

LEADERSHIP AND MASS MOBILIZATION AT THE GRASS ROOTS:
THE ULASHI EXPERIMENT OF BANGLADESH

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by
Mohammad Q. Zaman
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MOHAMMAD Q. ZAMAN

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ABSTRACT

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This is an ethno-political study of peasant mobilization for socio-economic development on a self-help basis in Bangladesh villages. Literature on peasant mobilization suggests that rural masses should be mobilized for planned changes, but such studies usually ignore the complex factors influencing the process of mobilizing peasants for mass participation in programmes for economic development and social change. The present study is intended to fill some of the gap in our understanding of the structural problems of mass mobilization. The study is based on field research done in three villages within the Ulashi Swanirvar (self-reliance) area of Bangladesh.

The primary focus of this study is on the village social structure which, I have argued, provides conditions for participation in local politics and developmental activities. It has been observed that the factional system of political interaction is typical of the village social structure. The village leaders (matabbars) who are landrich

elites organise factional groups (dals) out of small and poor peasants based on patronage-dependent relationships. Using the Marxist concept of 'class structure', I have tried to show that factional conflict is a pervasive form of "domination" by the rich peasants that hinders the growth of class consciousness among the poor peasantry. The analysis shows that local factional strife among the village leaders does not promote change, but tends to help preserve the status quo in the communities.

It is significant that the mass mobilization attempt through a bureaucratic and reformist model in the study area was largely unsuccessful. Mass mobilization and self-reliance is exemplified by mass politicization and "mobilization-oriented" policies and political processes aimed at structural changes of the society. In the case of Bangladesh, the prospect for mobilization lies in an all out effort for a radical land reform which can do away with the power of the landed elites of the rural society.

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I. INTRODUCTION: TRANSFORMING RURAL BANGLADESH

The Problem

Among the problems confronting the Third World countries today, rural development and mass mobilization have received increasing attention (for example, see Ashford 1969; Ruderbeck 1970, 1972; Huq 1976). Several reasons may be cited for this new emphasis. First, during the past couple of decades, most of the countries of Asia and Africa fought against colonial powers for their national independence. It is only very recently that some Afro-Asian countries are beginning to focus on complex issues of political development and economic growth. Second, if we define 'under-development' as essentially a problem of under-utilization of human resources of a given country, efforts to overcome it will have to be directed towards greater mobilization of population to participate in the total development process.

The present study analyses an important experimentation in mass mobilization in Bangladesh villages designed to attain economic development through mass participation on the basis of swanirvar (self-help).¹ My primary focus will be on three selected villages within the experimental area called the Ulashi-Jadunathpur Project

(henceforth Ulashi Project) located in the south-western corner of Bangladesh. Based on the leadership patterns and the problems of mobilization for development of the villages, I shall make some tentative generalizations about such developmental efforts. It is my hope that this study of rural leadership patterns and the mass mobilization process in the Ulashi Project will improve our understanding of some of the more general social and political factors that need consideration in such development strategies.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The problem set above may be understood in the context of two issues of general ethno-political interests. First, it may be a contribution to the study of village leadership. Second, it may be an examination of the local structural variables that determine the mobilization of peasants to participate in village development programmes.

Studies in social mobilization (see Deutsch 1961) have demonstrated that economic development is associated with sharp increases in the general level of political participation. It is "something that happens to large numbers of people in areas which undergo modernization, i.e., where advance, non-traditional practices in culture, technology and economic life are introduced and accepted on a considerable scale" (Deutsch 1961:493). Nie et al. (1969:361-78) suggest that political participation is the outcome of economic development which alters traditional

social structure, and thus economic development increases the rate of mass political participation.

American studies of political participation are heavily influenced by voting behaviour and turn-out and tend to consider participation, by and large, an individual act (see Milbrath 1965, Lane 1965, Dahl 1961, Campbell et. al. 1960). Milbrath 1965:6) suggests that "taking any political action generally requires two decisions: one must decide to act and one must decide the direction of his action." My task in this study is to spell out some of the conditions of group membership which contribute to local level participation and/or involvement in programmes for economic development. Alford and Scoble (1968:1192) argued for "the need to re-expand the theoretical framework of the analysis of political participation as an individual act." Alford and Scoble (1968) suggested examination of the local structural variables, rather than psychological, to assess the net effect on local political involvement. In the present study I intend to examine aspects of village social structure which provide conditions for participation in local politics and development activities. Social structure, I believe, affects political behaviour and participation in two ways: it influences motivation and also it influences the availability of means to pursue ends.

A related issue the study addresses is the leadership pattern in the villages. Although this study is not intended

to be a comprehensive test of any existing theory of leadership, the conceptualization of leadership, following Gibb (1968:91-101), may serve as a conceptual framework for our analysis. Gibb states that in leadership relationships four basic elements are present: (1) the leader with his characteristics of ability, personality, and his "resources" relevant to goal attainment, (2) the followers, who also have relevant abilities, personality characteristics and resources, (3) the "situation" within which the relationship occurs, and (4) the task with which the interacting individuals are confronted. With this conceptual scheme about the nature of leadership Gibb recognizes that the leader uses his "resources" to extend his support base among the followers and thus organises his followers to goal attainment. In a peasant society like Bangladesh, rural leadership rests heavily upon "resource" distribution among followers through a local patronage system. Therefore, the role of rural leaders determines structural variables in a way they activate and mobilize others for participation. Hence, leadership pattern influences participation and involvement in local political and economic developmental activities.

Review of Literature, Objectives and Major Hypotheses

A fundamental assumption of literature on modernization² of non-western societies has been that modernization is contingent upon mobilization of peasants

for definite socio-economic changes (see Apter 1965). Such assumptions are built around macro-political system and/or development analysis (see Apter 1971, Deutsch 1961, Pye 1966) and usually ignore the complex factors influencing the social structure and the exercise of village leadership. Studies done in the tradition of political anthropology in Bangladesh villages (see Bertocci 1970, Islam 1974, Zaidi 1970, Zaman 1977, Wood 1978) refer to the treatment of village social structure in terms of local political structures and processes. One trait which is often taken as diagnostic of the local political structure is the presence of pervasive factionalism (doladoli) among rural leaders who organise factional politics out of a localised patronage system (see Wood 1978a, Zaman 1981b). The analysis of village social structure is therefore relevant to the mobilization process in two respects particularly: it will allow an analysis of factional systems of political interaction, and the notion of patron-client relations between the factional leader and the followers which runs across class alignments.

The general theory from which this orientation is derived has a long tradition in peasant studies of South Asia (see Lewis 1958; Beals 1962; Bailey 1963, 1968, 1969; Nicholas 1965), and it appears to have turned into a favourite theme in peasant political analysis. The commonly used definition of faction was formulated by Ralph Nicholas. Nicholas (1965:27-29) identified factions as (1) conflict and

(2) political groupings which (3) are not corporate, they are recruited (4) by leader(s) (5) on the basis of diverse principles. Bailey (1969) offers one further distinction, that between 'core' and 'followers,' which aids the analysis of recruitment of factional alignments. Bailey (1968) observes that factions are conflict groups made up of two relationships or three roles: leader, follower and dependent. He argues that follower and dependent differ in that "the follower does not, and the dependent can, change sides" (1968:283). Bailey considers the followers as "a core" and the collectivity of dependents as "support group."

The nature and recruitment to factions (dals) in rural communities of Bangladesh have been reported, among others, by Islam (1974) and Zaidi (1970). Islam (1974:12) found that in cases where the "core" of a conflict is a patrilocal descent group (gusthi) the faction is essentially a corporate group. Zaidi (1970:73) observes that village factionalism (doladoli) is a reproducible phenomenon and may play a positive role in terms of cohesion and unity in a sub-group, in general, their basis, as observed in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), appears to be negative in the sense of bringing disunity and abandonment of cooperative activities. My earlier work (Zaman 1977) in a northern Bangladesh village supports Bailey's (1969) contentions that a faction has a "core" as opposed to "support group." Each village leader (paramanik) of the village has a dal

and bases of such dal alliance in the village were found to be kinship, economic dependence and neighbourhood. The existence of many dals in the village were found to result from conflicts among patronage networks of typically rich peasants in the village. The patrons through such networks organise conflict groups out of their followers, e.g., agricultural labourers, sharecroppers, mortgagers and other categories of small peasants and dependents (for further details see Zaman 1981b).

The management of factional conflict in rural communities through the network of patronage-dependent relationship has led to a discussion among some anthropologists of the problems of the development of class consciousness and rural class formation among the peasantry (see Nicholas 1965, Bujra 1973, Alavi 1973, Schryer 1975, Silverman 1979, Michie 1981, Wood 1978). Alavi (1965:274) observes that factors like extreme insecurity, low standard of living and paternalistic ties with the rural elites account for the fact that the poor peasants as a class are internally divided by competing loyalties in village-wide factional disputes. Alavi (1973) further observes that in a situation of pervasive factionalism, the rival factions are, in general, structurally similar and the faction leaders as local power-holders act as mediating "political entrepreneurs" (also see Attwood 1974), "middlemen" and/or brokers" (see Boissevain 1964). Such conflict therefore "does not have ideological expression, because rival factions

or factional leaders fight for control over resources, power, and status as available within the existing framework of the society rather than for changes in the social structure" (Alavi 1973:44). Alavi's approach emphasises the analysis of local class structure and differential political behaviour of the different strata among the peasantry.

From the preceeding discussion, it is possible to propose that a factional mode of politics in peasant societies may be studied from two theoretical positions: (1) the structural-functional and (2) class analysis where the rich landowning peasants vertically integrate individuals as building-blocks to support them in village level and supra-village political contests. The structural-functional position analyses factional politics as an important force for conflict resolution and maintaining stability in the society (see Lewis 1958, Beal 1962, Islam 1974, Beals and Siegel 1967). Alavi (1973), Bujra (1973), Schryer (1975), Wood (1978) and Zaman (1981b) analysed factional conflict as a pervasive form of "domination" by rich peasants that hinders the growth of class consciousness among the poor peasantry. In this study I shall, following Alavi (1965), attempt a class analysis using the Marxist concept of 'class structure'³ as outlined by Dos Santos (1970), and I will try to bring out the distinction between 'social class' as part of a larger theoretical framework concerned with the problem of social conflict and structural change and 'social structure' which is defined by social status

and ranking. The distinctions between the two are important in peasant political analysis as considered by a number of students of social stratification (see Stavenhagen 1975, Dos Santos 1970, Schryer 1975).

In the beginning I shall use a structural-functional approach to examine the structure and functions of factions in the selected villages of the Ulashi area. Such an attempt will help to determine the nature, content and issues of factional politics and the class basis of factional leaders. The village leaders, as will become subsequently evident, were tapped by the District⁴ bureaucracy, in the absence of mass-based political parties, to mobilise peasants in support of self-help voluntary activities for swanirvar development. The principle of self-help voluntary participation by community members was based on some underlying assumptions, beliefs and goals. In the first place, it was believed that the villagers would participate collectively to improve their own standard of living. Secondly, such participation for modernizing programmes was expected to be ensured by the traditional village leaders. Finally, village development goals may be pursued through the leadership of the rural bureaucracy rather than by politicization of the masses. Viewed from this position, the Ulashi swanirvar programme may be considered to be an essentially bureaucracy-led reforming attempt (see Hossain 1978b:58) without altering the basic structure of the village society, and therefore, necessary

politicization for mass mobilization was either avoided or ignored. This reflects the lack of an objective appraisal by the bureaucracy, the implicit assumption and illusion of classlessness of the rural society, and a failure to perceive that mobilization is either conditioned by politicization as in the case of China (see Hinton 1966) and Cuba (see Fagen 1971) or results from increased socioeconomic development (see Deutsch 1961).

My assumption here is that the factional leaders of the villages do often act as "middlemen" or "brokers" to mediate between the village system and the larger world in order to advance their own political careers and interests without altering the basic structure of the village society. I shall try to show that the "middlemen" or "brokers" as individuals, and "brokerage" as a process can be linked to patterns of class and class formation.

Based on the brief discussions outlined above, the following hypotheses are set in this study for testing:

- (1) The factional mode of politics in the village may prevent mass mobilization for swanirvar development.
- (2) Mass participation in self-help village development programmes will tend to be unsuccessful if they are not relevant to the needs and desires of the different classes in the village.
- (3) The village leaders, who are by and large traditional, cannot mobilise people for a modernising programme.
- (4) Mass mobilisation of peasants through initiatives of local bureaucracy may prove ineffective for development.

Data Source and General Methodology

The fieldwork for the study was carried out between December 1977 and February 1979 in four trips in the district of Jessore where the Ulashi Project is located. I was then temporarily stationed there to supervise and coordinate activities of three research teams in that area by the National Foundation for Research on Human Resource Development (NFRHRD), my employing institution. The three villages reported here were selected for intensive survey of each household (a family) to learn their socio-economic conditions. In selecting the study villages, the team initially relied on the classification by local swanirvar volunteers. The volunteers, through a week-long workshop sponsored by the local bureaucracy in June 1977, had classified a total of 119 villages within the Pilot Sarathi area into A, B, C and D categories indicating an order of high to low on the scale of development. Several factors formed the basis of such ranking of the villages:

- (a) completion of village surveys by household to assess the requirements and potentialities for development,
- (b) preparation of a two-year plan of the village outlining schemes and/or projects, (c) the degree of cooperation and coordination between the different social/economic groups in the village, (d) the amount of voluntary work already done on a self-help basis for upgrading the village, and
- (e) involvement of local school teachers in 'open-air'

school programmes (muktangan) for eradication of illiteracy from the village (for details, see NFRHRD 1979:3). The number of villages thus ranked in each category were 12, 48, 45 and 14 respectively (see Zaman and Khan 1979). The team members later visited a number of villages in each category.

Three villages, one each from A, B and C categories, were finally selected for the present study. They are: Karimali (A category), Gunnagar (B category) and Ramchandrapur (C category). The villages thus selected may be taken to be fairly representative of the area under investigation. A standardized interview schedule was used to interview heads of each household in the three villages. Other methods like formal and informal interviews with the leaders, use of key informants and participant observation methods were used to get additional information.

The data for the present study were collected prior to my conception of the problem in the way I present it here. I was then influenced by a Western social science approach to non-western "exotic" societies, an approach that pervades analysis of traditional/modernity studies. I am now critical of some of the techniques I have used in the study; they prove not to be very useful analytical tools for understanding some of the issues raised in this thesis regarding Bengali rural life. I shall try to point out their inadequacies in relevant sections with the hope of making further methodological refinement for future

research of Bangladesh. In this way, even where my conclusions need further evidence, they may be considered relevant in the debate on the appropriate path for Bangladesh development. The problems encountered in Bangladesh are best viewed from the Marxist political economy perspective. To the extent allowed by the data, the analysis in this thesis proceeds accordingly.

Identification of Leaders

A number of approaches are used in the study of leadership (see Singh 1976). The most common approaches used by rural social scientists are reputational, observational and socio-metric methods. The reputational method involves asking respondents to name powerful and influential leaders of the community. The final list of leaders is usually made from those who receive mentions above a certain arbitrary set-limit. According to the observational method, leaders are identified on the basis of direct observation by the investigator participating in the community life under study. The socio-metric method is closer to the reputational approach. The respondents are asked whom they approach for advice and suggestion on different personal and or social problems. Through this approach an interaction can be identified between a leader and his followers. The construction of a sociogram of the choice patterns of the respondents can help identify the influential in a community. Most studies in community leadership in Bangladesh have used either the reputational

method alone or the reputational and observational method together (see Karim 1979, Rahman 1980, Zaman and Khan 1979) to identify rural leadership.

The heads⁵ of all households in the three villages were asked to mention names of their village leaders. Individual respondents mentioned one to fifteen names of leaders in the village. Thus, I found that there were in all 495 mentions by 101 respondents for 34 leaders in Karimali, 502 mentions by 139 respondents for 35 leaders in Gunnagar, and 498 mentions by 133 respondents for 32 leaders in Ramchandrapur. Individual scores of total mentions villagewide by many leaders showed up to a minimum of one and below one percent. It appears, therefore, that there exists a lack of strong consensus among the respondents about who the village leaders are. Two reasons may have accounted for this apparent lack of strong agreement about the village leaders. First, during my field-research in those villages, I found that villagers were divided into many factions (dals) in the villages often based either on kinship, neighbourhood, or other interest groups, such as in-migrants in the village. Secondly, I realised that the leadership structure in the village was not "monomorphic", but "polymorphic"⁶ which provided enough opportunities to the followers to align with one or more leaders based on their requirement or needs. Hence, given the response patterns, an arbitrary decision was taken to exclude those leaders who received

less than fifteen mentions by the respondents. Thus the following 30 leaders were identified in the three villages (see Table 1).

As evident from the table nearly half of the leaders in all the three villages received less than 10 percent of the total mentions in each village. Leaders who have influence at the village level and beyond received more mentions by the respondents than those who exercise their influence only at the neighbourhood (para) level. So there are leaders who are recognised by the villagers as "village leaders" and those who get recognition only by members of the same neighbourhood to which they belong. Leaders who received mentions more by the members of the neighbourhood do participate in village level decision-making, although their authority and influence are not felt so strongly as those of the leaders who have village wide influence. The leaders were all interviewed by me to take stock of their functions—both traditional and developmental—and their attitude toward and involvement in the current programmes of local planning and development through self-help in this area. In some cases, I visited a leader more than once when my understanding was not satisfactory upon my first encounter.

TABLE 1

LEADERS OF THE THREE VILLAGES RANKED BY TOTAL AND
PERCENTAGE OF MENTIONS RECEIVED

<u>Village</u>	<u>Name of Leader</u>	<u>Number of Mentions</u>	<u>Percent of Total Mentions</u>
KARIMALI	Ziabuddin	75	18
	Fazar Ali	57	14
	Sheikh Abdul Hakim	44	12
	Bani Adam	41	10
	Din Mohammad	39	10
	Rabiul Hossain Gazi	30	7
	Moazzem Hossain Morol	26	6
	Golam Rasul	23	6
	Eunus Ali Biswas	22	5
	Sher Ali	19	4
	Mosaraff Hossain	18	4
	Marjan Mondal	16	4
	Total	415	100
GUNNAGAR	Abdul Gafur	71	17
	Lokman Passary	65	16
	Mozammel Huq	61	15
	Azizul Huq	55	14
	Insar Ali	46	11
	Bazlur Rahman Sarder	45	11
	Tarbez Gazi	17	4
	Fakir Chand	17	4
	Ziar Ali	16	4
	Fatik Rishi	15	4
	Total	408	100
RAMCHANDRAPUR	Akbar Ali	92	27
	Inman Ali	87	25
	Poymal Mondal	52	15
	Afsar Ali	28	8
	Siraj Mondal	24	7
	Fazar Ali	23	7
	Golam Hossain	22	7
	Abdur Rahman	15	4
	Total	343	100

Limitations of the Study

In the present study, the leaders of the villages have been identified by interviewing the heads of households in the villages. The choice of other members in the household about who village leaders are may not be inferred from the study, although it is hoped that opinions of other members within a household would not be very different. The opinions of the head of household are, however, considered important in rural society in interhousehold relationships and decision making at the village level. The selection of the villages was purposive with a view to get a representative picture of the villages within the Ulashi Project. The study focuses on the leadership pattern and mobilization processes only. The impact of the Project on productivity and other aspects are not considered here.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT AREA AND THE VILLAGES

In recent years, there has been considerable discussion among economists, planners and policy-makers of Bangladesh as to the need for a "self-reliant approach" to bring about socio-economic development (see Islam 1977, Planning Commission 1973). The "top-down" approach to development planning has proved inadequate to deal with the gigantic problems that this war-torn, poor country is facing. A consensus is emerging, following the current international move for a "new national economic order" (see Haq 1976), and the need for "bottom-up" planning and decentralization of power is felt in order to reach the villages and the rural people (see Ahmad and Hossain 1978:72). It is now considered that the people have to be mobilized for playing their part at all levels of the development process, from survey and planning to implementation. The mobilization should be based on the philosophy of self-reliance in order to use the country's most abundant and under-utilised resource—its manpower. Large scale voluntary participation by the people in development plans is considered to be one of the ways of utilizing the country's vast manpower. The Ulashi Project was introduced to test this concept and also to set up a demonstration model of 'self-reliance' for the entire country (see Sattar 1979:8).

Background of the Ulashi Development Project

The Ulashi Project got its initial start in November 1976, with the Ulashi canal digging project which was conceived by the Bangladesh Water Development Board in the 1960s. The digging was required to drain out excess water from a number of marshy (beel) areas (approximately 28.05 square miles). The objective was two-fold: (1) reclamation of 18,000 acres of hitherto uncultivable land upstream, and (2) facilitation of irrigation in new areas for increased production through irrigation-seed-fertilizer technology (see Alamgir 1978:13). Due to the absence of required funds, the Project remained shelved until October 1976, when the Jessore District Administration under the instruction of the President and the Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA)⁷ Major General Ziaur Rahman undertook the Project. A Preparatory Committee was struck, with the Deputy Commissioner⁸ as the chairman, to undertake the project and motivate the people to work on a self-help basis (see Zaman and Khan 1979). The District bureaucracy had in mind to create among the people a sense of confidence (emphasis mine) so that they themselves could work on a self-help basis to provide many infrastructural facilities necessary for economic development (see Alamgir 1978:13).

The Project as drawn (see Map #01) connects village Ulashi with Jadunathpur by a man-made canal of 2.65 mile length. A total of 109 acres of land (all one crop lands)

was acquired for the new course of the river. The earthwork thus involved was estimated to be 16.50 million cubic feet (see Alamgir 1978:11). The work started with enough enthusiasm and was inaugurated by the President and CMLA Major-General Ziaur Rahman. It is reported that about 4,000 volunteers participated on the inaugural day (see Sattar 1979:13). It took about six months to complete the canal-digging project, which opened new horizons for the self-reliance movement (swanirvorization) of the area.

Swanirvorization: A Two Year Plan

Immediately after the completion of the canal digging work, the Government announced its decision to develop this locality as a model swanirvar area. A 9-Point Programme was launched in the 119 villages of the Ulashi Project for development and swanirvorization. Speaking categorically, the following 9-Point Programme was to be realised within the next two years:

- 1) maintain full law and order
- 2) create a surplus in food grain production
- 3) double all other crops
- 4) adopt measures for family planning and population control
- 5) eradicate illiteracy
- 6) make primary (Grade V) education compulsory
- 7) improve health and sanitation

- 8) attain full employment
- 9) distribute the gains from increased output in a fair manner.

(Ahmad 1978:43)

A plan area was chalked out covering seven unions⁹ which lie in close proximity to the canal spreading over in part of the two thanas.¹⁰ The local swanirvar workers in collaboration with local school teachers, and supported by the District Administration, pursuing a "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" course surveyed their villages in order to assess requirements and potentials, and made a two-year developmental plan for each village. Village-level swanirvar committees were also formed in each village in accordance with the prescribed organizational structure issued by the Central Swanirvar Cell, Dacca. The village committee was entrusted with responsibility (1) to encourage the villagers to make a village-level development Project, (2) to approach the District Administration for necessary assistance, (3) to work on a self-help basis and mobilise the villagers to participate in voluntary work for village development, and (4) to urge the villagers to make maximum possible use of the local resources available for development. The village Committee was in fact made the de facto village government where different interest groups in the village were "claimed" to have been duly reported (also see Zaman and Khan 1979:3).

The village plans were then consolidated into union plans and finally into an area plan covering the proposed Project area with a total estimated investment of nearly 110 million taka¹¹ (see Table 2) to meet the 9-Point Programme. As seen in the table, 51 percent of the proposed investment in the two-year plan was shown to be contributed by local villagers through self-help work. The lack of realism is evident in this table. In each of the sectors, the villagers are supposed to contribute nearly half of the financial investment required to meet the objectives set out in the development budget in the form of voluntary participation. This component of self-help or voluntary participation remained vague in each of the sectors except the view that the villagers will do their

TABLE 2

SOURCE OF ULASHI PROJECT FINANCING FOR SPECIFIC SECTORS:
A TWO YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN (JULY 1977-JUNE 1979)

Sector	<u>Financial Source of Investment</u>			
	From Self-Help*	From Gov't Head*	Total	Percent of Self-Help
Law and Order	2.006	0.142	2.142	93.00
Food Production	13.541	1.863	32.173	42.10
Other Productions	3.109	0.033	3.161	48.34
Population Control	0.483	0.494	0.977	49.50
Primary Education	4.028	6.065	10.093	39.50
Adult Education	3.221	2.383	5.605	57.47
Employment Measures	16.276	17.653	33.929	48.03
Health Measures	13.943	7.764	21.708	92.30
Total	56.609	53.185	109.794	51.65

*in million Taka

(Alamgir 1978:14)

best to boost up agricultural production, eradicate illiteracy, improve health measures and adopt family planning measures to control population growth. The District Administration which was finally responsible for the Development plan failed to realise that the so-called voluntary participation, given the nature of the village social structure and processes of mobilization, may remain a "myth."

The Selected Villages

The three villages under study are situated about 4.5 miles southwest of Jhicargachha thana headquarters and are just to the south of Jessore-Banapole road at Navaron Union Parishad (Council)¹² office. The three villages are clustered together and can be approached both from the Union Council and Navaron market (bazzar) through the unpaved road to the east. The newly dug Ulashi canal flows about one to one-and-a-half miles southwest of the villages.

Karimali

Karimali, an "A Category" village, has 101 households with a total population of 962. Nearly half of them are females. Agriculture is the predominant occupation of the households, although some of them have petty trades at Navaron bazzar. The literacy rate is about 24 percent. Nearly 15 percent of the households do not have any agricultural

land. The majority (54 percent) are small-holding peasants. About 20 percent of the households are rich peasants.

The villagers are led by a dozen village leaders. Leadership in a majority of cases is hereditary. In recent times the village has earned a reputation as a model village of the Ulashi area, and gets preference for visits by dignitaries who come to see swanirvar activities in the Ulashi area. The rate of introduction of modern technology, e.g., seed, fertilizer, irrigation, is higher in this village compared to the other two.

Gunnagar

Gunnagar, a "B Category" village, lies in between Karimali and Ramchandrapur. The total number of households in the village is 139 with a total population of 736 (385 males and 351 females). The literacy rate in the village is 17 percent. The villagers are primarily agriculturalists. The use of modern inputs in agriculture is not very common except by some rich and middle peasants who constitute 30 percent of the total households in the village. According to my survey, there are 10 leaders in the village, including the lone elected member of the local union council from the village.

Ramchandrapur

Ramchandrapur is a "C Category" village as ranked by the swanirvar workers of Ulashi. There are 133 households in the village with a total population of 735 (385 males and

350 females). The literacy rate among the villagers is 15 percent, the lowest among the three villages. The occupations of the villagers, like the other two villages, are predominantly agricultural. More than one-third of the households (36 percent) do not own any agricultural land and live on wage labour. Eight leaders have been identified by the villagers for Ramchandrapur.

The three villages thus have a number of structural similarities. They are of a nucleated type, consisting of peasant proprietors, have agriculture as the mainstay of the economy, and are fairly alike in respect to both land ownership and landlessness. Taken together, nearly 69 percent of the peasants of the three villages are landless or nearly landless, 14 percent are small peasants who operate below subsistence, eight percent have a moderate subsistence level and nine percent are rich peasants (see Appendix I). The rich peasants usually have both the ability and opportunity for multiple cropping and use modern technology, e.g., seed, fertilizer and irrigation, as opposed to the others. Rice is the principal food crop in the area. Jute is grown extensively as a cash crop. Wheat, mustard and some vegetables are grown during winter, both for family consumption and marketing.

In the following chapters, attempts have been made to see whether there are differences in leadership patterns in the three villages that have a number of common features but differ in the level of economic development.

III. SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP PATTERNS

In this chapter my focus will be on the factional political system which typifies the rural social structure of the study villages. Here, I shall deal with the factional mode of political interaction, the nature and structure of factions, the class basis of the faction leaders and their political activities. I hope that the materials presented in this chapter will provide evidence of the patterns of leadership in the villages under consideration.

Factional Political System

The problem of factional political system in South Asian villages has received a good deal of treatment by social anthropologists (see Beals 1962, Lewis, 1958, Beals and Siegel 1967, Nicholas 1965, Alavi 1973). Ralph Nicholas, who pioneered the study of village political structure in terms of faction in rural West Bengal (India), made the following observation in an essay on the role of social science research in Bangladesh. Nicholas (1973:4) observes,

Villages, which appear to be the most 'natural' of human communities and the most obvious basis for cooperative development organization, frequently prove to be cockpits of bitter struggle, factionalism, and the very opposite of cooperation: no one has an effective remedy, but it is clear that rural development is severely hampered by the prevalence of such conflict. Social scientific

research cannot solve any of these problems but by identifying them and dispelling some of the general ignorance that prevails about them, it may provide policy makers with an initial basis of action.

The problem of village factionalism further complicates a unified decision making process, because factionalism is regarded as an ongoing dynamic in which schisms in the village society are actually created as the result of modernizing programmes. It is, therefore, particularly important to discuss the principle of factional recruitment in the villages and the nature of the relationship between the leader and the followers.

The principles of recruitment to factions in the villages appears to me to be diverse, although I realise, as far as I have been able to understand, the "core" represents the inner circle of the allies involving close kinship links. This loyalty to faction leader is 'primordial' (also see Alavi 1973), although occasions of divisiveness within the same gusthi may exist in such village level political structure (see Islam 1974, Zaman 1977). Each individual leader, locally called matabbar or sometimes mondal, has his own dal in the village to support him in the organization of inter-group conflict in the village. The size of the group of supporters is relatively higher among people I have referred to as dependents. The dependents are recruited by the leader through an unequal patronage network called "the patron-client relation." A patron, observes Foster (1967:228) "is someone who combines

status, power, influence, authority—attributes useful to anyone in 'defending' himself or in helping someone else to defend himself." Clients, on the other hand, assume subordinate positions, and must have a strong sense of loyalty to a patron in order to become involved in factions to serve the competitive purpose of a faction leader.

Powell (1970:412) suggests that three basic factors play key roles in the patron-client relationship:

- 1) the patron-client tie develops between two parties unequal in status, wealth and influence;
- 2) the formation and maintenance of the relationship depends on reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services;
- 3) the development and maintenance of a patron-client relationship rests heavily on face to face contact between the two parties.

Powell (1970:412) also observes that in many rural communities the role and status of a patron is highly correlated with land ownership, and the client status with poor cultivators dependent upon the patron's land for their livelihood. Under such circumstances, several features of patron-client relationships are fixed, such as unequal status, reciprocity and proximity; others are variable. The variability depends on the relative economy of the community under study. In traditional land-based agrarian economic structure, the patron-client relationships tend to be enduring and both intensive and extensive, because the "formal institutional structure of society is weak and unable to deliver a sufficiently steady supply of goods

and services, especially to the terminal levels of the social order" (Wolf 1966:17).

In context of the traditional agrarian economy of the villages where the majority of the population (69 percent) are landless and land-poor small peasants (see Appendix I), where the villages are relatively isolated with few or no market relations and governmental ties, the patron-client relation is expected to be enduring, intensive and more wide spread in the communities, and the clients are supposed to be readily available for services and political support. In the study villages, it was observed that the patrons help their clients with land for sharecropping, and also with support during economic crises, such as credit for consumption during lean agricultural periods or purchase of costly seed/fertilizer which the poor peasants sometime cannot afford. Traditionally, a patron also takes care of his clients in cases of illness or other hazards and acts as "broker" for his clients with the larger system and negotiating and/or bargaining for them. The factional leaders, by way of this patronage network in the villages, are considered "protectors" by the supporters. Thus, it is possible to say that factional politics result from conflict among patronage networks by rich peasants who organise such conflict groups from their followers and dependents, e.g., sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and other categories of small peasants and rural poor.

The recruitment to and organisational structure of dals in the villages are, therefore, based on kinship (core group) and dependents (support group) in a chain of three roles: (a) the leader, (b) the followers and (c) dependents. Here, the structure of a dal can be viewed as a variable derived from the core/support ratio. Dal alignments in the villages suggest that the size of a support group is dependent upon the degree of the network of the patronage system. The 'core' represents the corporate group while the rest of the dal structure is essentially not permanent. Nearly half of the leaders of the three villages (Karimali 41 percent, Gunnagar 60 percent, Ramchandrapur 38 percent) who received more mentions by the respondents appear to have more dependents in their dals compared to the other dal leaders in the villages. Thus, the more influential leaders in the villages have networks of support across neighbourhoods in the village. Leaders who maintain such networks of relationship manipulate their support through the clients or dependents. The para level leaders have kinsmen as their followers. They usually participate more in the dispute resolution processes at the neighbourhood level.

The factional leaders of the villages were asked to mention the nature of activities for which the villagers approach them. A list of ten issues was prepared. They are: judgement (bicar) and/or compromise (salish)¹³ for dispute resolution, counselling for court cases, contact

with thana officials, decision on material affairs, religious matters, adoption of family planning methods, new innovation in agriculture, negotiating agricultural credit and loans from banks. The faction leaders also use these issues as "resources" for organising alliances with persons who receive benefit from them. A leader thus increases his "support group" in the village.

Class Basis of the Dal Leaders

The dal leaders in the three villages are typically rich peasants and manipulating "political entrepreneurs" or "brokers" in the villages. My data on land ownership in the three villages (see Table 3) indicate that the leaders belong to the top 25 percent of the households who own larger amounts of land in the villages. Among the leaders themselves, the large majority (63 percent) belong to the top category (about 10 acres).¹⁴ Since land is the foundation of the village economic structure a vital and scarce resource for power and prestige in Bengali rural life, its possession constitutes an important objective of economic and political activity. The "land rich" dal leaders, through their control of the means of production and their articulation with the dominant mode, generate important social and political relations among the villagers to gain village level power and establish the authority decisions that I have discussed in the earlier section.

TABLE 3

OWNERSHIP PATTERNS OF LAND BY THE LEADERS AND
OTHER HOUSEHOLDS IN THE THREE VILLAGES

Ownership Size (in acre)	Number			
	Households of 3 villages	%	Leaders of 3 villages	%
Landless	112	33	0	0
Up to 2.5	144	42	0	0
2.51 - 5	46	14	5	17
5.1 - 10	25	7	6	20
Above 10	15	4	19	63
Total	342	100	30	100

The operation of this political structure can be tested for its significance in the overall social formation of the countryside.

The relationship between land, status and class is very important in the context of local social structure, class conflict and structural change. To date, rural studies in Bangladesh (see Bertocci 1970, Arens and van Buerden 1977, Zaman 1977) confirm that there is an overall association of landownership with relative social rank. Nevertheless, Bertocci (1972) considers it important to maintain a conceptual and empirical distinction between status and class.¹⁵ Bertocci (1972:40), in his study of two Comilla villages, reports that the villagers themselves discriminate between high status lineage (ucho bangsho), middle status lineage (madhya bangsho) and low status lineage (nichu bangsho) families. This stratification by

the villagers is based principally on two factors: (1) the traditional high status associated with family titles and (2) ownership of land. All families with high status titles are not necessarily wealthy peasant households, but families with newly acquired wealth tend to marry in the high status lineage to acquire yet higher status. Bertocci (1972) refers to it as "cyclical kulakism," suggesting a stable rich peasant class even under conditions of change.

"The fundamental distinction in Daripalla," a village studied by Thorp (1978:40), "is between being rich, that is owning land, and being poor. To be rich (dhani) is to be influential and important. The rich are big men (baralok) and the poor (garib) are the little people (chotalok)."

The villagers of Karimali, Gunnagar and Ramchandrapur classify themselves in two categories based essentially on property possession. The villagers call the wealthy peasants dhanilok (rich men) and those having less or no property or wealth are gariblok (poor men). This differentiation is very widely made by the poor villagers in the context of any new programmes for village development with the apprehension that new opportunities will serve the purpose of the rich peasants, and the poor may not be benefited by them. This dimension of status may become important in our analysis of class formation; it is found to legitimize and reinforce and maintain class differentiation (see Wood 1978). I shall deal with it in greater detail in the last section of Chapter 5 of this study.

Political Activities of the Leaders

In the questionnaire for the village leaders, an attempt was made to understand the political activities of the leaders in the context of participation in local political and developmental issues. Following the indices of participation outlined by Milbrath and Goel (1977:11-16), seven types of political activity questions were asked on the following aspects of participation: (1) organizational involvement, (2) voting, (3) contesting elections for public office, (4) electioneering and campaigning, (5) community activities, (6) contracting officials and (7) communication.

As evident, I have assigned varying weight for different questions. This is due to the fact that the selected questions to assess the activity rate of individual leaders asked vary in nature and in their contents. To ensure proper weight, I have assigned different values to different questions. I understand that such a method is likely to give a better representation of political activity rates of the leaders of the three villages. If similar weight is assigned to each of the questions, we might lose activity rates of some of the leaders who happen to be more active than others, i.e., their activity rates are likely to be underestimated. For example, if we give similar weight to questions 1, 2, and 3, we tend to underweight the higher political activity of a leader associated with contesting (question 3) in order to hold more power in a

TABLE 4

SCORING SYSTEM OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF VILLAGE LEADERS

<u>Question</u>	<u>Score Points</u>		<u>Total Possible Score</u>
1. Are you actively involved with any organization (e.g., <u>Swanirvar</u> , Cooperative, Political Party)?	No	0	8
	One	4	
	More than one	8	
2. Did you vote everytime in the national and local elections since 1970?	No	0	4
	Not always	2	
	Regular	4	
3. Did you contest in the local bodies election of recent years?	No	0	8
	Once	4	
	More than one	8	
4. Did you work for or help financially any candidate during elections?	No	0	6
	Provided funds	2	
	Worker	6	
5. Do you participate actively in village <u>bicar</u> and <u>salish</u> meetings?	No	0	4
	Not regular	2	
	Regular	4	
6. Did you talk to any public leader or senior officials during the last one year?	No	0	4
	Once	2	
	More than once	4	
7. Did you discuss with the villagers about any public welfare issues during the last one year?	No	0	6
	Casually	2	
	Tried to convince	6	
Total attainable score by individual leaders			40

wider political arena beyond the village boundaries. The questions having to do with organizational involvement and contesting elections, are considered here with higher weight compared to the others, because those who are "organizationally involved" participate in politics at rates far greater than those who are not involved (see Lipset 1960, Nie et al. 1969; Verba and Nie 1972). Also, organizational involvement is a major independent predictor of political participation (see Alford and Scoble 1968, Olsen 1972).

Total scores obtained by all the leaders of the three villages is 654. Individual scores of leaders range from 4 to 40, the mean score being 22. On the basis of this scoring system, a scale is proposed here to judge the rate of political activities of the leaders. It is proposed that those who received less than 22 points (mean score) may be considered "less active", those who received between 22 to 30 points are "active", and those who received more than 30 points are "very active". It appears in Table 5 that 15 (50 percent) of 30 village leaders fall in the "less active" category, while 5 (17 percent) are "active" and 10 (33 percent) are found to be "very active". Half of the total leaders thus appear not to be active, and usually do not take any initiative in issues that may promote village development. On further analysis of the data by village, it is found that the number of "less active" leaders is higher in less developed villages (e.g., B and C

TABLE 5

DISTRIBUTION OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY SCORE

<u>Category</u>	<u>Number of Leaders</u>	<u>%</u>
Less active (less than 22 points)	15	50
Active (22 - 30 points)	5	17
Very active (31 and above points)	10	33
Total	30	100

villages). In other words, it is found that the number of "active" and "very active" leaders increases as we move from less developed to developed villages. Village distribution of such leaders in Ramchandrapur (C village), Gunnagar (B village) and Karimali (A village) are 24 percent, 50 percent and 67 percent respectively. From this pattern of the distribution of leaders in the three villages, we can make a proposition that the more a village is developed, the higher the participation rate of the village leaders. Such a proposition suggests that modern villages tend to produce modern leaders in the sense that the majority of the leaders have higher activity rates (e.g., Karimali, A village). Given the relative degree of development of the three villages, and the activity rates of the leaders, it is plausible that the activity rate depends on the developmental ties of the village with the outside/or larger system. It is also theoretically sound (see Deutsch 1961) to consider that increased socio-economic development results in increased participation by members of the

community. The inflow of "resources" into community life provides opportunities to village leadership to interact more with the larger system and thus gain further contact. Hence, it may be inferred that the developmental ties of a village with the outside world determine the activity rate of the rural leaders. This should not, however, be taken for granted. The use of the scoring technique borrowed from the American political science tradition tends to be biased in favour of responses considered "ideal" or "appropriate" from the point of view of Western capitalist development. My own observations suggest that individual leaders having higher amounts of land and higher levels of education have more exposure to the outside world irrespective of the level of development of the village. It is possible, therefore, that individual modernity may also influence activity rates of the leaders in the study villages. It was further observed that the "very active" leaders were instrumental in the brokerage network between the villagers and the district bureaucracy who sponsored the village development programme on the self-help basis in the area. The leaders, as "brokers", maintained regular liason with the thana and district officials for swanirvar activities. It is important to note that the "very active" leaders of the three villages belong to the "rich peasants" category. It is assumed, therefore, that the actions of the brokers will be geared to maintain their own class interests. To support this assumption, I shall present illustrations in Chapter 5.

IV. VALUE SYSTEM AND ATTITUDE TOWARD SELF-RELIANT VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Modernization theories (see Lerner 1958, Black 1975) posit a fundamental dichotomy between two ideal-type societies—the traditional and modern—implying an equally sharp discontinuity between periods before and after the era of modernization. In this view, the value systems of traditional societies lack the potential for generating significant social changes from within. Changes result rather from the expansion of communication and diversification of technology for economic development.

In this chapter I intend to present the value system of Bangladesh rural leaders to examine the tradition/modernity orientation in their attitudes. Attitude patterns, I believe, play an important role in one's perception of social and political life, and thus finally determine one's role in social actions. My basic assumption here is that politically oriented and active leaders who hold modern views on the basic beliefs of rural life bearing on social change will be more involved in development activities. It follows then that traditional leaders cannot mobilize people for modernization programmes. I shall try to relate this attitude pattern to local planning and the development programme for the villages.

Belief System

To measure the modernity/tradition orientation in the belief system of the village leaders, a scale based on response to selected questions is used here for analysis. Each leader was asked to respond (either 'Yes' or 'No') to the following 10 selected questions. From the perspective of the present analysis the data generated in response to these questions inadequately represent the complexities of changing attitudes and behaviour; nonetheless, they are the only available measure of potential attitude differences.

<u>Question</u>	<u>Score</u>
1. Do you think that you can control your family size yourself?	No 0 Yes 1
2. In the present population boom of Bangladesh, do you approve family planning?	No 0 Yes 1
3. When you are sick, do you think that <u>kabiraji</u> (traditional medicine) is a good treatment?	Yes 0 No 1
4. Do you believe in the power of religious blessings, e.g., <u>tabiz</u> (amulet), <u>kalam</u> (holy verses) for health cure?	Yes 0 No 1
5. Do you believe that farmers have no control over their crops—success or failure depends on God?	Yes 0 No 1
6. Do you think that leadership should be hereditary?	Yes 0 No 1
7. Do you think that the poor are poor because God wanted them poor?	Yes 0 No 1
8. Would you allow womenfolk to move without <u>purda</u> (seclusion)?	No 0 Yes 1

9. In the present time, do you think that girls should be given chances for education?	No 0
	Yes 1
10. Do you think that women are capable of leadership?	No 0
	Yes 1
<hr/>	
Total possible score	10

A leader's total score thus assessed may range from 0 to 10 on the scale of traditional to modern beliefs. The distribution of actual scores ranges from 1 to 8 points, with the major concentration of leaders around the mean of 5. Despite this clustering at the midpoint, we can dichotomize the overall ranking of leaders into two categories—traditional (0-5 points) and modern (6-10 points)—since the scores of leaders in the three villages differ considerably. Table 6 shows the results of the scores thus divided.

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION OF LEADERS INTO TRADITIONAL AND MODERN
LEADERS BASED ON RESPONSE TO SELECTED QUESTIONS

<u>Score</u>	<u>Number of Leaders</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0 - 5 (Traditional)	17	57
6 - 10 (Modern)	13	43
<hr/>		<hr/>
Total	30	100

Fifty seven percent of the leaders are thus classed as traditional in their belief and value pattern; therefore,



the majority of the village leaders may not act upon programmes aimed at modernizing village societies, assuming the correctness of the hypothesis. On further examination by village, it is interesting to note that traditionality tends to be correlated with the development level of the village. Thus, the number of traditional leaders is greater in less developed villages and decreases in the more developed villages. For example, in Ramchandrapur (C village), there are 7 (87 percent) traditional leaders out of 8; 6 (60 percent) traditional leaders in Gunnagar (B village) out of 10; and 4 (33 percent) traditional leaders out of 12 in Karimali (A village). In other words, the more a village is developed, the more leadership tends to be modern. The modern attitudes are likely to result from continuous interaction of the village leaders with the outside world. Therefore, modernity in village leadership seems to be conditioned by socio-economic ties of the village with the larger system.

The traditional leaders of the three villages were found to participate very regularly in village bicar and salish systems. The bicar and salish systems work as important forces for conflict resolution and for maintaining stability in the villages. Conflicts among villagers are resolved at the samaj (a corporate community) level where religious and adjudicative functions are performed by the village matabars. The samaj in the three villages are organised on the para basis. At this level emphasis is on the

traditional dispute resolution functions of village leadership and on continuing stability in village affairs. My earlier research (Zaman 1977) in a Rajshahi village also supports this hypothesis that the traditional leaders are more interested in maintaining stability than bringing change in the social structure of the village.

Attitudes to Self-Help Village Development

As noted earlier, in the minds of local officials the completion of the Ulashi canal digging work ushered in a self-help village development programme. A 9-Point Programme for the entire Ulashi area was drawn up at an estimated cost of 110 million Taka of which local contribution in the form of self-help work was estimated to be 51 per cent (see Table 2). It was expected to be attained in two years (1977-79). The last time I visited the Ulashi villages was February 1979. I met the Chairman of Navaron Union Council (the three villages are within this council) on several occasions. He remarked: "We cannot make people work on a voluntary basis. We are trying to get some work done when government funds are made available. Our present activities include providing link roads to villages and propagation of high yielding varieties of rice and wheat to raise agricultural productivity."

During my visits to the villages in the months of January and February (1979), the President of the Karimali

Swanirvar Committee reported to me that during the last two years they succeeded in building the village road on a self-help basis. This was again possibly due to the promise of the District Administration that if they succeeded, the government would provide brick soiling. The road later was extended up to Gunnagar by government funds. A primary school was also built by the District Administration in Karimali village to achieve two objectives: to spread primary education and to eradicate illiteracy through adult education (the rate of literacy in Bangladesh is 24 percent). The school was established with the understanding that the educated youths of the village would volunteer their services to eradicate illiteracy through a village level programme for adult education. Din Mohammad, the Secretary of the Karimali Swanirvar Committee, informed me that some of the educated youths were initially enthusiastic on the expectation that if they did voluntary work in the school, they soon may find themselves in regulation teaching jobs with formal appointment by the District Education Office. When they realised that there were no prospects for work on pay-roll in the near future, the programme for adult literacy through night schooling was abandoned. The concept of voluntary participation for eradicating illiteracy did not work in Karimali, and the story was repeated in nearly all villages where the adult education programme was opened.

Through my interviews with the leaders I wanted to know about what they meant by swanirvar. Most of them gave me an impression that the concept of swanirvar involved increasing agricultural output and reducing population growth. The crucial importance of the concept in mobilizing the masses by the leaders to work on a self-help basis for village development did not figure in my discussion with them. When asked about their opinion on voluntary participation, one of the leaders of Ramchandrapur said: "Even in Ulashi people did not work voluntarily, the poor were either forced to work or paid nominally. You cannot organise people to work without being paid for it. Voluntary work is a false phrase." This leader was candid in his observations when he said: "The poor cannot afford to volunteer their labour and the rich would not come together to work to improve the over-all condition of the villagers, because you will find as many opinions as there are dals (factions) in the village." The existence of dals in the village, my respondents reported, hinders unified decision-making by the villagers to work for village development through a collective self-help attempt. Factionalism permeates nearly every issue, from the initiation of a village level development project by an individual leader to such issues as the relative influence of local villagers and non-local (immigrant) villagers. During my fieldwork a leader (himself immigrant) arranged an open-air cinema show in front of his residence by the District Public

Relation Office.¹⁶ A date was announced for the show. Another leader (a local) who, for other reasons was involved in dispute with the former, went to the Public Relation Office to report that the show could not be held in front of the house of an immigrant. The venue should be changed or the programme should be abandoned. The Public Relation Officer finally abandoned the programme. Such factional issues help people to form opposing groups in the community and co-operative work thus becomes difficult.

There were no other programmes for mass mobilization to work for self-help development in the three villages during my fieldwork. The two-year 9-Point Programme for swanirvorization was still a "cherished hope". Two reasons may account for such end results of an "ambitious" plan for self-reliance. First, neither the villagers nor the village leaders were convinced about the self-help development propaganda by the District bureaucracy. The villagers and the leaders alike considered it a government programme. The involvement of the local bureaucracy, the leadership of the Deputy Commission, the supervision of the local officials and the overall direction and authority of the District Administration since the Ulashi canal digging programme left a feeling among the villagers of governmental propaganda for swanirvar development. The leadership was never from "within". Secondly, the village level swanirvar committees appeared to be functionally weak, because none of the committee people who are the typical rich peasants,

thought of a change in the institutional framework of the society (see Sattar 1979:87). The landless and the poor peasants who constitute the majority of the productive forces in the villages are already divided into different competing factional groups where each faction leader demands services and support in village-wide factional conflict. The village Swanirvar Committee, instead of consolidating productive forces for basic structural change, has further divided them into various sub-groups to treat them in isolation from their relationships to the means of production. The potentiality of using the masses for effective participation by altering the basic structure of the village society was, therefore, never examined by this bureaucracy-led reformist attempt (see Hossain 1978:88). Hence, the programme for village swanirvorization did not work in the villages.

V. VILLAGE LEADERSHIP AND PROBLEMS OF MOBILIZATION

The Ulashi canal still remains the largest completed self-help project in Bangladesh. It is considered a "bright example of self-reliance" (see Sattar 1977:1) which provided the genesis of a new government policy of building infra-structure in rural areas through voluntary mass participation. In May 1977 the Government, through an administrative directive issued by the Ministry of Cabinet Affaris, Government of Bangladesh,¹⁷ urged the Deputy Commissioners to take up similar projects in all thanas and give necessary leadership to organise and complete such projects.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the role of the rural bureaucracy vis-a-vis the village leaders in mass mobilization for self-help work in the Ulashi Project. For convenience, my discussion will be divided into two sub-sections: (1) the so-called mass mobilization and participation in the Ulashi canal project, and (2) mass mobilization for self-help village development in the three villages. I believe the discussion here will provide evidence that the Ulashi mobilization was a "false start", and that such mobilization for overall village development will not be successful without aiming at structural change of the rural society.

Ulashi Canal Digging Project:
Mass Participation or Conscription?

In order to motivate and mobilize the people to participate in the Ulashi canal digging work on a self-help basis, a Project Committee with the headship of the Deputy Commissioner was struck. Other members included in the Committee were Union Council Chairmen of 27 Unions, local officials, and thana circle officers. The Union Councils were given a key role to play in organizing and motivating rural people to work in the Project. The Deputy Commissioner (DC), along with other local officials, visited a number of places within the Project area. Chairmen of the Union Councils took no apparent steps to motivate except bringing together some crowds when the DC paid visits to their localities. As reported, the motivational phase was "completed" within a fortnight (see Zaman and Khan 1979), an impossible task given the wide geographical area covered by the Project.

As noted earlier, the digging work was formally inaugurated by the President on November 1, 1976. The work started with mass enthusiasm with the President in the lead. On the inaugural day, it was reported that about 40,000 people consisting of local peasants, students, government officials and army people joined the President to work (Alamgir 1978:19). But within the next 10 days, the number of participants dwindled, the hope for voluntary participation began to wane (see Alamgir 1978). It then

became a matter of concern to the Committee. In the language of the DC, "tempers rose, and at times came to be even lost; hesitancy and doubt popped up" (Alamgir 1978:19). Once begun with the President at the lead, there was no alternative but to complete the Project. The DC then devised a mechanism to use his bureaucratic authority and influence to mobilise the people to work. The Chairmen of the local union councils were instructed by the District Administration to supply the required human labour force from among their villagers to ensure completion of the work. This "rigging" plan to mobilise, and thus "forced" participation started immediately in each village, and the villagers within the Ulashi project had to contribute to the work under compulsion. One land-poor peasant observed: "They (the chairmen and members of the local union Parishad) told us to go to Ulashi and work in the canal, or we would be taken into custody" (see Sattar 1979:21). The workloads of the project were also distributed by "notice" from the DC office through the Union Council chairmen to possible beneficiaries, e.g., landed people, local traders, license holders and bus-truck owners. These categories of people, instead of working themselves, either paid in cash to employ labour or did complete their assigned work through "local contractors who, to our surprise, were local leaders and motivators" (Zaman and Khan 1979:5, also see Sattar 1979:13-14).

Alamgir (1978:17) estimated the contribution of various groups of participants to the digging work in the table below.

TABLE 7

CONTRIBUTION OF DIFFERENT PARTICIPATING GROUPS
TO THE ULASHI CANAL DIGGING PROJECT

Category No.	Participating Groups	% of contri- bution to the total work
1.	Unions, Councils (<u>Parishads</u>)	32.30
2.	Licence holders, Businessmen, Bus and Truck owners	22.50
3.	Food for Works Programme	12.50
4.	<u>Jotedars</u> (big landowners)	10.50
5.	<u>Irregular</u> volunteers	9.40
6.	<u>Ansars</u> (irregular police force)	8.30
7.	Army	3.40
8.	Students	1.00
9.	Police	.10
Total		100.00

Although the "groups" mentioned in the table are in fact not groups, Table 7 gives an idea about the workload contributed by each of the categories. Major contributions came from the union councils through forced-work from the villagers. The local business elites were taxed by the District Administration to contribute to the canal digging project. Poor people were brought in for work and were paid in wheat from the government sources through the the Food for Work Programme.¹⁸ The jotedars, who were considered important beneficiaries of the project

once completed, were asked by the DC to contribute to the completion of the work. The amounts to be paid by the individual jotedars were decided by the District Administration, and they were obligated to pay it. Thus it may be deduced from this table that the larger contribution (nearly 78 percent) of the digging work came out of "planned rigging" (categories 1, 2 and 4). In fact, irregular volunteers (people who came from distant areas to visit and work a day or two) and the students had worked and contributed only 10 percent to the total work. Local people were never mobilized. One jotedar said: "I was called by the officer-in-charge of our thana and went to see him. He told me point blank that grave consequences were awaiting if I did not pay the contribution" (see Sattar 1979:21).

The role and power of the bureaucracy was important in the work; the rural leaders were hardly convinced or motivated themselves, and in turn did not help to mobilise the village people to work. Hossain (1978a:2) observed: "A top-down structured influence was exercised...; instead of devising techniques to mobilise the public in a democratic fashion, an administrative method was used to implement the project."

Dependency, Class Domination and Self-Help
Village Development

In village Karimali, as elsewhere within the Ulashi villages, the village Swanirvar Committee is expected to encourage the villagers and stimulate village level developmental projects, to approach the District Administration for necessary assistance, and to work on a self-help basis and mobilise the villagers to participate in voluntary work for village development. Each swanirvar committee ideally has a number of sub-committees, e.g., Peasant Committee, Landless Committee, Youth Committee, Women Committee, and Children Committee to assist and work out village development plans. These committees are typically headed either by a land-rich peasant or someone from his family, primarily because of the land-based power and authority of the rich in village affairs. The social and political significance of the possession of the principle means of production have also been emphasized by Abdullah et al. (1974). The rich peasants are deeply entrenched in control of the rural society, and unless it is recognised, the swanirvar activities may well turn into an instrument fashioned particularly well to their interests. I shall illustrate this contention with two examples.

The Village Road: An Example of the
Problems of Mobilization

The old muddy road of village Karimali which runs from Navaron Bazar through the village to Gunnagar was in

a dilapidated state. The Deputy Commissioner, the architect of the Ulashi programme, told the secretary of the Village Swanirvar Committee that if the villagers can rebuild the road on a self-help basis, the District Administration would do the brick-soiling. The Secretary informed the village leaders about it. There was no apparent response to the proposal. Later on, he convened a meeting of the leaders to decide on this issue. A date was fixed by the leaders who attended the meeting (only 4 out of the 12 leaders attended) for the work on a voluntary basis. The Secretary informed me that only 20 people finally turned up. So the schedule was cancelled. Ordinarily, I was told, none can afford the work for such activities, because everyone in the village remains busy earning his livelihood either through daylong work in the field or other non-agricultural occupations. The poor cannot afford voluntary or unpaid work. One poor peasant, after he was convinced that I was not a "government officer", said: "Why should I go to work without being paid for it? Village development will not help me. I can earn money with my labour; I sell it, and my entire family lives on it. The village swanirvar committee doesn't pay for my labour. Swanirvar is sarkari katha (a government slogan); it is not ours."

The Deputy Commissioner visited the village on the following week after the incident. He asked the village leaders to pull together everyone in the village to complete the work within a fortnight. The Secretary of the swanirvar

committee informed me that he was fed up with trying to bring them together. The work was finally finished according to the set time schedule by the Deputy Commissioner. The Secretary was convinced that it was possible only because the Deputy Commissioner wanted to get it done. But he observed that the poor people were unhappy because they missed two days of their wage-labour and were hard-hit. One poor peasant put it like this: "We worked for the village road without being paid for it. The leaders instructed us to go to work for the prestige of the village. The rich should pay for it or work, because they can afford to pay labour. They put voluntary work on our shoulders. We cannot ignore them too."

Landless Peasants' Cooperative

Thirty six percent of the households in Gunnagar (B village) do not own any cultivable land. They live on wage-labour. The village Swanirvar Committee set up a sub-committee for the promotion of the interest of landless peasants in the village. The committee is headed by rich peasants of the village.

The swanirvar development programme ideally provided opportunity to organise the landless peasants in the village and to draw up plans for government assistance so that the poor can make some more money¹⁹ and ultimately can form their "own organization" in the village. Even after one year of its formation, the chairman of the committee did

not take any such initiative to organise the landless. Some of the landless peasants reported to me that the village leaders will never work for the benefits of the rural poor. One of them said: "If we are organised they might lose their power. They fear that once we are organised into a cooperative, we might challenge their authority. They want us to remain divided. It helps them." An officer of the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)²⁰ visited the village twice to help form a landless cooperative, but met with no fruitful outcome. The officer candidly told me: "The village leaders don't want the landless to be organised. We can't help the poor without their plan and organization. You understand, we cannot operate in the village without logistics from the leaders."

The two illustrations above provide evidence that the village leaders as "brokers" for mediation with the outside world (in this case with the District bureaucracy) and the actions of the brokerage network are crucial obstacles in the process of class formation. It is possible to infer from the Ulashi data that the "brokers", as patrons or factional leaders, prevent the development of class-based horizontal ties due to their successful efforts at vertical mobilization through patronage networks (also see Alavi 1973). Bujra (1973), in a fairly recent article, dealt with the relationship between factionalism and class conflict and the problems of mobilization of factions toward class antagonism. According to her, the types of factional

cleavage found in village communities are based on two factors: (1) the relative strength of different socio-economic strata which stand in opposition to one another, and (2) the existence of external support for leaders of lower or subordinate groups. Bujra observes (1973:140-41), "In many cases, a subordinate group can only challenge a powerful minority when it has advantage of external support... From being political dependents, they may become political actors in their own right. This is likely to occur where external political or economic developments weaken their dependence on members of the higher stratum, or where they are given support by external forces." The external support to poor peasants in Ulashi villages and the relative independence of the poor from members of the higher stratum due to increased economic development are in either case absent. Therefore, the mobilization process is entirely dependent upon the brokerage pattern which, as it has become evident, is obviously biased to class interest. The data suggest that there is a relationship between the brokerage process and the local class structure.

Doladoli: Politics of Dependence

In the light of the preceeding discussion and the two illustrations, it is possible to make an analysis of the system of village doladoli in the context of class domination and rural class conflict. Given the prevalence of factional conflicts among the leaders with rival

ambitions they are unlikely to question the existing structural basis of power. Instead, village factionalism, with its associated patronage network, prevents the emergence of class solidarity among the poor peasants and landless labourers, and thereby tends to make the independent participation of the lower strata of the rural society difficult. The case of organising the landless peasants' cooperative in Gunnagar may be treated as an example here. Given the class structure and the mode of factional recruitment in the villages, it is unlikely that an independent faction with an ideological basis will grow up in order to mobilise the poor peasant to stand against the opposing class interests. But nevertheless, class conflict and factional dispute may often overlap or coexist (see Nicholas 1965, Zaman 1977).

James Scott (1972:10) observes that a "crucial question for rural class relations in patron-client systems is whether the relationship of dependence is seen by clients as primarily collaborative and legitimate or as primarily exploitative." When the clients get more of patronage and support, they consider the relationship more as helpful and thereby legitimate, but when the patrons do not reciprocate to the extent their services demand, the clients tend to feel that the reciprocity lacks legitimacy, and the relationship turns to be exploitative and unjust. It is then that the clients become critical of the patrons, both individually and collectively. Such critical attitudes,

collectively expressed, are important for the development of class conflict to mobilise the poor peasants for independent participation. If the administrative support had been made available to the poor peasants of Gunnagar, they possibly could have organised themselves horizontally and could have become independent political actors from their position of political dependents.

It is therefore evident that the local class structure provides conditions for mass participation in developmental activities. My preceeding analysis shows that factional strife among village leaders does not promote change, but tends to preserve the status quo in the community. The analysis also suggests that the "brokers" as patrons or faction leaders prevent the development of class-based horizontal ties due to their successful efforts at vertical mobilization through patronage networks. Therefore, the mobilization process is dependent upon the brokerage pattern which again is determined by class interest and local class structure. The implication of this analysis, I believe, extends beyond the selected villages. Supported by research of Abdullah et al. (1974), Wood (1978), and Zaman (1981a), this study calls for a greater understanding of the structural factors which inhibit and/or promote the mobilization of peasants for mass participation in the programmes for economic development and social change.

VI. CONCLUSION: ULASHI, A FALSE START

A.

In this study, an attempt has been made to examine the patterns of leadership and mass mobilization for self-help village development in three selected Ulashi villages of Bangladesh. Studies of rural leaders and their role in such self-help development rarely have been attempted, although very often it is pronounced that rural people should be mobilized for socio-economic changes in the rural areas. In the case of Ulashi, for example, despite its wide publicity as an instance of development through self-help participation, very little is known about the patterns of village leadership and the role of village leaders in mobilization for swanirvar activities. This study is intended to fill some of the gap in our understanding of the structural problems of mass mobilization for socio-economic development.

B.

It has been observed in the study villages that the factional mode of political interaction between faction leaders and their followers typifies the political structure and social relations among the villagers. The faction leaders, typically "land-rich" elite, act as patrons and

organise followers as clients for village level dal alliances to serve the competitive purposes of individual faction leaders. The two principal sources of recruitment to dals in the villages are (1) kinship and (2) economic dependents. Dal alignments in the villages suggest that the size of a support group is dependent upon the network of the patronage system.

It has been found in the study that factional politics complicate unified decision-making for self-help village development programmes. Although some recent studies (see Bailey 1969) have focused on the competition of faction leaders to bring "resources" from outside the community, and subsequent distribution of such resources to their clients, the concept of self-help village development by the villagers does not generate new influx of resources into the village community. Instead of distribution of "new benefits" to the clients, the faction leaders tend to use their support groups for unpaid self-help work by those who rarely can afford such undertakings. Data on factional politics in the villages confirm that the village leaders are more interested in factional competition and politics than in bringing about structural change in the villages.

C.

It has been found that the majority of village leaders are traditional in their attitudes to some selected issues that are considered important to initiate changes in the rural areas. The correlation of traditionality with the level of development of the villages finds support in this study. The involvement of the leaders and their participation in local politics and developmental activities reveals that the "very active" leaders are instrumental in the brokerage between the village and the outside system. It is reported in the study that the brokerage process is influenced by class interest and is conditioned by the class character of brokerage.

D.

The findings of the study provide evidence that mass mobilization for socio-economic development cannot be meaningful without programmes that can meet needs of the great majority of the rural poor in Bangladesh. Although the swanirvar programme ideally recognises it, the social structural conditions do not allow the poor to organise effectively to improve their economic and political interest in the village. The importance of village level organisation of the poor peasants has been rightly observed by Rene Dumont in two of his recent reports (1973a, 1973b) on self-help rural development policy in Bangladesh.

Dumont (1973a:48) observed that "some village level organizations are badly needed." Dumont (1973a:32) is convinced that "a new type of peasant's organization, some kind of fight" is necessary, because "well-to-do literate mattabar people...will mainly protect the status quo" (Dumont's emphasis). Dumont (1973a:34) further remarked that in order to organise the poor at the village level, political and administrative support in favour of them is absolutely necessary. He also suggested that the thana level officials always should play the game of the poor (Dumont's emphasis), a new attitude necessary to help organise them at the village level.

E.

It is significant that the Ulashi mobilization built on a bureaucratic reformist model could not effectively involve the unutilized and under-utilized manpower of rural Bangladesh. I have noted earlier that voluntary involvement of local people in the Ulashi canal digging work was marginal. The people were never motivated to work voluntarily; rather, they were conscripted by the District bureaucracy to work for the completion of the project. The Ulashi project does not resemble in any way the beginning of political mobilization. Mass participation and self-reliance is exemplified by mass politicization and "mobilization-oriented" political processes for social change and economic growth.

F.

The findings of the present study do suggest that peasant mobilization is dependent upon structural change which may be attained through (1) radical land reform aiming to do away with the power of the landed elites of the rural society, and (2) a strong organization of the poor and small peasants at the village level. But both need strong political decisions involving active cooperation of the peasants. If land reform comes only from the top, as it did in 1951 (The East Bengal State Acquisition and Tenancy Act) and in 1972 (The State Acquisition and Tenancy Order 1972, The Bangladesh Landholding Order 1972), it will not succeed at the village level without the support and active cooperation of the intended beneficiaries—the poor and small peasants in the implementation process. The two reformist attempts failed to improve the landlessness and poverty of the poor peasants, because the governmental machinery was hardly equipped for such a challenging task (for details see Abdullah 1976). Rene Dumont (1973a) is critical of this "reformist model" for Bangladesh and urges emulation of the Chinese experience: "many Chinese features must make responsible people think it over" (1973a:66). Such a sweeping reform is urgent to achieve the essential structural transformation. Clearly such a decision is political, and "politics is at the command post" (Dumont 1973b:79) for any transformation to take place.

NOTES

1. Swanirvar literally means self-reliance, and is now a nationwide movement for development based on the philosophy of "growth from below". For a comprehensive discussion, see M. A. Chashi (1976).
2. Modernization is a multi-faceted process of changes that occur in a society. I am using the term here to mean rise in standard of living and acceptance of new ideas. Modernization has also been employed to mean economic development as well. For different facets of modernization, see C. E. Black (1975).
3. The Marxist concept of 'class structure' as an analytical tool does not necessarily imply the existence of class consciousness, although the development of 'class conflict' does include the processes of becoming aware of basic economic and political interests. Such Marxist analysis can be applied both in micro and macro contexts in order to interpret domination/exploitation of one class by another.
4. A District is the basic unit of administration in Bangladesh. It is headed by a civil servant called the Deputy Commissioner. Bangladesh is now divided into 19 districts.
5. Head of household refers to a person who acts as the guardian of the family (a hearth), usually the father.

Average family size in Bangladesh is six persons per family.

6. A leader with a single area of interest is called "monomorphic" compared to "polymorphic", in which case a leader has interest in more than one area. See Robert K. Merton (1957).
7. The country was then under military rule, and the President was also the CMLA of the country.
8. Deputy Commissioner is the head of civil administration of the District.
9. A Union is the last tier of local government unit in Bangladesh. This is an elected body with an average population of 10,000 to 15,000 with 15-20 villages within its territorial jurisdiction.
10. A thana is the lowest administrative unit in Bangladesh. Average population of a thana would be around 200,000 people. The chief of the thana administration is the Circle Officer (Development), a junior member of the administrative service.
11. Taka is Bangladesh currency. U.S. \$1.00 = approximately 16 Taka.
12. Union Council is the local elective body in rural Bangladesh.
13. The usual informal methods of dispute resolution in Bangladesh villages by the village leaders. See M. Q. Zaman (1981a).

14. Average ownership of land per household in Bangladesh is nearly two acres (see the Census of Bangladesh 1974).
15. Class in Marxist terms refers to the relationship of different groups to the means of production and their role in the social organization of labour (see Stavenhagen 1975:28). Status is defined in the Weberian sense as a typical position of a person determined by the social estimation of honour. Weber also recognises property as a status qualification with extraordinary regularity.
16. The District Public Relations Office is responsible to communicate to the people new programmes for socio-economic changes through media-like mobile cinemas, slides, etc.
17. A circular titled "Identification of Project for Execution by Voluntary Mass Participation during 1977/78" was issued by the Cabinet Affairs Ministry, Government of Bangladesh, to all DC's to initiate Ulashi type projects. Cited in Alamgir (1978, Appendix D).
18. "Food For Work" is a programme for employment of rural poor during the slack agricultural season to build a rural infrastructure through earth work, etc. For details, see Arthur Raper.
19. The myth of social mobility through greater earnings has been questioned by many anthropologists (see Stavenhagen 1975, Wiest 1979). The rise in social

status that often accompanies economic development does not bring significant changes in social structure.

20. The Integrated Rural Development Programme has been established in Bangladesh to set up village level cooperatives to organise the peasants for higher productivity and thereby maximise income.

APPENDIX

DISTRIBUTION OF LAND AMONG THE HOUSEHOLDS IN THE SELECTED VILLAGES

<u>Landownership</u>	<u>A Village</u>	<u>B Village</u>	<u>C Village</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>%</u>
Landless	13	48	51	112	30
Up to 2.5 Acres	54	51	39	144	39
2.51 - 5 Acres	15	16	20	51	14
5.1 - 10 Acres	6	13	12	31	8
Above 10 Acres	13	10	11	34	9
Total	101	138	133	372	100

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