but little has been said about what this means for various forms of sociality. Bureaucratic organisation Weber saw in relation to increasing rationalisation of human life, which traps individuals in an “iron cage” of rule-based, rational control (legal principles). Bourdieu argued for a differentiated society using habitus to explain the reproduction of social diversities (bodily dispositions). For Foucault, society of control is the result of life itself being administered by biopower (morality of the body). Crux of the matter is social order and dynamics of human behaviour, which is explored further in the next chapter.

5

Challenging the State: social order beyond rationality of the modern state

According to Weber, religion in the West played a part in moulding human conduct in a particular way. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* from 1930, Weber traces the connection between religious ideals and practical life arguing that changes in how people viewed and enacted religion through Lutheran and Calvinistic Protestantism was essential for a transformation of attitudes towards life in general to take place. First, the doctrine of demonstrating one's faith through worldly activities represented a shift towards religious determination of life-conduct. Second, the concept of deity was de-mystified and practical life came to be seen as expressions of divine will. Third, self-discipline became central to everyday behaviour and the concept of good and evil took a practical meaning in terms of one's deeds. Finally, salvation became attainable and not something to be left to destiny. In Weber's account, practical solutions to spiritual challenges opened up for a whole new way of thinking and acting on the world that, albeit unintentionally, effected a rationalisation of practical conduct. Economic success became interpreted as a sign of grace and thereby channelling worldly activities and spiritual concerns in the same direction. It was this rationalisation of religious beliefs that facilitated the development of modern capitalism. Only later, and after a process of secularisation, did devotion to the accumulation of wealth on its own terms come to be justifiable (Brubaker 1984).

The argument is that religion functioned as a facilitator towards a development of thinking in terms of means and ends. Individuals had a religious interest in ascertaining their state of grace and with the help of religious prophecies came to believe this could be achieved through conscientious planning and righteous behaviour. The end was salvation and the means hard work and modest living. It was this rational and practical attitude towards the world that formed the basis for the modern institutional practices within the state, the bureaucracy and the enterprise.

To Weber, bureaucracy, defined as a system of control based on technical knowledge, emerges as a peculiarly 'modern' form of organising the state, economic corporations, and

voluntary organisations, which he sought to understand through ideal-types. Ideal-types are conceptual or analytical models constructed for comparative purposes by selecting a series of culturally significant facets of a complex socio-historical formation, relating them to each other and contrasting them with a different, and often opposed, type of formation. For instance, certain aspects of world religions can, according to Weber, be grasped in terms of two analytical dimensions: other-worldliness vs. this-worldliness, mysticism vs. asceticism. Protestantism, he argued, must be understood as a form of this-worldly asceticism emphasising one's unique 'vocation' in life, as well as the values of discipline, obedience, regularity, efficiency, and methodical rigor in one's work habits, the suppression of one's passions and desires by a kind of self-rationalisation, i.e. the subordination of feelings and emotions to cognitive control and, ultimately, the devotion of one's whole life to God's plan. It was this attitude that was seen as fostering attitudes favourable to the rise of Western entrepreneurial capitalism and its increasingly bureaucratic institutional forms, which in its ideal-typical form is, as seen before, a system of: 1) division of labour and specialisation, 2) hierarchy of authority, 3) formal, written rules, 4) impersonality and detachment, and 5) a life-long career pattern.

The way rationalisation is portrayed in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* illustrates but one incident of how this process came about and represents only the "the specific and peculiar rationalism of Western culture" (Weber [1930] 1976:26). One of Weber's great discoveries was that other religious civilisations have gone through similar processes of rationalising religious belief systems in terms of consistency, coherence and greater applicability, but with different effects (cf. his studies of *The Religion of India* (1958) and *The Religion of China* (1951)).

In the Weberian thesis, then, the concept of rationality is central and important. Although Weber never really defined rationality, he himself repeatedly calling attention to its multiplicity of meanings (Brubaker 1984), two elements are conspicuously present in his notion of modern rationality.

One is coherence or consistency, like the treatment of like cases, regularity, what might be called the very soul or honour of a good bureaucrat. The other is efficiency, the cool rational selection of the best available means to given, clearly formulated and isolated ends... Orderliness and efficiency may indeed be seen as the bureaucratic and the entrepreneurial elements in an overall spirit of rationality (Gellner 1993:20).

In modern society, Weber would claim, social order and state order is one and the same (state order as institutionalised social order) and legal rationality an end in itself, thereof 'iron cage'. Foucault, on the other hand, argues that, "the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals" (Foucault 1980:55), which he calls biopower. To him, the state is interesting as a social orientation and 'will' of the state relevant as embedded in and reproduced by subjects. A problem in Foucault, as observed earlier (previous chapter), is how this 'will' has come about, but that does not have to concern us here. The point here is the notion of the state as a moral authority, reproduced in social relations. This is achieved, he claims, not merely by force, but through "the activity that consists in governing human behaviour in the framework of, and by means of, state institutions" (Foucault 2003:203). In other words, the state is realised in disciplinary institutions such as schools, universities, barracks, hospitals, prisons, and so on, established to regulate human behaviour. Methodologically Foucault is calling attention to the more "minute and everyday level" (Foucault 1980:60), but his main concern is with practices of the state as a moral order regulating human behaviour.

According to Weber, rationalisation of society in terms of a means-to-an-end logic explains the legitimacy of rational-legal organisations such as the state, economic corporations, and voluntary organisations. Similarly, Foucault is interested in historically situated systems of institutions, but his emphasis on practices of the state as a moral power takes the analysis beyond the question of legality. While Weber used ideal types to organise historical material, Foucault differentiated himself from Weber methodically. "His contribution", says Dreyfus and Rabinow, comparing Foucault with Nietzsche, Weber, Heidegger, and Adorno, "is a heightened methodological sophistication and an a unique emphasis on the body as the place in which the most minute and local social practices are linked up with the large scale organization of power" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:xxvi).

Foucault's effort to "stay as much as possible on the surface of things, to avoid recourse to ideal significations, general types, or essences" (ibid:132), does indeed methodologically differentiate him from Weber. What they have in common, though, is the use of history for explaining the "problem of reason" or "how forms of rationalisation become embedded in practices, or systems of practices" (ibid:133). And according to Dreyfus and Rabinow,

Foucault's advance over Nietzsche, Weber, and Adorno is to have taken this prescription to heart and to have produced concrete analyses of specific historical practices in which truth and power are the issue. He has isolated and identified the mechanisms of the power of rationalisation with a finer grained analysis than Weber. But this should be seen as an advance, not a refutation of the Weberian project" (ibid.).⁵⁴

The Foucauldian analysis, however, appears to assume "explicit programs" like Panopticon, functioning as actual programs of action and reform, and he has been criticised for failing to link modern power to colonialism and for drawing a opposition between pre-modern, sovereign power and modern, disciplinary power (Krohn-Hansen and Nustad 2005).⁵⁵ In a sense, Foucault's analysis of modern power can be seen to depend on disciplinary institutions and the individual's attachment to them, much like Weber's. On the other hand, how institutions are constituted or who or what makes up the institutions is not defined. For Foucault, it is the ability to engage individuals in particular behaviour that matters (see chapter 4). What he does, then, is to disconnect power from a particular institutional form, allowing for more dynamic conceptions of both power and state.

Considering the colonial past of South Asia as discussed before, and following the Weberian thesis, one could expect a society dominated by a bureaucratic rationality that perpetuate itself according to an inexorable logic of purely formal rationality, a logic that excludes all considerations of substantive rationality, all questions of ultimate value. The rational-legal way of organising the state from the past continues, as seen in this thesis, to the present, but the practical meaning of such structures is another issue. During colonial times, Indians sought employment in the British administration as a way of exercising power (cf. chapter 2). Consequently, they became agents of Western modernisation promoting Western education and way of life. Formal positions are still, as we have seen, an opportunity to exercise power, but perhaps the rational logic supporting the bureaucratic system never really became a total way of life after all and that the social is about much more than rational-legal state processes, as suggested by Foucault.

⁵⁴ See also the discussion of Weber and Foucault in previous chapter where a similar comment is made: "Foucault's studies of the hospital, prison, and school can be seen to ground Weberian formal analysis in the history of various social techniques for the administration of corporeal, attitudinal and behavioural discipline".

⁵⁵ For criticism see Agamben (1998), and Hansen and Stepputat (2005). Also, see discussion in previous chapter.

The object of this chapter is to approach the question of state power through an analysis of everyday practices asking how the state is part of the social order. Looking at both familial and official routine practices, such as raising children and arranging marriages in the first instance, and dealing with requests for public services in the second, the aim is to discover forms of rationalities at work as “embedded in practices, or systems of practices” (cf. above).

Living with neighbours

Dangerous liaisons and futures at risk

Talking to Vincent one late afternoon on work related issues, our conversation was cut short by his wife interrupting us to inform him about this neighbouring woman coming by again with an update on their eldest son’s recent movements. Once again, said Mary with an expression of anger and weariness, I was obliged to listen to this woman’s account of my son’s whereabouts. In a calm voice Vincent asked about the son and was told that he had not been in since lunchtime. Seeing his wife’s state of mind, he asked her not to jump to any conclusions before confronting Paul on the matter. Mary left the room and Vincent let me in on what was going on.

On a number of occasions over the past few weeks Paul had been observed in the company of a girl from the neighbourhood. Vincent said they had been aware of him meeting this girl for some time, but saw no reason to interfere at first thinking it was not very serious. More disturbing was his choice of friends and how he spent his time hanging out with boys who had dropped out of school and showed no interest in the future. Vincent worried about his son spending more time drifting around doing nothing with these boys when he should be studying. Belonging to a Christian minority group, Paul was among few to attend university and seeing him through was important, as this was his only chance of a career in government service. Paul’s first-term exam results had been poorer than expected and Vincent wanted him to take his studies more seriously. Getting involved with a girl at this time would only further disturb his studies and jeopardise his future career opportunities.

From the times of the British, government service has been a popular career choice and is still highly valued. The British offered jobs in the civil service for those who fulfilled educational requirements and attracted children of middle class families to western education institutions. Jobs were secure, income was steady, career opportunities were there, and, in time, authority and respect followed. For similar reasons, children nowadays are encouraged to try for government jobs. Graduating from a government school increases the chances of a career in government service. A career with the government thus starts in secondary school and the first obstacle is getting children admitted to the local government school. Competition is tough because schools are few and applicants are many. Next is to see them through board exams, and then college and university, until final examination, preferably for a master's degree qualifying them to apply for cadre service in public administration.

Vincent believed his son saw the family's reservations about him seeing the girl as an expression of disapproval of her and her family, which only seemed to encourage him. The girl is Christian, but her mother is Bengali and her father was *Pahari* (tribal origin). The boy is fantasising a Hindi movie story, his father claimed, where boy and girl cannot have each other because of mismatching family situations, but where the hero is willing to forsake everything to be with the girl. All the time spent watching these movies is convincing him that love does not come easy and that the only way is to pursue it, his father explained. It's a kind of madness, he concluded.

Paul's way of denying having any relationship with the girl was taken as confirmation of the opposite. When for instance *Mama*⁵⁶ came by asking Paul about girlfriends he laughingly brushed him off saying there was no one. Encouraged by Paul's evasive reaction, *Mama* wanted to know how a young man like himself could claim not to be pursued by young ladies when even an old man like himself was having trouble keeping female admirers away. Everyone laughed, and especially Paul whose appearance seemed to confirm the insinuation. His father said that he can understand the excitement, but worried about his son's education. He had only just started his university studies and to finish the degree he would need to stay focused. Marriage was out of the question. Vincent said he had asked the boy's elder sister to talk to her brother and tell him that when the time is right he may marry whoever he wants.

⁵⁶ *Mama* is the term used for mother's brother indicating an open and relaxed relationship. It is often used about someone elder regarded as particularly close to the family and whom one wants to express closeness and familiarity with. *Apon mama* indicates mother's actual brother.

The family did not intend to interfere in his choice, but for the time being his studies were more important. Paul, on the other hand, seemed to think that the girl was not good enough for his family.

Vincent admitted that he was not thrilled about her family situation and the fact that her mother was alone with only daughters gave him reason to believe they were looking for suitable marriage partners. Their method was known, he claimed, from the way an elder sister had managed to get married to a local boy from a respectable family. Having been observed together on a number of occasions, and as a result of becoming the object of village talk, they finally married. Vincent did not want Paul having to marry because of people gossiping.

After leaving us, Mary went to her daughter's husband and asked him to locate her son, but he returned alone. He had gone to the field where the two had last been seen, but found no one there. Vincent suspected the sight of the women who had informed on them before could have caused them to flee. Since it was already late afternoon and would soon be dark; every decent girl is home by sunset, Mary waited by the gate watching the girl's house to see if she was returning, but she was not to be seen. Vincent said he would talk to Paul, but when Paul finally returned late in the evening, only brief nods were exchanged. Noticing the tense atmosphere and sensing what was going on, Paul went straight for the TV room joining his younger brother watching a Hindi sitcom. When his father received a telephone call, I joined the boys letting Paul know what trouble he was in. He said he could not be bothered trying to explain because they refused to believe anything he said anyway. I told him that I had already heard his father's version of what was going on and that I was interested in his side of the story. He agreed to talk about it after class on the following day and I promised to convince his father to leave him alone for the time being.

Returning to our conversation, Vincent said he was considering letting Paul stay at the university hostel. The reason he had kept him at home in the first place was that the university was close by and the hostel was costly. Seeing how Paul spent his time doing nothing with these 'useless' friends and chasing girls made him reconsider thinking he would be better off staying full time with other students. Besides, with him at the hostel there would be nothing for the villagers to talk about. This was the second time within a few days they had been notified about Paul's secret meetings.

The other time was on Good Friday after Mass. Vincent had stopped at the teahouse across from the mission for a cup of tea before returning home. While talking to his friends, he had seen Paul passing, and then the girl going in the same direction shortly afterwards. He remembered wondering where she was off to as to his knowledge she did not have any friends or relatives in that direction. He finished his tea and went home to find his wife waiting by the gate. His son was not back and Mary said the pair of them had been seen sitting together alone talking by the paddy fields. It was the neighbour residing next to the fields that had reported it. Shortly after the girl appeared from one side and Paul from the other, insisting he had not been with her. His mother accused him of lying, but Paul, grumbling under his breath that there was no point in arguing since she was not listening anyway, ignored her.

The place Paul and the girl apparently used for their secret meetings was only a few minutes walk from the house. Why choose a place that close to home for dating when the risk of being seen by someone familiar with the family seemed so obvious? I asked Vincent.

This is nearby and everybody knows, but this is a kind of immaturity that they did not think about it. Just they are thinking that their parents are not seeing them and not thinking about the others. Even they are not thinking that these people that are seeing them will inform the parents. They did not think about it. This is kind of immaturity.

As it turned out, though, meeting elsewhere was no solution. They had already tried.

The girl, Paul, and his friend Ben went to this other side where the people do not know them, or whose son he is. They do not know, but only they found them sitting – Paul sitting with the girl talking. They came and told “what are you doing here?” seeing these two sitting and discussing alone. They said that “this is not acceptable; she is a young girl and you are a young boy sitting under a tree talking about what? Give us money otherwise we will take you to the police station”.

In all my ignorance I asked why not just tell them they were married, but married couples do not go elsewhere to sit and talk. They stay at home.

Everybody can understand here and they become sure that this boy and girl are having an affair. That’s why they are charging them. As they are immature they don’t know how to reply. They are just standing and when these people ask for money they give money.

Paul paid them some money and left with the girl, but his friend stayed back arguing with the two guys who demanded money from him too for conspiring with ‘unacceptable behaviour’. When they started pushing him around, Ben pushed them back and a fight broke out. Hearing

about the fight, Ben's mother and sister came running, but received knife cuts on their hands and arms when they tried to interfere. The police showed up and were informed about what had started the fighting, that is, Paul and the girl meeting and with Ben watching out for them. Later the police came to the house asking for Paul. Vincent was not home at the time and his wife told them that their son was out too, even though he was not. The police told her to tell her husband to bring their son to the police station at the earliest. Vincent saw no reason to take Paul down to the station unless the police came back, which they did not. Vincent said it would not have been a problem had the two met somewhere else; either at the university campus with other students or at the *mela* (fair). Meeting alone like that is not accepted and the boys saw a chance to earn some money. Threatening to involve the police is sometimes enough to settle differences, as people have little faith in the integrity of the police, but not so in this case. Fighting broke out; the police came, registered course of events, and sided with the boys claiming Paul and the girl had committed an offence with Ben as accessory.

Waiting for Paul to come back from the university on the following day, I decided to go for a walk around the village. A few houses down the street I found a young woman breast-feeding her baby on the patio of her house and stopped for a chat. Seeing some young boys running in the direction of the paddy field I decided to follow. By the banyan tree in the middle of the field, a small crowd had gathered. On one side were Ben and other of Paul's friends. On the other, some young guys from another village claiming they had come to compromise on behalf of their friends that had insulted Ben and his family earlier. Ben was angry, showing little interest in compromising. As the atmosphere grew tenser, an elderly man from the crowd came forth as intermediary. Ben said that no matter what differences there may have been between them; insulting his mother and sister was unacceptable and he wanted names and addresses of the perpetrators. The intermediary called for pen and paper and wrote down names of families involved. After discussing for about half an hour, they all went their several ways with an understanding of not bothering each other again, while keeping the police out of it. Families involved were similarly positioned (none particularly influential) and the only reasonable resolution had been to compromise.

On the way back to the house, Paul and his younger brother Sean, having heard about the meeting, turned up on a bicycle heading towards the field. Paul was curious and I told him that he might be able to hear some of the conversations from my recording. Some children who had tagged along to the field, thrilled to discover my video camera, had tried their best to

monopolize the recording without totally succeeding and we went home to watch it. Shortly after, his friends came to discuss what had happened. Hearing them talking, Paul's mother appeared wanting to know what was going on. Paul insisted nothing was going on, but she said his father would deal with him later; indicating she did not believe him. Paul and I went for a walk around the village.

Paul was upset with his mother for accusing him of lying all the time instead of listening to what he had to say. He did not like the prospect of 'being dealt with by his father' either. He was aware that the whole affair had caused his father tensions and Paul wanted to spare him further details. On the other hand, Paul could not understand what the fuss was about when all they had done was to sit and talk together. "I am not going to do anything unexpected", he said, "I just want to see her and talk to her. I respect her and would not do anything to her". He admitted to a fascination since secondary school and told about letters they had exchanged when he was away studying in Dhaka. He loved her, he said, and imagined he would eventually want to marry her, but for the time being he just wanted to get to know her better. I told him about his father's concern regarding his education and he said he had no intentions of marrying her before finishing his education. As long as they were just sitting and talking together, it should be of no concern to anyone. His parents in particular should understand, always encouraging him to make his own decisions, but in this case his mother decided to listen to the village gossip demanding that he stay away from the girl instead of hearing the truth.

Back at the house, Mary was waiting for me to have lunch. Paul had already eaten and left to attend to his studies. During lunch I told Mary that Paul was upset and disappointed with them for not listening, taking the neighbour's word over his, and she responded that he could not be trusted because he had already been telling lies (*mita kotha*). Suggesting that he may not have been with the girl the evening before, she replied that it did not matter much what he said when the neighbours were saying something else.

At least two, yet interrelated, concerns are made evident: education and marriage. Education is the main gate to government service and a career potentially going all the way to the ministry. Marriage is seen as an obstruction to a career. Due to circumstances, Vincent had married before completing a master's degree, which compelled him to discontinue his studies and get a job to support the family. As the oldest son of a low-income family (both parents

were teachers), the whole family had pooled together for his education. Once he got a job he was expected to support parents and siblings in addition to wife and children. Having worked for non-government organisations (NGO's) all of his professional life he knew how unpredictable work was, being mostly dependent on foreign funding, in addition to challenges of being tribal in a small private organisation (cf. Sissener 1999). He wanted his son to achieve more and the best chance of succeeding professionally would be working for the government. In this case, the argument of education is used for the benefit of regulating the future family situation, which has several implications as discussed below.

As Vincent tried to insist on his main concern being the son's education and not village gossip, concerns about the family's reputation in the village finally caught up with him. Village talk was making it difficult to maintain a relationship with the girl without marrying her and marriage was out of the question. His education being of course the most important, but also her family situation spoke against it; a widowed mother without male relations in the village.

Paul may or may not have been seeing the girl on the reported occasions, but neighbours were gossiping about them. To Vincent, his son's behaviour only proved his immaturity and that he was too young to understand what he was getting into.

You know, in our country these young boys and girls they are watching the Indian films where they see what the hero, the actor, is doing to get the actress. He is doing lots of things – fighting and everything. They think that this is maybe the way to get her and they try to follow in that way... These films are made in such a way that these young chaps will be encouraged to do this – they are being encouraged. Their only thinking is that I want her. I don't want the world, but only her... If you ask them to put the world in one side and the girl in the other – measuring the world against the girl – they will say they want the girl because of emotions and all these things. We can also imagine because we were also at that age and many things happened... When we became matured then we realised that we were wrong at that time.

What Vincent was saying is that it takes experience to understand that the 'world' matters and that to think anything else is the illusion of young people. To exemplify, he told a story about this boy he knew who learned the lesson the hard way. After completing a master's degree in accounting, he started working for the same organisation Vincent was working for at the time and eventually put in charge of a sub-office where several girls worked. Soon the whole department talked about an affair between this Christian boy and a Muslim girl. His father was informed and, angered by the news, he asked Vincent to do something. From the boy's

friends, Vincent found out that, if necessary, he was ready to leave his job and family to be with the girl. The affair continued and when the manager heard about it the boy was asked to either drop the girl or resign from his job, of which he did the latter. The organisation worried about its own reputation and did not want to be seen as a place where love affairs were accepted, or worse, encouraged. Knowing neither of the families would support marriage, the couple eloped and married in court, after which his father renounced him as his son. Having been evicted from his father's house, they rented a place in the city. Without jobs or income, life became hard. "At least he finished his education", Vincent dryly commented, but without support from family or friends he could not find a job, and without a job he could not support his family. In this case, laws of the state and village practices conflicted, as the couple was able to confirm the relation in court when the environment went against it, but without work or income chances of making it on their own were few.

Seeing that the son's marriage caused no greater social unrest in the village, and that even the girl's family had accepted it, his father was persuaded to resume contact with his only son. Mixed marriages are commonly not accepted and elopements can cause antagonism between whole communities. Initially, the girl's family protested the daughter's relationship to this non-Muslim boy, but realising their daughter was marrying into an educated and wealthier family no action was taken. That the boy's sister was working in the United States also spoke in favour of accepting the family as in-laws.⁵⁷ Husband and wife finally settled with his parents, and his father, who was well connected, managed him a job with another organisation. Vincent reasoned that had the situation not been resolved, it would not have been long before the marriage would suffer. "Obhab jokhon dorja eshe dalai; bhalo basha tokon janala die bhalai", he reckoned, which translates to *when poverty knocks on the door; love disappears through the window*. The 'world' decided not to bother in this case, but the father's reaction of renouncing his only son is an indication of what was at stake, viz. the villagers opinion of who can and cannot marry regardless of what is possible under the state.⁵⁸

Marriage is for the most part a family matter and to be arranged at an appropriate time to a suitable partner. Until such time, boys and girls unrelated to each other by kinship are

⁵⁷ See Kathy Gardener (1995) and Santi Rosario (1992) for discussions of both dowry practices and effects of overseas employment. See Tone Bleie (1995) for a more comprehensive discussion of dowry practices.

⁵⁸ In some cases whole families have fled to escape revengeful guardians holding the other family responsible for eloped children. Most of the time, eloped couples can never return (Sissener 1999).

expected to avoid unnecessary contact. Being seen alone together easily starts rumours of a love affair, which is generally condemned as improper behaviour. Vincent was initially not concerned about his son occasionally talking to a girl, but felt compelled to take action when it was becoming the topic of village talk. Rumours can be difficult to contradict and Vincent did not want to see his son marrying before completing his education and jeopardise his future. Besides, a child's marriage, and especially that of a son, is an opportunity to connect with another family for mutual support. On suspicion of a possible love affair, such opportunities may be lost along with any favourable position the family may have enjoyed. The importance of marriage arrangements can be seen from the case of Vincent's daughter Paula's marriage to Dan.

Confirming relations and securing a future

Dan and Paula lived in the same village, but had little to do with one another while growing up. Dan is Bengali and Paula tribal, but both are Christians. Being of different origin and belonging to different churches implied no regular contact between the two families who knew each other from before only as neighbours. Vincent said Dan actually proposed to Paula informally years before the actual proposal came, but at the time he had not completed his education, nor did he have a job. Neither had she. Besides, Vincent wanted something else for his daughter, preferably someone with a respectable career like a doctor or an engineer.

Like her brother, Paula had also studied in Dhaka, during which time she wrote to her parents telling them about this boy, but her father wanted her to complete a master's degree before thinking of marriage. Besides, there was also this medical student showing interest in her and Vincent liked the prospect of a doctor for a son-in-law more. Having confirmed that Paula was into the idea of the medical student, contact was established between the two families. At a later point, and without prior notice, they came to know that the boy had already married. Vincent was disappointed and angry for not having been informed. Fortunately, few knew about this marriage plan for Paula and nobody, at least not openly, discussed it.

Paula completed a bachelor and moved to a neighbouring district to take up a job with a local NGO. Her father wanted her to go straight for a master's degree, but she was more interested in working for this organisation that some of her friends from school had also joined. She

resumed contact with Dan who by then had completed a bachelor and was working for a NGO in Dhaka. He was still interested in marrying her, but her father hesitated due to his career choice. Paula made her own position clear, that she wanted to marry Dan, but that it was up to her father to decide. “She was showing me this politeness and I became soft then”, Vincent admitted, but there was much to consider. He still wanted her to complete the degree before marrying. She enrolled for an introductory course, but withdrew when she got a position with another NGO and was told to attend a training programme during the same period. Paula showed little interest in completing a master’s degree. She convinced her father to leave the issue and instead consider her marriage to a suitable man.

Dan’s mother was a widower, but the family was well regarded in the village. When her husband died, their children were almost grown-up. The oldest daughter married a boy from a nearby family of some influence who agreed to let their son and daughter-in-law stay with her mother. After Dan finished his education and started working, he too was supporting the family. Dan belonging to a different church was questioned, but after discussing it with the parish priest, Vincent was told that this was not a problem since both were Christian. Another and perhaps more pertinent issue was the boy’s Bengali origin.

It was not decided then whether I shall agree with their proposal or not because previously I was looking for a boy that is from my own tribe. But some way I came to know that this proposal was proposed earlier and then once again. And my daughter she agreed with this proposal. I came to know this and I was thinking that she is agreeing with this proposal so that maybe she has chosen him. Just I am passing time to decide. At the time my elder sister came and asked me “what are you thinking about [your daughter’s] wedding?” She also came to know that somebody from here, this village, has proposed to marry her. At that moment I had not decided about this boy. She told me, because she is my elder sister, she told me “why you are not agreeing with this?” And I talked with her a little bit more about in what way I am thinking about Paula’s wedding. Finally she advised me that this is the time for Paula’s wedding. This is the best time in terms of her age and she is doing her job and the proposal came from the same village. She will stay here and you’ll have the opportunity to see her all the time and all these things. All these are considerable things. So finally I decided to agree with their proposal.

That the proposal came from the village was important not only because of the opportunity to see the daughter more often, but also in terms of support. Originating from another district, the family had no other family members living in the vicinity and the connection was welcome.

That the daughter was ready to accept whatever her father decided Vincent saw as a token of respect and understanding of family matters. Having expressed her own wishes she left it to her father to decide, entrusting him to know what was best for the family. In Bangladesh, the father is the formal head of the family, usually referred to as the guardian, and relations between older and younger family members, and often also between male and female members, can be rather authoritarian. Teenage years are seen as a period of madness because of the unpredictability of teenage emotions, but proper guardians control their children. A favourable reputation means better selection of marriageable partners, which again can mean a strengthening of family position in the village.

From the experience with the medical student, Vincent wanted to take his time and make sure everything was in order before announcing the relation, which meant the two should not be seen alone together either. Wedding preparations would take at least a year to complete and the couple in question knew they were not supposed to meet during this period. A mutual friend came to their rescue and offered the perfect opportunity to meet without people talking. As it happened, on a number of occasions they were both invited to this friend's house at the same time and with the whole family present no one would think twice about it. Should something go wrong during wedding negotiations, the family's reputation would not have suffered, meaning they could still find Paula a suitable husband.

The other family's intentions proved sincere and wedding preparations continued as planned with Dan's elder sister's husband as *ghortok*, which is a kind of a middleman communicating with both sides to reach agreements on what arrangements to be made and by whom.

When Vincent started thinking about Paula's marriage he realised that he had some relations to mend. Over the years, contact with other tribal families in the village had become irregular and Vincent suspected they were consciously avoiding him. For instance, when a tribal family makes the special tea they usually call tribal families of the neighbourhood to come and share it. They meet, drink tea and share latest news, but for the last few years Vincent's family had not been called to these meetings, which he blamed on *hingsha* (jealousy).

Usually we found that the [tribal] people don't actually want to see the other [tribals] in a better position. Those who are living around my house they were trying to avoid me because I'm just doing a job in a better position than them. They were thinking that "yeah, he is in a better position and he is developing his family in many ways. He is educating his children in

nice schools and better colleges, and he is earning more than us”... As I am in a better position than any of them and our life is better than theirs, they are taking in negative ways.

He thought nothing of it at the time, but his daughter’s upcoming wedding changed his mind. When somebody is planning a wedding it is customary to call on a large number of people, usually from the same community, which in this case meant other tribals, and bring them for the first meeting with the other family. This is to show that you are widely supported. With this in mind, Vincent realised he had to improve relations with people of the community for the management his daughter’s wedding. One year ahead of the wedding, he resumed contact with the neighbours.

What happened was that the relationship became good again as they were seeing that I several times came to their houses – even though they had not called me – and talked to them asking how they were and asking their children about school. Instead of continuing thinking bad I think they realised that maybe they were mistaken about me. When the time came to pay a visit to Paula’s in-laws house they went with me and became very helpful preparing for the whole wedding. When I later called a representative from each and every community – Christian, [Tribal], Hindu, and Muslim – they all came and we discussed how to manage the wedding. They said they would take responsibility for everything and I could just give them the money. A budget was made and I just gave the money. For the wedding, the cooking and everything were prepared in a very nice way and I did not have to do anything with that. It is our custom to take care of these things ourselves, as we cannot afford hiring people to cook, and for that we rely on each other for help.

Reflecting on his relationship with his neighbours, Vincent admitted he was not happy with things, as they had been prior to the wedding. Not taking part in the special tea parties, or any other gatherings, he had become socially marginalised. Over the years, he said, he had tried to do his best helping out with jobs, providing loans, mediating village conflicts played out both inside and outside court rooms, and so on, but it was never enough.

I was involved with some of these things, but I was thinking about the neighbours or the people in the way that I always think about others. I was expecting them to think of me as I think of them. But I found the opposite. Then there was some learning from all these incidents and once, seven or eight years back, I decided that I’ll stop doing like this – thinking for others and going for solving the conflicts and all this. I will stop this because the result is the opposite. Even though I am doing lots of things for the others, they are thinking about me like this – to do something harmful for me. So that I don’t need because I will not go for any elections that I must have a group of people that will support me always. I thought that yeah, I don’t need this. I have been spending the time for the others, but it is better to spend the time for my children and my family. Due to the learning of my previous things I decided that I will not involve with any others. I started doing my job in my office, coming back to my home, and just watching TV and discussing with my family members. I just changed my life in this way not to be involved with the things – whatever is going on.

Details about the nature of his disappointments are described elsewhere (Sissener 1999), but concerned in essence occasions in which he had been taken advantage of and even cheated when trying to help others. Besides, experiencing how people were only expecting more whatever his contribution Vincent decided to withdraw his support. He was not running for any elections and he was not looking to be considered leader of any kind, he explained. When there was a church election for the parish council, for instance, and his name was not on the list of candidates, people questioned why he was not competing. He answered that, “shamne gele dhisay, picchone thakle lathi mare”, which translates to something like *standing in front of the cow and it rubs its head against you; standing behind it and it kicks you*. Vincent did not want to be either kicked or rubbed; he wanted to stand on the side just minding his own business. His resources were limited and, no matter how much he tried, it never seemed to be enough anyway. However, the decision to regardless mind his own business got him into trouble with the neighbours.

In one case, there was this bamboo tree belonging to Vincent, but with leaves constantly falling on the neighbour's side of the fence. One day the neighbour started cutting down the tree without his permission. Finding them ‘mutilating’ his tree, and even earning money on it by selling its cane at the market, Vincent accused them of causing damage to his property. Accusing Vincent in return, of not doing enough to maintain the tree, annoyed him even more and they started arguing. Finally Vincent warned that unless they stayed away from his tree, he would take necessary action, implying he would go to the police and file a complaint. “This talking made them very angry”, he said, “and they kept this decision in their mind. They became non-cooperative and stopped talking”. Vincent decided it did not matter and stopped talking to them too. Threatening to go to the police for having the problem solved, Vincent had introduced distance and remoteness and thereby offended the nature of the relationship. Soon he was not on talking terms with several families of the neighbourhood due to similar issues (Vincent refusing to show particular consideration), which he was content to continue until there was a wedding to plan.

Not only did he start talking to them again; he engaged in providing jobs for their sons and daughters; he started planning for a separate Christian-Tribal Housing Society; he engaged in peoples financial situations; offered advice on their children's education and so forth. He still stayed out of competitions for positions in the church council and other committees, but realised it was not enough to mind his own business.

To my knowledge, I never did any harm to anyone, but this was not enough... If I only think for myself that I want to live in peace and I don't care about others then it is not possible and it cannot happen... The people who came to me asking for help I have done for them as much as I can. When I started doing this I got less trouble from neighbours... I did what I was able to do for them. Afterwards the things became easier and relations were rebuilt again – relations became better. Now it is ok.

Previously, Vincent believed he could do without the support of neighbours, but his daughter's marriage arrangement made him realise his dependencies. Finding her a suitable husband from the right family was one thing, being able to make the proper arrangements another. Having neglected taking part in tea parties, and refusing to involve socially and economically with the neighbours for years, he could no longer rely on them for support and help with his daughter's wedding. Ending the 'solitude' meant actively taking part in their daily concerns. While Vincent had wanted to concentrate his resources on his immediate family, other concerns imposed themselves on him and he appeared caught up in the village rationality (making his son stop seeing the girl, taking part in communal gatherings, engaging in neighbours social and economic problems, and so on). Thus, what the cases discussed above shows is how life in the village requires much more than what is legally permissible or needed in the eyes of the state, which in particular the case of the elopement clearly states.

At the time of my first fieldwork in 1996, Vincent was working for an NGO that he had been with for almost twenty years. He had started as a fieldworker (supervising projects in the field) and worked his way up the hierarchy until he was 'second in command'. His boss, a Bengali Christian, was nearing retirement and Vincent was waiting to replace him as director of the organisation. Instead of promotion, however, he was transferred to a less important position in Dhaka. Vincent was convinced it was because of his tribal origin and his boss looking for someone from his own community to replace him. He refused to go to Dhaka and ended up leaving the organisation. Unemployed, resources were much constrained and Vincent could not afford to support all those he had supported in the past. Realising his situation, people stopped involving him economically and otherwise, and he became socially marginalised. After a few months he managed a poorly paid and, compared to his previous job, minor position for another NGO. Seeing that the organisation offered no advancement any time soon, he started looking for work again. On one of my return visits to the village, he had received an offer from a Christian international organisation as a director of development projects. The organisation had maintained minimum activities in the area for some years, but

was ready to revitalise the station. As director, Vincent was promised a decent salary and generous perquisites, such as a large and well-equipped office, several office staff, a car, international experience (travels abroad to attend meetings), and so on. The only drawback, according to him, was the funding situation and uncertainties related to how long the organisation would continue supporting development work in the area. Having consulted family and friends on the matter, he finally accepted the offer, which changed the way he was regarded. By virtue of his position, Mr. Director was greeted with renewed respect, but also anticipation, as his new situation meant more resources and ability to do more for others. This latter point may also explain why government jobs are so popular, namely that important jobs generally means access to more resources, meaning ability to support more people, which again is a source of honour and respect. What this means in practice can be seen from the following cases.

Conflicting rationalities

In government service

Bangladesh has an institutionalised mechanism for community participation in secondary education. School management committees (SMCs) are required for all recognised non-government secondary schools, as are governing bodies for all intermediate colleges. These bodies are responsible for mobilising resources, approving budgets, controlling expenditures, and appointing and disciplining staff. While government schoolteachers are employed centrally, managing committees employ teachers for non-government schools. To obtain accreditation for conducting Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations from the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE), there are certain criteria to be fulfilled.

The BISE of Chittagong is responsible for educational institutions in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachari; Chittagong; and Cox's Bazar. At the time of my fieldwork, a chairman and four inspectors, in addition to permanent office clerks, managed daily operations of the board. The chairman and inspectors are recruited from the education cadre and appointed by the Ministry of Education for a period of maximum three years.

Besides managing the yearly exams, which is quite a task considering that for instance in 2001 sixty-five thousand students sat for SSC examination, the four inspectors are charged with the duty of yearly inspections of more than eight hundred schools located within its jurisdiction.

During a conversation, the chairman of BISE admitted that with the few inspectors he had it was impossible to inspect all the schools and colleges under the board's jurisdiction. This was confirmed to me by one of the inspectors during a visit to a high school for girls that had applied for renewed accreditation. He said he usually had no time to actually visit schools, but that the chairman had requested him to do so on that particular day in order to accompany me and explain the procedures. District officers sometimes inspect schools and report back to BISE, but generally accreditations do not depend on inspections.

Arriving at the school, the headmaster was waiting outside together with a teacher of a nearby college. A relative of the college teacher, a wealthy local businessman, had founded both institutions. The inspector and teacher had been in school together and embraced each other as old friends. As usual, first on the agenda was tea in the headmaster's office where Mr. Inspector was shown proper respect as representing higher authority by being accommodated in the headmaster's chair behind the desk. After a briefing by the college teacher on the history of the school, which had offered education to local children since 1981, and its importance as the only local school, the headmaster explained that the school was having financial problems. Adding another floor would allow them to admit twice as many fee-paying students. There were already five hundred girls attending sixth to tenth grade and the SMC had decided to also enrol five hundred boys. The expansion would imply hiring more teachers, but with government approval subsidies would cover salaries.

As per government rule, inspectors are to consider educational demand, qualification and experience of personnel, teacher-student ratio, school facilities and equipment, financial situation, property ownership, and so on. On his inspection round, Mr. Inspector went from one classroom to another asking questions. Entering a classroom, students raised and greeted the inspector *salam walekum*, and the teacher approached. Mr. Inspector asked the teacher about the subject being taught and ordered the Number One Student (top grades) to approach the blackboard to write down answers to his questions. While the student wrote down answers, the inspector looked through the records checking teacher attendance for the last few

months, as teachers drawing salaries while being absent from duty (the so-called ghost teachers) is believed to be a common problem with non-government schools. His friend, the college teacher, accompanied us the whole time generously praising headmaster, teachers and students. The inspector appeared satisfied with condition of facilities, students and personnel, but expressed concern about how the school would manage the additional costs of buying new furniture for the second floor under construction given its financial situation. His friend assured him everything would be taken care of and we left.

Back at the office, the inspector explained his relationship with the college teacher and said they had been close friends at school. The teacher had been a brilliant student and was related to influential families. The inspector said the school would be expecting the accreditation on his friend's recommendation. He wrote his report recommending the school for accreditation and gave it to the chairman for his approval. Without any inquiries and merely asking if it was ok, the chairman signed the papers granting the accreditation on the inspector's request. After the inspector had left, I asked the chairman if correct procedures had been followed and was told that if not legally correct, then most certainly socially acceptable.

There are many things here that we should not do, but the pressure, the social pressure, we have to manage many things that I do not like. Pressure from society. For instance, a student should submit all his documents for appearing in the exams. There is a time limit for appearing in the exams and the student should give all his documents and papers at a particular time. Let's say somebody is coming after scheduled time, even one month, in that case we do not agree, but the people or friends or social leaders they pressure me. Give pressure to take the documents.

And then you cannot say no?

I can say no, but after some time I shall have to agree – under pressure.

Do they do something for you or give you any promises?

No.

But you have to do it?

We have to do it. Strong or powerful families they give pressure.

Similarly, a number of procedures are prescribed for starting a school offering SSC and HSC. A deputy director grants primary recognition to applicants fulfilling requirements of appropriate premises and necessary facilities in cases of educational demand, which means that there are no other schools offering the same kind of education within a radius of three miles. Primary recognition includes junior high school (grade 6-8). After three years, schools may apply to the director general for academic recognition, which is required for applying to BISE for accreditation to conduct SSC examination, and the District Education Officer for government subsidies.

To manage and supervise, non-government schools have SMCs consisting of nine to eleven members, including a president, a vice-president and a secretary. Composition of SMCs will depend on resources and intentions of the founder, but local political leaders and high-level civil servants make popular presidents. Headmasters are usually appointed among recently retired college professors.

During the course of fieldwork, I visited several non-government secondary schools. In one case, a wealthy businessman with political ambitions decided to establish a school in his residential area. A rented building was renovated and refurbished to house the school, and a SMC consisting of local politicians, government officials and wealthy neighbours was established. A retired college professor, who had also served as member of BISE, was employed as headmaster and a few local teachers were engaged to teach the neighbourhood children. The school started with only a few classes at primary level, but grew rapidly. The founder's extensive network and ability to engage community leaders and government officials in the operation proved effective both for enrolling children of affluent families and for obtaining accreditations. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, the founder was elected Member of Parliament from his constituency representing BNP. The candidate received most votes because establishing a school is commonly seen as a most appreciated communal act. Besides, he was a well-connected and wealthy businessman famous for getting things done (by whatever means), which convinced people he was right to represent their interests.

At the time of my visit, education was offered both at primary and secondary levels and the school was self-sustained on fee income. The headmaster explained that primary recognition had been granted and that academic recognition was expected in due time. The combination of the headmaster's long experience in education and involvement of people with political influence would see to that. The president of the SMC was also chairman of the local BNP and with BNP in power, the school's network included members of parliament and ministers. No, the headmaster expected no problems with formalities.

BISE officials were not alone in mentioning pressure when asked about their work. Chatting with the principal of a local college one morning, she mentioned that one of her colleagues, knowing they were associated, had requested her to see the headmistress of a renowned government high school for girls. The second round of admission was ongoing and the

colleague was eager to get a daughter admitted. The principal told me she was not comfortable asking the headmistress to bypass procedures and admit the child, but did not want to disappoint her colleague either. She tried to get in touch with the headmistress, but an office clerk said she was on leave. The principal said that she was probably staying away from the school to avoid people approaching her personally for admission.

Later when talking to a higher official, I mentioned what the principal had said about headmasters and mistresses of secondary schools being on leave because of the ongoing admissions. She said they were not on leave, but that many would work in the office at odd hours during enrolment. Although admission was a matter for the principal and the school, guardians also tried to ply her for help.

They come to see me and tell me to do something. It is not enough to say that I will try. They ask for letters of recommendation or that I call the school. When I say I will try to make the call later, they tell me to make the call in front of them. People don't understand. It is so much pressure. I'm not involved in the admission, but people think that I have some influence since I'm the higher officer and that I can do something for them. This is very difficult.

She said that people do not understand, but what they do understand is that there are ways other than waiting in line to get access. Every year schools have a limited number of application papers available for parents trying for admission and enrolment is to be decided from applications. Children scoring high on entrance examination, qualify as applicants entitling the parents to receive application papers. Children of government officials on transfer order are to be prioritised for admission in government schools on the condition that they pass the entrance examination with 'satisfying results'. Remaining seats are to be distributed among the most qualified students.

In practice, most qualified is not necessarily the same as most talented. When a commissioner's daughter was admitted to the best government school in town, the headmistress was requested to also admit his friend's daughter. Enrolment was closed and all available seats had been allocated. The headmistress explained the situation ensuring the commissioner priority whenever a seat was available. In cases of insistent commissioners, capacity and timing matters less and schools regularly admit more children than allowed for.

A commissioners' higher rank implies more authority, meaning lower ranked officials do not easily dismiss their recommendations. This being common knowledge is evident from the

crowds waiting everyday outside offices hoping for a chance to make their pleas with some higher authority. One commissioner told me that as a public servant he tried to keep his office door as much open to the public as possible and he proudly explained how he had helped numerous families by issuing letters of recommendation. At the very time of our conversation he had on his desk a relative's application to a government school. The commissioner had written on top "forwarded for favourable considerations" together with his signature, which is usually enough to be selected.

Others confirmed that applications recommended by officers of superior rank usually receive special attention and that lower officers' do comply with requests made by higher-ranking officers, or even political leaders. Sometimes applicants bring letters of recommendation signed by ministers, but many are dismissed as fake. Other methods of gaining access to public services may include threats of violence. The headmistress mentioned above was said to stay away from her office in fear of *mastans*, which are violent groups hired to cause damage either to persons or property. A group of young men recognised as *mastans* had been observed outside the school during office hours and the headmistress suspected they had been sent to threaten her. Several officials mentioned fear of violence as a factor that could possibly influence decisions, but few had actually experienced it. Most of the time problems of access and authorisations are dealt with in more peaceful manner.

For instance, a friend wanted to sell a plot of land. He found a buyer willing to pay taka 1,400 per decimal and went to the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Land (ADC) to have the property registered as transferred. Arriving at the office, the assistant asked him to write name and purpose of visit on a piece of paper and wait to be called. After waiting for two hours he approached the assistant to find out when he would be able to see Mr. ADC, but was told that the boss was very busy. Having passed another hour waiting, he decided not to wait any longer and politely asked if he could be told when to come back. The assistant said he expected the boss to be very busy over the next few days and told him to come back next week. A week passed and he went again, approached the assistant, stated name and purpose on a piece of paper, and waited. The whole afternoon passed and office hours were coming to an end. The assistant apologised pointing out a busy schedule and told him when to be back. Showing up for what he thought was an appointment, the assistant said the boss had been called for an urgency meeting and would probably be out for the rest of the day. When he tried to call the office asking for Mr. ADC, the message was always the same; either the boss

was out or he was busy. By this time my friend was growing impatient and realised he would have to spend the next few months waiting for a signature on the transfer papers unless he changed his strategy. He went to the assistant and told him he was willing to pay some extra for his efforts trying to forward his case. In a voice of indignation, the assistant responded that all cases were processed in due time, but that the work pressure was immense and resources limited. Appreciating the assistant's answer, my friend engaged a 'professional' to negotiate the price for having the transfer processed sooner. Four thousand taka was paid as an initial payment, but the assistant was asking for a total amount of fifteen thousand. Unwilling to pay as much for the transfer, my friend managed to locate a friend he believed was somehow related to the assistant and that he had once recommended for a job. Having explained the situation, the friend agreed to accompany him to the office and ask his relative for help. Back at the office, the assistant promised to see what he could do. A few days later, and without further ado, my friend received the signed transfer papers. Being asked by a relative, the assistant could no longer refuse.

The bureaucratic rationality allows for no particular considerations and the bureaucrat is at the service not of a person but of an objective and impersonal goal, which means he is to conduct his office regardless of personal preferences or interests, as described earlier. In Bangladesh, the communal spirit is strong and refusing to take personal interest when asked to do so, even when on duty, is seen as selfish (*shartopor*) and without concern or care for others. While Vincent is struggling with striking a balance between own interests and social expectations, others see no other way than to comply with such requests. The dilemma of choosing between rationalities, as seen in the case of the aforementioned chairman and other officers expected to bypass formalities on behalf of higher authorities, colleagues, local leaders, or anyone personally related to them, are further explored in the following.

The price to pay

“High-class people”, said my friend Alam, “they have got money and they don't have to care about anything. They shouldn't bother for other things. They have got their own building, they've got their own car, they've got much more money. They shouldn't bother for *samaj* [society]. If you've got money, then goddamn the society. I shouldn't bother – I shouldn't bother about anybody else even in my position also. If I've got much more money then I

shouldn't bother about anybody". What Alam was saying was not that moneyed people do not have to care about others, but that with money you can always pay your way out of things. Being a mid-level 'honest' officer (one that does not take bribes) earning no more than around nine thousand taka a month, resources were limited. Most of the time he managed because he was living with his family and could share living expenses with other family members. His father owned property and was making money on the stock exchange. His wife was a chartered accountant, but working as a teacher in a small private English medium school her income was even less than his. He often fantasised about a job with a private company offering generous salaries. "Money can solve eighty percent of all problems" he claimed. The remaining twenty percent accounted for incurable deadly diseases. On the one hand, Alam said he was fortunate enough to be blessed with a family that did not demand much. On the other, he knew he was not contributing enough.

If I had money to give them then all mouths would be shut down. This would not move any more. You need two thousand; ok I'm giving you five. Then they will say, "oh, he's a good man, my brother is a good man, or my son or husband is a good man". Like this way you will have to manage. So money is the big factor in life... Whenever there is a problem I know where the problem is and the solution I know. Solution is that: if I've got money then no problem at all. My mom – ok. If I give her five thousand, if I give my wife ten thousand, if I give my younger sister ten thousand everybody's mouths will then be shut. They will start to say that, oh my elder brother is ok. My wife might be saying that my husband loves me very much and then my mom might be saying that my son is very great. He is doing lots for the family. Even my parents-in-law sometimes they try to say something.

His in-laws were well off. As the vice-president of a large insurance company in Dhaka, his wife's father was an important man. The company provided car and driver also for private use, he owned a modern apartment building in an attractive part of the city, he was well connected, and socialised with powerful businessmen and top politicians. Alam had an ambivalent relationship with his in-laws because of his own economic situation. Whenever he stayed with them in Dhaka he was always reminded of his modest earnings and suggestions were made that he apply for employment abroad to make more money.

Alam said most of the time his wife and parents were supportive of his efforts to make an honest living and tried not to ask him for more than he could provide for, but he was well aware of his poor contributions. Even his friends commented on his situation, accusing him of not providing properly for his family.

They say that, “he is selfish”. If I only care about my kids and my wife then they start to say that I am selfish (*shartopor*). Even my parents: “oh, he is selfish and self-centred. Only he just thinks about his sons and his wife and nothing more. He doesn’t care about us”.

To explain the situation, Alam told me about his wife’s younger sister and her husband. It was a love marriage (not arranged) and her parents were against it, he said. Alam reasoned that since they had already married, the parents should accept it, but after years of marriage he was still not accepted into his wife’s family. When Alam’s wife’s brother, who was working in England at the time, lost his job and was having money problems the younger sister’s husband gave him 60 000 taka. Alam heard about it and asked his wife how much to give. Alam was upset that he had not been informed about his wife’s brother’s financial problems earlier and told his wife to ask her parents how much he should give. His wife said he was not expected to give anything, but Alam called her parents to ask. His father-in-law confirmed that they were not expecting anything from him considering his poor earnings. Alam answered that his income was not his headache and that he had already heard about the amount given by the younger daughter’s husband. Father-in-law said his son did not need any help and that they had turned down the offer from younger daughter’s husband as well. Talking to his wife’s mother, she, on the other hand, confirmed the contribution and Alam asked how much he should send. The mother-in-law said there was no need and asked him if he had received his outstanding salary from the government yet. “This is not your headache”, he snapped back asking again how much he should send. “But you see the situation and what is going on”, he told me. “My sister-in-law’s husband is not getting entrance into the house and he is just looking for some way to enter into the house. When the family fall into the problem, they have got the money. Sixty thousand taka is not a matter for them”. Evidently they were well off and could more than afford the contribution. Arguing about it with his wife afterwards, Alam said he would send some money anyway, but his wife said they could not afford it and that money had been given already. “Do you think that I don’t understand anything?” he had asked his wife. “He cannot enter into your parent’s residence. Why have your parents taken this money from him as they have not accepted the marriage?”

I said that I have never said anything against that boy. He’s intelligent enough. He took advantage and hit the right target. He fired and his target was very much exact – exact in target. He is ok. He is very much familiar with this society. Moneyed man’s daughter he wants to marry and he married. Now he is making money and he is purchasing your parents – and you also. Later on you will also say that “oh, he is a very good boy”, but I will never say like that. If you give me one million taka also I will not utter this kind of word. Nobody can purchase me. Usually I used to say to my workstation that nobody can purchase me – even if you can think ten million taka, or twenty million, I cannot be sold out to anybody.

According to Alam, the family attitude towards the daughter and her husband changed as a result of his economic contribution and he was finally welcomed into the family. Suddenly he was seen as a generous person who cared much about his wife and her family. Alam too cared and was offended by their attempt to exclude him like that believing he would not contribute.

When another brother-in-law needed help with a visa application, Alam found a way to help without having to compromise either at work or at home. The brother-in-law was applying for a visa to go and work abroad and the Australian High Commission asked for documentation of his finances. Alam wanted to show his support and went to the bank to ask for a loan of 100 000 taka. Several of his friends were bank employees, but he did not want to involve any of them and went to a bank with which he had no prior dealings. He explained his business and was handed application papers. The comprehensive procedures annoyed him, but he answered all their questions thoroughly. He went back a few days later for the result of his application and was told that with his modest earnings he would not be granted the full sum. “After being told I would get 72 000 taka only I suggested them to make it a round figure. Then the person I was dealing with said he would think about it. Why would he need to think about it? Either they have a rule or they don’t”, cried Alam. He finally got 80 000 taka, which he gave to his brother-in-law for the visa application. The money was to show his ability to support himself in Australia. Alam had contributed and proved his willingness to support his wife’s family without it costing him anything, except the time and effort of getting the loan. He expected to have the money back to repay the loan within a week or two.

As a bureaucrat trained in the logic of the system, Alam was determined not to take or ask for any special favours in the name of his position. As seen earlier, he did not try to make any extra money on his position either, or make up for the fact that he was not even getting his salary regularly. At the same time, he worried about his reputation as someone who did not care for his family. It was a constant struggle for him, which he spent much time and effort trying to solve without compromising either job or family. To those around him, though, he seemed to sacrifice the latter for the benefit of the former while in reality his loyalty to the job seemed to do him little good (cf. previous chapter).

I also met a professor who, like Alam, struggled to balance work ethics with social responsibilities. For most of his professional life, the professor had remained in education, but

made a career change to administration 1992 when his department opted for a transfer outside Dhaka. For major parts of his career he had taught in Dhaka and when he received the transfer order he decided to apply for a different position. The professor said his main concern in life was to impart quality education to his children, which could only be realised in Dhaka. Unwilling to leave wife and children behind to go and work in another district, he started looking for a job in Dhaka. When there was an opening for an intra-cadre transfer, the professor applied and was inducted to the secretary service as deputy secretary in 1992. In 1997, he was promoted to joint secretary under the Ministry of Science and Technology, and additional secretary under the Ministry of Planning in 2000, from where he retired two years later.

In the BCS, new entrants are placed in a particular cadre based on their performance in open competitive examination conducted by the Public Service Commission, and their preferences of cadres (ranked in order). Once inducted, they become career-long members of that cadre (education, administrative, auditing and accounting, agricultural, foreign affairs, health, engineering, etc.) until separation by retirement, resignation or dismissal (Zafarullah et. al. 1997). As part of a strategy to avoid an elite cadre system and to accommodate officers of other service cadres to top administrative posts of the secretariat, the government abolished the former system of the ‘Senior Services Pool’ in 1989 and introduced reservation by quota for the posts of deputy secretary and joint secretary for all cadre services. Intra-cadre transfers are therefore possible, but do not occur on any regular basis.

Looking back on the years in the secretary service, the professor said he had enjoyed the work but that he could never understand colleagues ‘work ethics’.

There was no single honest and sincere man working for the organisation. In the morning I reached the office and I worked till ten at night myself, but I could not get any sincere worker. I did my work and I fulfilled my mission, but the unfortunate is this, you see, whatever plan you take, as the head of an organisation, it should be reinforced by other people – by your colleagues. Then it becomes easier to fulfil a mission and to reach a target – to fulfil a goal. These two positions in the Ministry of Science and Technology were interesting, [but] sincere and competent workers, as I mentioned to you earlier, is a great cry of the country or our society. You will not see competent workers and you will not see sincere workers. This is my reading. I headed two organisations in my life and I saw this. As I mentioned, people are not willing to make oneself competent for the position he is holding.

Asking the professor what the problem was, the answer was money: “They run after money”, he claimed. Apparently, as deputy and joint secretary, he had punished four people in his

department on charges of corruption. “As the head of an organisation, if you try, you can punish”, he said. The problem was that few dared to do so out of fear of being ‘manhandled’ (threats of violence). According to him, the country suffered from ‘disorder’ because few would apply rules and procedures available for pressing charges against those suspected of corruption. “There are legal matters, you see,” said the professor, “but people do not follow these legal rules. Rules framed by the government and procedures laid down by the government to be followed by high officials. In most cases they do not follow it and that is why there is chaos and confusion. So you see, by applying rules you can bring order in disorder”. Another reason mentioned by the professor for why so few apply the rules is that the man who is corrupted has money that can be used to pay off bosses or investigation committees. According to him, money was all that mattered and nobody cared about how it had been obtained.

Yeah, from general view he cannot conceal things. He is a clerk drawing 5,000 taka salary a month. Come on! He is to feed a family of five members or ten members and at the end of the year he is embracing, let’s say ten lakh taka. So people naturally would take it that the man is doing corruption. Otherwise how is he getting money? Unfortunately in our society social accountability is lost. Accountability in the eye of law, rules, and regulation, as I mentioned or as you see in our country, is not efficient – isn’t that so? Accountability – social accountability – is also lost. Earlier when we were young we saw people hating others who were doing corruption in the society. Nowadays this is also lost. Rather a man raising a ten storied building by doing corruption is being praised by our society... If you have a very nice building you have the honour in the society. It is material. Whether you have killed ten people for getting the money to raise the building does not matter.

The professor said he spoke from experience and that *samaj* (society) viewed him not only as a poor provider, but as the number one fool also. He was “Mr. Additional Secretary” and an additional secretary is the owner of not only one house, or even just one car, but of several. A minister friend of his once told him, upon being asked about his tendency to compromise rules and regulations, that there was the future to consider. As long as in office, he was well provided for and enjoyed full time transportation service and first-class accommodation. According to this minister friend, there were two things a former minister could not do. One was to travel by rickshaw, and the other to reside in a rented house. In other words, he had to obtain both a house and a car while still in office. The professor, on the other hand, by always following rules and regulations owned nothing at the time of retirement; he had rented a house and used rickshaws for his transportation, which apparently did not go unnoticed.

It is in my face when I go by rickshaw people say that “you have been additional secretary and you are going by rickshaw or you are walking?” I’ve been facing this for the last two years, but I don’t care about this... I cannot steal to buy a car. I cannot steal. I cannot put my hand in your pocket. Can I? Absolutely not!

Dwelling on his point of not caring about people’s talk, I asked about his family. Up until then, the professor had spoken with much energy and humorously engaged in the conversation. Upon mentioning his family, his features turned grave and in a quiet voice he said it had been ‘painful’. Among five brothers and two sisters, he was the only one who had held a position at that level. Some of his brothers were small-scale farmers in a village outside Dhaka and the professor said that he felt their ‘ambitions’ at the time of his promotion to the secretariat. He was expected to put his personal relations before his work and bypass rules and regulations if necessary, but he had refused.

They expected much of me, which I could not satisfy. Unfortunately they are not at all satisfied with me now. They are not at all happy with me now. At the beginning they had great ambitions or great expectation from me, but I could not satisfy even a little bit so they are not happy. This is the reality. Socially also I have seen some people expecting something – some people wanting that I provide his son with a job working with the government. I did not provide this and he is not happy. Some people wanted that I would do some managing. This is the social attitude and I am aware that this attitude differs from place to place, from country to country. This is the attitude of my society because my country is poor – poverty of the average people is high. You see I have many relations that are in extreme poverty. So naturally is it not unexpected that they will hope for something from me. This is quite natural, but if I cannot provide this or offer this they will be dissatisfied. But in developed countries people never think like this. You know, the people’s attitude and thinking differs from place to place – social conditions have much reflection of thinking of people.

The professor was seen as selfish and without concern or care for others. To those around him, his high position meant access to resources they all expected to benefit from, but which he denied them. Among colleagues, in addition to being seen as a poor provider, he was regarded a fool for not knowing how to make a better living for himself and those around him. As with Alam, who said others considered him talented and brilliant but not too smart always insisting on legal procedures, the professor said he knew perfectly well how to make money from his government job. “It is a matter of choice”, he said, while admitting that always insisting on formal procedures had cost him much, socially and professionally.

In 1985, for instance, the professor was the deputy director of a government launched mass education project and in charge of buying equipment for literacy centres. His office was spending more than two million taka on equipment and his boss wanted to instruct him on

which suppliers to choose. According to the professor, his boss was constructing a house for himself and needed money, which had been offered by one of the suppliers in exchange for a contract. The professor protested firmly insisting on following government procurement policies and tender for contracts. His boss was furious and they argued, but the professor refused to give in. Shortly after he found a transfer letter on his desk and was forced to leave the office within weeks. “You see,” he commented, “if you want to remain on track when it comes to rules laid down by the government you will have to suffer much. Sometimes you’ll be in Sundarban, sometimes you’ll be in Bandarban”, which are seen as punishment posts because of the remoteness from larger cities.

According to the professor, honesty or dishonesty (corruption) in office is a question of ‘democracy’, as he so acutely put it. “When does a man in an office find himself in a difficult position if he wants to be honest?” he asked.

When does that happen? It happens when the condition of the environment goes against him. Environment condition goes against him and it is determined by the number of people. The number of people is causing his own ideas and thoughts. Say he is dishonest and he is working in the environment of fifty people. If there are only two people like him so he will definitely find himself in a difficult position. If there are thirty people like him so he will be in a good position and he will have a good time. Rather a man who is advocating for honesty he will be trouble. So you see in our society it is difficult because most people are on the wrong track. So people on the wrong track are in a good position and people on the right track are in difficulty because they are less in number – they are less in number. Actually here you can talk about democracy – it’s a kind of democracy.

The professor was talking about the work situation, but his way of managing the office had also marginalised him socially. On his salary he could not buy a house or a car, and he had not used his influence to provide jobs for those who had asked for his help. Insisting on the rule of law as a universal principle, people talked of him as selfish and without care for others, and he became marginalised. His own family, mainly brothers and sisters, blamed him too for not doing anything for them either.

Alam used to say that his children are his building because on his modest income he could not even afford to build a toilet. He took pride in his ‘honesty’, but in the eyes of samaj he was a failure. The professor also felt the verdict of his surroundings for not taking advantage and sharing the fortune of an important job. However, as trained bureaucrats and firm believers in the rationality of the system, neither Alam nor the professor saw any other way than following formal rules despite much pressure to do otherwise. On the contrary, both acted as agents of

state power by putting formal responsibilities before social commitments. The fact that they both became more or less marginalised, professionally and socially, says something about the rationality of the social and the emphasis on moral responsibilities. In Bangladesh, people feel the burden of social responsibilities and important jobs commonly means higher expectations. Entering civil service means taking on responsibilities beyond, and even against, official duties. Hence, a government job is not merely an individual contract for an interesting job or a personal career in state service; it is a potential resource for socio-economic advancement and fulfilment of multiple obligations.

The modern state

Assuming Dieter Conrad is right, it was from studying the Indian material that Weber discovered the concept of *eigengesetzlichkeit*, often translated as “lawful autonomy”.⁵⁹ In his modernity studies, Weber talks about “polytheism” to denote the anarchistic predicament faced by the individual in having to deal with the demands of different values that are both incommensurable and incapable of being ordered in any rational way. Driving towards logical consistency, individuals’ values come into irreconcilable conflict because they follow their own ‘inherent logics’ or ‘laws of development’. No higher rationality can be invoked to overcome the contradictions that inevitably develop between the demands of the autonomous spheres. Tracing Weber’s use of the term *eigengesetzlichkeit* in his studies of Hinduism, Conrad finds it first used when he says that priestly power had to recognise that the world of politics followed its own laws, i.e. no fusion of political and priestly power. “What seems to have struck Weber”, Conrad writes, “is the independent normative rationalisation of various spheres of action – an early paradigm for the modern cultural differentiation into various spheres regulated by their own rationality” (Conrad 1986:182). That there is not one single, canonical form of rationalization was one of Weber’s main intellectual discoveries. In the case of India, however, lawful autonomy was used only to describe the relationship between different castes within a caste hierarchy and not recognised as a principle causing individual predicament as a result of having to choose between equally rational choices:

⁵⁹ From *eigen* = own, proper; *gesetzlichkeit* = legality, lawfulness. The expression is not translatable to English and translators of Weber have therefore generally chosen to paraphrase it according to inclination and context (Conrad 1986:180-1).

The Hindu order of life made each of the different occupations an object of a specific ethical code, a Dharma, and forever segregated one from the other as castes, thereby placing them into a fixed hierarchy of rank. ... In this way, the caste order allowed for fashioning the Dharma of each single caste, from those of the ascetics and Brahmins to those of the rouges and harlots, in accordance with the immanent and autonomous laws (Eigengesetzlichkeiten, D.C.) of their respective occupations. War and politics were also included" (ibid: 182).

According to this, a caste person is not torn by choice and does not suffer from conflicting obligations arising from different value spheres because the obligations he must fulfil are seen to be unambiguously dictated by the cast position into which he is born. The rationality of Hinduism is thus for individuals to follow their caste duty and "leave the rest to god".⁶⁰ Conrad criticises Weber and his understanding of dharma and caste duties for being apolitical, but recognises the importance of the analysis for discovering the dynamics of the modern state, i.e. differentiation, atomisation, universalisation, and institutionalisation (Sissener 2005).

While Weber is commonly seen as an evolutionist, others have seen his work as "a theory of modernity constructed around a thesis about the unique characteristics and cultural effects of western rationalism" (Scaff 2000:102). According to Badie, Weber falls within both by empirically contradicting his own theoretical model proclaiming that "everywhere the modern state is undergoing bureaucratization", while paying close attention to "the variety of actual patterns of evolution" (Badie 1983:24). Rather than following theorists propounding evolutionary models, however, Weber employed an analytical method attempting to work out a typological classification (ideal types). Fundamentally, he distinguished between forms of legitimate domination; charismatic, traditional, and rational, but only the rational is seen to operate through an agency such as the state. Considering only his thesis on different forms of domination, no claim is made that the types of domination succeed one another in any specific order. "There is no unique law of history", Badie reflects (ibid:18). On the other hand, "it remains true that traditional domination, as the name implies, belongs to the past and is incompatible with a modern form of society" (ibid:19), which reflects his universal conception of the state (see the introduction). His historical studies, though, are more open for variations and complexities.

⁶⁰ See also Louis Dumont (1970) arguing that secular power in traditional Hindu society was clearly 'encompassed by' and subordinate to religious values.

With the aid of a large number of historical examples, Weber discusses the modern state. Typologically, the modern state is the result of a bureaucratisation process institutionalising rational-legal practices. “Modern societies”, says Badie, “are characterized by the emergence of exclusive legal domination, which is revealed chiefly through the formation and development of an institutionalized bureaucracy, literally the instrument of the contemporary state” (ibid:20). “The birth of the state”, he continues, “marks the end of patrimonialism: the state becomes a distinct institution within society. It differentiates itself from civil society and becomes institutionalized” (ibid:21). By investigating the historical conditions in which the state rose to prominence as a peculiarly Western form of political power in the wake of a peculiarly Western rationalisation process, Weber actually emphasises the uniqueness of a particular process of state formation.

Perhaps the several lines Weber wrote about ideal types have been given “a vastly disproportionate attention” (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983:132). Dreyfus and Rabinow claims that if one skips from those few methodological pronouncements to his historical analyses, “the gap between Foucault and Weber diminishes considerably” (ibid.). As noted at the beginning of this chapter, also Foucault has been criticised for drawing an opposition between pre-modern and modern power. While Weber used ideal types to organise and explain varied and disparate historical phenomena, Foucault sought to isolate explicit programs and produce “concrete analyses of specific historical practices” (op. cit. p. 133), not how they were intended but how they actually work. Both use history, though, to explain the “problem of reason” or “how forms of rationalisation become embedded in practices, or systems of practices” (ibid.).

In this chapter I have endeavoured to show how the social is about much more than rational-legal state processes and how competing rationalities, informing and shaping sociality, is challenging the state. While in the case of some officials, such as Alam and the professor, the particular state rationality imparted during colonial times lives on as the result of a productive socialisation process (agents of state power as discussed in previous chapter), others appear less affected by such a rationality. Furthermore, in situations where the state is necessarily implicated one way or the other, such as questions of school accreditation and land registration as seen in this chapter, or in some similar situations discussed in earlier chapters, bureaucratic rationality appears negotiable. On yet other occasions, such as seen in the first part of this chapter on village life where people depend on each other for managing daily

events, the state is brought in for support only. Thus, the situation with the state and social order in Bangladesh, I argue, is much more complex than what can be sensibly captured by the use of ‘ideal types’⁶¹ arguing for or against rationality of the state.

Following Weber, societies that have been through rationalisation processes where power has been institutionalised there is no longer room for discussing values or value choices, only more or less rational, making morality almost irrelevant (iron cage: rationality of the institution). Foucault, on the other hand, by disconnecting power from institutions, enables the analysis of power as a question of not only rational or legal behaviour but also moral (biopower: morality of the body). As seen in this chapter, people’s behaviour is not primarily affected by the rationality of legal institutions and power does not have to be formalised to be effective. In the village, there are some criterion for moral behaviour and those that do not measure up risk social marginalisation or even exclusion. These standards, as seen from the discussed cases, are not necessarily evident from the structure of the state or the rational-legal logic, but appear as embedded in practices (neighbours watching each other, parent’s disciplining their children, marriage preparations, communal interaction, family relations etc.). When the state is engaged it is not simply for its rationality, but rather for the benefit of a favourable social position, that is, as a point of reference for various social ambitions realisable through education, positions, earnings, and so on.

In the last and closing chapter immediately following, attempts will be made to follow through implications of discussions and arguments about state and power made throughout this thesis.

⁶¹ See also Migdal (2001) discussed in chapter 1.

6

In closing

In *The Sociology of the State* (1983), Badie and Birnbaum describe European situations prior to political centralisation processes arguing for a connection between existence of different sociocultural systems and developments of modern states.

If it is true that the state arose in answer to crises that threatened the disintegration of certain societies in Europe, crises that basically involved resistance to change in social formations based on the community, then there is reason to believe that in order to explain the state's rise we must look to the feudal past (Badie and Birnbaum 1983:79).

While it has been argued that the inherent logic of the feudal past was such as to make a particularly thorough monopolization of political power quite likely to occur, Badie and Birnbaum claims that “the state was not simply a product of the feudal system” (ibid.). The reason is that we are simply not dealing with *a* feudal system, but with different feudalisms. In England, for instance, where the influence of feudalism is seen to have been relatively slight, processes of modernisation occurred differently from societies in which the influence of the feudal past was stronger mainly because of the different role played by the civil society. Where feudalism is strong, civil society stands stronger putting up stronger resistance towards any kind of changes, especially attempts to disintegrate and reduce its control over political power. According to Badie and Birnbaum, states that came into being in the period of feudalism by expelling the lords from the political arena, developing autonomous structures of government, and intervening in the economy often for reasons of their own, “these states had no choice but to strike some kind of *compromise* with a civil society that was still largely dominated by the aristocracy in terms of both prestige and wealth and that was far less affected than some have maintained by supposed economic rivalry between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie” (ibid:82). Thanks to a very old tradition in England of representative government balanced by society's willingness to recognize the sovereignty of the monarch, who without regard to the feudal hierarchy accepted oaths of allegiance directly from all his subjects as early as the eleventh century, and because English society had never suffered from the rigidity or fragmentation associated with feudalism, centralisation was possible without breaking with past political traditions.

This in turn explains why England was able to modernize without differentiating political from social roles or developing a state to anything like the degree we find in France, for example (ibid:83).

Unlike the Paris *Parlement* in France, they argue, the English Parliament not only represented the economic interests of an aristocracy allied with the bourgeoisie and involved in commerce, but also served those interests in a direct political way. In France, where the state arose as a separate entity as a reaction against feudalism and in response to the need to establish or restore order in the country, pattern of development was necessarily different from that in England merely responding to changing circumstances by making minor adjustments in their social structure and strengthening the ability of the central government to carry out functions for which it had already assumed responsibility (Badie and Birnbaum 1983).

Thus, if the different histories of social formations in England and France can explain the peculiar features of the growth of the state in the two countries, discouraging any inclination to talk about *the* modern European state, why should we not expect the same to be true for the development of non-European states? It is on this last point that my own views critically depart from those of Badie and Birnbaum as in their view, state formation in postcolonial societies “has largely been a matter of imitating models developed elsewhere, in industrial societies of either East or West, and artificially superimposed, with or without local consent, on economic, social, and political structures shaped by other ways of thinking” (ibid:97).

As discussed in this thesis, foreign interests (first of the explorers and merchants, and later of rulers and administrators) supported by local forces marked early developments of the modern Indian state. When the British first arrived in the sixteenth century, India was divided into princely states and ruled by more or less independent rulers. Due to the British Crown granting monopoly over the trade in Eastern Waters, and Jahangir’s permission to trade in his domain, the Company was able to establish itself in India. Through Indian intermediaries, the Company closed lucrative deals with local producers buying their products thus triggering rapid growth and expansion of activities. To secure business, territorial and juridical rights were obtained and gradually expanded. Company administrators such as Clive, Hastings, Cornwallis and Lord Wellesley were instrumental in developing the organisation and strengthening the position of the Company in India in various ways, facilitating colonisation and the establishment of the British Crown as the sovereign ruler.

As part of their imperial policy, the British sought to consolidate British rationality by imparting their own education system and by creating or permanently settling a landowning class. While British education became popular among some Indians (bhadralok interested in improving their position), the Permanent Settlement Act (discussed in chapter 2) were of less impact than expected as political power, historical status, influence, and other resources remained for the most part within the same lineages. Characters such as Rammohun Roy (Brahmo Samaj) and Radhakanta Deb (Dharma Samaj), both accomplished scholars and influential leaders and supporters of Western education, contributed much to the growth of a national consciousness in the subcontinent. Although loyal supporters of the British Raj, the bhadralok openly opposed the various kinds of British discriminatory practices against Indians by submitting petitions to the British parliament. By applying the techniques of modern politics, the bhadralok were successful in imposing many of their demands thus actively taking part in the formation of the Indian state and its politics (not merely passive recipients or victims of foreign ideas).

To consolidate their sovereign position in India, the British arranged for assemblies inspired by the old Indian durbar tradition, but with unmistakably British overtones. Instead of following the old tradition of symbolising the complexity of power relations, the British used the occasion to introduce a new social and political order (contractual relationship exchanging progress and stability for loyalty) thus suggesting a new standard for establishing authority. Although a reversed case, this latter can be seen as an example of a known 'formula' taking on new meanings by being applied to a different situation (adding new meanings to familiar concepts).

In another passage, Badie and Birnbaum claims that,

No matter how much local elites may have internalized Western political ideas, the truth is that the Western model has only been transplanted in an abstract and formal sense and has not worked in third-world societies. It is a model that has been introduced artificially, sometimes by force, sometimes voluntarily when traditional forms of government have been rejected because of unfair accusations that they were responsible for economic and military failures. To this day the "state" is no more than an imported artefact in both Africa and Asia, a pale copy of utterly alien European social and political systems, a foreign body that is not only inefficient and a burden on society but also a fomenter of violence (Badie and Birnbaum 1983:98-99).

I will not go into the last claim about ‘fomenter of violence’. The point I want to make is that whether the one way or the other (East to West or West to East, or between countries), in practice models and ideas are never just absorbed and imitated – no matter how they came about. Although Badie and Birnbaum do modify their statement saying that the Western ‘political technology’, referring to political and administrative systems set up by European colonisers, has been less far-reaching in its effects as systems have been established without simultaneous consciousness about its functions. In the end, Badie and Birnbaum’s analysis seems to rest on a division between the modern West and their political ideas versus the traditional ‘rest’ and their local traditions. On the contrary, what I see is a much more dynamic process where ideas and models, or images and practices as I have discussed it in this thesis, form and develop as a result of the particular situations in which interchanges are made. Likewise, I would say, it is a never ending story where images and practices keeps (re)forming in accord with changing circumstances. This is the world in which the state exists: historical, social, cultural and situational. For South Asia and Bangladesh this means that although European in design, very much South Asian and Bangladeshi in product. As Jean-François Bayart has put it with reference to Asia and Africa:

When the colonialists effectively acted as a demiurge, such as by building [states]... they did not do so *ex nihilo*; and colonial creations were also subject to multiple acts of re-appropriation by indigenous social groups. Therefore, these states, which are reputed to be artificial, rest in reality upon their own social foundations (Bayart 1991:52-53).

This means that, in addition to the concrete history, the cultural constitution of things, commonly studied by anthropologists and often disregarded by other disciplines, is crucial for the understanding of modern states. Clifford Geertz recognised this decades ago focusing on symbolic forms, classification systems and structures of meaning. His ideas about the analysis of cultural life “helped to frame and shape much later work, not only in anthropology, but also in history and other academic disciplines” (Krohn-Hansen & Nustad 2005:10). In *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-century Bali* from 1980, he argued that much political analysis had been reductionist because, as put by Krohn-Hansen and Nustad: “it had ignored and silenced the importance of rituals, symbols and meanings in the construction and reconstruction of states” (ibid.). According to Geertz, the rituals of the Balinese theatre state “were what there was” (1980:136) and not means of “representing the state or of masking its true nature – they *constituted* the state” (Krohn-Hansen & Nustad op. cit.). Although my analysis does not directly build on Geertz, he is worth mentioning for his stress on the cultural

constitution of the state. Another early contributor to the cultural understanding of the state is Bruce Kapferer. In *Legends of People, Myths of State* (1988), where he compares the hierarchical-holistic Sri Lanka and the egalitarian-individualistic Australia, modern political world-views were examined “on their own terms and in the contexts of their ideas” (1988:xii), forcefully bringing out the cultural embeddedness of states and political practices. In my thesis, the state is that complex relationship between cultural forms, institutional structures and relations of power that are continually formed, reformed and transformed in social situations implying both continuity and change.

From chapter 2 alone, I could have argued for the hegemony of bureaucratic rationality, but that would be too simple. There are no good reasons to think that even back then the situation was as simple as that. Besides, considering what I have discussed in the other chapters of this thesis, submitting to that kind of reductionism would make no sense at all. Instead, what have emerged is a most varied and complex picture and with rationalities existing side-by-side continuously challenging the rationality of the modern state.

In this thesis, I have discussed state and power mainly with reference to Weber and Foucault arguing for both similarities and divergences between the two. While Weber used ideal types to explain varied and disparate historical phenomena seeing the modern state as the embodiment of socio-religious rationalisation processes, Foucault insisted on the body as the place in which the most minute and local social practices are linked up with the large-scale organisation of power. To both, though, individual freedom is somehow constrained by external forces.

According to Rogers Brubaker (1984), Weber presents himself as an empirical scientist and not as a moral philosopher, and Brubaker confirms that it “is true that he has no moral philosophy in the traditional sense. He elaborates no rules of individual conduct, harbors no vision of an ideal society” (Brubaker 1984:91). Even if the standard terms of moral argument – moral, right, ought, should – are conspicuously absent from his vocabulary, the whole of his scientific work is “informed by a fundamentally moral impulse – by a passionate concern with the ‘fate of man’ in contemporary capitalist civilization”, which he says is “embodied in Weber’s empirical interpretation of modernity in terms of its ‘specific and peculiar rationalism’ and in his moral response to this rationalized world” (ibid.). Thus, in addition to

examining Weber's rationality thesis, Brubaker also has an interesting discussion about Weber's moral thoughts.

Consider two individuals, Brubaker requests, one committed to *Zweckrationalität* or instrumental rationality, guided by reason and unhampered by the constraints of tradition, strong emotion, or ultimate value commitments, and the other committed to *Wertrationalität* or value rationality, striving to shape his life in accordance with his chosen ultimate value commitments, which individual is freer, he asks.

The first individual, to be sure, is not bound, as is the second, by any ultimate value commitments, and is thus completely unfettered in his decisions. But in a deeper sense the first individual is less free. For he does not really choose his ends; his agenda of ends is in fact determined by his given subjective wants – by his 'raw' nature rather than his consciously formed personality... *Given* wants guide the first individual in his selection of ends; *chosen* ultimate values guide the second. Only the second individual is autonomous in Weber's sense (Brubaker 1984:105).

Autonomy to Weber, however, does not "connote the radical 'freedom from inner bonds'... that characterizes pure *Zweckrationalität*, but rather the capacity of an individual to create his own moral personality by committing himself to certain ultimate values and meanings and organizing his life around them" (ibid. p. 106). Pure *Zweckrationalität*, therefore, is morally dangerous because it is incompatible with genuine autonomy (ibid.), which explains Weber's ambivalence towards increasing bureaucratisation and his warnings against the 'iron cage'-society subjecting individuals to rational-legal control beyond moral reasoning.⁶²

Foucault, on the other hand, saw no individual autonomy to begin with as in his view, human action occurs in already defined contexts influencing and directing its subjects in distinct ways. Power being something occurring anywhere at all times, Foucault argued for a far more diffuse field of power relations. By disconnecting power from institutions, he enables the analysis of power as a question of not only rational or legal behaviour but also moral (biopower: morality of the body).

In Bangladesh, as discussed in this thesis, human behaviour takes place in the interface of modern rationality and the "brotherliness of direct and personal human relations" (Weber

⁶² Weber's own solution, according to Brubaker, was 'ethic of responsibility', a synthesis of Wert- and *Zweckrationalität*.

[1948] 1997:155). The power regulating behaviour being at once symbolic, institutional, legal, and moral, it takes historical detail and the ‘thick description’ of the ethnographer for a more dynamic understanding of the state and the social order, which is what I have tried to give here.

Returning to the issue of corruption mentioned in the introduction, and also in the title of this thesis, I find it most unsatisfactory to reduce the richness of context to a question of legal matters. Instead of evaluating people or practices merely according to some legal parameters, applying labels such as corrupted/uncorrupted, what I hope to have achieved in this thesis is to show the multiplicity of forces informing and shaping social order also in the context of the modern state.

List of abbreviations

ACR	–	Annual Confidential Report
ADC	–	Additional Deputy Commissioner
AL	–	Awami League
ASRC	–	Administrative and Services Reorganisation Commission
BCS	–	Bangladesh Civil Service
BISE	–	Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education
BNP	–	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
CSP	–	Civil Service Pakistan
DC	–	Deputy Commissioner
DD	–	Deputy Director
DEO	–	District Education Officer
EPCS	–	East Pakistan Civil Service
EU	–	European Union
EU EOM	–	European Union Election Observation Mission
GO	–	Government Official
HSC	–	Higher Secondary Certificate
ICS	–	Indian Civil Service
LTO	–	Long-Term Observer
MP	–	Member of Parliament
NPC	–	National Pay Commission
PCS	–	Provincial Civil Service
PSC	–	Public Service Commission
PM	–	Prime Minister
SMC	–	School Management Committee
SP	–	Superintendent of Police
SSC	–	Secondary School Certificate
SSP	–	Senior Service Pool
UNEAS	–	United Nations Electoral Assistance Secretariat
UNO	–	Upazila Nirbahir Officer
VIP	–	Very Important Person

District maps

Chittagong

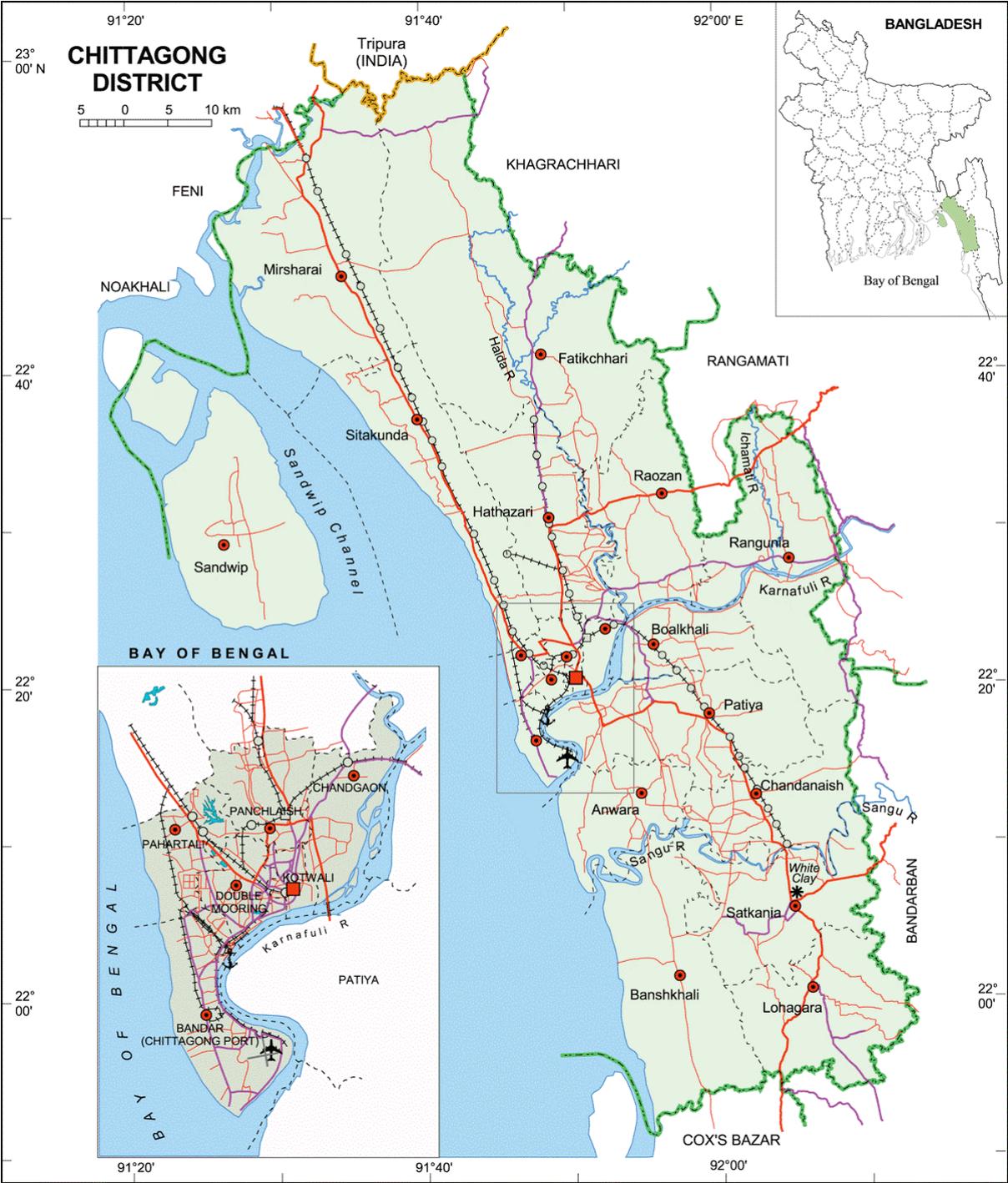


Image source: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, <http://banglopedia.search.com.bd>

Dinajpur

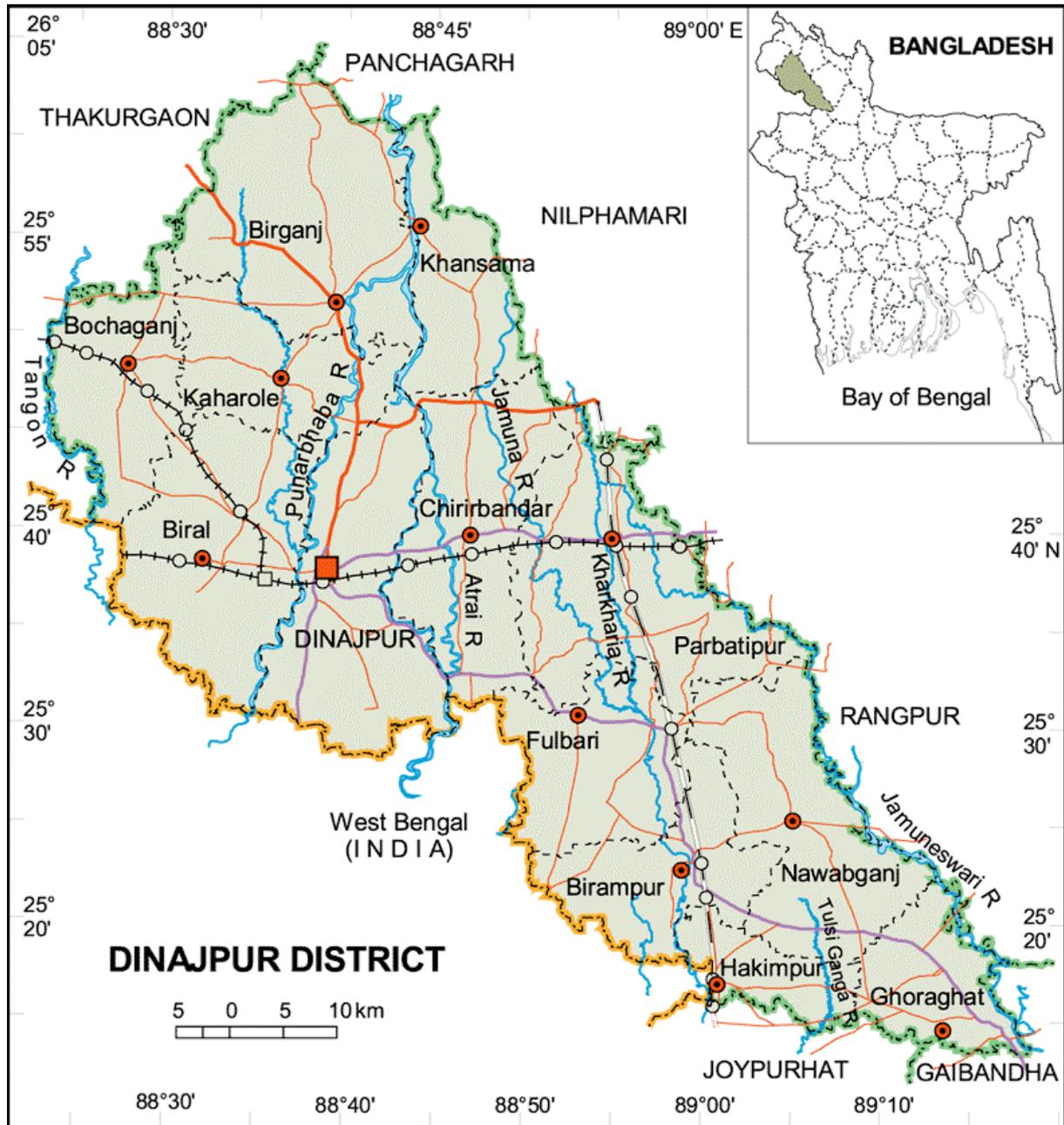


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