

ISSN : 1815-2163

Bangladesh Sociological Studies

A Journal of BISR

Volume 1, Number 1

March 2005

Towards a Theory of Muslim Social Stratification

Khurshed Alam

The Social and Cultural Significance of Homestead Forests

Khondoker Mokaddem Hossain

Urbanization in Bangladesh: A Socio-historical Analysis

Omar Faruque

Grassroots Views on Health Practices, Changes in Health Behaviour and Policy Means for Health Communication in Bangladesh

Mohammad Mainul Islam

The Life Style of MSM: A Study in Two Suburb Areas of Dhaka City in Bangladesh

Mozammel Haque Neogi

Impact of the Bangabandhu Bridge on Environment: A Study in a Selected Area

Selina Ahmed, K. M. Rezaul Karim and Amirul Alam Khan

Book Review

Dr. Afroza Begum, Government NGO Interface in Development Management

K. M. Rezaul Karim



Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR)
Dhaka

Bangladesh Sociological Studies
A Journal of BISR

Volume 1, Number 1

March 2005



Editor
Khurshed Alam

Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR)
Dhaka

Editor
Khurshed Alam

Editorial Advisory Board

Anupam Sen	<i>Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Chittagong</i>
Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury	<i>Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Chittagong</i>
Aslam Bhuiyan	<i>Vice Chancellor, People's University of Bangladesh</i>
Mahbub Uddin Ahmed	<i>Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka</i>

Subscription:

Institutional subscription: Per issue BDT. 250. 00 (Taka two hundred fifty) and annual BDT Tk. 500 (Five hundred) only. Per issue US \$ 30 (thirty) only and annual US \$ 60 (sixty) only.

Individual subscription: Per issue BDT. 200.00 (Taka two hundred) and annual BDT Tk. 400 (four hundred) only. Per issue US \$ 20 (twenty) and annual US \$ 40 (forty) only.

Correspondence: All correspondence should be addressed to: Editor, Bangladesh Sociological Studies (BSS), Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR), 15/D/3 (3rd floor), Abdul Hatem Lane, Zigatala, Dhaka-1209, Bangladesh. Telephone: +88-02-8612916; Fax: 88-02-8629419; E-mail: bisr@agnionline.com

Copyright: All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, transmitted, or disseminated in any form or by any means without prior written permission from Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR). Grants authorization for individuals to photocopy copyright material for private research use.

Published by : Chief Executive, Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR)
Printed at : Sumi Printing Press & Packaging
9 Nilkhet (Babupura), Dhaka-1205
Phone: 8611670, 8625328

ISSN: 1815-2163

Editorial

Bangladesh is an underdeveloped country where sociology is also an underdeveloped discipline although the first one is not the exclusive cause of, or entailed, the second one. Therefore, development of Bangladesh is not a precondition for development of sociology itself rather development of sociology - for many reasons, is necessary for the development of the country. Sociological knowledge itself cannot play the decisive role of developing the society itself as the sociologist does not have any secret art or tactics for that, but can significantly contribute to find out certain ways and means to propel the country towards development.

In Bangladesh, sociologists are often regarded for their potentials rather than their accentuated achievements, which is partly because the society is a traditional one where ascriptive role is still pre-dominant in almost every sphere of life and where even a professional counts prestige more important than self-contribution to the society. Despite that an emerging trend of transition in the society from tradition to modernity is evident in almost all spheres of life where concomitant variation is also observed in many sectors of the society. Thus sociologists, although once enjoyed a full privilege without pursuing any significant intellectual work, have a reason in coming days to apprehend that they will not enjoy such privileges unabatedly without changing their present trend of marginal accomplishment. With the growing demand for social researches and to keep pace with the demand of the new millennium - the sociologists have to undertake researches in many fields including the fields where needs for applied research are burgeoning day by day. Therefore, the present state of sociologists would not allow the professionals to remain inactive in coming years. And to meet the challenges of the new millennium or post modern society, there should be opportunity for publications of research findings as without that the inspiration for sociologists would not remain strong here, and moreover it will be despairing for them as without that their findings will perish.

Intellectual pursuits without having scope of publication(s) cannot be sustained in a society for an indefinite period, which perhaps also entail a poor performance of the sociologists of the country in addition to causing other major or minor limitations. The present initiative is, therefore, to create an opportunity for and to remove the entrenched disadvantages of the sociologists - disadvantages they have been, as they were facing over the last five decades.

Guidelines for Contributors

It is not a matter of complacency to have scope for publications of articles prepared on different aspects of social researches, perhaps, it is also equally important to adhere to pursuing high quality research to gradually compete with the changing world, where many other countries have superseded us in respect of number and quality of social researches. Therefore, time has come to wake up and propel social researches with all enthusiasm to cover the lost decades and for that matter to add to the vehicle of the same. I am confident that the trained sociologists of the country are fully aware of the fact and are ready to face the challenges that are ahead of them.

I, therefore, would like to urge upon the sociologists of the country to come up with a mission to undertake social researches here in Bangladesh with paramount quality and increased quantity. Everybody's will and zeal can together bring the success much faster than what one alone can pursue. And time for pursuing anything important for greater social cause never runs out.

Articles for publication in the journal should be printed, double-spaced on one side of A4 size paper with enough margins at both side.

An article should not be more than 10,000 words except review articles and short notes. Review articles should not be more than 5000 words and short notes should not be more than 3000 words.

The author-date method of referencing minus the comma should be adopted within the text, e.g. (Karim 1978). The page number(s) should be separated by a colon (Karim 1978:3) and inclusive page numbers by a hyphen (Karim 1989: 3-14). When citing more than one author, entries should be chronological with works of different authors separated by a semi-colon (Khan 1965; Karim 1978).

Footnotes, if any, should follow the main text of the paper, and should be numbered serially in the sequence in which they are referred to in the text (where numbered superscripts should be used).

Notes and references should be cited following the described style:

Books: Aziz, K. M. Ashraf. 1979. *Kinship in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: ICDDR. B.

Edited Volume: Wood, Geoffrey D. 1976. "Class Differentiation and Power in Bandakgram: The Minifundist Case" in M. Ameerul Huq, (ed.) 1976. *Exploitation and the Rural Poor: A Working Paper on the Rural Power Structure in Bangladesh*, Comilla: Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development.

Journal: Rahman, Aminur. 1991. "Micro-credit Initiatives for Equitable and Sustainable Development: Who Pays?" *World Development* 27(1): 67-82.

Tables should be numbered serially with appropriate headings. Artwork for maps, figures and charts should be provided separately.

Use single quotation marks while quoting sentences or a single word/phrase, and double quotation marks for use within single quotes. Quotations of more than 50 words should be separated from the text and indented.

Use universal's and British rather than American spellings (colour, not color).

Numerals from one to nine should be in words, and 10 and above in figures. However, the following should always be in figures: (a) distance-5 kms; (b) age -23 years old; (c) per centage-7 per cent; (d) centuries-11th century; (e) years-1700s.

Authors must provide their names, designations and official addresses with their papers.

Only papers, which are not being considered for publication elsewhere and have not been published earlier, will be entertained. Author(s) are required to send a declaration to this effect.

If a paper is accepted for publication, the author(s) will be required to send a floppy disk containing the full text of the paper, including notes, references, tables, charts and maps. Floppy using the **Microsoft Word of IBM** compatible software program will be accepted, which will have to be sent to the editor.

Please follow the following declaration:

The submitted manuscript is not concurrently under consideration by another journal or press or has not been published elsewhere or not under consideration for publication in any other Journal.

The work submitted has been written by him/her; s/he takes public responsibility for the content of the paper where the content of the paper has not been published before in any referred scientific journal and he/she accords consent to the Bangladesh Sociological Studies (BSS) to publish the paper.

The declaration should be signed putting name and address.

Papers and other editorial correspondence should be addressed to: **Khurshed Alam, Editor, Bangladesh Sociological Studies (BSS), Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR), 15/D/3, Abdul Hatem Lane, Zigatala, Dhaka -1209, Tel: 88 02 8612916 (off.); 0171-071053 (mob.) E-mail: bisr@agnionline.com**

Bangladesh Sociological Studies Vol. 1, No. 1, March 2005

Contents

Editorial

Guidelines for Contributors

Articles

- Towards a Theory of Muslim Social Stratification 1
Khurshed Alam
- The Social and Cultural Significance of Homestead Forests 13
Khondoker Mokaddem Hossain
- ✓Urbanization in Bangladesh: A Socio-historical Analysis 35
Omar Faruque
- Grassroots Views on Health Practices, Changes in Health Behaviour and Policy Means for Health Communication in Bangladesh 49
Mohammad Mainul Islam
- The Life Style of MSM: A Study in Two Suburb Areas of Dhaka City in Bangladesh 61
Mozammel Haque Neogi
- ✓Impact of the Bangabandhu Bridge on Environment: A Study in a Selected Area 77
Selina Ahmed, K. M. Rezaul Karim and Amirul Alam Khan

Book Review

- Dr. Afroza Begum, Government-NGO Interface in Development Management 85
K. M. Rezaul Karim

Towards a Theory of Muslim Social Stratification

Khurshed Alam*

Bangladesh is predominantly a rural society where an overwhelming majority of its habitants are Muslim by religion. In order to understand the rural society of Bangladesh, one therefore, needs to analyze the Muslim social stratification both theoretically and empirically. Taking into account the empirical evidences, in this paper, an attempt has been made to develop a theory of Muslim social stratification with particular reference to Bangladesh¹.

Introduction

Bangladesh is predominantly a rural society in the sense that an overwhelming majority (about 78 per cent) of the people is living in the rural areas. Therefore, the growing interest in understanding such a society has naturally led to interest in conducting research on rural social structure. Since people living in rural areas are predominantly Muslim, it therefore, requires an analysis of Muslim social stratification with particular reference to Bangladesh.

Different social scientists have already studied various aspects of social structure and life in rural Bangladesh where some of them even discussed the issues of Muslim social stratification. Among the social scientists who have substantially contributed to the issue of Muslim social stratification are Khan (1960); Karim (1962, 1976, 1980); Bhattacharya (1978); Aziz (1979); Arefeen (1982, 1986); Ahmed (1988) and Mannan (2002). In this paper, therefore, an attempt has been made to critically analyze their positions to make a comprehensive understanding of Muslim social stratification in Bangladesh with particular reference to their theoretical positions and empirical data.

* Chief Executive, *Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR)*, Dhaka.
email: bisr@agnionline.net

¹ This theory was originally developed in my Ph. D. Thesis submitted to University of Poona, India, 1985. This is slightly a revised version of that framed theory.

Caste among the Muslims of Bangladesh

Under the broad rubric of social anthropology and rural sociology many Indian as well as foreign scholars have used the familiar 'caste' model for understanding and analyzing Indian society because of its relatively more rigid system of hierarchical ranking among the members of the caste Hindu society. To them caste is the most fundamental reality in case of Indian society. Being influenced by the then dominant theoretical orientation of structural functionalism most of these sociologists found it difficult to perceive and explain social reality in India in any way different from the caste frame. But in Bangladesh most of the rural inhabitants are Muslims and this raises a series of questions of which the more relevant in the present context are:

- i. Does the Muslim community in rural Bangladesh follow Hindu caste model or at least use it as a reference group for determination of status ranking?
- ii. Is the Muslim community a caste-like or non-caste and casteless society?

Before going for a detailed examination of the Bangladesh situation it is necessary to clarify few points developed regarding the pattern of Muslim stratification in India. Several Indian scholars have also tried to understand Muslim stratification pattern in India. An outcome of this effort is a volume edited by Imtiaz Ahmad (1978) with the purpose of understanding the extent to which caste-like system of hierarchical ranking existed among Muslims and 'to explore the degree of the similarity of their social stratification to caste among the Hindus'. Ahmad also clarified that 'caste is viewed by most contributors to that volume as a form of social stratification' (1978: 15). The main problem of contributors to that volume was whether or not the notion of hierarchy among the Muslims could be considered as isomorphic to the hierarchy implicit in the model of caste Hindu society. All of them have tried to understand caste or caste-like formations among the Muslims from different regions and states of India. Ahmad's conclusion suggests that 'caste exists as a basis of social relations amongst the Muslims too, but its form has been greatly weakened and modified as it differs from Hindu caste model in certain details' (1978:12). In general the opinion of the contributors is that 'the types of hierarchies found among the Muslim communities studied by them are certainly comparable to the Hindu caste system though an exact parallel between them cannot be said to exist.

This is evident both from the manner in which the contributors have titled their papers, in their explicit statements as well as in the logic of their arguments' (1978:4).

However, a major problem with that volume is that its contributors did not approach hierarchy among the Muslims with a probing mind. Rather they confined their discussion to the nature and extent of caste system among the Muslims. On the contrary, they should have raised this question of caste like hierarchy with a searching attitude and should have probed more thoroughly as to the fundamental basis of hierarchy among the Muslims in India. However, here we are not primarily concerned about Muslim stratification in India.

Whether or not the Muslim society in Bangladesh follows any caste or caste-like system is a basic question that needs to be pursued here. As pointed out by Arefeen (1982), some authors notably Wise, Mukherjee, Karim and others² wanted to term the social stratification among Muslims as a variant of Hindu caste system. To them some features are identical with the Hindu caste. e. g. Muslims are hierarchically organized – they too practice certain forms of endogamy and they tend to have hereditary occupation particularly in rural setting. But these scholars have also mentioned some distinctive features of social stratification and hierarchy among Muslims e.g. the total absence of the concept of purity and pollution. These features led the above authors to the conclusion that although strictly speaking Muslim stratification does not follow the Hindu caste model, it is still possible to trace a variant of caste system among the Muslims of Bangladesh.

There are many other scholarly works produced by a good number of social scientists,³ who mainly dealt with problems of land distribution,

² See James Wise, 1903. 'The Muham-Madans of Eastern Bengal' *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. LXIII, Part-III; Ramkrishna Mukherjee, 1949. "The Economic Structure and Social Life in Six Villages of Bengal." *American Sociological Review* Vol.14 No.3; A. K. Nazmul Karim, 1962. *Social Stratification Among the Muslims of Certain Districts of East Pakistan*; in John Owens (ed.), 1962. *Sociology in East Pakistan*, Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan; F.R. Khan, 1968. "Caste System of the Village Community of Dulandi in the District of Dhaka." in John Owens (ed.), 1968. *Sociology in East Pakistan*; Zillur Khan, 1968. "Caste in Muslim Peasantry in India and Pakistan", *Man in India*, Vol. 28.

³ See Peter J. Bertocci, 1970. *Elusive Villages: Social Structure and Community Organization in Rural East Pakistan*, Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University; Hafez S.M. Zaidi, 1970. *The Village*

social arrangements on land, differential land control and power structure and with the differential impact of rural development measures on social composition of agrarian classes in rural Bangladesh. These authors, excepting Chowdhury, have dealt with the pattern of social stratification in Bangladesh villages, including the question of applicability of the caste model to Muslim society. However, the caste question is discussed somewhat casually because apparently they are convinced that caste is far from being a noteworthy phenomenon among Muslims in rural Bangladesh. On the basis of ethnographic data Arefeen (1982) has rightly observed that Hindu caste model is not applicable to the Muslims of rural Bangladesh.

Even if any similarities, structural as well as underlying ideological, between Muslim stratification and Hindu caste system are ruled out summarily, the other question still remains as to whether the Muslims constitute a genuinely non-caste or casteless society both in theory and in practice. As mentioned above, some authors like Wise, Karim and others have also used the caste model for understanding social stratification among the Muslims but in general their position too is greatly ambivalent. In their opinion the Muslim stratification is a form or variant of Hindu caste system and at the same time they refuse to term Muslim society as a caste system. Perhaps their ambivalence is due to the fact that these authors viewed the problem of analyzing social hierarchy among the Muslims within the Hindu caste framework (Arefeen, 1982: 57).

It, therefore, may be mentioned here that the caste framework is neither appropriate nor applicable to the Muslim society in general and to the understanding of Muslim villages in Bangladesh in particular, because the Muslims do not follow any rigid rules of ritual hierarchy or ritual

Culture in Transaction-A Study of East Pakistan Rural Society, Honolulu: East-West Centre Press; A.K.M. Aminul Islam, 1974. *A Bangladesh Village: Conflict and Cohesion-Anthropological Study of Politics*, Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company; Jenneke Arens and Joss Van Beurden, 1977. *Jhagrapur: Poor Peasants and Women in a Village in Bangladesh*, Amsterdam; Anwarullah Chowdhury, 1979. *A Bangladesh Village: A study of Social Stratification*, Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies; Willem van Schendel 1982. *Peasant Mobility: The Odds of Life in Rural Bangladesh*, Delhi: Manohar; Betsy Hartmann and James K. Boyce, 1984. *A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladesh Village*, Delhi: Oxford University Press. H. K. Arefeen, 1986. *Changing Agrarian Structure in Bangladesh: Shimulia - a Study of a Peri-urban Village*, Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies.

practices, habits, restrictions on food and water and notion of purity and pollution that are most commonly associated with caste Hindu hierarchies as mentioned by Dumont, Ghurye and others,⁴ which are not prevalent among the Muslims in Bangladesh villages. Moreover, the recent studies on rural Bangladesh have also further confirmed that caste-like practices are absent among the Muslims of Bangladesh.

'Class' as a Framework

In the above discussion it has been made clear that the 'Caste' framework for understanding hierarchy among the Muslims in rural Bangladesh is not applicable. Alternatively, the 'Class' framework is both an adequate and appropriate framework for analyzing social structure in rural Bangladesh. In a theoretical contribution made by Arefeen (1982) the use of 'Class' framework has been rendered more problematical. However, before entering into a critical review of Arefeen's respective positions I would like to mention here the reasons which are generally advanced against the use of class framework in the neighbouring Indian situation.

Those who disapprove of the use of class framework in the rural Indian context often argue that the concept of 'Class' has a definite historicity and social context in an alien setting; it was developed in, and applied to the analysis of western industrial societies only. Since India is predominantly an agrarian society, class concept may be misleading in understanding Indian society in general and rural society in particular. Secondly, it is further argued that the lack of class awareness or consciousness on the part of those belonging to objectively different social strata also militates against the use of class framework. Since the 'Class' concept has been developed for understanding the problems of class conflict and class struggle, by definition it is inapplicable to rural India where there is no class-consciousness. Use of 'Class' framework would be no more than a conceptual construction, they assert. Hence, there is an extensive use of native "community-based" categories such as caste in the study of rural India particularly⁵.

⁴ See Louis Dumont, 1972. *Homo Hierarchies - The Caste System and its Implications*, Paladin; G.S. Ghurye, 1961. *Caste, Class and Occupation*, Bombay: Popular Book Depot; J.H. Hutton, 1968. *Caste in India: Its Nature, Function and Origins*, Bombay: Oxford University Press; M. N. Srinivas, 1962. *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House; etc.

⁵ See Beteille's - *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure* particularly chapter II for a fascinating discussion on the use of caste-class framework in the Indian context.

In the context of Bangladesh, however, the arguments advanced against the use of class framework are somewhat different from those voiced in the Indian context. In the Bangladesh context Arefeen has addressed the whole question of using 'Class' analytical framework in an essay published in 1982.

Briefly put, Arefeen's argument is that the fictive ascriptive descent is the fundamental basis of Muslim hierarchy in Bangladesh (Arefeen, 1982: 57). He has developed a theory that 'Muslim stratification is based on nobility of descent or *Saraphati*' (1982:66). Though the 'fictive ascriptive descent' is the fundamental basis of Muslim hierarchy in Bangladesh, the 'Class' framework is differently used for analyzing rural Bangladesh in a broad Marxian sense because fictive ascriptive descent or *Saraphati* is basically a non-economic category whereas 'Class' analysis revolves mainly around economic criteria. If the Muslim hierarchy is perceived fundamentally as based on a non-economic principle such as *Saraphati* then the pertinent question is whether at all the 'Class' model is applicable. If so, whether it is complementary to such non-economic categories as *Saraphati* or independent of them. Arefeen's *Saraphati* theory for understanding Muslim stratification or hierarchy is not beyond criticism. The critical question is the importance of wealth in understanding Muslim stratification.

Then the question is as follows: What is the more fundamental basis of Muslim stratification in Bangladesh? Is it the extent of wealth or ascriptive descent? Or is it *Saraphati* or *Tawangari* or to put it in technical parlance, is it 'nobility of descent' or 'nobility of opulence' that decides social ranking in rural Muslim society in Bangladesh? Indeed, a more fundamental basis of Muslim stratification in Bangladesh is not *Saraphati* but *Tawangari*⁶. The word *Tawangari* means the extent of 'richness and wealthiness' which is not only a social category that is measurable by objective indices but is also experienced and felt subjectively. It is not the nobility of descent but rather the nobility of opulence, which is a more fundamental basis of Muslim stratification in

⁶ *Tawangari* is a Persian word that means 'richness' or wealthiness. In Noakhali district of Bangladesh rural people use this word such as *Tawangar* (rich) and *Goriv* (poor). Indeed, Muslims of Bangladesh are using many Arabic, Persian and Urdu words in their daily life that have mixed up with their mother tongue Bengali.

Bangladesh. It may be argued here that nobility follows from opulence and hence I would like to call it the nobility of opulence. On that account *Tawangari* is the fundamental basis of Muslim stratification in Bangladesh. In the following pages some more evidences in favour of this theoretical position have been presented.

Chowdhury (1979:10) following Louis Dumont (1972) has said that the Hindu caste hierarchy is mainly based on consideration of ritual pollution and purity, while the Muslim status groups are based on the traditional ownership and control of land, education and on differences in styles of life. He further says that the well-to-do landowning class mostly corresponds with high status Muslims and these roughly correspond to the upper caste Hindus because power is more or less concentrated in the hands of a few *Khandani* (aristocratic, men of noble origin) Muslims (1979: 10). Chowdhury (1979: 83) has also mentioned that the *Khandans* are large or big landowners and the *Girhastas* are either subsistence-oriented landowning cultivators or sharecroppers.

Karim (1976) has conducted a study in another Bangladesh Village called Nayanpur. Inhabited mostly by Muslims, the village has only 5 per cent of its population as Hindus. According to Karim the Muslim population of village Nayanpur is stratified into the following hierarchically superimposed classes or groups as he has put these:

- i. Chowdhuries- they claim to have once been the feudal chiefs of the village;
- ii. Khandakers- they claim to have once belonged to the priestly class;
- iii. Muhuris- they claim to have once belonged to the writer class (writer of deeds, scribes, chroniclers, etc.);
- iv. Bhuians- 'wealthy' peasant proprietors;
- v. Agriculturists- having their own cultivable lands;
- vi. Landless agricultural labourers;
- vii. Wage-earners of other sorts;
- viii. Woodcutters working in the neighbouring forests.
- ix. 'Slaves' as *Ghulams* - once they were slaves.

Bertocci has given a fascinating account of the status differences of lineages and homesteads that can be used for understanding the pattern of social stratification among the Muslims of Bangladesh. It is widely known that throughout rural Bangladesh each and every lineage or homestead (with a few exceptions) has a name or title of its own. The origins of these names and titles vary from region to region and sometimes even from village to village. On the basis of his fieldwork conducted in two Comilla villages - Hajipur and Tinpara (Pseudonyms), Bertocci observes that there are at least four kinds of names and titles commonly associated with lineages and homesteads in those villages. Among these two are 'traditionally status' titles or names associated with (a) landed aristocracy, (positions in the revenue collection system of the pre-independence times or in the government administration) and (b) religion. The remaining two kinds of titles are usually associated with (c) occupation, in a service or artisan capacity, and (d) characteristics given to a member or member of the family, remembered by the village community for some reason. The latter are not patronymics but merely localism by which neighbouring families in the villages have come to call a given homestead (Bertocci, 1972: 38). Bertocci was also interested in examining the relationship of status distinction and pattern of marriage alliance, in his villages both on the class and caste lines. The villagers often told him with varying tones of insistence that economic considerations were of the greatest import in the selection of spouses. As one of his informants had put it (1972: 44-45), nowadays, if one's economic position is good, one's lineage status is also good.

But in any lineage, the economic condition of all the households is not the same. Some households are high and these include mostly surplus farmers. Then there are others who are comparatively less affluent while some are outrightly poor, hence, the maintenance of the status honour of the whole extended kin-group or lineage falls largely on the shoulders of the wealthiest members of that respective lineage. Bertocci has also given an interesting set of data. **Table 2** later indicates that 9 out of 10 (i.e. 90 per cent) surplus farmers in Hajipur and Tinpara are members of the titled lineages or homesteads.

However, poor peasant households in the patrilineal kin group of the homestead or lineage enjoy high status as their low economic status is counterbalanced by their affiliation with a relatively wealthy lineage.

One might say the poor are 'paid-for' (or compensated) in the long run by the wealthy households of the lineage either in the past or at the present point in time. It is only in this sense that the statements of the villagers have to be understood and interpreted because villagers perceive the economic condition of the household as the major consideration in their matrimonial choices. Thus, only indirectly can it be maintained that those whose economic situation is good also have (or come to acquire) high lineage status (1972: 47). Perhaps, this explains why the members of poor peasants/families also sometimes claim that earlier they were also enjoying high status along the secular dimension, but now they express their woes that they could no longer claim similar high status. Hence, one is reminded of the proverb common to Muslims everywhere in the sub-continent, which states: "Last year I was a *Jolaha* (weaver), this year I have become a sheikh, and if next year's crops are good, I shall be *Syed*." Of course, it should also be mentioned that all households of traditionally high status titles, whether secular or religious, were not truly wealthy in both the villages that Bertocci has studied.

In **Table 1** a comparative picture of land ownership and their respective status as presented by Bertocci is given. **Table 1** gives the social status of different peasant families along with their economic status in terms of the extent of land holding. In that table it is also shown that 39 Muslim households of Hajipur and Tinpara belonged to homesteads, which enjoyed traditional high status title. On the other hand, 56 farm households belonged to low status Muslims where majority of these i.e. (77 per cent) were categories of marginal and poor landowners. **Table 2** also shows that 90 per cent of all the surplus farm families belonged to high status category while Table-1 shows that 98 per cent of farm families of low status belonging to landless/landpoor and marginal/subsistence peasant categories and only about 2 per cent belonged to surplus category. Hence, Bertocci has drawn an important generalization from those data, which confirm an overall association of land ownership with relative social rank. Thus it has to bear out Weber's dictum to the effect that while property and status do not always coincide in the long run they tend to do so with extraordinary regularity (1972: 41).

Table 1. Land ownership and status Muslim only

Land ownership category	Low status		High status	
	No.	%	No.	%
Landless	6	11	3	8
Land poor	27	48	11	28
Marginal	16	29	10	26
Subsistence	6	11	6	15
Surplus	1	1	3	23
Total	56	100	39	100

Source: Peter J. Bertocci "Community Structure and Social Rank in two Villages in Bangladesh" *Contributions to Indian Sociology* NS NO.VI 1972 P. 42

Table 2. Comparison between per centages of per class high status and low status households

Peasant type	High status % per class	Low status % per class
Surplus farmers	90	48
Marginal/subsistence	41	59
Landless/Land poor	31	69
Total	100	100

Source: Computed from Bertocci's data. *Ibid.* Pp. 42-43.

Another recent study by Mannan (2002: 253) shows similar evidence of Muslim social stratification where one changed the *Bangsha*⁷ status through gaining economic prosperity. His informant said:

"These people traditionally are pan-bepari (betel-nut hawkers). By dint of their effort and business transactions, these people over the years became the richest people in the neighborhood. Now they influence politics and donate money to village welfare and sports activities. Around 1970 some members began to claim that they were the descendents of *Sayeed Bangsha*. I knew they were lying. Indeed they are from low-*Bangsha*. After 17 years later, now, many original and younger *Sayeed* know that these people are from *Sayeed Bangsha*. After the next 20 years,

this pseudo-*Sayeed* will be able to establish themselves as true *Sayeed* and no one will question their integrity".

However, to recapitulate the issue of stratifying rural Muslim society, *Tawangari* is considered as a more fundamental basis of Muslim stratification in Bangladesh. As stated earlier, it is not the nobility of descent but the nobility of opulence, which is the essential basis of Muslim stratification in Bangladesh in the sense that in the long run nobility comes with opulence. So, it is logically and empirically (in view of Bertocci's data) proved that *Tawanagari* can be considered as the fundamental basis of Muslim stratification in Bangladesh.

REFERENCES

1. Ahmad, Imtiaz (ed.). 1978. *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in Indi*. Delhi, Monohar.
2. Ahmed, Rafiuddin. 1988. *The Bengal Muslims, 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*. 2nd ed., Delhi, Oxford University Press.
3. Alam, S. M. Nurul (Ed.). 2002. *Contemporary Anthropology: Theory and Practice*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
4. Arefeen, H.K. 1982. "Muslim Stratification in Bangladesh: An Attempt to Build a Theory" *Journal of Social Studies*, No. 16.
5. Arefeen, H.K. 1986. *Changing Agrarian Structure in Bangladesh, Shimulia – a Study of a Periurban Village*. Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies.
6. Arens, Jenneke and Beurden, Joss Van. 1977. *Jhagrapur: Poor Peasants and Women in a Village in Bangladesh*. Amsterdam.
7. Aziz, K. M. Ashraf. 1979. *Kinship in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: ICDDR. B.
8. Bertocci, Peter J. 1970. *Elusive Villages: Social Structure and Community Organization in Rural East Pakistan*. Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University.
9. Bertocci, Peter J. 1972. "Community Structure and Social Rank in Two Villages in Bangladesh", *Contribution to Indian Sociology* NS No. VI.
10. Bessaignet, P. (ed.). 1964 (1960). *Social Research in East Pakistan, Asiatic Society of Pakistan Publication No. 5*, Dhaka.
11. Beteille, Andre. 1974. *Studies in Agrarian Social Structure*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
12. Chowdhury, Anwarullah. 1979. *A Bangladeshi Village: A Study of Social Stratification*. Dhaka: Centre for Social Studies.
13. Dumont, Louis. 1972. *Homo Hierarchies-The caste system and its implications*. Paladin.
14. Ghurye, G.S. 1961. *Caste, Class and Occupation*. Bombay: Popular Book Depot.

⁷ Bangsha means lineage

15. Hartmann, Betsy and Boyce, James K. 1984. *A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladesh Village*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
16. Hutton, J.H. 1968. *Caste in India: Its nature, function and origins*. Bombay: Oxford University Press.
17. Islam, A.K.M. Aminul. 1974. *A Bangladesh Village: Conflict and Cohesion-Anthropological Study of Politics*. Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company.
18. Karim, A.K. Nazmul. 1962. "Social Stratification among the Muslims of Certain Districts of East Pakistan." in John Owens (ed.), 1962.
19. Karim, A.K. Nazmul. 1976. *Changing Society in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*. Dhaka: Nawroze Kitabistan.
20. Karim, A.K. Nazmul. 1980. *The Dynamics of Bangladesh Society*. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
21. Khan, A Majid. 1964 (1960). "Research about Muslim Aristocracy in East Pakistan." in P. Bessaignet (ed.). 1964 (1960).
22. Khan, F.R. 1968. "Caste System of the Village Community of Dulandi in the District of Dhaka." in John Owens (ed.) 1962.
23. Khan, Zillur. 1968. "Caste in Muslims Peasantry in India and Pakistan." *Man in India* Vol. 28.
24. Mannan, Manzurul. 2002. *Bangsha: Islam, History and the Structure of Bengali Muslim Decent* in S. M. Nurul Alam (ed.). 2002.
25. Mukherjee, Ramkrishna. 1949. "The Economic Structure and Social Life in Six Villages of Bengal" *American Sociological Review* Vol.14 No.3.
26. Owens, John (ed.). 1962. *Sociology in East Pakistan*. Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan.
27. Srinivas, M.N. 1962. *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.
28. van Schendel, Willem. 1982. *Peasant Mobility: The Odds of Life in Rural Bangladesh*. Delhi: Manohar.
29. Wise, James. 1903. "The Muham-Madans of Eastern Bengal." *Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. LXIII, Part-III
30. Zaidi, Hafez S.M. 1970. *The Village Culture in Transaction-A Study of East Pakistan Rural Society*. Honolulu: East-West Centre Press.