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Monograph Series

THE NET

Power Structure In
Ten Villages

Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC

rural study series

THE NET

Power Structure In
Ten Villages

BANGLADESH RURAL ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE



Prokashana

rural study series: 02

THE NET
Power structure in ten villages

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FOREWORD

Studies carried out by our Research Division on contemporary rural scene is normally published in cyclostyled form and a limited number is distributed to development planners and practitioners. In the Rural Study Series, we plan to bring out those of our studies which have a wider appeal. THE NET is the second publication in the series.

Dhaka
December 1983

Publisher

“In the past, dedication and commitment of governments and agencies, and the desired participation of the people, have been assumed. This has been a false assumption and now serious work must go into converting that false assumption into a workable reality.”

Ziaur Rahman
President of Bangladesh

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The Prominent Characters

VILLAGE DIGPAR

Gobinda	Faction leader
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VILLAGE NIZPARA

Kamal	Faction leader and member of Shantigarh Union Parishad
Huda	A retired teacher and father-in-law of Kamal
Salehuddin	Brother of Kamal
Hafiz	Follower of Kamal's faction
Latif	Nephew and stepson of Hafiz; follower of Kamal's faction
Mahfuz	Influential village leader
Manzur	Influential village leader
Taher Company	Now dead, was once a Union Parishad Member

VILLAGE MOTIHAR

Lutfur	Faction leader and Ex-member of Shantigarh Union Parishad
Anwar	Follower of Lutfur's faction
Kashem	Follower of Lutfur's faction
Manju	Follower of Lutfur's faction

VILLAGE OSMANPUR

Amin	Faction leader
Aziz	Influential member of Amin's faction
Suruj	Influential member of Amin's faction
Gani	Follower of Amin's faction
Rob	Follower of Amin's faction

VILLAGE NALDANGHA

Nazmul	Influential person of the village
Farid	Brother-in-law Nazmul
Mostafa	Faction leader
Matin	A school teacher and secretary of B.N.P. Union branch and an active member of Mostafa's faction
Idris	A school teacher and follower of Matin and Mostafa
Humayun	Follower of Mohiuddin's faction of Taluqkandi

VILLAGE TALUQKANDI

Mohiuddin	Faction leader and a member of Shantigarh Union Parishad
Mustafiz	Follower of Mohiuddin
Selim Commander	An Ex-Anser Commander and leader of a faction
Mahaboob	Relative of Selim Commander and a Member of Shantigarh Union Parishad
Mustaq	A Union Parishad ration dealer and follower of Selim Commander's faction

VILLAGE GUPTAPARA

Alamgir	Faction leader
Abdul Hoq	Follower of Alamgir's faction
Kader	Follower of Alamgir's faction
Joynal	Son-in-law of Kader
Anjan Kumar	Follower of Alamgir's faction

VILLAGE BASANTIPUR

Rafiq	Faction leader
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VILLAGE NACHAL

Alim	Faction leader
Akhtar	Influential member of Alim's faction
Sattar	Follower of Alim's faction
Malek	Follower of Alim's faction
Nur Muhammed	Faction leader

OUTSIDERS

Mizan	Ex-Chairman of Sundorgonj
Abdul Bari	Brother-in-Law of Mizan
Johurul	Rich businessman
Jamal	Rich businessman

PREFACE

During the Emergency Relief Programme conducted in drought affected areas in 1979 BRAC workers had the opportunity to come into very close contact with the landless and disadvantaged members of the rural community. From discussions with them much valuable information was obtained about the manner in which people occupying positions of authority utilized their advantageous positions. It was then realized that this information could be used to throw some light on the way in which the local power relations are structured. Systematic enquiry and cross-checking of verbal accounts, obtained from villagers in ten selected villages, revealed how members of the small elite stratum build-up a network of contacts and relationships. These networks are then shown, through various incidents to be utilized for gaining access and control over scarce public and private resources.

This study is the presentation of the information that was collected by members of BRAC's field staff—Andrew Jenkins, Anjan Kumar Dutta, Manzur Hasan and Khaja Zahurul Islam Khan—through their interactions with the disadvantaged sections of the rural population. An important supplemental benefit of these conversations was the extent to which they stimulated critical analysis of the situation by the local people themselves. Thus the report is a genuine attempt at participatory research, in the sense that the respondents acted not only as sources of data but were themselves raised by virtue of their participation to a greater level of critical awareness.

This study gives some indication of the extent of corruption and malpractices that characterises resource distribution in rural Bangladesh and the consequent difficulties of achieving develop-

ment through conventional approaches. The powerlessness of the poor to withstand the machination of the rural elite appears to be the primary constraint to development and social change. Without the resolution of the problems of power, genuine development in rural Bangladesh will continue to elude us.

February, 1980

F. H. Abed
Executive Director

1.1. Introduction

In July 1979 BRAC became concerned about the effects of the recent drought in certain parts of Bangladesh and anticipated that by September after the *aus* harvest a serious situation might develop. As a result an emergency relief programme was organised in three different areas. The strategy was to organise groups of landless people in each village, encourage them to start collective agricultural activities using their own resources initially and then support them on a food for work basis in their activities. Land was obtained by the groups on lease, sharecropping basis or by getting the use of Government *khas* land.

Through this process the BRAC staff involved became quite familiar with the situation, the landless people and their problems. It also became clear that quite large-scale government relief operations were going on that if successful, would have made BRAC's work largely unnecessary. It was, however, equally clear that the resources were not reaching the poor and landless but instead were being controlled and enjoyed by a small number of powerful men, who had developed good connections with the local government officers. We also realised that there was a similar situation in other fields, for example, the very rapid cutting down and sale of timber in the public forest, where a small number of rich and powerful men were able to make large profits from public resources. At the same time these men were also able to use their government connections, their economic power and threats or actual use of force to obtain control over the land and actions of others.

Power is often defined as the ability to command private and public resources in terms of men and materials; to this economic power may be added the power of violent coercion, usually but not always, monopolised by the state. (In this area the state's monopoly force was available for sale to the highest bidder). By means of their personal wealth, their followings of violent and non-violent supporters, their official political positions, but most of all through a complex net of co-operative connections with other powerful men including the government officers, a small group seemed to have obtained a very disproportionate share of power. At the same time, the landless people with whom we were working frequently caught up helpless in the meshes of this invisible network which they only partially understood, had a very small amount of power indeed.

As they became more organised, the result of our work and their own efforts, the landless people became more conscious of this disparity and were particularly aware that benefits intended for them: food-for-work, rations, education etc. were not getting through but were being intercepted by the net between them and the central government. In order to increase the flow of resources getting through, organising was not enough, it became essential to understand the system clearly and put pressure on the weakest points. To achieve such an understanding we carried out this research; jointly with the landless people we began to identify the powerful, learn about their activities and analyse their connections and methods of operation. If, as a result, in the next food crisis a little more of the food intended for the poor actually reaches them then this study will have been worthwhile.

1.2. Methodology

Our methodology was essentially simple and could be repeated by any field worker who can read, write and do simple arithmetic. Our main sources of information were the landless people of each village. although the local elite supplied us with considerable information about themselves and each other. Later on we got a great deal of help from government officers, who gave up a lot of their time to clarify various points for us.

The first stage was to record carefully all the examples of oppressive, exploitative and illegal activities we could find. We did not have to go out to look for them very much, the landless and poor who were the principal victims, came to us and as our study continued, their interest and analytical capacity increased to the point where they gave us pens and paper and insisted that we record everything. Of course, none of the incidents we recorded were new to them, they know about those things far better than us. But by linking incidents and activities from different villages, by comparing what happens with what is supposed to happen and above all, by discussing and recording the oppressive activities of the powerful, as if they could be fully understood and then checked, we helped the landless to develop a new consciousness and militancy. Already they have started taking collective actions on certain issues and achieving limited success. From this point of view our investigation was like a shining a torch in a dark room. Previously everyone knew some of the things that were going on because it was right in front of him, but in a shadowy, partial way. By adding his knowledge to that of others and then by analysing and calculating everything, they could see clearly for the first time, and so realistically consider the possibility of change.

In the second stage, after checking all the details with at least four separate sources (and sometimes upto fifty) we plotted all the connections involved in each incident to build up a picture of the network involved. Our charts were constantly altered and improved as our knowledge increased and helped us to draw conclusions about the relationship between individuals and groups within the power structure.

Thirdly, using this knowledge we identified the powerful people and their main followers in each village and prepared a profile on each individual covering their background, political, business and other activities, land-holding and so on. At this point we limited our study to a cluster of ten villages in two Unions² as being a large enough area to show a number of relationships and small enough for us to deal with fairly quickly. We then prepared a profile on each village showing its main characteristics: history, class composition, size etc, but without carrying out elaborate

surveys. It was absolutely essential to define a field of study covering a number of villages and including activities and connections at Union and Thana level, to avoid the inherent limitation of single village studies, which only give a very limited and narrow picture of the many activities of the elite.

Fourthly, we made contact with the government machinery at all levels up to the District, to trace any connections wherever they might lead, but mainly to get a clear picture of how the government functions: distribution of resources, law and order, conservation etc. are *supposed* to be working, in order to compare with our knowledge of how they are *actually* working. For example, we obtained exact details of food for work allocations, and working with the landless people checked them against the work done.

Finally, we tried to build all this information into a comprehensive whole and draw some simple conclusions, as we did not have the time or the training to develop any theoretical statements.

1.3. Limitations

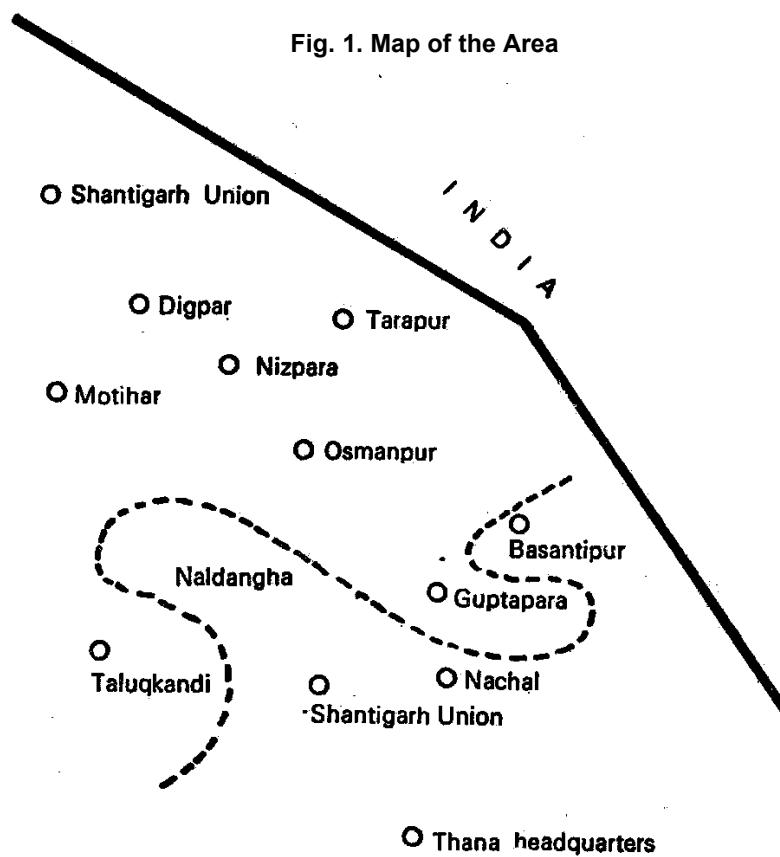
This study is by its nature incomplete in many ways. It was completed, simultaneously with other urgent work, in five months; it would be revealing to know what impact BRAC's work in the area, and other changes, will have had in, say two years time, on the power structure described here. It deals with a specific area, a semi-forested border area with a high percentage of *Adivasis* and is not typical of the whole country. However, with every additional piece of research it becomes clearer that the 'typical' village is a myth and regional variations are very significant. Semi-forested border areas cover more of Bangladesh than one might think (it's a very long border!) and several typical social characteristics we found are similar to those found in *chars*, which also cover a significant, if remote, section of the country. In any case it seems likely to us that the operations of the elite and lower sections of the government, though some aspects are specific to this area,

will be broadly similar throughout the country, particularly in the half which is relatively remote and recently settled.

Regarding methodology we were not able to make detailed surveys of whole villages to determine landholding, income etc. and relied on close relationships with numerous local people to obtain accurate information, which was of course cross-checked with different sources. Also a great deal of the information we collected relates to illegal or 'semi-legal' activities, which may be why it is so often ignored, and it is obviously difficult in these circumstances to guarantee 100% accuracy. However, we feel strongly that it would be more inaccurate to leave these activities out of account because of a certain margin of error, and because some of our figures are approximate it does not mean they are not generally correct, and are certainly accurate enough for most practical purposes.

Finally, it should be said that we have concentrated on the nature and operations of the local power structure, that is, the relationships and activities of power-holders. We have not examined their relations with their followers and faction members in great detail since this would have made the study enormous and this area has been covered already in a number of village studies.³ Also, we have not followed their connections beyond the Thana level, except in certain areas. Enough has emerged from our work, however, to show that understanding the operation of the power structure at Sub-division and District levels is of great importance in analysing developments in the villages we studied. Time did not allow us to do this and so, in the best tradition of research, we conclude that further investigation in this direction is definitely needed.

Fig. 1. Map of the Area



Notes

Union boundary line : - - - - -

International boundary line : ———

2.1 The Place and the People

Our study area consists of a cluster of ten villages on the border of two Unions, all within four miles of the Indian border. It is 2.5 miles from the local Thana headquarters, which is 13 miles by motorable road to the Sub-Divisional town. It is rather hilly and 40-50% of the land belongs to the Forest Department with 30-35% still being forested. Many large and small *bils*, which are suitable for paddy cultivation, exist throughout the area. Until the 1940's the area was mainly inhabited by Adivasis, but this has been changing rapidly. There has been a gradual inflow of Muslim Bengalis, particularly as refugees from India during the 1965 war and an emigration of Adivasis at the same date, during the liberation war of 1971 and during the abortive rebellion of the 'Kader Bahini' in 1976. Unlike some other parts of the country kinship relations among the Muslims are not yet very widespread because of their recent migration from different places.

About half of the total land is low and 30-35% suitable for cultivation of *aus* and *aman* paddy, the remaining 15-20% being used for *aus* and *rabi* crops. The quality of the hilly land is much lower and most of it is owned by the Forest Department; some of it is used for pineapple, cassava and some *rabi* crops. It is normally a rice surplus area and also exports large amounts of timber and firewood to local towns and Dhaka. The great majority of the people are involved in agriculture as farmers and labourers, or wood-cutting on an individual basis or as part of large-scale operations (see Chapter 5). However, a significant number are engaged in trade, smuggling and thieving.

2.2 Motihar

Starting from the west the first village is Motihar⁴. It has a population of approximately 1750, in 288 households (271 settlers and 17 Adivasi), of which 76% surplus, 22.6% self-sufficient, 22.6% marginal and 47.2% landless. Before 1960, except for three households, all were Hindu Adivasis (Koch, Hajong, Marsk and Rajbangshi). Now the main powerholders are:

LUTFUR, EX-MEMBER, AGE 50

Before 1939 Lutfur's family left for Goalpara, Assam, from an adjacent Thana. In Assam they were not well-off, so they left in 1950, and as refugees settled in Motihar. Lutfur's father got 2.3 acres from the government, now Lutfur has 20-26 acres.

In 1964 he was elected Union Parishad Member and during 1964-66 was delegated the job of distributing 'abandoned' property to refugees under the guidance of a First Class Magistrate, locally known as the Border Magistrate.

Before 1964, Lutfur and all his brothers were engaged in money-lending activities. During 1964-65 he bought 7-8 acres and after 1965 he illegally occupied 8 acres from an Adivasi and is still having problems in registering it. The rest of his land, about 10 acres, he obtained legally since 1970. 4.5 acres of his land is given out on sharecropping basis to three marginal farmers who are his friends and supporters.

He is a member of the managing committee of the local High School and Secretary of the Motihar Furkania, Madrassa.

Lutfur used to be the local President of the Jamaat-e-Islami and before that was in the Muslim League. In 1970-71 he was in the Awami League, but actually supported the Muslim League. He is now again politically active and interested in the coming U.P. election, and is trying to forge a relationship with Matin Master, Secretary of B.N.P, Shantigarh Union. Through him he will try to approach the local B.N.P, M.P.

He has been heavily involved in timber and leaf business (see Chapter 5).

ANWAR, AGE 60

Anwar arrived in 1963 from Assam as a refugee where he had been quite well-off. As a result of his close relationship with Lutfur he got an extra 2 acres on top of the usual 3 acres allotted by the government. He was also able to steal one acre from three Koch brothers when they went for India in 1963, only one of them returning. In 1975 he bought 0.55 acre from his brother and in 1978 he got 2 acres by acquiring false documents from the Revenue Department. Lutfur helped him in this and probably received some money.

He often acts as a *dala* and has a good relationship with the B.N.P. Union Secretary, Matin Master.

KASHEM, AGE 50

Kashem arrived from an adjacent Thana in 1969-70 and originally worked in a shop. He started with one acre and then bought another. In 1978, jointly with Anwar, he illegally occupied 1.5 acres. He also sharecrops land from Anwar (0.5 acre) and Lutfur (1.00 acre) and borrows two cows from Anwar. He is also involved in paddy-husking business.

MANJU, AGE 37

Manju arrived in 1975 from an adjacent Thana and bought 3 acres but sold 2 acres in 1977.

In July 1979 he tried to forcibly occupy 1.20 acres of Koch land but has not been successful (see Chapter 3). He has a close relationship with a notorious thief from an adjacent village who inspires a lot of fear in people. Manju also gets support from Kashem, Anwar, Kamal Member, Matin Master and Lutfur. Cheating is his main preoccupation.

FACTIONS

There are two major factions, one led by Lutfur Ex-Member and consisting of five small kinship groups. This faction is quite active and violent and is supported by 37 households.

The second group is larger, 82 households, which includes some of the Adivasis.

About half the population, mainly landless and marginal do not belong to any faction; the village is dominated by the smaller, more violent and disciplined faction.

2.3. Taluqkandi

South-east of Motihar is Taluqkandi with a population of 4100 in 683 households (27 Adivasis and 656 settler) of which 3.4% are surplus, 16.8% self sufficient, 30.0% marginal and 49.9% landless. Before 1950 there was only a handful of settler households in this village, concentrated in the south. After 1954 the settlers also moved into the north. Although it is a large and important village no Union Parishad Chairman has ever been elected from here. The influential people are:

MOHIUDDIN MEMBER, AGE 85

Mohiuddin arrived in 1968-9 from an adjacent Thana where he had been a marginal farmer involved in illegal activities and had been more or less expelled by the local people.

On arrival he bought 3 acres from the father of Selim Commander and became involved in the leaf business (see Chapter 5) without the knowledge of the *Patar Company*. He was caught and imprisoned by the Police, the case is still continuing. After that he started cattle rustling with five lieutenants: three have been murdered by him, one is in jail and one is on the run with a warrant against him. His associates helped him to get elected as U.P. Member to provide them with official backing, and he has a close relationship with the B.D.R. and Police. However, when in

1977 he tried to help two colleagues by bribing the B.D.R., he was caught red-handed by a senior B.D.R. Officer and sent to jail. Still, he managed to get released after three days.

Another case has been filed against him, his brother and others for robbery, but he has given Tk. 2,500/- to the Police to cross his name off the list. Two murder cases are still pending but he has got them postponed by bribing the *Peshkar* of the Sub-Divisional Court.

He has good connections with Salehuddin, Kamal, Zahurul, Mizan, Ex-Chairman of Sundorganj Union, the Chairman of Shantigarh Union and Mustafiz. He was previously in the Awami League, has now joined the B.N.P. and has an indirect relationship with a Minister, through the Minister's brother who is his god father.

For the last two years he has illegally occupied 10 acres belonging to a big landlord and Ex-Chairman and 5 acres belonging to one of the associates he murdered, and has acquired false documents. He is also involved in the timber business (see Chapter 5).

He is a gambler and heavy drinker.

SELIM COMMANDER, AGE 56

In 1961 Selim Commander moved from Taluqkandi south to Taluqkandi north. Before 1947 he was a member of the 'Home Guard' and after the partition he became an Ansar Commander; in 1968 he was released from the Commandership. In 1961 he had a land dispute in which his opponent was severely beaten and Selim had to give up his claim to settle the case. The house he lives in belonged to an Adivasi but Selim Commander arrested him on a charge of theft and sent him to the Police after severely beating him. After being released, the man left for India and the Commander occupied his house.

In 1963-4 he became a Basic Democrat and tried to bribe five other Basic Democrats to become U.P. Chairman, but a rival bribed one of his supporters with Tk. 10,000/-. Consequently, Selim lost the election.

After the Communal riot of 1964 when the Adivasis left Pakistan and refugees arrived, the Union Parishad was given the power to allocate land; he used this opportunity for his own benefit and acquired 35 acres, 3-4 by purchase and the rest by occupation. In 1966 he was arrested on a charge of smuggling but was released through the influence of his brother-in-law, a big Contractor and an influential Muslim League leader.

During the liberation period (1971 March to December) he became the Chairman when the previous Chairman got killed. He worked closely with the Pakistan Army, acting as a recruiting agent for the *Razakars* and *Al-Badar*. After liberation he was in hiding for two years and finally returned after paying the Police (Tk. 500/-) the B.D.R. (Tk. 500/-) and influential freedom fighters such as Mahfuz and Salehuddin (Tk. 900/-). To cover this he had to sell some land and now has 25 acres and a shop in the Taluqkandi market.

In 1977 he unsuccessfully tried to get elected as the U.P. Chairman and spent Tk. 7,000/-, having to sell 5 acres of land. In May, 1977, he was caught by the 'Kader Bahini' who demanded rice and cash; he saved himself but his son was badly beaten up. (That night the same group of Kader Bahini are said to have killed Taher Company).

During 1964-7 he was closely connected with the then Border Magistrate, who is now a top official in the Anti-Corruption Directorate in Dhaka. Influential local leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami and B.N P. are his friends.

Now he is very pious and religious.

MAHBOOB, AGE 32

Mahboob came from Assam on an exchange basis in 1950 with his father; his father got 9 acres of which Mahboob inherited 2 acres, but got another 5 through his wife. He was elected U P. Member in 1977.

He has good connections with the U.P. Chairman and Selim Commander, who is his brother's sister-in-law's husband. A few of his relatives are still in India.

MUSTAFIZ, AGE 31

Mustafiz arrived in 1964 with his elder brother as a refugee from Assam. Between them they got 3 acres, one bundle of C.I sheets and Tk. 300/- from the government. Mustafiz got another 1.50 acres allotted, and in 1967 illegally occupied 1.25 acres belonging to a Hajong. He obtained the document in early 1979. Over the twelve years 1967-1979 he bought 3 more acres. He has had five wives of whom three are dead.

He has close connections with Mohiuddin, Humayun, Salehuddin and others and was involved in the leaf business (see Chapter 5). When he was caught and imprisoned by the Police; the case is still going on.

Previously he was in the Awami League and has now joined the B.N.P. His main preoccupation is gambling.

MUSTAQ, DEALER, AGE 40

Mustaq arrived in 1950 as a refugee from Assam with his father who got three acres allotment. When he separated from his father three years ago he bought an acre and took two acres on sharecropping basis from his father. He used to be a small cloth merchant but since 1972 he became a ration-dealer. For the last four years he has held an Authorised Grain Dealer (A.G.D.) licence enabling him to procure paddy and sell it to the government (see Chapter 6 for some of his activities).

He has good connections with a rice-mill owner in the Sub-Divisional town with Mahaboob Member and other. Formerly he was in the Muslim League, now has joined the B.N.P. He is said to be religious.

FACTIONS

There are four factions in this village, one of about 100 households led by Mohiuddin, consisting of his friends and relatives and including Humayun of Naldangha. Its main activities are gambling, drinking, prostitution, cheating and rustling and is quite violent.

The second is of about 200 households led by Selim Commander, which is mainly a political grouping.

The third is led by Mahaboob and consists of his relatives and friends; it is almost a part of the second group and usually cooperates with it. There is a cold war going on between these two groups and the first group, as a result of which no-one from Taluqkandi has even been elected U.P. Chairman despite the size and importance of the village.

The fourth group consists of 60 households including almost all the Adivasis and Hindus and it tries to defend the interests of the minority groups. About half the people do not actively belong to any faction and these are mainly landless and marginal households. During the last U.P. election Mohiuddin was able to get himself elected Member despite the relatively small size of his faction, by threatening people with beating, robbery and death.

2.4. Naldangha

North of Taluqkandi and east of Motihar is Naldangha. It is in a different Union from the villages which border on it to the north, south and west and is much smaller than any of them. It has a population of 750 in 119 households (all of whom are settlers) of which 6.7% are surplus, 16.0% self-sufficient, 24.4% marginal and 52.9% landless households.

The main power holders are:

NAZMUL, AGE 55

Nazmul comes from an adjacent Thana and fought in the British Indian Army in Burma. He arrived in 1950 and worked as a day labourer until he was able to occupy 5 acres of Adivasi land in 1964. He claims that this land was given to him instead of his Army pension by the government, but this is almost certainly untrue because he is the only Ex-soldier in the area, and it is strongly denied by the Adivasis. He was the first settler to come to this village and at the time of the communal riot of 1964 he also occupied 1.5 acres of *Khas* land and sold off the cows and CI sheets belonging to Adivasis who had fled to India. With this money he bought 5 acres more.

Since that time he has been heavily involved in money-lending business which is now his main pre-occupation (see Chapter 4). During 1971 he was again involved, with many other people, in grabbing the possessions of Adivasis who fled to India, (for example, copper and brass utensils, wooden door frames and other household goods).

Now he has 20 acres. His main business is with the Adivasis and for this purpose he maintains a good connection with several Adivasi leaders.

FARID, AGE 50

Farid came in 1967 from an adjacent Thana and married into the same family as Nazmul. At that time he occupied one acre of *khas* land and started engaging in money-lending activities. Now he has 18 acres. Like Nazmul he does not engage in politics or other activities but concentrates on making profit through money-lending.

His daughter is married to Kamal Member's son.

MATIN MASTER, AGE 35

Matin came from an adjacent Thana with his family in 1976 and still has land there. He bought 4 acres from refugees. He is a matriculate and a teacher at the Naldangha government primary school.

He is the Secretary of the Union branch of the B.N.P. and has good connections with Idris Master, the local M.P., the Chairman of Suridorganj U.P., the President of the local B.N.P. Jubo Dal, the Secretary of the Thana Teachers' Association, the President of the Central Teachers' Association, in Dhaka and Zahurul.

He is very active as a *dala* going between the above mentioned individuals and the government officers making money. Recently, at the instruction of the local B.N.P. M.P. Matin has harvested disputed land and has made a substantial amount of money.

IDRIS MASTER, AGE 35

Idris arrived after 1964 from an adjacent Thana. Married in Naldangha and got one acre as a gift from his father-in-law. He also bought one acre from Selim Commander. He is a gambler and lost most of his land except 0.5 acre. However, he is quite active and powerful because of his close connection with Matin Master.

Previously he was a teacher in Nizpara primary school, but the school has been closed since it was damaged in 1977 by a cyclone. He contested the last U.P. election but lost.

MOSTAFA

Mostafa arrived with his father from an adjacent Thana after the communal riots of 1964. His father at that time bought 6 acres. Mostafa got 2 acres from his father and has bought 1 acre.

He used to belong to a violent gang led by his uncle and another leader, both now dead, and including his cousin and brother-in-law. Before his election in 1977 Mohiuddin guided and used this group, but after the election he formed his own group and in the winter 1978 killed Mostafa's brother-in-law in a land dispute. The next day Mostafa's cousin and another relative killed Mohiuddin's father and in late 1979 that relative joined Mohiuddin's group and at the instigation of the latter killed Mostafa's cousin.

After the death of his relatives Mostafa has become the leader of the original gang; there is a case pending against him for *dacoity* on which his family has already spent TK. 25,000/-in bribes and other expenses.

HUMAYUN

Humayun come from a notorious family of *dacoits* which has been here for two generations his profession is the same and he has been in jail once and has two cases pending against him. He has close links with Mohiuddin, Salehuddin and Kamal.

He has married twice and divorced his first wife, his present wife was previously Salehuddin's third wife; he has one daughter and a son. He has no land.

FACTIONS

There are two main factions, the first consisting of locals, 50 households led by Mostafa, Matin Master and Idris.

The second is less dominant, consisting of 45 households of refugees from India.

Mizan, ex-Chairman, controls the dominant group of 50 households from outside.

2.5. Nizpara

North of Naldangha is the large village of Nizpara, which dominates the surrounding villages. Until 1965 the only market in this area was held here, but during the 1965 war it was closed and shifted away from the border to Taluqkandi. Now Nizpara too has a market but Taluqkandi is growing in importance. Nizpara has a population of 2700 in 448 households (327 settlers and 121 Adivasis) of which 2.2% are surplus, 5.8% self-sufficient, 30.8% marginal and 61.2% landless. Before 1950 there were no settlers; the influx began after 1964. The main leaders and power holders are:

HUDA MASTER, AGE 60

Huda came to this village from another part of the same District in the early 1950's and acquired 5 acres of *khas* and of which he still has 2 acres. For about ten years he forcibly occupied *khas* and Adivasi land and allocated it to people coming from his own area in return for substantial bribes. However, many people who came from that area went away without getting anything, becoming destitute. About 100 families came in this way and got his help and patronage in return for money and services, but most eventually left; only about 20 remaining. While he has operating this business he was able to employ several people and buy several houses including one big one and a shop as well as various luxuries and expensive furniture.

He was also involved in the timber and leaf business (see Chapter 5) and in various types of forgery and deception (See Chapter 8). In 1971 the local people tried to get him involved in incidents that would get him put behind bars or preferably get him killed. His good education has always given him high prestige and helped him in these various activities, and he was previously the headmaster of Motihar primary school, now retired.

He is the father-in-law of Kamal.

KAMAL MEMBER, AGE 45

Kamal arrived in 1960 from an adjacent Thana and for his second wife married Huda's daughter. His eldest son has married Farid's daughter.

When he arrived he worked as a labourer for Manzur Sarkar and forcibly occupied two acres. Now he has seven acres. Later on he became a supervisor for Manzur, and ran off with about Tk. 10,000/-although, Manzur was able to get some of it back.

After that he was heavily involved in the leaf and timber businesses and these were the basis of his present wealth. He was closely connected with the former U.P. Chairman and in 1977 fought the U.P. election against Taher Company unsuccessfully. After Taher was killed by the Kader Bahini he became Member in a by-election, mainly because of the support of Manzur Sarker. He

is now very close to Mohiuddin and other U.P. Members and has good connections with the M.P.. Matin Master, the Forester, B.D.R. and Police. He is the Secretary of Nizpara primary school committee and has recently made some money out of it (see Chapter 7) and is member of various other committees including the madrasa committee.

In 1971 he went to India and his brother Salehuddin was a freedom fighter, which helped him later, but recently Salehuddin caused a clash with the landless people, which Kamal is trying to settle, so far without success.

SALEHUDDIN, AGE 36

Salehuddin arrived in 1960 and obtained two acres of land; he is the younger brother of Kamal. He has had five wives and many mistresses.

Through his elder brother Kamal he is well connected with Mohiuddin and many others and also works closely with Latif. During the day he spends most of the time drinking and gambling ; at night he steals cows and other things with the help of many colleagues within the region and across the border.

There are eleven cases and three warrants against him at the present time; by liberal bribing he usually manages to escape, but has been sent to jail several times and severely beaten by the Police and B.D.R. in the market. In 1971 he was a freedom fighter and extracted several thousand taka from poor people and Razakars like Selim Commander. He was involved in these activities until 1973.

HAFIZ, AGE 55

Hafiz came from Assam in 1964 and got allocated 9 acres, 3 acres for him and each of his two sons Lutfur, ex-Member, helped him to get the additional land allocated to his sons. He also got money for three ploughs and three bundles of C.I. sheets. He was the leader of all the refugees and in 1967 tried to grab 8 acres from a Koch ending up with almost half of it (see Chapter 3) and grabbed 4.4 acres from other Adivasis. After obtaining false documents from the Revenue Department he gradually sold off all

his property except for three acres of his original land registered in the name of Latif, his nephew. In 1976 he went to Sylhet, but came back after one year and resumed his old business of land-grabbing obtaining false documents with the help of Lutfur, ex-Member.

He works closely with Latif, his nephew, and has close connections with Salehuddin, Humayun and Kamal Member, and was involved in the leaf business for two years as a sub-agent. He has been married six times, two wives are divorced, two are engaged in collecting firewood from the forest and two live with their respective sons: Latif and Mofiz.

Latif is the son of Hafiz's elder brother, but after his brother's death Hafiz married his wife, so Latif is both his nephew and step-son.

LATIF, AGE 35

Latif came with his uncle Hafiz and lived with him for five years until he got married. He has been married twice. When they separated Hafiz gave him 3 acres and he bought 4 acres of illegally occupied land from Hafiz. He is a very heavy drinker and has now sold off all except 3.5 acres.

He is closely connected with Salehuddin, Humayun, Kamal Member, Lutfur ex-Member, and Mohiuddin Member and is a member of the Village Defence Party. He is involved in cattle rustling and other kinds of robbery and thieving and has six cases against him: two for robbery, others for highway robbery, attempted murder, illegal occupation of temple land and the attempted abduction of two young women.

MAHFUZ, AGE 36

Mahfuz arrived in 1960 from another part of the district and occupied 5 acres of *khas* land. In 1962 his father came and bought 3 acres; since 1971 Mahfuz has bought 7 acres more.

In 1971 he was a freedom fighter and terrorised many people, extracting Tk. 900/- from Selim Commander, Tk. 1000/- from another influential person and other amounts from less

important people. Now he is the Secretary of Nizpara (west) primary school and has unsuccessfully contested the U.P. elections. At the present time he is trying to get the support of the landless people in order to become U.P. Member in the next election.

He was involved in the leaf business and spent six months under arrest. He used to drink but does so no longer.

TAHER COMPANY, DEAD

Taher was originally from Comilla; in his youth he was involved in a murder case, fled to Assam to escape conviction, and started a business there, hence his title. In 1964 he came to Nizpara as a refugee and occupied a huge area of land temporarily abandoned by the Adivasis; by obtaining false refugee cards he got extra land allocated to him and bought a house at the Thana headquarters. Later on much of the land was reoccupied by the Adivasis and allocated to other refugees by the Border Magistrate.

He was deeply involved in the leaf business and bought 9 acres out of the profits, his son presently has 16 acres. As a rich and intelligent person he was often asked to give judgement at *salish* and was very influential; Kamal called him his godfather-in-law, a fictitious relationship, to get his patronage. In the 1977 U.P. election he contested and won by bribing election officers, spending Tk. 10,000/- but when Kamal Member and Salehuddin found out on election night they got very angry and said that Taher Company's days were numbered. In the same year he was killed, apparently by the Kader Bahini.

After he was shot he survived for several hours during which he told his relatives that he knew who was responsible, but would not reveal their names, for the safety of his family. Nevertheless, the relatives found out and were preparing to file a case when Kamal reached a settlement with them.

The following year Kamal was elected U.P. Member in a by-election.

MANZUR, AGE 72

Manzur is the biggest landowner in this area, having 150 acres in different places. During the British period his family were *talukdar*; he is influential throughout the whole Thana, and plays a 'kingmaker' role during elections. He was previously involved in the timber business in a very big way and was once U.P. Member while his uncle was Chairman in an adjacent Union. He was recently the major force enabling Kamal to become Member of local U.P. Now he is more or less retired, does not engage in business or politics and has become 'respectable'.

FACTIONS

There are three major groupings in Nizpara. The first is led by Kamal Member and consists of his own group of 40 households and a group of 25 mainly Garo households, as well as Hafiz's small kinship group of five households and 10 households from the east *para*. Formerly Kamal had the support of Manzur, but this is no longer very strong.

Second is a looser grouping under a number of small leaders including three groups of 20, 15 and 37 households and a large group of 69 Adivasi households.

For certain purposes all Adivasi groups sometime unite under the leadership of a Garo Catholic who has a good contact with the Catholic Mission.

Although the first faction is much smaller than the second, because of its tighter organisation, the ruthlessness of its members and its good connections it is more powerful and successful. Recently with the development of a landless organisation, resistance to it has increased somewhat (see Chapter 9).

2.6. Digpar

North-east of Nizpara is the small village of Digpar with a population of 400, in 64 households of which 14.1% are surplus,

46.9% marginal and 39.1% landless. The whole population is Adivasi (Koch and Garo).

This large area, which is mainly forest, was first settled in about 1800. The Koch are all Hindus and the Garos all Christians, six families are Catholics and the rest Baptists. The village is completely dominated by one man:

GOBINDA MASTER, AGE 45

Gobinda lives in the home of his father and mother-in-law, who are dead and who left him 12 acres. He has also bought two acres. He gives 4-5 acres to his relatives on a sharecropping basis.

He worked as a relief worker for World Vision, a foreign Protestant relief organisation, for two years and then as a teacher and supervisor of seven schools for five years. He resigned in 1975 but is still the Secretary of seven schools in the area and supervises the payment of wages and feeding of Children. These are all schools supported by World Vision and mainly attended by Adivasis.

Although he is powerful in this small village he has few links with the powerful settlers in the surrounding area and his main contacts are with World Vision and the Baptist Missions.

2.7. Tarapur

Tarapur village is bisected by the international border and only a small part is in Bangladesh. The soil is poor and although it has been inhabited for four generations many people have left for India during the last twenty years. The present population is about 150 in 22 households (3 settlers: 19 Adivasi) of which 77.3% are marginal and 22.7% landless households.

There are no powerful people and no significant factions, the people are living from hand to mouth.

2.8. Osmanpur

South of Tarapur and east of Nizpara is the sizeable village of Osmanpur with 500 households and a population of about

3000, of which 455 households are settlers and 45 are Adivasis (11 Hajong, 21 Koch, 13 Garo). The percentages of different categories are 5% surplus, 8.2% self-sufficient, 31% marginal and 55.8% landless.

Before 1950 there were 105 Koch households, 81 Hajong and 2 Garo. In the following year two settler families arrived from Assam and Aziz's father came from another part of the District. After 1958 there was an influx of Muslim refugees from India and self-proclaimed refugees from within the region, since it became accessible as the result of some clearing of the forest. At the same time Adivasis began leaving for India and some Garos arrived from further south.

The main power holders are:

AMIN, AGE 45

Amin came here with his parents from Assam in 1964 and his father got allocated 2 acres: they had been day labourers in Assam. Amin now has 17-20 acres, 5.4 acres of which he acquired by force from Adivasis.

He was heavily involved in the leaf business and made a lot of money. He has good connection with Mizan, ex-Chairman of Sundorganj Union and also with two brothers who are leaders of the landless people in Osmanpur. During Pakistan he was in the Muslim League and after 1971 joined the Awami League, now he is in the B.N.P. He tried to be elected U.P. Chairman twice, in 1973 and 1977 and is thinking of trying again.

AZIZ, AGE 40

Aziz arrived from another part of the District in 1950 with his father who built his house on 0.3 acre of *khas* land. In 1973 Aziz started occupying land belonging to Adivasis and has occupied about 16.5 acres during the last few years. He also bought and sold 1.4 acres making a profit of Tk. 9,000/- after three years. He used this profit to bribe Revenue Department Officers and obtain false documents and to bribe the Police (see Chapter 3). In

these activities he is helped by Rob, Suruj and three more, they are known as the 'gang of six'. He has been imprisoned five or six times for land occupation, smuggling and robbery. During 1971 he was a self-proclaimed freedom fighter, terrorised the local people and held them to ransom.

He has a close relationship with Mizan, Ex-Chairman. Alim Master, Kalam Member, Salehuddin, Abdul Hug, Kader and others, as well as the U. P. Chairman.

He is a frequent gambler.

GANI, AGE 23

Gani is the younger brother of Aziz and has 3 acres, 1.5 acres from his brother and 1.5 acres that he bought.

Because of his education up to class ten, he is Aziz's spokesman and front man, and so has a close connection with the M.P. Chairman, Kamal Member and others.

In 1979 there was an idea that the government would divide the union into three and that the new U.P.'s would be nominated by the existing U.P. In order to get Gani nominated, Aziz paid the U.P. Tk. 1500/-. However the plan has been dropped.

ROB, AGE 45

Rob arrived in 1958 having come from Assam in 1950 and built a house on *khas* land: in 1960-62 he forcibly acquired 4 acres of *khas* land.

There are numerous cases against him for cattle rustling, land-grabbing, robbery, etc. His power derives from his leadership, with Aziz. of the 'gang of six.'

SURUJ, AGE 45

Suruj arrived as a refugee in 1965 and got 1.5 acres from the Border Magistrate. He started business as a woodcutter and then went into money lending. Now he has 14 acres, most of which he acquired through money lending. He rapidly developed a good connection with Amin who helped his business by giving *salish* judgements in his favour (see Chapter 4).

FACTIONS

The dominant faction is led by Amin and consists of his own group of 50 households and Suruj's group of 35 households. In special cases he gets support from Aziz's group of 40 households.

The opposing faction consists of two neighbourhood and kinship groups of 30 householders from the same *para*.

There is a third group consisting of 45 Adivasi households. This group sometime gets support from the second faction when they have a common interest.

2.8. Guptapara

East of Osmanpur is Guptapara, a medium sized village and still predominantly Adivasi. Out of 211 households and a population of about 1300, 61 households are settlers, 50 Garo, 60 Koch and 40 Hajong of which 2.8% are surplus, 9.5% self-sufficient, 59.2% marginal and 28.5% landless households.

The powerful people are:

ABDUL HUQ

Abdul Huq is a cloth merchant from the District town, where he still lives: he came in 1976 with, he claims Tk.1,80,000/- bought 1.15 acres and forcibly acquired 25 acres working with Alim Master, Alamgir and Akhtar. He has been a major supporter and financier of their land-grabbing activities.

ALAMGIR

Alamgir originally came from an adjacent Union in 1970 and his father and brothers are still there. Before his migration they were not well off.

During the liberation war he illegally occupied a large area of Adivasi land and harvested the paddy with the help of pro-Pakistani elements. He invested his profits in buying land in his native place where he now has nearly 10 acres and has also occupied 20 acres of Adivasi land in Gupta-para.

He has good links with Alim Master, Mizan ex-Chairman, Abdul Bari and the B.D.R. He throws regular parties for the B.D.R. and other friends, which include drinking. One of his brothers is a fertilizer dealer in the Thana headquarter and also issues tax receipts when animals are sold (see Chapter 8). Through this brother he has good links with U.P. Chairman and Members.

KADER, AGE 50

Kader and his son-in-law Joynal who is his close friend and associate came originally from a neighbouring District. He arrived in 1970; now he has eight acres of illegally occupied Adivasi land which he seized in collaboration with his son-in-law Abdul Bari, who lives in the District town.

His main activity is cattle rustling and he obtains fake sale receipts from Sattar, clerk of Sundorganj Union, via Alim Master and from Alamgir's brother, clerk of an adjacent Union, via Alamgir. (see Chapter 8).

ANJAN KUMAR, AGE 65

Anjan Kumar has one wife, one son and three daughters of whom one is married. They are Adivasis (Garos) and have 1.5 acres of land.

His main activity is a prostitution business in which he employs his wife, two unmarried daughters and four other women from outside the area. He also supplies alcohol to his clients and his house is a favourite place for the local leaders to entertain the Police and B.D.R. and each other.

He is closely connected with Alamgir, Abdul Huq, Kader, Joynal, Alim Master, Jamal, the B.D.R., Police and Forest officers, Mizan ex-Chairman, Zahurul, Mohiuddin and Salehuddin. He provides them with information about the movements and land of the Adivasis, who hate him.

FACTION

The main and powerful faction in Guptapara is led by Alamgir and consists of his friends and relatives inside and

outside the village notably Abdul Huq, Anjan Kumar, Aziz Rob, Kader, Joynal, Alim Master and a very few landless Hajong. Abdul Bari controls this group of 30 families from the District town, its main activity is land-grabbing.

In addition the Koch, Hajong and Garos each have a group of their own but they are not very strong or active.

2.10. Basantipur

East of Nachal is another village of similar size, Basantipur, but settlers now make up two thirds of the population (111 households), the remainder being Koch (48 households) giving a total of 157 households and a population of about 950. The percentages of different classes are 7.0% surplus, 2.5% self-sufficient, 54.0% marginal and 36.2% landless.

The only powerful faction in this village is led by Rafiq Daktar who has succeeded in dominating the village with the support of about 20 settler households.

RAFIQ DACTAR, AGE 42

Rafiq Dactars arrived in 1967 from the sub-divisional town where he used to be a compounder for the present M.P., who is also his cousin. As his mother has said, "so long as my nephew continues in power, no one can touch us." From this job he got the title 'Daktar'. When he arrived he acquired 8 acres, now he has sold 6 acres. He was heavily involved in the leaf business and in the last four years has only been involved in the timber business.

In 1971 he was caught by the freedom fighters because of his opportunist collaboration, but Nur Muhammed's brother, a relative by marriage and a freedom fighter released him.

In 1978 he took advances of Tk. 50,000/- from many people of the area and promised to deliver timber and land, but has not produced anything. He is involved in many dishonest and exploitative activities (see Chapter 8) making good use of his connection with the Police B.D.R., Forest Department and Jamal a timber merchant.

Now he is a member of the B.N.P.

2.11. Nachal

South of Guptapara and Basantipur is the large village of Nachal with a population of about 3,000, in 500 households, of which 59 households are Adivasi. The percentage of different classes 3.8% surplus, 14% self-sufficient, 43.2% marginal and 39% landless. The main leaders are:

ALIM MASTER, AGE 50

Alim has two wives and many mistresses; he was a folk music master, hence his title. In 1967 he came from Agartala and acquired 2 acres; last year he paid taxes on 9 acres, but actually exercised rights over nearly 30 acres of Adivasi land. He was involved in the leaf business for four years as an agent (see Chapter 5).

He has good connections with Abdul Bari from the District town, Abdul Huq and all the clerks and peons of the *Tahsil* and District Revenue Offices who helped him to legitimise his illegally acquired land. Before 1971 he was clerk to the local U.P. Member, who had the power to allocate land to refugees under the supervision of the Border Magistrate. In 1971 the Member was killed; Alim Master and Mizan ex-Chairman took all his papers and used them to acquire land.

NUR MUHAMMED, AGE 50

Nut Muhammed arrived in 1964 from India, though he was originally from an adjacent thana, and acquired 3 acres. Now he has 6 acres and has bought and sold 10 acres over the last four years. In 1973 he got elected U.P. Member and immediately afterwards got married for the third time.

He has a good connection with the M.P., the Police, B.D.R., Forest Officers, and some link with a Minister who comes from this area. His eldest son's father-in-law's brother was an Awami League M.P. in 1973 and Nur Muhammed was able to use this connection effectively.

AKHTAR, AGE 50

Akhtar was previously a peon in the local *Tahsil* office, from which he resigned in 1970. During that period he acquired 4.5 acres; of which he bought 1 acre. At the same time he was involved in the leaf business with Nur Muhammed and Alim Master. After 1971 he twice attempted unsuccessfully to be elected U.P. Member.

At present he is closely linked with Alim Master and one of his unmarried daughters is a nominated U.P. Member. She is also a Family Welfare Visitor undergoing training in another District and so does not attend meetings regularly. Through her Akhtar can influence the U.P. and local affairs.

SATTAR, AGE 30

Sattar arrived from Assam in 1967 and presently has 0.60 acres. He is a U.P. tax collector for Sundorgonj Union and collects the sales tax on cows, bullocks, and buffaloes; this makes him a key man in the cattle-rustling business (see Chapter 8). He also collects the *chowkidari* tax, trade licence fees, rickshaw and bullock cart tax etc., He is not paid any fixed salary but receives 20% commission on all the taxes he collects.

He is closely linked with Akhtar who has unsuccessfully contested the U.P. election and through him is linked with Alim Master and others. He is also connected closely with Akhtar's unmarried daughter who is a nominated U.P. Member.

MALEK CHOR, AGE 32

Malek came from another part of the District in 1971 and worked as an agent of the Pakistan Army. At that time he was very powerful, occupied Adivasis' land and harvested crops in collaboration with Alim Master and Alamgir. After the liberation he was arrested and sent to jail for theft.

After 1975 he joined the 'Kader Bahini' and was given some weapons which he used to intimidate people and for looting: He was arrested with his gun and sent to jail for two years; now after his release he is engaged in stealing and smuggling.

His present associates are Aziz, Rob and Alim Master. He has no land and lives with his father-in-law.

FACTIONS

There are six factions in Nachal. led by Alim Master, Akhtar, Nur Muhammed, two small settler leaders and one Adivasi. Previously Alim Master, Akhtar and Nur Muhammed were all in one faction and were involved together in the leaf business. However, in 1973-74 they fell out over the profits and split into three groups, but there is still a general understanding between Alim Master and Akhtar, especially over the illegal occupation of Adivasi land.

An opposing faction has been formed by Nur Muhammed's group and the Adivasis in an attempt to try to get back the land grabbed by Alim and Akhtar.

2.12 Outsiders

In addition there are, of course, powerful men from out-side this cluster of villages who play an important role within it for one reason or another. The principal ones are:

ZAHURUL, AGE 35

Zahurul lives in the Sub-Divisional and District towns; his relatives are rich and influential people, including a journalist, as S.D.C. and a Forest Ranger.

He is mainly engaged in cattle rustling, smuggling and land grabbing and is guided by the brother of a Minister who comes from this region. He has good links with the Police at Thana, Sub-Divisional and District levels, with Mizan ex-Chairman and with Mohiuddin Member.

MIZAN, EX-CHAIRMAN, AGE 38

Mizan came from India after partition in the early 1950's with his father and settled in an adjacent Thana where they were allotted 3 acres land. In Assam they had not been well off and after arriving worked as labourers, Mizan also worked as a cook.

In 1963 he moved from that place to a village adjacent to this area and forcibly occupied 2 acres of Koch land. In addition he acquired 7.8 acres of *khas* land through the help of the then Border Magistrate. He also forcibly occupied *khas* and Adivasi land and allocated it to people in return for bribes, clearing about Tk.15,000/-.

He was elected Chairman of Sundargonj Union Parishad in 1973 and sold 2 acres to cover his expenses.

He lost his Chairmanship in 1977 but is still very active. Through his brother-in-law, Abdul Bari who has a shop in the District town, he has a good link with the District Revenue and other officers.

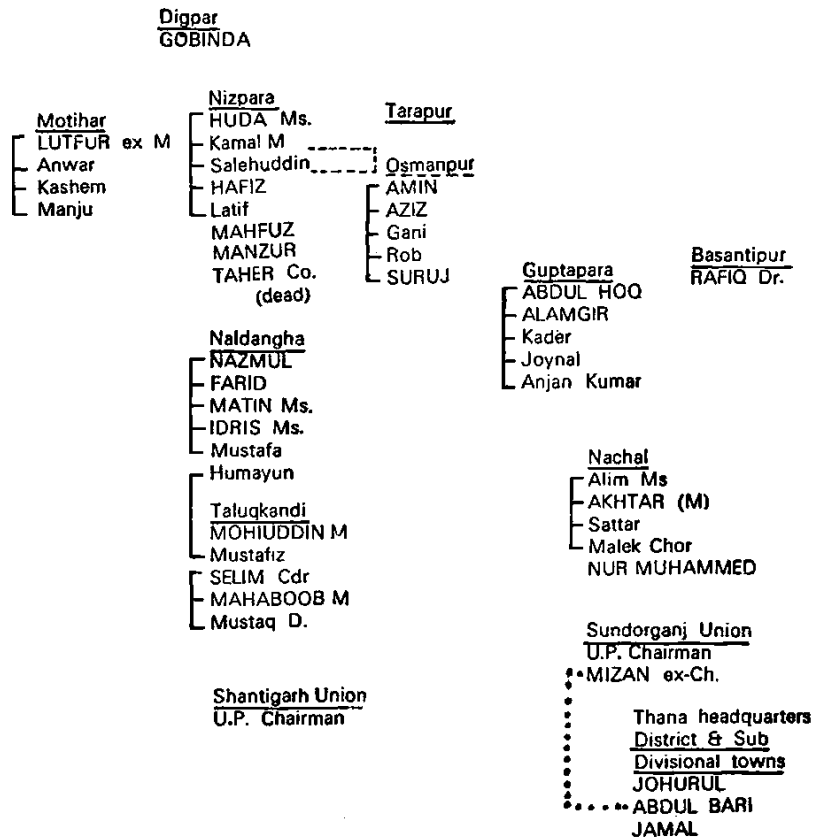
JAMAL, AGE 35

Jamal is from an adjacent Thana where his father has some land. He has one wife and many mistresses. He was involved in the leaf business throughout, first as a clerk, then he was made a small partner to compensate him for a motor-cycle accident, and made enough money to build a house at the Sub-Divisional town where he now lives. He is now heavily involved in the timber business and whereas he was formerly known as Jamal Chor (thief) is now known as Jamal Shahib (see Chapter 5).

2.13

Having identified the power-holders and their relationships (see figure 2), in the next chapters we shall show how they maintain and extend their control over private and public resources, both those internal to the area and those coming from outside. We focus on their control over land, (private and public) capital (private), the forest (public), food rations (public) and education (public) and also look at the way they integrate their control over state law-enforcing agencies (the B.D.R. and police) with the use of force themselves when necessary. We start with the most basic resource-land.

Fig. 2. Village Level Power Structure



Notes :			
Chairman = Ch.	Company = Co.	Faction links	
Member = M.	Commander = Cdr.	Kinship links	
Master = Ms.	Daktar = Dr.	Marriage links	
Dealer = D.	Father of female	Faction leader	
	Member = (M)	Powerful leader	CAPITALS

3.1. Land

As can be seen from the previous chapter, the history of this area during the past twenty years has been a continuous process of land occupation by Muslim refugees or self-proclaimed refugees. This process is still going on and every year at transplanting and harvest times new disputes arise. Whether it will be completed in the future by the departure of all the remaining Adivasis or whether it will cease before this happens; is still uncertain. It would be completely wrong however to imagine that a large number of settlers simply arrived over the years, each occupying some land for himself; this can be seen to be an unlikely explanation simply by the large number of landless settlers in the area. In fact the process has been much more complex and has been initiated and carried out by quite a small number of active and ruthless men, who have greatly expanded their power and wealth as a result. While some of them have kept hold of the land they occupied and managed to get it registered, others have sold off large amounts to more recent arrivals to finance other operations and their vices. Their methods vary from outright violence, through trickery and deceit, to bribery and forgery of official documents, the method depending on the individual capacities of the entrepreneur. Some sophisticated operators use a mixture of all three or work closely with others who have talents, which are complementary to their own. Adivasis have very rarely sold productive land voluntarily in this area, so it can be seen that a very significant amount of land has changed hands illegally over the last twenty years varying from village to village, from 0% in Digpar to 100% in Naldangha. The methods of operation can be seen by looking at some recent examples for which we have detailed data, supported by land documents and case numbers, and direct personal observation.

3.2. General History

Land-grabbing reached its peaks in 1964-65 and 1971, when communal riots and wars forced many Adivasis to flee temporarily to India. At those times men like Selim commander, Mohiuddin member, Huda Master, Lutfur Ex-Member, Alim Master, Alamgir and Mizan Ex-Chairman were able to do it on a large scale and build up their present wealth and power, and men like Nazmul laid the basis for their money-lending business.

At the present time a new wave which started in 1976-77 with the Kader Bahini rebellion is still going on; for the most part these men now play a more 'respectable' role, providing protection, encouragement and finance to a younger and more active generation. Notable exceptions are Mohiuddin Member and Selim Commander who are still very actively involved and Amin, who has found more peaceful ways of achieving the same ends. Most of the action has shifted from Taluqkandi & Naldangha to Nizpara, Osmanpur, Motihar and most recently Basantipur and Guptapara.

3.3 Nizpara

Recently Hafiz and his nephew Latif have been the most active in this village. In 1967 they forcibly occupied 8 acres belonging to a Koch, who over two years filed nine cases against them and others in the Sub-Divisional Magistrate's Court. They were all arrested but released after seven days on bail while the case continued. When their conviction become imminent they approached the Chairman, who threatened and pressurized the Koch to come to a compromise. As a result he kept 4.25 acres and Hafiz got 3.75 acres; the Chairman influenced the Court at this stage by reporting that Hafiz had never occupied any land, for this he received Tk.1000/. At the same time Hafiz occupied 4.40 acres from two more Koch and has been able to obtain documents from the Revenue Department.

In 1971 a coalition of Selim Commander and Hafiz with support from Kama! Member, Lutfur Ex-Member together with

others from outside occupied 100-200 acres of land belonging to Adivasis who had temporarily fled to India. In many cases the land had been registered in the names of relatives who had since died, but since no proper birth and death register is maintained in this area the occupiers could claim that they were not dead but still in India and the land was therefore 'enemy property.' If the owners complained to the Court it was referred to the O.C. Police, who never came to the village because he had been bribed. Much of this land was sold to new arrivals, some was recovered by its owners and Hafiz kept 3 acres of temple land and 1 acre of private land he got in this way, and Latif 3 acres.

In 1979 after returning from Sylhet he resumed his old occupation and occupied 1.5 acres from his first victim, transplanting and harvesting it, while his nephew occupied 0.25 acres belonging to another Koch. They were inspired, by and obtained false documents through Lutfur Ex-Member, got support from Matin Master and through them have a good link with the O.C. Police. Both Koch have continued paying taxes on all their land all the time and appealed to the U.P. Chairman and Members but without result. Hafiz's activities are not restricted to Adivasis. Ten years ago he sold 0.65 acres to a settler but gave no documents: now he claims he sold it to his nephew Latif, who is cultivating it by force. They have both said recently that when they have finished not one decimal of land (0.01 acre) will remain to the Adivasis. Most of the land they occupied has been sold and the money spent on gambling.

Selim Commander is also still active in this village and with a group of supporters tried to occupy 2.44 acres belonging to a Koch, at transplanting time in 1979. He failed, however, because the owner made a case and the O.C. Police came. A case was also made in the sub-Divisional court to prevent him from trying again, but on the 20th November he came and harvested the 0.50 acres that were ready.

3.4. Motihar

In Motihar a well-organised gang has been operating in 1978 and 1979 apparently led by Anwar and Kashem, but actually run from behind by Lutfur Ex-Member. They obtained false documents from the Revenue Department for 9.32 acres of land owned by nine Koch and transplanted and harvested it by force. We shall examine one of these cases in detail.

In 1979 they attempted to transplant by force, but failed and the owner transplanted himself. However of the 20th November they occupied 1.66 acres and started harvesting it while he was harvesting another field with hired labourers. At that point the police arrived, insulted the owner and arrested one of his Muslim labourers, in connection, they said, with a completely different matter. The owner told them to arrest him, not his labourer, but they refused and took him to Taluqkandi market, where, after bargaining, they agreed on a Tk. 500/- bribe to release him. Since the owner had no money, they accepted a bond from his relative, the village *chowkidair*.

The next day a new group of ten labourers arrived, led by Matin Master, Union B.N.P. secretary, who produced a paper with an official stamp signed, he claimed, by the O.C. Police, ordering him to harvest all the disputed land and store the paddy until the issue was settled. This is being done according to the instructions of the B.N.P. with the support of the U.C. Chairman and Members. Matin harvested all disputed land and says that one half will go to whoever transplanted and one half to the Union fund. Unlike this plot, almost all of the other disputed land was transplanted by Kashem. Anwar and friends, so the owner will not receive anything.

The result of this ingenious delaying tactics is to confuse the owners and so help the occupiers, it also penalises the Adivasis, who are mostly Awami League supporters. Afterwards, Matin started selling paddy saying that it was to pay the labourers. No one knows how much he harvested how much he paid and how much he has stored, So far the M.P. has not appeared. Matin has

also been harvesting Adivasi land not apparently claimed by anyone (except himself).

In addition to this gang Manju is operating more on his own in Motihar though with support from all the others. In July 1979 he forcibly occupied 1.20 acres belonging to two Koch brothers and obtained false documents that were verified in court. However, the U. P. Chairman of that Shantigarh Union rejected his documents and the village people supported the Koch brothers, who were able to destroy the aman paddy he had transplanted, transplant themselves and harvest successfully. Manju has again filed a case in the Sub-Divisional Court.

3.5. Osmanpur

Like Motihar, land-grabbing in Osmanpur is quite well organised and is carried on by the 'gang of six' led by Aziz, Rob and Suruj and supported by Mizan Ex-Chairman. Kama! Member, Salehuddin, Abdul Huq and Alamgir as well as the U. P. Chariman of this Union. Aziz has occupied 10.70 acres from three Hajong during the last four years and an additional 0.75 acres where he has his house. This year he occupied an additional 5.0 acres from a Koch. In all cases the owners have continued to pay taxes, though Aziz has used the profits from previous land transactions to bribe the Revenue Department officers and obtain false documents.

In 1979 one of the Hajong owners managed to transplant his land himself, but Aziz filed a case at the Sub-Divisional Court to prevent him from harvesting it. Over a period of time the Hajong had given Tk. 1200/- to the Police for protection, and on the advice of the O.C. Police he went to the court of the Additional Deputy Commissioner (A.D.C.) in the District town to make a counter-case. After receiving his prayer (application) the A.D.C. gave a written instruction to the O.C. Police instructing him to provide protection while the field was harvested.

However, Aziz found out about this and gave Tk. 8000/- to the Police; when the Hajong brought his instruction, the O.C.

Police told him that it was not effective since it did not come from the Deputy Commissioner (D.C.) himself. He told him to come back to the Police station the next day and arranged for Aziz to harvest the field while he was there. Aziz harvested at great speed, paying his labourers Tk. 20/-, twice the normal rate. The Hajong now has to pay back the Tk. 1200/- he borrowed against the crop and has given up trying to get help from the law; he feels there is no law for Adivasis.

The A.D.C. later explained to us what had happened officially. He told us that when people have a false land claim they do not take it to the civil court, which is intended for these disputes and where documents would be examined carefully. Instead they wait until the owner is harvesting the land and go to the criminal court, presided over by a Magistrate, and apply for a “144” which is a kind of injunction forbidding a specific person from going near the specified property. This is intended to be used when an owner suspects his land is going to be illegally occupied, but in these cases the illegal occupier uses it against the real owner. Since this is a criminal court the false documents are not examined carefully.

When the Hajong went to the A.D.C.’s court he did not understand this and did not ask for the “144” to be over-thrown, which he could have done, but simply got an instruction to the O.C. Police. The O.C. Police’s reply to the A.D.C. was therefore “Sir, what could I do, there was a “144” against this man, so how could I protect him ?” Filing this kind of case is a favourite tactics of the occupiers since it seems to prove legal ownership. If he is not the legal owner why should the Court give a “144” in his favour ? It is thus a powerful weapon and often used.

Osmanpur also provides another example of acquiring land without having to buy it, in the activities of Amin. He has managed to acquire 17-20 acres since he arrived from Assam in 1964; out of this, 2 acres are temple land for which he has got false documents, but on which the Adivasis are still paying taxes, and 2.75 acres which he took on sharecropping basis several years ago. The owner, a Hajong, is still paying taxes and manages to get a small part of his share every now and then. In addition Amin

bought 5.4 acres at low prices and forcibly occupied 0.60 acres from a Koch. More recently he became very friendly with an old Koch whose son is a primary school teacher in Digpar. This family had already lost 0.5 acres to a small client of Amin and the 'gang of six' in 1975 but nevertheless when the Old man became very ill Amin used to visit him frequently with presents of milk and bananas. During the last six months of his life the old man suffered from amnesia and delusions and his son was not able to be with him all the time because of his job. At one stage Amin was able to persuade him to sign a paper, saying it was some village business. After he died Amin produced this paper and claimed that it proved the old man had taken an advance of Tk 6000/- against 1.25 acres of land and that the land now therefore belonged to him. He occupied and started to cultivate it. The son objected, saying he knew nothing of this, they had received no money and the claim was false. He would not hand over the registration document and has continued to pay the land tax.

Amin is still cultivating the land.

3.6. Basantipur

In 1976 a large group got organised to make a big effort to occupy most of the Adivasi land in Basantipur at once. The main leaders were Salehuddin and Kamal from Nizpara, Alamgir from Guptapara, Aziz and Rab from Osmanpur, Alim Master from Nachal and guiding from behind were Abdul Huq and Abdul Bari from the District town and Abdul Bari's brother-in-law Mizan, Ex-Chairman of Sundorganj Union. About 100-125 acres were involved. Many of the registered owners had died and the land had not yet been registered in the names of their descendants, so the occupiers claimed that the owners were in India and the land was 'enemy property'. No proper birth and death register has been maintained in this area and the 'mutation' or registration in the name of the descendant is often obstructed by the *Tahsilder*.

The occupiers engaged to obtain false documents from the office of the Circle Officer Revenue (C.O.Rev) in the Thana

headquarters where they have good contacts. It is significant that the price of a blank Pakistan-government officially stamped paper, which is now only useful for forging old documents, is Tk. 100/- in this area. However, the real owner have got the real registration papers and have continued to pay the tax.

The eight leaders have about hundred colleagues including their friends and relatives and other similar people from different places, to whom they gave the occupied land to cultivate on share-cropping basis and from some of whom they have taken advances of money against the land. When they first forcibly occupied the land in 1976 there was a lot of fighting between the Kader Bahini and the BDR so the Adivasis were frightened to resist in case they were labelled Kader Bahini.

However, this year for the first time the owners have started to resist (see Chapter 9).

3.7 The Law

As can be seen much of this activity is outside the law and yet both the owners and occupiers are trying to use the law to support their claims whenever possible. The ways in which this is done were clarified for us by some senior District level government officers.

First, even the land allocated to refugees by the Border Magistrate was only given to them on a one year share-cropping basis and does not become legally theirs even by continued occupation. This ruling is completely ignored and ineffective.

Second, a great deal of land is claimed and occupied on the basis that it is 'enemy property', now officially known as vested property. The enemy property ordinance was passed after the 1965 war and was intended to be used to confiscate the property of those who had defected to India and make it available for settling refugees from India. In 1967-69 a census was carried out to find out who had permanently left the country for India and confiscate their property. However, as we were told, actually the

census officials never went to the field, they just sat in the *Tahsil* office and whenever they saw a non-muslim name in the list they classified it as enemy property; the *Tahsildars* who had a great deal of influence over the classification and as we were told “all the lower officials are influenced by unscrupulous elements”. Thus it was and still is quite a simple matter for land to be classified as enemy property; but it is extremely difficult to get a wrong classification changed, the owner usually having to go to the S.D.O. the A.D.C. and finally the Ministry in Dhaka. This is a lengthy and expensive process, not the least of his problems being how to get into the Ministry, which is inside the guarded secretarial building with very restricted access.

Another serious problem is it quite difficult to find out how land has been classified. We were given two examples, one by a Senior District Officer and one by an experienced Kanungo (officer of the land settlement operation). In the first case a man came to the Magistrate's court appealing against an enemy property classification on 13 small plots of land. In 11 cases they were not even classified ‘enemy property’, but he had been deceived by the *Tahsildar* who used his control over the local records to show a large amount of land, as classified in this way and to extract bribes on the pretence of changing the records. The remaining two classifications were false and were overthrown. The senior Kanungo told us that he had completed part of the settlement operation in an adjacent Thana where he found that 75% of ‘enemy property’ classifications were false and that in case of one village 100% of rich classifications were completely false, even a number of Muslim families having been included. Since ‘enemy property’ like other *khas* land is officially leased out by the S.D.O but is often in practice open for occupation, which is rarely prevented, the advantages of the present situation for land-grabbers are obvious, and the possibilities for ‘unscrupulous’ local government officials are substantial.

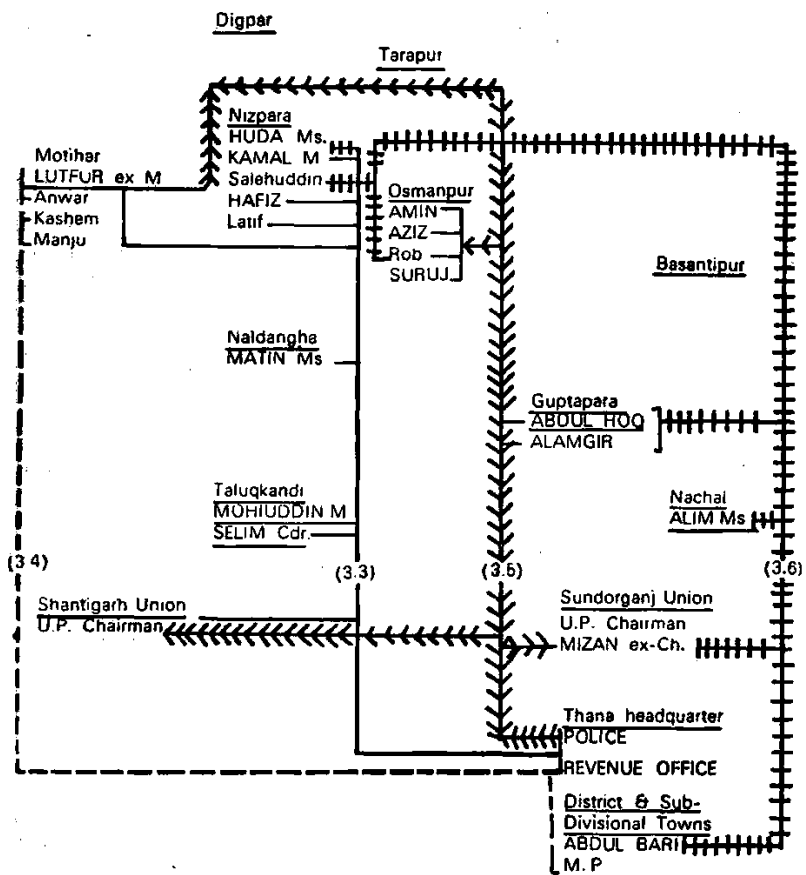
Another government activity, which was carefully designed originally to protect the weak and enforce the law, but which is now in practice doing the opposite, is the land settlement operation. This was established during the British period and

consists of four main stages spread over six to seven years in which all land is carefully surveyed, ownership established and revenue fixed. It is repeated about every thirty years. At every stage different officers are used and opportunities are given for appeals in order to make the system as foolproof as possible. We were told that in earlier times the most senior, experienced and competent officers were used for the settlement operation, but this is no longer the case, and the wide powers given to the officers, the cumbersome nature of the operation and the ignorance of the people about the process now mean that there are multiple opportunities for frightening, deceiving and extorting money from the people. This process is presently going on in our area.

3.8.

From these few examples we have tried to show the mechanics of how the local elite are able to extend their control over private and public land, making many prosperous peasants landless in the process. We have tried to give some idea of the size and scope of the process, the nature of the different types of people involved and their connections and of the way they are able to use a combination of force, manipulation and corruption to achieve their ends. In the face of this sophisticated system the ignorant and unorganised people on one side of it and the senior government officers on the other side seem almost helpless.

Fig. 3. Land Grabbing Operations



- Notes
- i) Major operators during 1965 and 1971 Periods are underlined.
 - ii) Number within brackets correspond with the section number in the text.
 - iii) A particular type of line shows the linkage among people involved in a particular incident.

4.1. Capital

In addition to extending their control over land the local elite are also able to make very effective use of their near monopoly control over liquid capital, by lending it out at extremely high rates of interest. In fact these two activities are closely related since several of the principal money-lenders got their start by illegally occupying land and are using their power over their debtors to continually increase their holdings at low cost. However, the two types of operation demand quite different styles, connections and methods of operation and each is favoured by different people. They do, however, usually maintain good links with each other and support each other when necessary. The money lending style can be seen from some examples.

4. 2. Nazmul

Nazmul built up his initial capital by land-grabbing and looting in 1964 and 1971. In 1966 he started money-lending at the rate of 100% per crop season: there two main crop seasons, *aus* and *aman* (spring and summer). In that year he lent one maund of paddy to a Garo, who was unable to repay, and continued to extend the loan until 1973. By that time the debt had grown to 16,384 maunds, an absurd amount. Nazmul claimed Tk. 5,000/- and was prepared to forget the rest, so to clear the debt he received 0.50 acres. So, for an investment of Tk. 20/- in 1967 he made a profit of Tk. 4980/- six years later.

In 1972 he lent two maunds and Tk. 200/- to another Garo who returned Tk. 200/- and five maunds after one season (the

price at that time was Tk. 40-50/md.), Nazmul claimed Tk. 1800/- more and his debtor had to give him the use of 0.50 acres for one year. That year the yield was fourteen maunds and the following year he received another four maunds. He still claimed Tk. 1200/- more. Finally his debtor paid him another Tk. 100/- after selling his cow and begged to be forgiven the rest. The matter was settled, Nazmul's profit was approximately Tk. 2,300/-.

In 1974 two more Garos borrowed two and a half maunds before the *aus* season and had to repay fifteen maunds after the *aman* season because the bad harvest had forced prices up, and consequently the rate had increased.

In 1977 he lent two maunds, by late 1979 it has already become twenty four maunds and of course is continuing to increase.

This year a landless Muslim sharecropper borrowed Tk. 150/- on the understanding that three maunds would be repaid after the *aus* harvest, but this was impossible because of a poor crop. He was told to repay six maunds after the *aman* harvest but his entire share of the crop was only six maunds. He is now trying to approach Nazmul to get his debt reduced to three maunds but has so far not succeeded.

Nazmul also leases out six pairs of bullocks and receives six maunds per season for each pair. This year he has lent out a lot of paday and expects to receive one hundred and forty-five maunds; he has already recovered forty-five maunds.

4.3. Farid

Nazmul's relative Farid is also involved in the same business on the same scale. In early 1979 he lent three maunds, to a Garo who has not been able to repay it after two crop seasons, by which time it had become twelve maunds. Therefore, Farid is now demanding 0.85 acres of land, the Garo's only possession.

In 1971 another Garo borrowed Tk. 60/- and promised to pay two maunds paddy after one crop. Because of the war he fled to India and all his property was looted so he could not repay. By 1974 the debt had become thirty two maunds and he had to hand over 2 acres in settlement. Over the years Farid has acquired 17 acres by this means.

4.4. Suruj

Suruj has also acquired 12.5 acres through this business. In early 1973, he lent Tk. 150 and expected six maunds paddy after the *aus* harvest. After two crops his debtor could not pay the twenty four maunds which had accumulated, and demanded a (village court) *salish* hearing. The judges consist of the local leaders and included Amin, with whom Suruj had cultivated a good relationship. As a result the verdict was in his favour and he received 0.50 acres in settlement. His debtor received fifteen seers paddy as consolation.

4.5.

Of course many people from all social classes are involved in money lending at varying rates interest, depending on kinship and other relationships. Generally those operations are small and do not involve large-scale transfers of resources such as those described above. Almost all the leaders mentioned so far in this study are involved in a small way; however small number of men have been able to specialise in this field successfully with quite dramatic results in terms of building up their power and wealth. In our area they number about fifteen and include three Garo surplus farmers, one of whom is the son-in-law of another, and one Koch widow, all of whom only operate within their own community and at half the normal rate of interest; also the three examples mentioned above, and Amin. Amin however, is limiting the size of his operations and becoming more generous because he was been defeated twice in the U.P. Chairmanship elections and will need money and goodwill if he is going to win next time. All fifteen are large scale operators the remaining eight mainly self-sufficient farmers, including Mahfuz, who are engaged on a significant scale

and trying to increase the size of their involvement. Mahfuz, however, is now following the same policy as Amin, for the same reason.

It can be seen that success in this business requires a fairly respectable and friendly reputation and good connections with village leaders to ensure success in *salish* and repayment. This means it cannot be easily combined with land-grabbing, politics or semi-legal activities, and the successful large money-lenders tend to spend most of their time pursuing this business.

The effect of the business on the clients was expressed by one of them while we were watching an eclipse of the moon. "Do you know what's happened to the moon ?" he said as it began to disappear "He took a one paisa loan from the sun.....".

5.1. The Forest

“The Forest Department is destroying everything; across the border they are replacing, we are just destroying”—District level government officer.

In the last two chapters we examined how the local elite use their economic and physical power and their government connections to gain control over the private property of others. In this chapter we look at their control over a large public resource, the forest. In our area the Government Forest covers an area of about 8,000 acres or half the total land, of which about two thirds is still forested, but this is rapidly changing. Large timber merchants are cutting at a rapid rate; with the unofficial co-operation of the Forest officers and the large timber trees are disappearing. This co-operation is in sharp contrast to the harassment and punishment experienced by poor and destitute people when they cut head-loads of firewood in the forest to sell for their survival, as they have always done. Possibly no other activity demonstrates so clearly the imbalance of power as the way in which different groups are able or unable to exploit this common resource.

5.2. The Timber Business

Every year for three months from February to May large numbers of trucks come to the area and carry away large *sal* timber trees to the towns, and small trees and branches to the local markets for firewood. The main operators are Jamal, Mizan Ex-Chairman, Rafiq Daktar and other big ones from outside the area. The way it is done is like this:

The Adivasis have some plots of private registered land inside the government Forest, which they do not use much for agriculture because the soil is poor. The timber operators buy up these plots at Tk. 300/- to 500/- per acre and obtain permits from the District Forest Officer (D.F.O.) to cut down the trees on this land. The permit is officially given free in these circumstances, but in fact costs several thousand Takas in bribes. Having obtained the permit the operators then start cutting down trees in the government Forest adjacent to the plot and carrying them into the plot where they place them next to old stumps. Very often the plot contained nothing but stumps to begin with, usually these stumps are re-cut six or seven times. each time enabling the operator to get a different tree stamped by the Forester and Ranger. This is to get round the regulations which state that each tree has to be officially stamped with a special hammer before it can be removed.

It is interesting that the labourers who cut the trees get different rates depending on whether they are cutting inside or outside registered land. Inside they get Tk. 10/- per *buli* (18 ft long by 2.5 ft. diameter) and Tk. 25/- to 30/- per *lok* (18 ft. long x 4-5 ft. diameter) and Tk. 120/- for a truck load of firewood. In the government Forest they get Tk. 20/-, Tk. 70/- and 140/- to 150/- respectively. This is because of the extra risk, which of course falls on them not on the contractor. Because of this difference in the rates they know exactly which timber really belonged to the government and could give us detailed information; additional information was obtained from the local clerks of the big contractors and from Forest officers. Ninety per cent of all trees are cut in the government Forest under this arrangement.

The Police, BDR, and Forest officers all have to be paid and the exact amounts are not known, but the Ranger has to come from his office 15 miles away and charges Tk. 20/- per mile travel allowance plus a fixed commission.

The price of timber in the Sub-Divisional town is at least Tk. 80/- per cubic foot (cft) and the transport cost Tk. 1000/- per truck. One truck can carry about 200 cft, and the cutting cost of 200 cft.

(on government land) is Tk. 1,400/- Therefore the sale price per truck is Tk. 16,000/- and the costs Tk. 2,400/- excluding bribes. Firewood is sold locally with no transport cost at Tk. 2,000/- to 2,500/- per truck with a cutting cost of Tk. 150/-. The profits are therefore, Tk. 13,500/- per truck load of timber and Tk. 2,000/- per truckload of firewood. The amounts of timber and firewood cut are about equal. Several of the timber contractors are also government building contractors and use the timber in their construction operations, making a double profit (see below)

In three forested Unions, including our area, in the winter season of 1978-79 about 40 large contractors were operating for five months, each employing an average of 100 labourers per day, One or two months is spent at the beginning of the season negotiating with the Forest officers and demarcating the plots then one or two months is spent in cutting and the rest of the time in carrying away. All the trucks have to pass the same point and in that year there were at least 20 truckloads per day for at least 45 days of which about half carried timber and half firewood. This give- 450 truckloads of firewood at a profit of Tk. 2,000/- per truck, total Tk. 9,00,000/- and 450 truckloads of timber at Tk. 13,500 per truck, total Tk. 60,75,000/- combined total Tk. 69,75,000/-, Divided among 40 operators this gives an average of about Tk. 1,75,000/- each, but this figure is of course exclusive of bribes which are certainly a heavy expense and may take as much as one third or even half the total profit. Since other sources inform us that the contractors make about Tk. 1,00,000/- net profit per year we can gross at charges totaling about Tk.75,300/- per contractor. It should be explained that in making these calculations we have consistently used minimum figures and generally underestimated, so the real amounts might well be higher.

5.3. Lutfur Ex-Member and the Bridge

There are other ways of carrying on this business, for example Lutfur Ex-Member has been involved in timber contracting without a licence since 1985. In 1967 the Circle Officer Development (C.O. Dev) sanctioned Tk.11,000/- to build a wooden bridge over a local river. Lutfur negotiated with the

Forester to supply him with a large amount of timber for the bridge, but sold most of it unofficially. Now he is using the repairing of the Motihar Furkania Madrassa of which he is secretary, for the same purpose.

Working closely with the Forester, he has made at least Tk. 40,000/- by this means, over the years.

5.4. Jamal and the Tree

To show how these relationships and operations work in detail, it is worth looking at the example of one tree. Unusually it was cut during the off-season since it was in Bashantipur village, and close in an all weather road; it was also unusual in that the local landless people tried to prevent its illegal removal.

On the 26th October 1979 Rafiq Daktar sold a *sal* tree to Jamal, claiming that it grew on his land and received Tk. 300/-. In fact it grew on *khas* land belonging to the Forest Department but since Jamal always maintains a good relationship with the Forest he had negotiated with him unofficially and was able to cut down the tree.

He also usually maintains a good relationship with the Police, frequently taking them expensive food and organising parties for them at Anjan's house with alcohol and women available (he explained this to us in some detail). But he had not made any arrangement with them over this tree.

In Bashantipur village by this time the landless people had become quite well organised and they were fed up. They are arrested for cutting small amounts of firewood in the forest and Jamal was getting away with cutting down a big timber tree in front of their eyes. They informed the O.C. Police who, since he had not been paid anything came to the scene accompanied by Mizan Ex-Chairman. Jamal usually maintains a good relationship with him too, but had not given him anything for this tree.

Now Nur Muhammed Ex Member had a permit from the Forest Department to cut down a different tree in Guptapara and Jamal tried to borrow that permit and use it for his tree. The Forester became frightened, however, because of the involvement of the O.C. Police and denied all knowledge of the business.

Jamal was very determined to carry off the tree because his future prestige and operations would be at risk if he failed. He has a good connection with the Forest Ranger and on the 10th November arranged for him to come and have the problem solved. The amount of money he paid is not known but the value of the tree in the Sub-Divisional town is about Tk. 3,000/-.

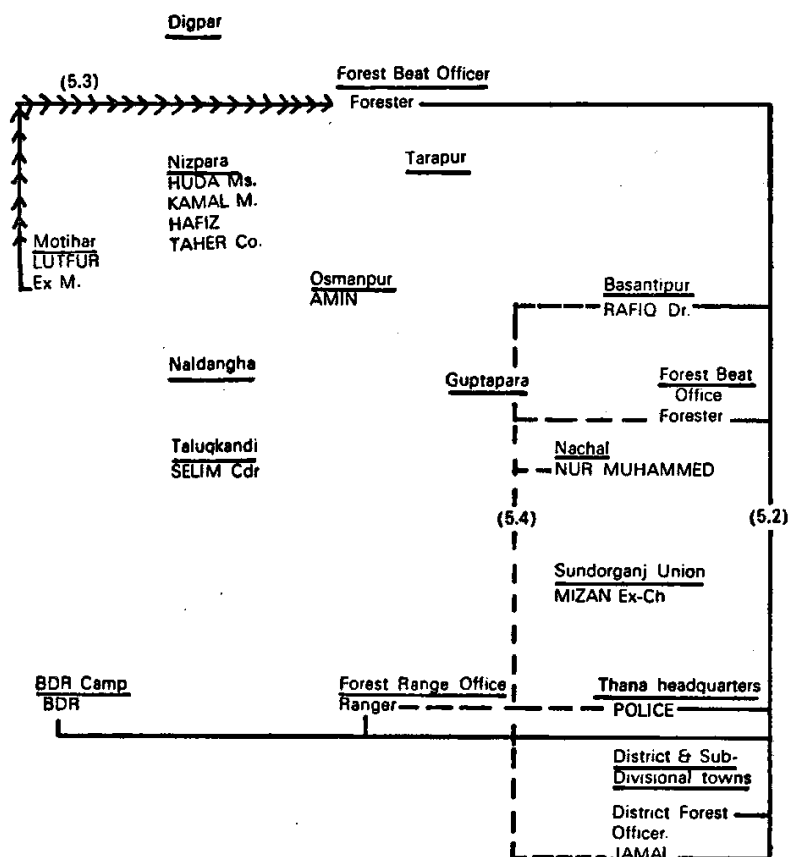
By understanding the details of this small scale low level transaction we can get a fairly good idea of how the larger operations are arranged at higher levels.

5.5. The Leaf Business

Until 1975 the timber business in the forest was overshadowed in size and profitability by the leaf business. From 1965 leaves were collected in large amounts from the *Komvi pata* trees in the forest, cured by boiling and drying in the sun bundled and sold to the *biri* (local cigarette) factories, mainly in Rangpur, where they were used for the outside of *biris*.

The business was controlled by the 'Patar Company' run by four big businessmen, two from Tangail, one from Rangpur, and one from the then West Pakistan. They had a government licence making them the sole agents authorised to buy these leaves in the whole region comprising half a dozen Unions.

Fig. 4a. Forestry Activities: Timber



- Notes :**
- i) Number within brackets correspond with the section number in the text.
 - ii) A particular type of line shows the linkage among people involved in a particular incident

The bought from the local people through many agents and stored them in their go-downs locally and elsewhere before shipment. The main agents in our area included Kamal, Huda Master. Taher Company, Hafiz. Kashem, Amin Selim Commander and Mizan ex-Chairman, all of whom were among the 99 people who bought a few shares. After the first few years 75% of the leaves were bought from across the border in India, which was of course illegal. The local Police and BDR used to receive Tk. 150/- each from the Company and the local Forest office Tk. 200/- every month. In addition the Police and BDR used to regularly stop agents en route and collect varying amounts, usually about Tk. 50/- per stoppage. To maintain good local public relations the Company built a mosque and madrassa next to its go-downs, and divided a one sixteenth share among all the local influential people.

In 1975 the new government banned the use of leaves in *biri* making and clamped down on smuggling. As ordered, the BDR *Naik-Subadar* went to the Patar Company office to seize all the leaves. He was offered one lakh taka to allow the stock to be sold but refused and the stock rotted. Several go downs have been dismantled and removed. One taken by the BDR and two of the main shareholders are now in business, as lawyers.

Throughout the period of operation, every year for about two months many trucks each carrying 150 mds, of leaves used to leave the go-downs every day. Initially the agents used to buy the leaves at Tk. 32/md and sell them to the Company at Tk. 36/- md. with a carrying cost of Tk. 2/md. In addition they got commissions of Tk. 400/- to 500/- per month depending on volume. By 1975 they were paying Tk. 30/- to 60/- per md. depending on quality. It takes one man about five days to collect and cure one maund so the collectors income was Tk. 6/- to 12- per day, full time. By this time the price in Rangpur was 1200/- to 1700/-per md. and the transport cost to Rangpur Tk. 50/-md, The Company was clearing several hundred takas per maund on thousands of maunds a year.

5.6. The Agents

It was not long before the agents realised that if they could by-pass the Company and contact Rangpur directly they could take these profits themselves. Amin for example did so with a partner whom he subsequently cheated by claiming that he had been caught by the Police and had to give up all the stock he cleared Tk.72,000/-over two years. His partner lost everything and is now landless.

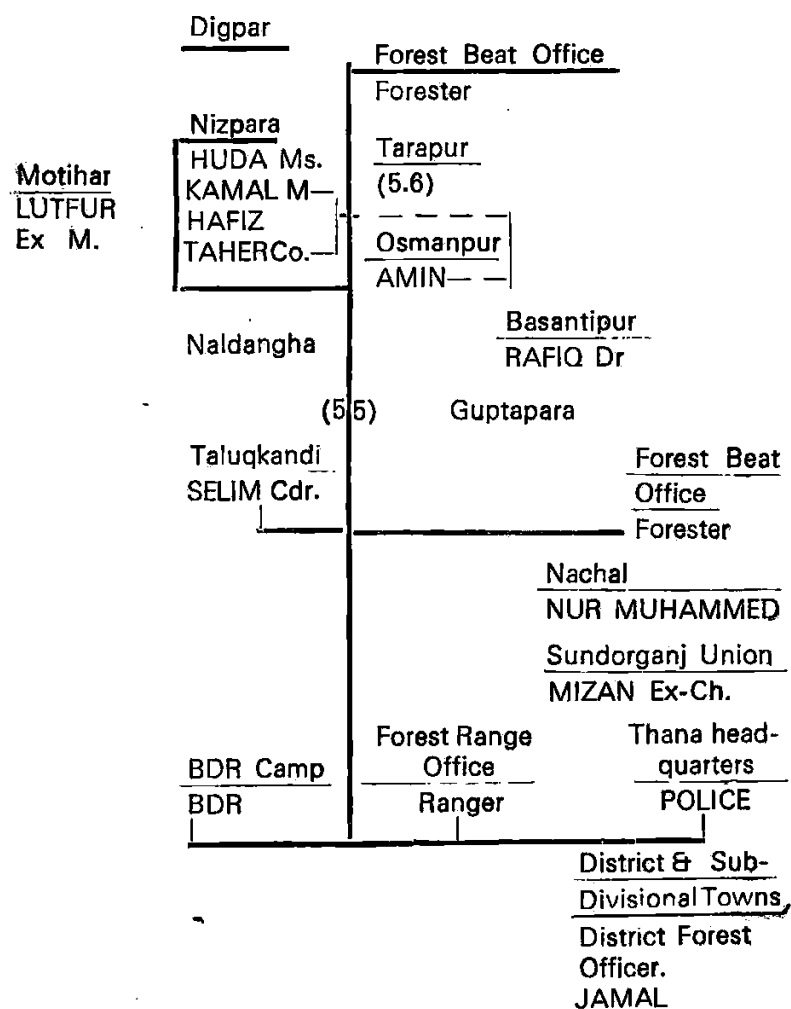
By 1975 about half the total production was going 'black' directly to Rangpur. Kamal was the principal contact with the *biri* makers of Rangpur, working under the protection of Taher Company, whom he later may have killed. Almost all the agents were involved in this way, many later switching over into timber business.

5.7. Firewood

There large and profitable operations are in stark contrast with the activities of landless and destitute families who spend all day cutting a headload of firewood, then carry it on their heads to the local market where it fetches Tk. 5/-. According to the Forest Department this work is only legal if the wood is broken and collected with bare hands (not cut with an axe) and if a permit application signed by the U. P. Chairman is submitted and a fee of Tk. 1.50 paid for each head load. Because of the difficulty of confirming to these regulations no-one does so, and so poor people who have no other livelihood are often harassed by the local elite, Police and Forest officers. Two examples:

a) On 7th December, 1979 a landless labourer cut some firewood from the forest early in the morning and was making it into a bundle to carry to the market. Rafiq Daktar heard about this and informed the Forester: together they went to the man's house where the Forester arrested him and took him to his office. His friends and relatives heard about the incident and went to the office asking for his release. After three hours of negotiation the

Fig. 4b. Forestry Activities: Leaf



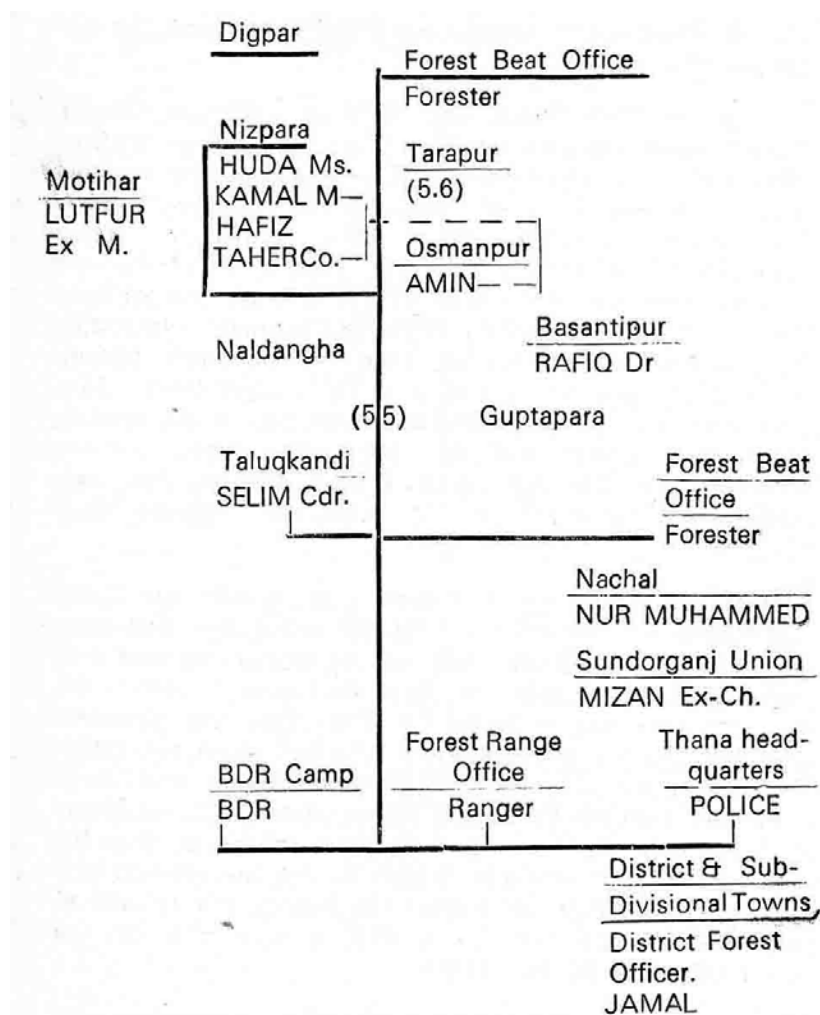
man was released of payment of Tk 130/-, which was shared between the Forester and Rafiq Daktar, and Tk. 13/-for tea and biscuits.

b) On 18th September, 1979 at 4.00 a.m. twenty three landless labourers went from Nizpara towards the Sub-Divisional town carrying firewood they had cut the previous day. There was no work available and the condition of their families was quite serious. Some policemen returning from patrol caught them, three ran away and twenty were arrested. They had no money to pay a bribe and so were taken to the police station. Mizan Ex-Chairman, who spends most of his time around the Thana headquarters became involved and negotiated a rate of Tk. 5/- per head. Soon their friends and relatives and other members of the landless organisation arrived and with them came Amin. He was allowed entry into the police station, though they were refused, so he went in and negotiated together with Mizan.

On his return he told them that by now the Forest Department had become involved and so the price had gone up to Tk. 10/- per head. They refused to pay and said they were prepared to take the case to higher level if the prisoners were not released. By this stage the prisoners were very hungry and the sentry who had given permission for food to be sent in now refused, Mizan and Amin interceded with the Police and got permission. After showing their sympathy in this way they gave the news that the BDR had been informed by telephone and the rate had now gone up to Tk. 15/- per head. The friends still refused to pay; however, and the Police sent a man over to the Forest office for co-ordination.

Then Mizan, Amin and the Police began discussions with the prisoners inside and friends outside simultaneously. They hinted that the prisoners might be beaten, kept without food, and later sent to Jail. Amin reminded the prisoners that their friends would find it very difficult to go to higher levels and offered to sign a bond for their release. Eventually they agreed and each had to sign two bonds, one admitting guilt and another promising to pay Tk. 20/- each. By noon they were released and paid later on. Out of the

Fig. 4c. Forestry Activities: Firewood



Notes :

- i) Number within brackets correspond with the section number in the text.
- ii) A particular type of line show the linkage among people involved in a particular incident.

Tk. 400/-the Police, BDR and Forest Department each got 25% and the remainder was divided equally between Mizan and Amin. Although this was paid on the understanding that the case would be dropped, it has not been.

5.8.

Thus the elite are not only able to defy the laws protecting the forest with impunity and make a lot of money out of it, they are also able to use the same laws to exploit and harass the poor. When extending their wealth and power by exploiting a local resource like the public forest, good connections with the government officers are of primary importance. This is also the case with external public resources which we deal with next.

6.1 Food

Food is perhaps the most important resource of although our area is surplus in rice and exports substantial amounts, there is such a high percentage of landless labourers that it suffers very much from anything which reduces their employment opportunities. This happened in May/June 1979 when drought seriously affected the *aus* crop and most important, made weeding unnecessary, leaving most of them unemployed and on the edge of starvation. This situation was repeated in September-October after the poor *aus* harvest and *aman* transplanting. In such circumstances the almost total control enjoyed by the elite over government food supplies in the form of food for work or rations puts them in an extremely powerful position as well as providing an opportunity of making a considerable amount of money.

6.2. Food for Work

Normally all over Bangladesh large amounts of wheat are used during the winter season for the creation of a rural infrastructure including roads, canals embankments, ponds and the raising and leveling of land. Labourers are paid in wheat instead of cash because this is available in large amounts from foreign donors and it is administered by the Union Councils under the supervision of the government administration. In 1979 because of the crisis caused by the drought much of the wheat intended for the dry winter season was brought forward and used during the monsoon. We obtained the figures for Shantighor Union from the S.D.O's office and were able to check most of them with the local landless people.

In the four months, August to November 1979, twenty six schemes were sanctioned and a total of 2100mds. wheat disbursed by the government. Four schemes; one embankment and three roads were at the other end of the Union and not checked by us. Twenty schemes checked, totalling 1825 mds; out of this 435 mds. 32 srs, had actually been distributed, 23.9% of the total sanctioned. The remaining 1392 mds. 8 srs. 'disappeared'. Out of the twenty schemes: (twelve roads and eight school, madrassa, mosque and office fields), one road and two fields had been sanctioned twice under different names and the work only (half) done once. At this time wheat was about Tk. 100/- mds, so the disappeared amount represented about Tk 1,39,200/- which is in effect a large subsidy to the U.P. Chairmen and Members involved.

According to the U.P. Members 30% of the wheat for each scheme always goes on 'expenses' that is the transport cost and the share of the various government officers. The transport cost is actually covered separately by the government and anyway we know from our own experience that it could not exceed 3% of the total. Several levels of government officials are involved from the Project Implementation Officer, who checks all movements and certifies completion (who for example, received Tk, 1800/- for the month of November alone), through the Circle Officer, Development up to the Sub-Division, If the 30% estimate is correct, they received about Tk. 41,760 throughout the period, the balance going to the eleven U.P. Members and the Chairman making an average of about Tk. 8,120/- each. Of course the Chairman and more active and influential Members got rather more and the nominated women Members rather less and we have not included the 275 mds. (Tk. 27,500/-) which we did not check, but the percentages for this are probably similar.

As one senior district level officer told us, "you should check on all these things and publish them in the newspaper..... the government people below the senior District and Sub-Division Officers are all completely unreliable, don't talk to them, get the real picture from the A. D. C. and S. D. O".

6.3. Nizpara Primary School Field

One example will show the system working in detail. In December 1979 a special scheme was sanctioned for raising and leveling the Nizpara primary school field. The school is not registered, or even running (see Chapter 7). This was a special scheme, transferred from some other allocation and 50 mds. were sanctioned. It was implemented by Karnal Member, Matin Master, and Idris Master. Less than five mds. were actually disbursed. The implementors reported that they could not distribute more because their 'expenses' had been thirty maunds.

6.4. Rations

As well as food for work, food is distributed by the government in this area in two other ways, the government ration (G.R.) which goes to all government employees and is discussed in Chapter 7, and the modified ration (M.R.). This is distributed through registered-dealers at fixed low prices to ration-card holders under the supervision of the Union parishad and is supposed to be made available on a priority basis i.e. poorest first. It comes from the Food Department, is sanctioned by the Thana Council, consisting of all the U.P. Chairmen and chaired by the C.O. Dev. and is administered by the Thana Food Inspector. In Shantigarh Union it is distributed the nine male U. P. Members, three in each ward.

From June to December 1979, 1,605 mds. of rice and 2,990 mds. of wheat were allocated to this Union and divided more or less equally among the nine Members for distribution, about 176 mds. rice and 332 mds. of wheat each. We were able to check the constituency of one Member, Kamal and found that less than fifty mds. of wheat and fifty mds. of rice had been distributed, mostly to his relatives, friends and richer, more powerfully and less remote people. It is highly probable that the process is similar elsewhere. The balance was sold on the black market. A former ration dealer and many others explained to us how it was done.

6.5. Kamal Member's Black Market Ration Operations

Kamal is very active in this business and has good connections so he often acts as agent for the whole Union Parishad. In June 1979 the local people heard that 300 mds. of wheat and a smaller but unknown amount of rice had been sanctioned for distribution at the low ration price (actually 432 mds. of wheat and 156 mds. of rice had been sanctioned). In theory the registered dealer deposits the price with the government in advance, collects the food and sells it to ration card holders at the ration price, receiving a small commission to cover his costs and profit. In this case Kamal working with the U.P. Chairman and through Mustaq Dealer sold all the rice locally at the market price of Tk. 225/md. instead of the ration price of Tk. 110/md. and all the wheat in the Sub-Divisional town at the market price of Tk. 160/md. instead of ration price of Tk. 150/md. . Out of profits the Thana Food Inspector (TFI) normally gets 25% and the ration dealer, who provides the capital, and the Sub-Divisional clerks between them got not more than 25% at the time of delivery. This leaves 50% to be divided between the Chairman and nine male Members. Thus in the month of June they each received Tk.2,168/- net profit, and Tk. 13,075 net profit for the whole six month period.

In June there was a drought and the condition of poor and landless people was very bad since there was no work, so having heard of the sanctioned rations but not received them they wrote to the Deputy Commissioner (D.C.), with copies to the S.D.O. and Sub-Divisional Controller of Food, by registered post, informing him of the seriousness of their situation.

For long time nothing happened, then the O.C. Police arrived in Nizpara in October and started investigating. The complainers went to the police station and gave him the facts and he assured them that justice would be done; however, he demanded many details such as the date and number of the ration delivery order, which they could not supply. They then contacted the office of the Sub-Divisional Controller of Food to obtain these details, but by this time Kamal had heard about the investigation and mobilised the Chairman, Members and dealer. They contacted the head clerk in the office and the clerk dealing with the matter, and through them made sure that the information was not released. The amount of money involved is not known.

The landless people still tried to continue the pressure, but since the O.C. Police later received payments of Tk. 500/- and Tk. 3,000/- from Kamal's brother Salehuddin in connection with other cases (see Chapter 8), he lost interest in pursuing the matter.

6.6. Promises, Promises

Having real or apparent control over such a vital commodity as food has advantages in less obvious ways, as the following two examples show.

In early October 1979 Matin Master told three marginal farmers that he had received a delivery order for 100 md. wheat to repair the Nizpara school field, but needed money to transport it. After bargaining they bought six mds. in advance for Tk. 300/- and he shared the money with Idris Master and Kamal Member. When, three months later, the wheat finally arrived he told them that since only fifty mds. had been sanctioned and thirty had gone on 'expenses' he could not supply any.

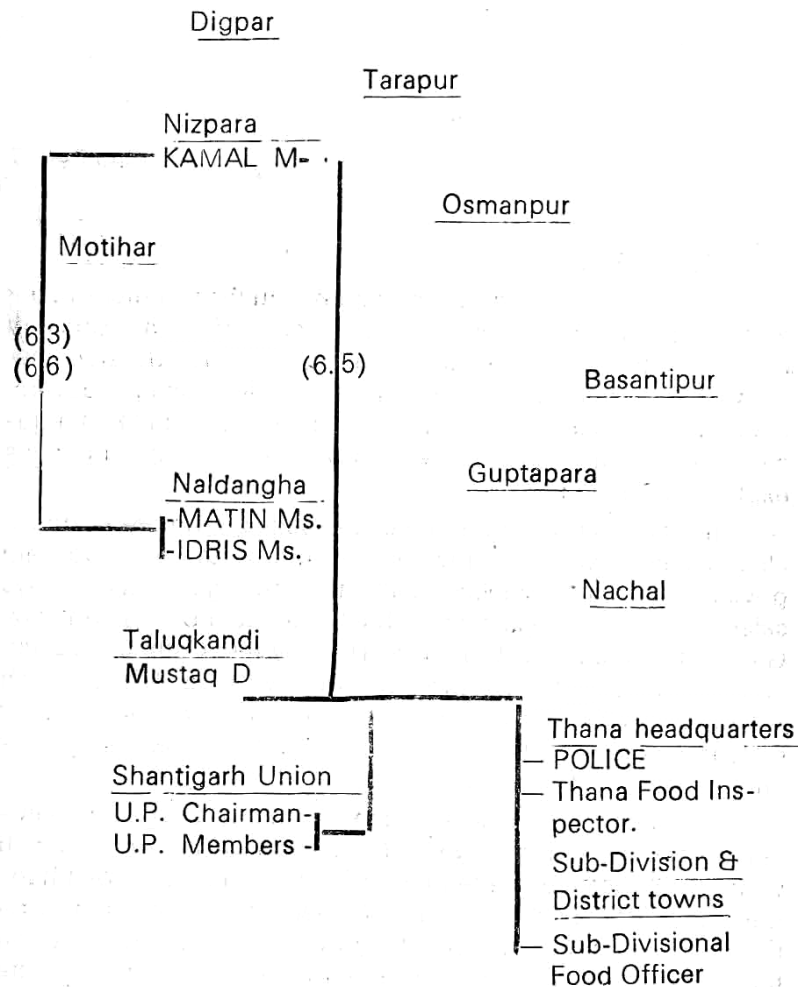
In the same way at the end of October Kamal told another marginal farmer that a special rice ration would be distributed for Eid. He sold him one and a half md. in advance for Tk. 100/-. No rice ever arrived.

6.7. The Power of Food

It can be seen from the above calculations that during the six months June to December 1979 each U.P. Member made at least Tk. 20,000/-, from food for work and rations. This is more than enough to offset the costs of getting elected, about Tk. 10,000/- in the first year, thereafter it is all profit. To have made a profit of Tk. 20,000/- from agriculture in the same period a man would have to own 25 acres of good land, a very large holding in this area, and of course U.P. Membership has many additional economic and other advantages.

Control over food supply is also an effective method of patronage ; food for work, for example, is usually given to the relatives and faction-members of the Member, which has the additional advantage of keeping the amount distributed as secret as possible. It can also be denied to any rivals or dissatisfied groups, for example as soon as the landless people became organised and started demanding higher wages and other benefits the U.P. denied them any further food for work. It is in practice a powerful weapon in the hands of the elite.

Fig. 5. Food Business



Notes :

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- ii) A particular type of line shows the linkage among people involved in a particular incident.

7.1. Education

The other major source of external public resources in our area is the education system. We came across no signs of activity in health or agriculture or other field, possibly because this area is not a high priority for development. Government involvement in education is, however, quite significant and in this chapter we show how private interests exploit this resource.

In Shantigarh Union there are sixteen primary schools, all registered with the government, out of these, eleven are government aided, which means that the government pays salaries and other expenses, three are attended mainly by Garos and aided by the missions (two by the Catholic Mission and one by the Baptist Mission) and two are unaided. Each school has three or four teachers who receive fairly regular government rations twice a month wheat or flour, rice, salt and oil at the low ration price.

All three mission aided schools, four of the government-aided schools and one unregistered school are running well with all the teachers attending regularly and about one hundred and fifty students attending each one. Seven government-aided schools are hardly running at all, with often half a dozen students, never more than forty, and rarely more than one teacher in the school, the rest doing politics and business. One unregistered school has been closed for years though the teachers are still drawing rations. This situation, where half the schools in the Union are not functioning in any real sense and about twenty privileged men draw subsidies of Tk. 375/- to Tk. 625/- per month for doing

nothing, has been going on for several years at least and is able to continue because of some well-established unofficial procedures.

7.2. Unofficial Procedures of the Education Department

A school is, in practice, an enterprise of the teachers, who often have private tutoring operations and other business and political activities, especially if their school is not really functioning. They sometimes get help and are sometimes cheated, by the school managing committee consisting of local leaders. To get government help they have to go through various steps.

First, registration; this officially depends only on having a satisfactory building and facilities, teachers and sufficient students. It is done by the Director of Public Instruction's office in Dhaka and depends on a favourable report from the Thana Education Officer (TEO) which costs not less than Tk. 1,000/-.

Second, in order to get the teachers' salaries paid by the government, affiliation is needed. The number of new schools affiliated depends on the government funds available and local selection is made by a committee at Sub-Divisional level including the S.D.O., Sub-Divisional Education Officer (SDEO), and selected heads of important local educational institutions. This step is quite difficult to achieve and strong political pressures are brought to bear. Also substantial amounts of money have to be given to the T.E.O. for a favourable report, some of which is passed upward.

Third, every year each Thana has a quota of schools which will get development grants for repair and furniture. The selection is effectively made by the T.E.O. and again a large payment is required. A local school that got registration in 1977 and affiliation and a development grant of Tk. 10,000/- last year spent a total of Tk. 26,000/- to arrange it all. Out of the immediate return of Tk. 10,000/-, Tk. 3,000/- was spent and the rest divided among the teachers and managing committee. These arrangements are

organised by the T.E.O. and the President and Secretary of the Thana Teachers' Association (T.T.A). The President is almost permanently absent from his school and works unofficially as the T.E.O's office assistant. Despite this his examination results are excellent since he is said to give out the questions in advance, help the students during the examination, and influence the examiners afterwards. The Secretary, locally known as 'Dalal' collects one Taka per month from each teacher of the 102 schools in the Thana, which he claims is sent to the District Inspector of Schools' office to ensure their salaries are paid. Both of them are active in settling disputes over salaries and getting arrears paid; when this happens, which it does quite frequently, the T.E.O. takes 25% of the arrears, the Presidents and Secretary of the T.T.A 5% each, and the clerks and Assistant School Inspector (A.S.I) 15% between them. In 1978 there was a general retrospective increment; to collect the arrears all the 376 teachers in the Thana had to contribute Tk. 55/- each, a total of Tk. 19,680/-. Usually the T.E.O. and A.S.I. do not visit the schools, but occasionally the District Education Officer (D.E.O) orders a special inspection, on these occasions the T.E.O. requires Tk. 2,000/- in order not to visit and for filing a good report. There are also numerous small payments like Tk. 100/- for a service book, which should cost 50 paisa and his travel allowance of 80 paisa mile.

The T.E.O. has been in this job for many years and was almost transferred ten times, but has always avoided it by judicious bribing. He likes this area because it is his home District and he has built two brick houses in the District town, also he is in charge of a large and profitable area and thirdly he has received 15 acres of land here as a bribe. He has been able to build his houses out of the cement, timber and C.I. sheet provided by UNICEF for constructing primary schools. In the case of one local school he recently acquired 4 out of 11 bags of cement, a number of C.I. sheets and Tk. 1,300/- out of the Tk. 4,600/- sanctioned.

7.3. The Absentee

One example will show in detail how things are arranged between the T.E.O., the T.T.A. and the teachers. One teacher in a local school is extremely irregular and once was absent for seven weeks out of eight. The Headmaster wrote 'illegally absent' in the attendance register and salary sheet and sent them to the T.E.O. and the teacher then went to see him. When he entered the office the T.E.O. asked him "Are you still alive?" to which he replied, "Only due to your kindness." The T.E.O. then said, "I don't want to see you", to which he replied, "I am almost dead, why don't you kindly finish me off"!

The T.E.O. then said to the T.T.A. President who was as always, in his office, "you have heard what this man has to say, tell him I don't want to see him here again", and left. After some discussion the teacher agreed to give one month's salary to the T.E.O. and President if he received the other month's salary. Having made the settlement he entertained them with sweets, when the T.E.O. returned the President explained everything to him.

A new salary sheet was immediately filled in and all the signatures, including the Headmaster's were forged by the teacher. The T.E.O. also pointed out that as a graduate he was entitled to certain extra allowances and asked him to stay in touch. He then sent the A.S.I. to instruct the Headmaster to rectify the attendance register, when the teacher returned from the T.E.O.'s office he commented. "I'll see who stays in this school, the Headmaster or me".

Three months later the Headmaster was transferred to another Thana.

7.4. The school without students

The system offers more unorthodox opportunities for making money. Two examples involve Nizpara Bazar school which has been closed for several years since the roof was destroyed in a storm.

In November, 1978 two men came from an adjacent Thana and spread the news that the school would be reopened, aided by the government and that they would get jobs in it. Kamal Member is the school Secretary, so he started approaching various people offering to get them jobs in the school. One of these a marginal farmer, was convinced, sold all his land, 0.35 acre, and gave Kamal Tk. 700/-. As a result he now works as a day labour. Kamal gave the outsiders Tk. 200/-and kept the rest.

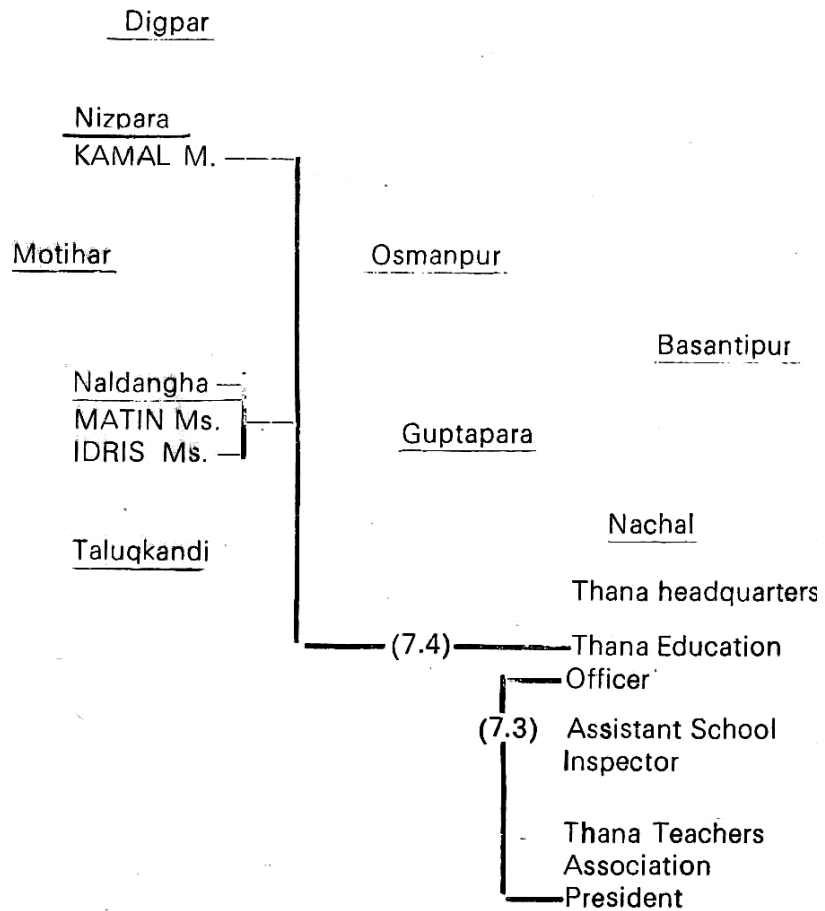
Later on Matin Master, Idris and “the absentee” mentioned above found three new clients from nearby villages. Working with Kamal they extracted Tk. 5,000/- from each one and told them that Tk. 8,000/- had been given to the T.E.O. and the remainder spent on travel expenses. Something may have gone to the T.E.O. since later on he visited by motor-cycle, which fact was used effectively by the four. They said that they had established a good link with the M.P. and the school was soon going to become affiliated.

By the end of 1979 nothing had happened on that score but in September the three clients did receive government ration (G.R.) cards as teachers of the school, Idris Master also got one; the marginal, now landless, farmer got nothing.

7.5.

It can be seen that a well-organised set of unofficial rules and procedures regulates the operation of the education system for the benefit of the teachers and the Education Department officers. It is carefully managed by the President and Secretary' of the Teachers' Association. The rich and powerful are not much affected since they can educate their children at home with private tutors anyway. Out of the total government education budget a large proportion goes on providing very cheap University education for the sons of the well-off. We have seen that of the amount left over for primary education, over half goes into the pockets of the rural elite. Everyone gains, except the poor, who remain as illiterate and ignorant—and exploitable—as ever.

Fig. 6. Education



Notes :

- i) Numbers within brackets correspond with the section number in the text.
- ii) A particular type of line shows the linkage among people involved in a particular incident.

“All thieves are maternal cousins”—Proverb

8.1. Law and Order

In the previous chapters we have seen how control over public and private, local and external resources enables the elite to safeguard and extend, their power and wealth. The fundamental basis for all power is physical force and in this chapter we give some examples of how it is possible to use private force and terrorism to achieve objectives and how control is maintained over public force in the form of the Police and BDR. First we show how powerful people are able to defy the law then how they use it as an instrument of oppression and exploitation.

8.2. Cattle Rustling

a) On 14th September 1979 Kader and his son-in-law Joynal brought two stolen buffaloes over the border. They maintain close relations with Malek Chor and Rob who provide patronage and advance money for their operations. Through Akhter, whose daughter is the nominated female U.P. Member they contacted Sattar, the Union tax collector whose duties include collecting the sales tax on cows. He issued a false sales tax slip showing that the buffaloes belonged to them, and using this they were able to transfer them to another Thana and sell them for Tk.18,000/-.

Out of this the Indian partners got Tk. 4,000/-, Sattar got Tk. 2,000/-, which he shared with Akhtar and the remainder was shared between Kader, Joynal, Maleq Chor and Rob Soon after wards the BDR found out and approached Kader, but a quiet unofficial settlement was made and the case dropped, the amount of money involved is not known,

b) On another occasion in August 1979 Salehuddin, his nephew (Kamal Member's son) and Humayan went to india at night, stole four cows and brought them back. They sold two for Tk. 2,400/- at the Thana headquarters but could not sell the others. They approached Nazmul and Farid, who are relatives of Salehuddin and Kamal, asking if they could keep the cows in their houses, but they refused.

Soon the BDR got news of the business, and since they had not received any money they started an investigation. As a result it became difficult to sell the cows, so the thieves let them go in the forest and persuaded the Nizpara village chowkidar to catch them and hand them over to the U. P. Chairman, via the Member. Kamal, who is of course Salehuddin's brother. However, the Police and BDR found out and got the whole story from Nazmul and Farid.

A case was made against the thieves, but negotiations took place through Kamal Member, the U.P. Chairman, and Mohiuddin Member (Humayan is his body guard). The case was settled quietly but the amount of money involved is not known.

8.3. Attempted Rape

One night in June 1979 Humayan and three friends went to India but came back empty-handed and in a bad mood. They came across a cluster of Garo houses in the forest where three Garo girls live aged 30,25 and 16. One divorced and two unmarried, The thieves broke in and tried to rape them, but failed and one was caught by the girls and beaten up. All the Garos from the surrounding area came to help.

The other three fled and found Salehuddin drinking in the house of a Garo, he collected twenty men, went to the scene and carried out a rescue. Later on his relatives thought that he had been captured and 25 of them also went, but found him lecturing the Garos, who ran away and hid in the forest.

The next morning the Garos complained to Kamal Member, Salehuddin's brother, and getting no satisfaction they made a case with the Police. Salehuddin was arrested and released on bail after a few days; the case has been pending for six months and he has paid the Police Tk. 500/- not to re-arrest him. It seems likely the case will be ropped and he will settle quietly with the Police.

8.4. Tax Evasion

In our area there is a lot of business in buying and selling the tax stamp from *biri* packets. Each packet of 25 has to carry a tax stamp of 25 paisa and sells for Tk.1.25. All the shopkeepers save the used stamps and sell them to a middleman for Tk. 7/- to 8/- per hundred, who then sells them to the *biri* factories in the Sub-Divisional town for Tk. 10/- to Tk. 15/- per hundred. His profits are up to Tk. 1000/- per week, but he is often stopped by the police and has to pay them, but is never arrested.

8.5. Fraud

As we have seen in previous chapters one of the advantages of holding an official position is the opportunities it gives for deception; this can either be at the expense of government funds or the people directly. We shall give one example of each.

a) In 1979 work was begun on building a Thana Training and Development Centre (TTDC) at the Thana headquarters; the contract was given to a contractor from Dhaka, who is a relative of the Circle Officer, Development (C.O.Dev.), to the disappointment of local contractors. Apparently the original plan was for a 10 inch wall but the contractor built 5 inch walls, claiming that this was according to the plan given to him by the Sub-Divisional Engineer, who denies it. The work was done under the direct supervision of the C.O. Dev. who received Tk. 10,000/- from the contractor.

After the 5 inch wall was started someone reported it to the senior Public Works Department (PWD) engineers. Also some children playing nearby, including the son of the local U.P.

Chairman accidentally broke down part of the wall. In November the PWD Superintendent and Executive Engineers visited with the S.D.O. and inspected the work: they stopped it and demanded Tk. 50,000/- to allow it to continue. This was followed by a period of bargaining over the size of the payment and the contractor demanded compensation for the delay in the work. No doubt compromise will be reached, since substantial profits are involved.

b) Defrauding of people rather than the government is best illustrated by what is known locally as the eleven taka Co-operative. In 1976 Huda Master started a Co-operative Society in and around Nizpara with about one thousand members, He collected a Tk. 10/- share and Tk. 1/- subscription from each one and made frequent trips to the District and Sub-Divisional towns coming back with promises of loans, handlooms and land from the government. Many times he told the members that government inspectors were coming and the society had to buy expensive food for them, but they never came and he ate the food himself. He and Amin claim to have spent Tk. 200/- just for books, records and an official stamp, some of which he later sold. No benefits from the government have ever arrived as a result of the Co-operative, and therefore the people have become extremely sceptical about Co-operatives.

8.6. Extortion

a) Not only are powerful people able to defy the law without suffering any consequences, because of their good links with the Police and BDR they are able to use their power to make personal profits. For example in 1978 Rafiq Daktar was passing the house of a poor Koch when he was attacked by a buffalo Rafiq Daktar ran off and accused the Koch of owning a dangerous mad buffalo. telling him to sell it immediately or he would inform the police. When the man refused he went to the Police Station and returned with two Policemen, who threatened him with arrest. The man became afraid and agreed to sell the buffalo to Rafiq Daktar for Tk. 1200/- (the market price was Tk. 2,500- to Tk. 3,000/-).

After buying the buffalo Rafiq Daktar slaughtered it and sold the meat to other people giving a share to the Police and BDR. He never paid the price however, and when it is demanded he replies that most of the meat was taken by the BDR and Police, who did not pay, so why should he pay ? The local people have demanded an account from him, but he has not given it.

Another example: He has a plot of 0.30 acre of forest land which he gives out to a poor Koch on sharecropping basis. In 1978 the crop was very poor and a yield of one maund was expected. One day some cows belonging to two rich Koch ate up some of the crop which is close to grazing land. When Rafiq Daktar heard of it he claimed it was deliberate. threatened them with a Police case and demanded five maunds paddy as compensation. They were afraid and eventually paid at that time local people pointed out that half the compensation should have gone to the sharecropper who however, received nothing.

b) Finally two examples involving the BDR: On 10th October 1979 a group of poor Garos and Koch were working together when two BDR *sepoys* came and demanded two men to cut firewood from the forest and carry it two and a half miles to their camp. Apart from the illegality of cutting firewood, the *sepoys* receive a firewood allowance from the government. The people refused since they were busy working and had not eaten that day, but eventually agreed to go after finishing work. The *sepoys* became very angry and insulted them: later on they fetched their *Naik*, who threatened the people with arrest and beating and accused them of being members of the Kader Bahini. In the end they agreed and sent two men.

Five days later at night three *sepoys* went to the house of the leader of this group while the *Naik* and *Havildar* went to the house of Anjan, a Garo who runs a prostitution business with his wife and daughters. The *sepoys* had a list of three men they wanted to find, and after threatening the leader they managed to find one of them. He was taken to Anjan's house where the *Havildar* told him that there were orders from higher up for his arrest on charges of theft and robbery. He demanded Tk. 1,000/-

to release him, but Anjan and his family negotiated and settled for Tk.150/-. The following morning Anjan's wife came to the man's house to demand the money, which was owed to her for alcohol and services. After this the *Naik* and *Havildar* went to her house frequently.

8.7. Dealing with Informers

It would be wrong to think that the people make no attempts to resist these kinds of exploitation and terrorism, but the elite have very effective means of dealing with them as shown by this example.

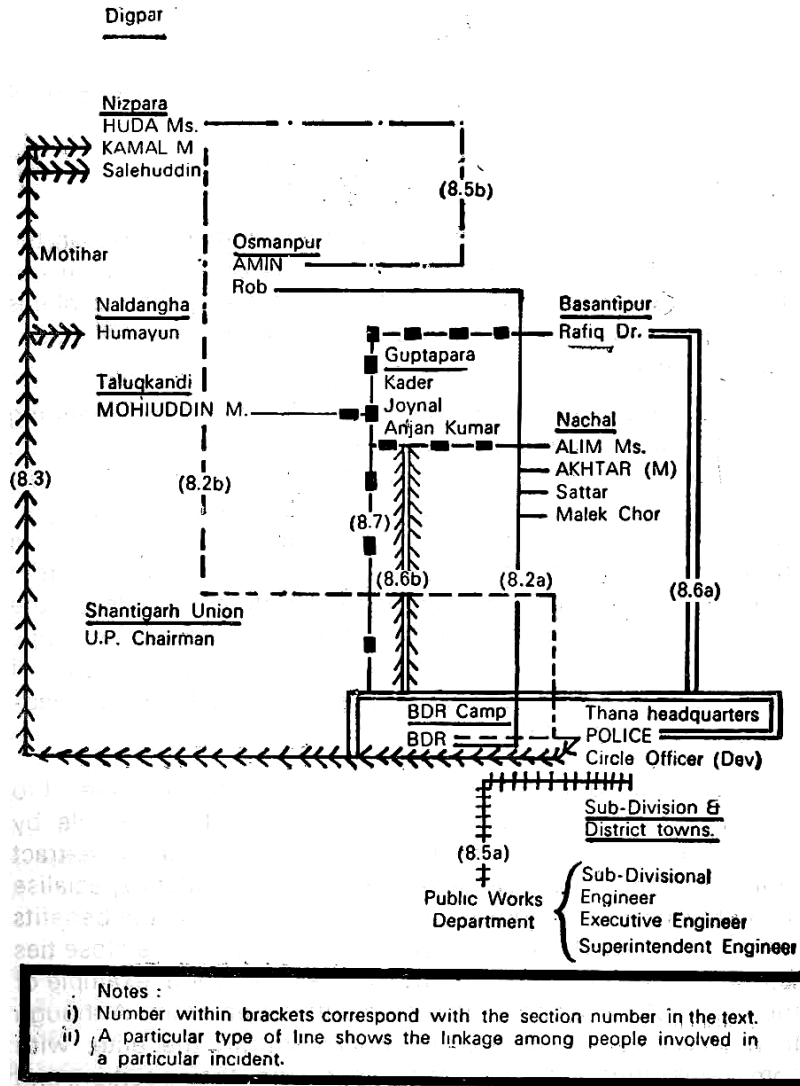
In 1977 there was a very active Village Defense Party (V.D.P) in Basantipur which started arresting people who were doing illegal business. One of the members prepared a report on cattle rustling, dacoity and illegal land occupation and BDR complicity and sent it to the BDR Wing Commander. Rafiq Daktar found out about it and informed the local BDR, who were rather unhappy, especially as a *Havildar* had been suspended as a result of the report. At about the same time the VDP had caught an illegal timber merchant and the Forest Department gave them a present of wood worth Tk. 100/-to Tk. 150/-. They sold this wood to Rafiq Daktar, planning to use the money to buy a torch.

Rafiq Daktar saw this as a good opportunity to teach the informer a lesson, so he mixed this wood with stolen wood and told the BDR that the informer had sold it all to him. They arrested and held him for seven days until the Wing Commander found out and had him released. However, Rafiq Daktar, Alim Master and Mohiuddin working with the BDR managed to get him arrested again and sent to jail. They arranged for seventeen local people to testify against him though many refused, and at the trial all the evidence was contradictory. Just before the trial the Wing Commander was transferred and the Magistrate, who comes from the same village as the BDR *Havildar*, sentenced him to two and a half years for interrupting the witnesses. He appealed to a higher court and was released on bail pending the appeal; up to that point he had spent Tk. 33,000/-and sold all his cows to pay the expenses.

8.8.

It is clear, therefore, that the law enforcement machinery, like the other institutions is fairly helpless to protect the weak, in fact is -subverted and used to oppress them, and cannot even protect those who try to assist it. In the face of a sophisticated and well-organised combination of terrorism, bribery and manipulation it has more or less given in and formed an alliance with the local elite at the expense of the poor. This alliance is, of course, of crucial importance in supporting and maintaining the existing power structure.

Fig. 7. Crime



9.1. Conclusions

Recently there has been considerable discussion on the role of research and how it should focus on the problems of the poor. We have tried to examine one of the biggest problems of the poor: the rich and powerful, and how they are extending and maintaining their power.

We have seen how they are able to use a changing combination of economic and physical power and a system of interlocking networks to gain control over local and external resources. Public resources seem to be particularly significant as a source of wealth that make possible a rapid rise in power and status for those who control them. In order to gain this control, relationships with different levels of the government are crucial and the pattern of these relationships is shown in Fig. 9. It is of course not necessary to control the whole government structure, one 'weak link' used effectively, is usually sufficient.

Economic power, physical power and prestige are all to a large extent convertible into each other for example by using wealth to bribe the Police or by using force to extract money or steal land. However few power-holders specialise in all these simultaneously; rather they maximize the benefits of their special skills and opportunities, and have close ties with others who have different abilities. A good example of this is Kamal's working relationship with Salehuddin. Although there is a certain amount of mobility within the elite, with some ambitious men gradually improving their position, and occasional violent conflicts, such as that ending in the death of Taher Company, generally its membership seems very stable over the last ten years. Since links between most power holders are quite strong, formal positions of

leadership, U.P. Chairmanship, Membership etc. can be allowed to rotate to a certain extent without undermining the whole structure. Despite occasional individual conflicts, sometimes very violent, there appears to be a fairly high level of class solidarity among the elite.

Having achieved some understanding of the operations of the local power structure it no longer seems surprising that resources intended for 'development' do not produce much development and rarely reach the poor. In fact it is surprising if anything reaches the poor at all. It is however, an interesting question whether there is a system intended to achieve development and benefit disadvantaged people which is simply malfunctioning, or whether it is a system actually intended to cement and reinforce relationships between the urban and rural elites and which is functioning very well. One thing seems clear, that the words and plans mean little, but that the realities of power relationships determine what actually happens.

9.2. Resistance

In this study we have concentrated on the principal sources of power and influence and have not, for example, looked at the significance of the Christian Missions within the Garo Community. They are quite important as a source of patronage and their impact means that the Christian Garos are in a rather better position than the other Hindu Adivasis. However, these sources of patronage are fairly insignificant in the general context of power relationships.

Potentially more important are recent attempts by landless and marginal farmers to develop organization and to challenge some of the activities described in the last seven chapters. It would be wrong to think that they are merely passive victims or observers. During the five months of the study we saw an increasing capacity for resistance in various fields, some of which has been mentioned already. Two major examples can be given in detail.

9.3. Resistance to Land Grabbing

In Nizpara there are 4.2 acres of temple land belonging to the Koch, claimed by Hafiz and his relatives and previously occupied by them. In 1979 the Koch made an arrangement to share this land with a landless group of 70 settlers and Adivasis. They all filed a case against the land grabbers, and because of their large number were able to transplant and harvest the land successfully.

On a much larger scale the big land occupation operations started in 1976 in Basantipur by Kamal, Alim Master and others have been successfully countered. For three years the occupiers were able to use about 100 acres belonging to all the Adivasis of the village. In 1979 when BRAC's food for work programme was beginning, the victims began to discuss how to recover their land. By transplanting time they had organised a strong group including almost all the landless settlers and Adivasis in the village and established good contacts with similar groups in the surrounding villages and with the M.P. At that time the central government was giving special attention to the Adivasis. After careful preparation they transplanted and harvested in a large group of 60 people and have reoccupied almost all the land, although there is a case filed against their leader.

9.4. Resistance to Terrorism

As the landless began to get organized and take these actions, certain people struck back. During the BRAC food for work programme a number of women's groups were organized and started joint cultivation. Salehuddin started bullying and threatening them when he was drunk, and generally tried to intimidate them. Their leader complained to the U.P. Member, who is Salehuddin's brother, but got no satisfaction and so contacted all the landless groups in the surrounding villages. They decided to organize a *salish* among themselves and summoned Salehuddin to attend: at the *salish* it became clear that he had been threatening many people with beating and murder if they spoke against him. Because of this, before taking the matter any

further, the landless leaders reported these threats to the Police, who were very unco-operative since they had just received a Tk. 500/- bribe from Salehuddin in connection with another case (see 8.3).

One leader who had been particularly active in the *salish* had also played a leading role in resisting the land grabbing activities of Salehuddin and friends. Two weeks after the *salish* they attacked him in the bazar at dusk. They failed to injure him very much but wounded another landless leader in the head, and a local rich man. Manzur, in the hand, as they came out of the mosque and tried to stop the fighting.

The landless people became very angry, cutting up bamboos to make *latis* and discussed whether to go to Salehuddin's house to kill him. Finally, they decided not to do so and the victims went to the Sub-Division for treatment and to the Thana Police station to file a case. Salehuddin also filed a case against the landless leader, which was well received by the O.C. Police because of their close relationship. The following day 600 men went to the Police station to request the O.C. to take action against Salehuddin and offer their assistance. They shouted the slogan: "Build landless organization, stop robbery!" The O.C. met them in the road and spoke very nicely and sympathetically, which is unusual. He promised to investigate and asked them to go home: when he reached the Police station he found 200 women sitting round it, who had come by a different route and gave promises to them also. The following day he came to investigate the case.

Salehuddin disappeared for some time and his assistant Latif was arrested, but he reappeared after his brother sold 0.5 acre, mortgaged 0.5 acre and paid the O.C. Tk. 3000/- to avoid arrest. He then tried to negotiate a settlement with the landless organization.

9.5.

These are small beginnings, but may be the beginning of a difficult and painful shift in the balance of power away from the existing elite towards the landless and exploited people. To achieve such a shift requires understanding, organization and courage; our experience suggests the people may be just beginning to develop these qualities.

Fig. 8. Local Power Structure

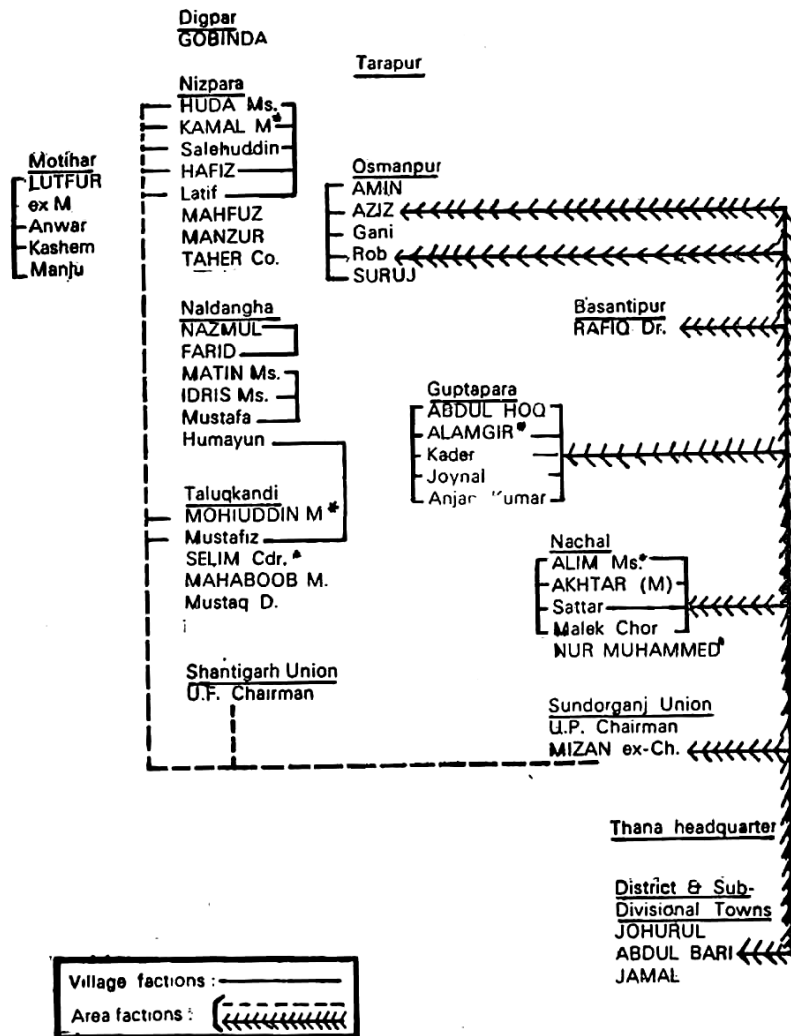
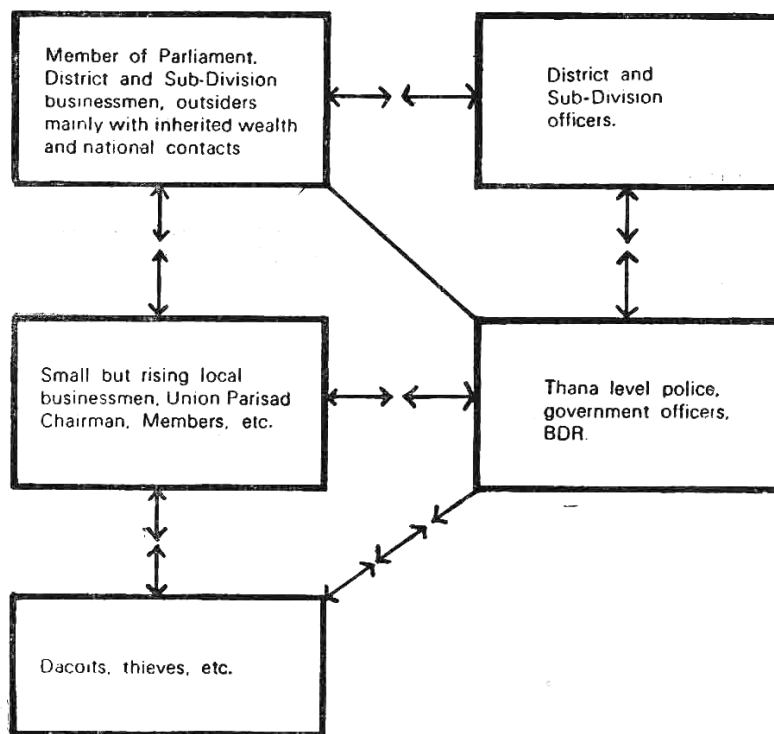


Fig. 9. Links with Government



Notes :

1. *The New Internationalist*: No. 81, November 1979, Page 17
2. Bangladesh is divided into districts, a district into sub-divisions, a sub-division into thanas, a thana consists of several unions while several villages make up a union.
3. See for example:
 - a) *JHAGRAPUR—Poor peasants and women in a village in Bangladesh*. By Jenneke Arens/Jos Van Beurden. Third World Publications, 151 Stratford Road, Birmingham C11 1 RD. 1977.
 - b) *Who gets What and Why: Resource Allocation in a Bangladesh Village*: Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1979.
 - c) *Ashram Village: An Analysis of Resource Flows* Bangladesh Rural Development Committee, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1980.
4. All names of place and people have been changed. The guidelines which we followed when collecting information concerning villages were :
 - a) Number of households
 - b) The breakdown of the total number of households into four categories:
 - i. Surplus households are defined as those buying labour, that is, employing people for the most part of the year. These households produce a surplus for investment and often have a large amounts of land.
 - ii. Self-sufficient households. For the most part of the year these households neither sell their own labour nor hire in outside labour.
 - iii. Marginal households. These households rely for their hiring on the combination of manual labour for other people and consuming their own produce from their meagre landholding.

- iv. Landless households rely almost completely on selling their labour.
- a) The breakdown of the total number of households into Settlers and Adivasis. In some cases further breakdown of Adivasi households into various types, that is, Koch, Hajong, Garo.
- b) We then investigated the various factions within the village, and their size, nature (that is, whether it is based on kinship, political association, religion etc.) and their function.
- c) Finally, we investigated the history of villages, and its physical characteristics.
- d) When collecting information concerning individuals these guidelines were used ;
- e) The date of arrival of the individual and his family background.
- f) The amount of land he owns inside and outside the area including land sharecropped.
- g) His other assets, for example, houses, ponds, cows carts etc.
- h) His activities, which included, business, political, social, etc.
- i) His connections with the local elite and others inside and outside the village.

As it has been stated in the introduction (1.2) “the methodology was essentially simple our main sources of information were the landless people of each village.....”. After collecting our information we checked and cross-checked them with at least four separate sources.

GLOSSARY

AUS	: Spring-Summer Crop (30% of total production)
ADIVASIS	: (KOCH, GARO, HAJONG, RAJ-BANGSHI, MADOK,) Aborigines—the original inhabitants of the area.
AMAN	: Summer-Autumn Crop (60% of total production),
AWAMI LEAGUE	: It was the dominant political party, led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and was in power from 1971-75. The party played a leading role during the Liberation War (March-December 1971).
ANSARS	: Previously a volunteer force now a militia.
AL-BADAR	: Pro-Pakistan militia during 1971,
BIRI	: Local cigarette.
BIL	: Seasonal swamp land.
B.N.P.	: Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by President Ziaur Rahman and now in power.
B.D.R.	: Bangladesh Rifles, the border defence unit.
BASIC DEMOCRAT	: Members of the electoral College during 1962-69.
COMMUNAL RIOT	: Violent clashes between the people of two religions.
C.I. SHEETS	: Corrugated Iron Sheets.
C.O. DEV.	: Circle Officer, Development.

C.O. REV.	: Circle Officer, Revenue.
COMPOUNDER	: Doctor's assistant.
CHOWKIDAR	: Village Watchman.
DISTRICT TOWN	: Centre of the District Administration
DALAL	: Go-between.
DACOITS	: Robbers.
DACOITY	: Robbery
DAKTAR	: A quack without any medical training or qualification.
FURKANIA	: Religious educational institution of the primary level.
HAVILDAR	: A junior commissioned rank in the Army and B.D.R.
JAMAT-E-ISLAMI	: A right-wing orthodox Islamic political party.
JUBODAL	: The youth group of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (B.N.P.)
KHAS	: Government Land
KADER BAHINI	: Armed Supporters of Late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led by Kader Siddiqui.
KOMVI-PATA	: A kind of leaf used for making local cigarettes.
LAKH	: One-hundred thousand,
LATI	: Bamboo stick.
MOULVI	: Muslim Priest,
MUSLIM LEAGUE	: A political party.
M.P.	: Member of Parliament.
MAUND	: A weight measurement approximately equal to forty kilogram.
MUTATION	: Documentation of land division and inheritance.
NAIK-SUBADAR	: Senior non-commissioned officer in the Army or B.D.R.

O.C.	: Officer in charge of a Police Station.
PARA	: Neighbourhood.
PESHKAR	: The clerk of the court.
PATAR COMPANY	: Big license-holder buyers of Komvi Pata, locally known as Patar Company.
RABI CROPS	: Winter Crop.
RAZAKARS	: Armed collaborators of the occupying force during the Liberation War.
SHAHIB	: Gentleman.
SUB-DIVISION	: Second-level administrative unit.
SALISH	: A village court.
SEPOY	: A soldier.
SEER	: A weight measurement one seer is approximately equal to one kilogram.
SETTLER	: Refugees from India and other people who have settled in this area.
TOUT	: Crock.
TALUKDAR	: A big land-owner.
TAHSIL	: A revenue unit.
TAHSILDAR	: A government land tax-collector responsible to Circle Officer Revenue.
TAKA	: Bangladesh Currency.
THANA	: An area of five to twelve unions.
UNION	: An area of about fifteen to twenty five villages. Average population 18,000.
UNION PARISHAD/ COUNCIL/BOARD	: The first level of the local government known as Union Board before 1960, Union Council till 1971 and Union Parishad after December 1971.
VILLAGE DEFENCE PARTY	: Volunteer village force but sponsored by the Union Parishad.