THE FRAGMENTS AND THEIR NATION(S): SENSITIVE SPACE ALONG THE

INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER

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THE FRAGMENTS AND THEIR NATION(S): SENSITIVE SPACE ALONG THE

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Borders are often described as "sensitive" areas—exceptional and dangerous spaces at once central to national imaginaries and at the limits of state control. Yet what does sensitivity mean for those who live in, and those who are in charge of regulating, such spaces? Why do these areas persist as spaces of conflict and confusion? This dissertation explores these questions in relation to a series of enclaves—sovereign pieces of India inside of Bangladesh and vice versa—clustered along the Northern India–Bangladesh border. In it, I develop the notion of "sensitivity" as an analytic for understanding spaces like the enclaves, showing how they are zones within which postcolonial fears about sovereignty, security, identity, and national survival become mapped onto territory.

I outline the politics of sensitivity and the production of sensitive space through both historical and ethnographic research. First, I explore the ways that ambiguity and vague fears about security and citizenship emerge as forms of moral regulation within and in relation to the enclaves. Specifically, I interrogate the processes through which information about the enclaves is regulated and policed and the ambiguity, suspicion, and insecurity that emerge out of such practices. Second, I examine the historical production of the enclaves as sensitive spaces. I ask how the enclaves were transformed from one of many administrative complications related to the new and hastily drawn border between India and East Pakistan in 1947 to symbols

that were appropriated by various nationalist groups in India and Bangladesh as markers of national obligation and territorial threat. Third, I explore the ways residents of these contentious spaces frame their own histories as claims to belonging (in community, nation, and state). I examine how such claims are often indexed to possessions (belongings) and the way these claims shape the contours of membership within the enclaves themselves. Finally, I interrogate ways that various competing projects of rule coalesce in the enclaves to reconfigure power, opportunity, and expropriation. In doing so, I examine the ways that projects of territorial definition, national incorporation, and monitoring and regulation are experienced similarly by residents as various forms of spatial corruptions.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jason Cons was raised in Maine and completed a BA with honors in English Literature and American Studies at Wesleyan University. Before entering graduate school, he worked as a freelance writer and reviewer for a number of publications, edited *The Bookpress* in Ithaca, New York, and worked for several years as an instructional designer. In 2002, he entered Cornell University's Department of Development Sociology as a graduate student and, in 2005, completed a master's thesis on colonial border formation along British India's North-West Frontier. In 2006–2007, he was a Social Science Research Council International Dissertation Research Fellow. From 2007 to 2009, he was the Director of Research and Project Design at the Goldin Institute, where he designed and supervised community-based research initiatives in Bangladesh and elsewhere. In Fall 2010 he was a fellow at the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, Cornell University. Currently, he is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University.

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the social world are both a model and an inspiration. She has consistently cultivated, challenged, and pushed forward both me and this research since my first semester in the Graduate School.

My family has supported me throughout this occasionally bumpy process. My parents, Jon and Judy Cons, have believed in and encouraged me in and through all of my many projects, detours, crises, and successes. My mother-in-law, Patty McLaughlin, always encouraged me to work hard and not take things too seriously. My brothers-in-law Jon Lentz and Christian Lentz, sister-in-law Adriane Lentz-Smith, and niece Zora Lentz-Smith have always welcomed me into a vibrant, intellectually lively, and loving (except at the card table) family. My pets, Messapuss, Tiffin, and Revels, always made me smile, reduced stress, and reminded me that there are more important things than sitting in front of the computer.

Most of all, my wife, Erin Lentz, shared this experience with me from start to finish. Without her, none of this would have been possible. Any thanks I could offer here would be woefully inadequate to capture the ways she has shaped and supported me and this work. I dedicate this dissertation to her.

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A Note on Naming

There are two types of complications in writing the names of places involved in the

history and politics of Bengal. The first of these is that some of these names have

periodically changed with shifts in political administration. Of these, for purposes of

this thesis, the following transformations are the most important to keep in mind:

- In 1947, Greater Bengal was Partitioned into West Bengal and East Pakistan

- In 1971, with the Liberation War, East Pakistan won independence from West
  Pakistan, becoming Bangladesh

- In 1983, the district of Rangpur in Bangladesh was sub-divided into several
  smaller administrative districts. Many of areas under discussion in this thesis,
  formerly part of the district of Rangpur, now became part of the District of
  Lalmonirhat

- The basic administrative subdivision in Bengal is the *Thana* (or police station).
  Under the Ershad administration in Bangladesh from 1981-1990, the name
  Thana was officially replaced with *Upazilla*. In contemporary Bangladesh,
  these terms are used almost synonymously in conversation and journalistic
  writing

More confusing are the number of different spellings and transliterations from Bengali

that appear in both colonial and contemporary documentation of places and names in

North Bengal. I have chosen to preserve the spellings as they appear in specific

documents as I refer to them throughout the dissertation. However, I have employed a

standard spelling corresponding to the most common transliteration of place names in

my own writing. Of the names that may appear to shift in spelling in this dissertation

are the following:

- *Dhaka*, the capital of Bangladesh, was typically referred to as *Dacca* in the colonial and early post-colonial period

- The *chhitmahals*, also known and referred to in this dissertation as *chhits*, make various appearances in archival and newspaper reporting as "chitmahols," "chhitmahols," "chhittmahols," "chhittmahals," "chittmahols," and "chits"

- The sub-division of *Cooch Behar* in West Bengal was historically known as Kuch Behar, but also makes appearances in documentations as "Coch Behar," "Koch Behar," "Cooch-Behar," "Cooch-Bihar," and "Coochbehar"

- *Dahagram* is also spelled "Dohogram" and "Dahogram"

- The *Tin Bigha Corridor* is often referred to simply as "Tin Bigha" or "Tinbigha"

- *Mekhliganj Thana* in India makes appearances as "Makhligan," "Mekliganj," and "Mekligong"

- *Haats*, or markets, are occasionally simply written as "hats"

Is not the secret of the state, hidden because it is so obvious, to be found in space? The state and territory interact in such a way that they can be said to be mutually constitutive. This explains the deceptive activities and image of state officials (*hommes de l'Etat*). They seem to administer, to manage and to organize a natural space. In practice, however, they substitute another space for it. . . . . They believe they are obeying something in their heads—a representation (of the country, etc.). In fact, they are establishing an order—their own.

—*Henri Lefebvre,* "Space and the State"

In fact we should not study the frontier in itself. We should study and analyse it in relation to the state.

—*Lucien Febvre*, "*Frontière*: The Word and the Concept"

To make a claim on behalf of the fragment is also, not surprisingly, to produce a discourse that is itself fragmentary. It is redundant to make apologies for this.

—*Partha Chatterjee*, The Nation and Its Fragments

INTRODUCTION:

CHALLENGING INTERFACES

In April of 2007, Army Chief of Staff Lt. General Moeen Ahmed[1] gave a

public seminar on the future of democracy in Bangladesh that firmly asserted the

problem of national survival as one of sovereignty, territory, and control. The talk

came four months into an extended period of Emergency rule in Bangladesh that

would ultimately last for two years. This talk, tantalizingly titled "The Challenging

Interface of Democracy and Security," was largely meant to justify the openly

military-backed Emergency government. Ahmed suggested that the country was "not

ready" for democracy, at least as it had been practiced before the Emergency—called

after months of chaos around the general election scheduled for January of 2007.[2] The

job of the Emergency administration was to fix this problem by engaging in projects

that would simultaneously make Bangladesh right for democracy and make a

democracy that was right for Bangladesh.

To do this, the administration would need to accomplish two key goals:

eliminate corruption and create a "secure" environment for democracy to thrive. The

Emergency provided the perfect opportunity to confront these challenges. Under a

state of emergency, the Bangladesh constitution was legally suspended, allowing the

Emergency Administration to work around (and beyond) a range of inconvenient

liberties—such as due process, the right to public assembly, and freedom of the

press[3]—that had previously "stood in the way" of democratic progress. Indeed, a

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[1] As Army Chief of Staff, Ahmed was not the head of the Bangladesh government, however, he was the chief of the military that backed it (see below).

[2] See Sudworth, J, *BBC,* 2007 (July 11), "Bangladesh Emergency Six Months On."

[3] See Odhikar, 2008, (March 12), *Due Process of Law Must be Followed,* at www.odhikar.org/documents/14monthsofstateofemergency.pdf and Freedom House, 2008 (April 29), *Freedom of the Press 2008 - Bangladesh*, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4871f5ee2.html.

number of programs to accomplish these goals were, by the time of Ahmed's seminar, already under way. Among these were a massive reclamation of state land—which involved the "eviction" of slums and street vendors throughout Dhaka and a wholesale bulldozing of numerous stores and shop-fronts that had encroached on public/state space—and a widespread crackdown on corruption that targeted both high and mid-level officials in Bangladesh's two key political parties—the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP).[4] At the same time, Ahmed argued, steps needed to be taken to address Bangladesh's position as a country surrounded by a hostile state (India) and at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia. "As a moderate Muslim country and aspiring democracy, I emphatically express this to be a fortress country against any wave of terrorism on the southern hemisphere."[5] As such, the country needed to renew its commitments to maintaining a secure border and to engaging "constructively," as Ahmed ambiguously put it, with other regional partners. The Emergency Administration thus firmly established its prerogative as safeguarding Bangladesh through regimes of policing and spatial control. At the same time, it grounded the question of rule and order in a fluid argument about territory, sovereignty, and rights.

The story Ahmed told wove together several familiar narratives in Bangladesh. On the one hand, rampant corruption and bad governance crippled the country's economy (reducing per capita income by as much as 50%, Ahmed claimed). On the other, the emergence of new forms of terrorism ("micro-terrorisms" in Ahmed words) and the porous border with India led to an insecure environment for economic—and

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[4] The anti-corruption crack-down was not solely limited to members of the AL and the BNP. Indeed, General Mohammed Ershad, head of the Jatiyo Party and a former President and military dictator of Bangladesh, fled the country several times during the Emergency to avoid rumored arrests. However, the main thrust of the anti-corruption drive appeared to be to cripple the oppositional political machinery of the AL and the BNP under the guise of purging those who had benefited at the expense of the nation.

[5] The complete text of Ahmed's seminar appeared in *The Daily Star,* 2007 (April 14), "The Challenging Interface of Democracy and Security."

hence democratic—growth. The Emergency, and the suspension of democratic norms it entailed, would allow the Emergency Government to tackle such challenges in a way other democratic ones could not. As Ahmed concluded, "Bangladesh is aware and prepared for the challenges posed by security concerns facing the region. In my opinion, the issues of security and democracy are inextricably linked."

Ahmed's seminar drew on numerous tropes and paradoxes that are central to discourses over security and territory at the contemporary conjuncture as it wove together two seemingly competing narratives of nation and state. It asserted the national potential for progress as it claimed the need for an iron fist to guide it there. Bangladesh was a fledgling nation, emerging from the violence and turmoil of two anti-colonial struggles.[6] In the period since, the country had struggled with a range of challenges—from military dictatorship, to development and economic liberalization. Ahmed's narrative celebrated this nationalist history. Yet, it also played on the insecurities and instabilities of governance in Bangladesh since its independence. In Ahmed's framing, the nation was off track. Its 36-year-old experiment with democracy was failing. It risked succumbing to a range of tacitly linked threats—the violation of national space through porous borders; the opportunistic appropriation of resources and land by corruption from within; the overindulgence of short-term "rights" at the expense of long-term growth, stability, and survival.[7]

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[6] Namely, the anti-colonial movement against British rule in India, culminating in the Partition of Bengal in 1947 (in which East Bengal became East Pakistan), and the movement against Pakistani rule culminating in the 1971 Liberation War and the creation of independent Bangladesh.

[7] Ahmed's argument also invoked a range of tropes that seamlessly fit into a set of global dialogues and debates. The protection of democracy through its suspension, the preserving of freedom through an increase in securitization (particularly at national borders), and the addressing of issues of corruption and criminality through policing—as opposed to the exploration of incentives, needs, and practices—all are unsurprising, if no less troubling, aspects of much of the contemporary debate on security, terrorism, development, and growth (C.f., Collier 2007; 2009; Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Tschirgi, Lund, and Mancini 2009). Neither did Ahmed's proposed strategies for addressing this "challenging interface"— transparency, sustainable development, promoting the "rule of law," building regional and global partnerships, and participating in global and regional security measures to counter terrorism—offer any departure from global developmentalist discourses that have gained currency against the backdrop of the international "War on Terror."

Ahmed's arguments, and the programs it justified, were, of course, as much or more about establishing rule, power, and control in Bangladesh's unstable political landscape as about the restoration of democratic institutions. The Emergency provided seemingly durable legitimation for the extension of various forms of state power into a range of different arenas of life within Bangladesh. Many have critiqued similar rhetorics as cynical justification for eliminating rights, expanding state power, and—in its more global forms—reasserting empire.[8] I do not dispute such interpretations. Indeed, in the case of the Emergency Administration in Bangladesh, they seem more than justified. Yet, I am concerned that such critiques often risk reproducing the same logic that unconsciously and uncomplicatedly ties a range of regulatory projects together in the name of a unified process of statemaking.[9] From this standpoint, the dispute between those who enact and support such regulations and those who criticize them is reduced to a problem of intent (i.e. are such projects concerned with building or dismantling democratic institutions and do they preserve or curtail rights for citizens and others?). While this normative debate is critical to understanding and contesting initiatives that, at once, speak in the name of and hollow out democratic process, I wish to raise a different set of questions about the relationships embedded within Ahmed's challenging interface.

Specifically, I wish to question the mutual coherence and overlaps of projects of establishing security, sovereignty, territorial definition, criminal monitoring, and a range of other regulatory projects that fall under the umbrella of "Emergency" invoked in Ahmed's speech. What seems striking to me in Ahmed's presentation—and in countless similar articulations of this logic both within Bangladesh and beyond—are

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[8] See, for example, essays in Hershberg and Moore (2002).
[9] I borrow this term from Sivaramakrishnan, who argues, "Statemaking appears then to be a matter of organizing political subjection within a defined territory (the spatial form of power) and imbuing this subjection with legitimacy" (1999: 8). Sivaramakrishnan is particularly interested in emphasizing the articulation between the forms of centralized knowledge that are critical to such projects and the negotiated terrain upon which such projects are contested and carried out.

the common-sense quality of the claimed linkages between such processes. The self-evident-ness of these linkages are, I suggest, ideological constructions—discourses that interpolate subjects and their understandings of events into a natural-seeming justification for force and the suspension, reduction, and regulation of rights (Althusser 1971; Corrigan and Sayer 1985). There is a coherence ascribed to such projects and their presumed overarching goals, a "natural" logic that conceals a range of fragmentations that shape and are shaped by people and spaces that are their presumed targets. Such fragmentations include, but are not limited to, incoherence of agendas and outcomes between different initiatives designed to secure territory; the reconfigurations of power and opportunity that emerge in the context of assertions of sovereign power; and lacunae in knowledge and ambiguities that both undermine and facilitate new forms of regulation and exploitation. These fragmentations are important, not just because they point to ways in which projects of rule are incomplete, but also because they offer ways to rethink and, potentially, recon*figure* understandings of state-formation, security, and political power.

This dissertation engages with these fragmentations, the fraught histories that shape and are shaped through them, and their entanglements with broader narratives of both nation and state. As importantly, it explores the daily lives and tactics[10] of meaning making of those who live under tenuous and often violent conditions of rule. Such fragmentations, I argue, are more than incidental—chinks in the otherwise smooth armor of state security and power. They are central to the productions, experiences, and profound ambiguities of politically organized subjection (Abrams 1988).

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[10] I use the word "tactics" in De Certeau's (1984) sense of the word—as a set of practices employed by individuals to define space for themselves within environments shaped by "strategies" of institutions and other structure of power. Though I embrace this distinction—between broad projects and the quotidian negotiations of them (Scott 1992)—I question the ability to make easy and fast divisions between them in practice, and resist strains of critique that reduce the distinction between strategies and tactics to practices of "state" and practices of "society."
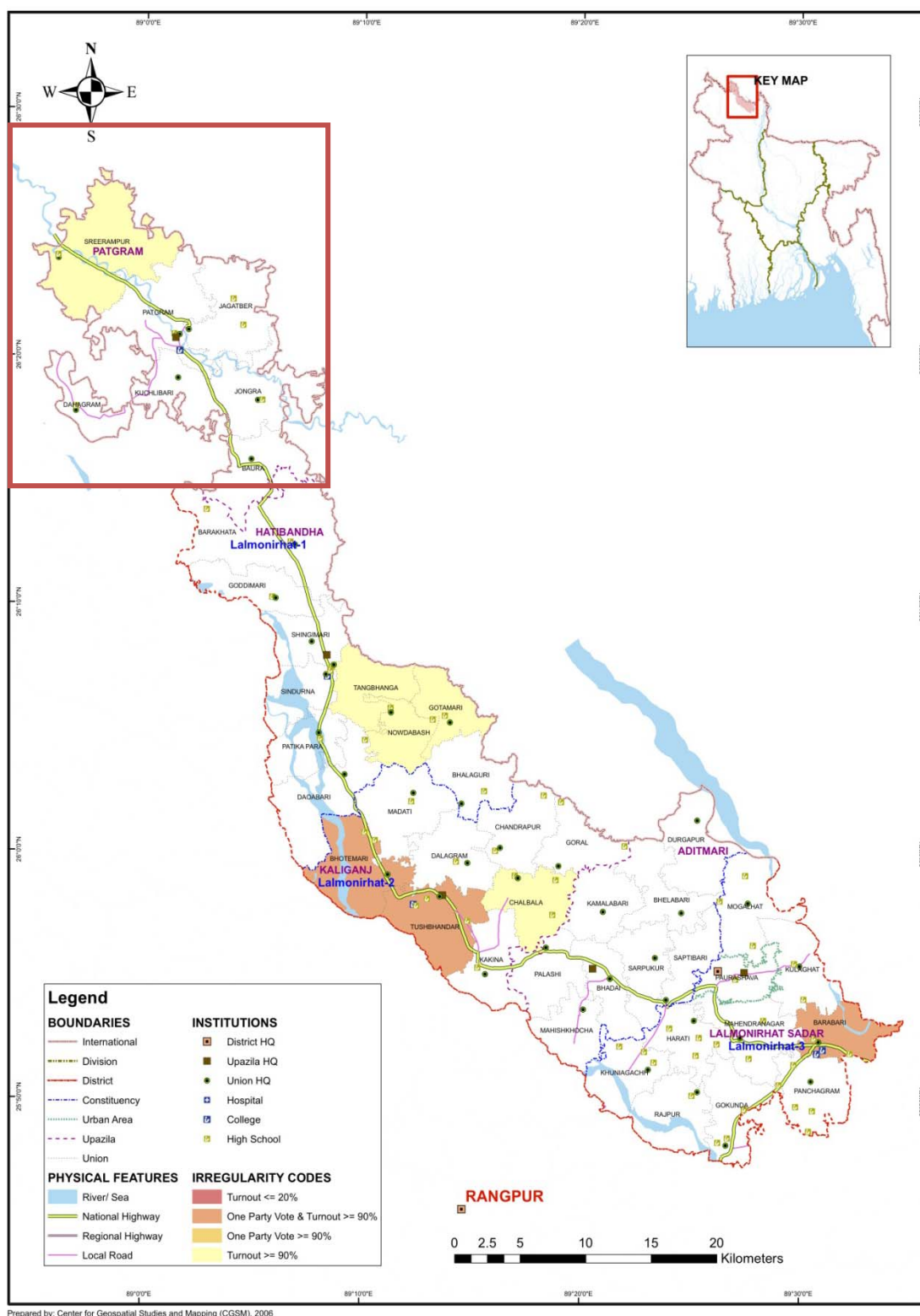
Figure 1: Lalmonirhat District, Bangladesh. Fieldsites contained in the Red Box

My subject is not, or at least not directly, the recent Emergency in Bangladesh.[11] Rather, I offer an in-depth study of one place in which these range of processes subsumed within commonsense linkages between democracy and security are, and over the last sixty years have been, articulated (see Figure 1). Specifically, I explore a series of enclaves—*chhitmahals*, as they are known in Bengali—along the northern border between Bangladesh and India. They are literally sovereign pieces of Bangladesh inside of India and vice-versa. Moreover, they are problematic spaces where the ambiguities and anxieties of security, criminality, territory, nation, and state have and continue to be shaped in conjuncture with local histories and politics of belonging. Many of the paradoxes of Emergency rule have long characterized the logics of regulation and control of the enclaves. Neither are the claim of suspension of democratic norms and rights in the service of their defense unfamiliar within these spaces. At the same time, the ambiguities and anxieties that emerge out of the tenuously linked projects of statemaking, claimed as tools of democratic progress by Ahmed, have also shaped the contours of daily life within them.

The enclaves, and their peculiar and problematic histories, then, offer provocative vantage points to rethink projects such as the Emergency that represent, in Agamben's suggestive phrasing, "the threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism" (2005: 3). The use of the term "threshold" in relation to the enclaves is apt.[12] The *chhitmahals*, as I will show in this dissertation, rest at the limit of a range of different political imaginaries. They are zones within which claims to national identity, citizenship, territorial integrity, security, and belonging overlap and are reconfigured in often-problematic ways. They are places that lie literally and

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[11] Though this research was carried out during the Emergency, in 2006-2007.

[12] While I will have more to say on Agamben over the course of this dissertation, I should express, here, an initial difference. Agamben's invocation of the word indeterminacy signals a grey area—a space of transition away from Parliamentary democracy and towards authoritarian rule. While similarly interested in this "grey area" identified by Agamben, I invoke indeterminacy as contingency, to highlight the overlaps, gaps, and reconfigurations that occur in historically constituted projects of rule.

figuratively on the threshold of state and nation. As such, they are spaces within which we may begin to reconfigure the meanings of liberal normative concepts deployed by Ahmed and others, and rethink them as unstable, fragile, and ambiguous claims, fraught with uncertainty and anxiety.

I base my analysis on both historical and ethnographic fieldwork carried out in 2006 and 2007. During this time, I conducted archival and historical research, primarily in Dhaka's National Archives though to a more limited extent in other areas throughout Bangladesh and India. I also conducted fieldwork in both Indian *chhitmahals* in Bangladesh and Bangladeshi *chhitmahals* in India over a nine-month period beginning with the declaration of the Emergency in Bangladesh in January 2007. From Patgram, a large market town in Northern Lalmonirhat district in Bangladesh, I traveled to numerous enclaves, gathering participant observations, oral histories, interviews, and discussions.[13] Over countless cups of *cha* in local tea stalls, generous meals and snacks in enclave residents' homes, and idle time spent under trees and in fields, I listened to local histories of and perspectives on these fraught and problematic zones. This dissertation seeks to share and reflect on these emic understandings of place, space, and rights; histories of suffering for territory (Moore 2005); and local struggles over sovereignty, opportunity, and control.

This project also engages with the bureaucratic processes through which these spaces are "made."[14] It does this through a reflexive perspective wherein I treat my

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[13] Prior to 1984, Lalmonirhat was part of Greater Rangpur District.

[14] My use of the term "made" builds on critiques framed by and emerging out of Lefebvre's (1991) classic study of the production of space. As Lefebvre shows through his Marxian reading of the relationship between capitalism, states, and space, there is no such thing as a neutral space upon and within which states, economies, and societies interact. Rather, space is shaped by, and in turn shapes, political power. The production of space is a process of ordering—an active transformation of space into a recognizable, defined object called "place. "As Lefebvre also highlights, this process works in reverse. Political-spatial practices also seek to transform place into space—an ongoing deterritorialization and reterritorialization that, according to Lefebvre, is part of the spatial dynamic of capitalism. For more on Lefebvre's critique of space, see Brenner (1997; 2001), Brenner and Elden (2009) and Goswami (2004).

own experiences conducting this research ethnographically. My research of these enclaves involved a range of encounters—many of them uncomfortable and unsettling—with representatives of both the Indian and Bangladeshi state system. These included struggles with securing visas and research clearance to conduct work in these areas;[15] encounters and negotiations with various state officials in archives and administrative offices; and late night visits by security officials in charge of policing and securing the border. These challenges shaped access, possibilities, and research practices in my fieldwork.[16] Yet they also provided clues to the various tensions embodied in the regulation of the *chhitmahals* that are complicit in shaping their space.

Unquestionably, the attentions and restrictions paid to me, a foreign researcher, cannot be simply transposed or read as isomorphic with the experiences of enclave residents. Yet, as I will try to show, these uncomfortable encounters offer ethnographic insight to the antinomies of life for enclave residents and the tensions and fears that shape their governance. As I conducted this research, I tried to understand these experiences further through interviews, conversations, and more shared tea and snacks with government officials and with the soldiers and officers of Bangladesh and India's border security forces. These experiences suggest ways in which the ambiguities and anxieties of the enclaves also pose challenges, complications, and dislocations for those who regulate and encounter these spaces on a daily basis. In this dissertation, then, I offer an ethnography of state and space that cuts across the problematic divide between state and society (Mitchell 1991b), looking

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[15] Indeed, I am still waiting on an Indian research visa applied for in late 2005.

[16] For example, my inability to secure a research visa in India, coupled with the Indian bureaucracy's notorious reticence to allow research in border areas, prevented me from visiting most of the Bangladeshi enclaves situated in India. I was, however, able to visit and devote the bulk of my fieldwork to research in Dahagram, the largest Bangladeshi enclave in India. This enclave has special circumstances that make it more accessible from Bangladesh than any other Bangladeshi enclave (see below). However, and indeed because of this, it is in no way "representative" of other Bangladeshi enclaves in India. My observations and conclusions are thus limited in their geographic scope.

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instead to understand the mutual constitutions, overlaps, and uncertainties of space and sovereign control.[17]

Zones of Anomaly

But what are the *chhitmahals* and why are they so ambiguous and problematic? The term "enclave" is a technical geographical term that refers to a piece of land territorially bounded by another state (Robinson 1959; Whyte 2002).[18] C*hhitmahal* is often translated from Bengali as "enclave," and indeed I use these terms often interchangeably in this dissertation. However, a more accurate translation, perhaps, would be "fragment."[19] They are territorial anomalies, posing a number of challenges and limitations to representatives of *both* India and Bangladesh who seek to administer them. The *chhits,* as they are locally known, are, to a greater or lesser extent, "unadministered" because, though they are nominally sovereign pieces of their home state, representatives of that state—such as police, military individuals or groups, bureaucrats petty or otherwise—cannot legally cross an international frontier to administer them. They have been the subjects of acrimonious political and legal struggles in both states. They are both persistent points of contention in arguments over crime, smuggling, and terrorism at the intermittently violent border; and flashpoints for local and broader conflict and obstacles in the peaceful resolution of disputes. Moreover, despite repeated diplomatic agreements that the *chhitmahal* issue be resolved by simply absorbing these spaces into their bounding states, they persist as

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[17] For more on "ethnographies of the state" see, in particular, essays in Hansen and Stepputat (2001b) and essays in Schatz (2009).

[18] The term has a complicated genealogy and is bound up in its terminological obverse, "exclave." The two terms are similar and depend, largely on the positionality of the speaker (one might speak of an exclave as a piece of territory bounded by another state, or of an enclave as a piece of another country's territory bounded by one's own). In common parlance, the word "enclave" serves for both positions (Whyte 2002).

[19] From the Bengali words *chita*, meaning detached or separate, and *mahal* meaning self-contained building, portion of a building, or estate.

symbols of the inability of India and Bangladesh to address many basic, longstanding questions about their territorial boundaries. Yet, as I will show, the challenges posed by these enclaves cannot be reduced to questions of bureaucratic complexity or administrative failure. The enclaves are also zones of cartographic anxiety (Krishna 1996): places where postcolonial fears about sovereignty, security, identity, and survival become mapped onto territory. They are marked symbols of an incomplete Partition and ongoing communal conflict and tension between India and Bangladesh. They are vivid, if intermittent, reminders of the violent instability of state, land, and nation in both countries.

I. Postcolonial Spaces

To provide a brief overview of their history:[20] prior to Partition in 1947, the *chhitmahals* were discontinuous land-holdings dating back to the Mughal incursion north from Dacca (Dhaka in contemporary spelling) into the kingdom of Koch (Cooch) Behar in the late 17th century. According to Whyte (2002), author of one of the few in-depth accounts of these spaces,[21] Mughals were unable to dislodge a number of powerful chieftains from the lands around Boda, Patgram and Purvabhag— areas on the frontier between Koch and Mughal rule—that were granted to them by treaty in 1713. These lands remained officially part of the kingdom of Koch Behar while becoming enclaves within the Mughal empire. Similarly, Mughal soldiers had occupied lands inside of Koch Behar, lands that became a discontinuous part of Mughal territory. During the colonial period, many of these enclaves were spread

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[20] I address these histories in more detail in chapters 2 and 3.
[21] Other academic studies of the enclaves are mostly brief and primarily descriptive, such as Butalia (2003), Sen (2002), Chitkara (1997b) and Karan (1960; 1966). The exception to this rule is van Schendel's (2002) "Stateless in South Asia." Though also comparatively brief, van Schendel explores the *chhitmahals'* simultaneous political, theoretical and social precariousness. Whyte's thesis is the most exhaustive (and only full length) study. However, its goals are to assemble a documentary history and produce a set of reliable maps, not to produce a critical historical, sociological, or anthropological investigation of the enclaves.

along the border between Rangpur district, under direct colonial administration, and

Koch Behar, an indirectly ruled "Princely State."[22]
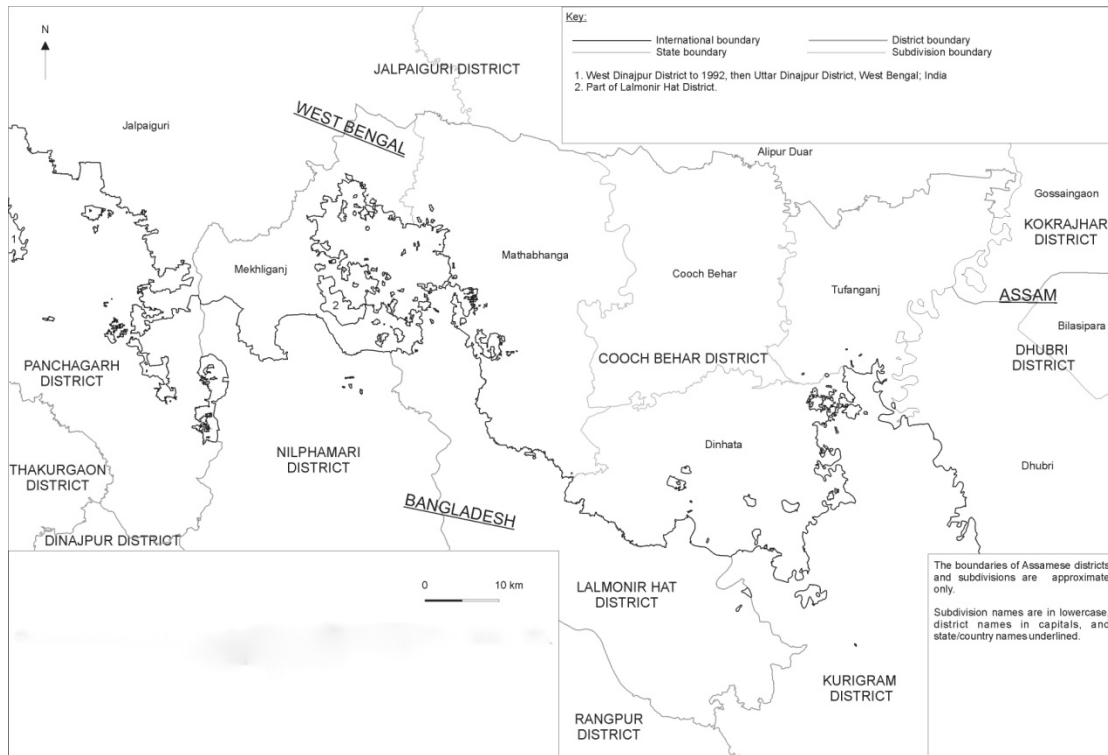
Figure 2: Environs of Cooch Behar[23]

Though the existence of such territorial ambiguities caused confusion for

colonial administrators, projects and proposals to "solve" the *chhitmahal* issue either

ran into administrative complications or simply came to no fruitful end. Roughly 200

chhitmahals[24] became state enclaves—in the sense of being completely bounded by

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[22] Princely States were districts that remained under nominal sovereign control of a Maharaja, Nawab, or other "native" ruler while remaining within the ambit of colonial rule. For an overview of the system of Princely States and direct and indirect rule, see Metcalf and Metcalf (2002).

[23] Map by Brendan Whyte.

[24] Numerous other enclaves, particularly those falling between the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar—both districts within West Bengal, India—posed few administrative problems and were eventually simply absorbed into their bounding district.

another sovereign state—at and shortly after Partition in 1947 with the accession of Cooch Behar to India in 1949 (see Figure 2).[25]

The enclave residents' status as nominal citizens of one state living in a territorially bounded space within another, initially posed only minor problems, as, in the period immediately after Partition, the border was, to a greater or lesser extent, open (Chatterji 1999; Rahman and Van Schendel 2003; Van Schendel 2001b; 2005). Yet as tensions between India and East (and West) Pakistan increased, enclave residents, and border residents more generally, frequently found themselves in complicated and compromising situations that often led to disputes, violence, and arrest by border security and police forces. Passport and visa rules, officially established in October 1952, regulated, at least legally, travel into and out of the enclaves. This was further complicated by India and Pakistan's tacit claim of citizenship status for populations both inside *and* outside their borders. Muslims living in India were nominally entitled to the same rights as East Pakistani citizens. India made a similar claim of "proxy-citizenship" for Hindus in East Pakistan (Van Schendel 2002). In the religiously diverse enclaves, this policy effectively offered dual citizenship to some, affording proxy-citizenship in their bounding state and legal citizenship in their "home" state. At the same time, it doubly alienated the rights of others, requiring that they illegally cross two national borders simply to obtain legal permission to go to market. The uneven enforcement and application of such policies in the *chhitmahals* meant that in some enclaves, life remained more or less "normal" while in others, residents were subject to multiple exploitations by their neighbors, local governmental officials, and members of border security forces. As these

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[25] Princely States were nominally given a choice as to which state—India or Pakistan—they wished to join at Independence. In practice, this choice often boiled down to territorial contiguity. These decisions, however, have been at the heart of many conflicts over territory in South Asia since 1947, especially in Kashmir, the Rann of Kuchchh, and, arguably, Cooch Behar. On the accession of Cooch Behar, see Ghosh (1993).

residents could not easily access officals from their "home" state, their claims to ownership of land, livestock, and crops were particularly tenuous. The precarious status of these residents meant that disputes over their belongings could quickly escalate and become deadly.[26]

This seemingly untenable situation was to be officially rectified in 1958 with the Nehru-Noon Accords[27] between India and Pakistan, which made provision for the absorption of the enclaves into their bounding states. Yet, this treaty met fierce opposition both in India and in Pakistan. Indeed, in India, the Accords were challenged both in the popular press and in the courts over the question of whether, under the Indian Constitution, a prime-minister could "give away" a piece of sovereign territory to another state. The question remained unresolved until the Liberation War in 1971, which marked the independence of Bangladesh and a sea-change in political relations between India and the territory formerly known as East Pakistan.[28] In 1974, the question of the enclaves was again raised in the Indira-Mujib Accords[29] between India and Bangladesh. These Accords, also known as the "Land Boundary Agreement," called for the exchange of all enclaves into their bounding states with the exception of Berubari, a large Bangladeshi enclave that was to be ceded to India, and Angoropota-Dahagram (henceforth Dahagram), two conjoined Bangladeshi enclaves that were to be linked to Bangladesh by a "land-bridge" known as the Tin Bigha Corridor. Bangladesh quickly ceded Berubari to India. However, the question of the Dahagram Corridor remained unresolved until 1992. While pundits in

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[26] Though this did not necessarily make the *chhitmahals* overtly different from much of the India/East Pakistan border in the years following partition. Indeed, addressing such crises was one of the principle tasks of the Home Political Offices of both states in the years following Partition. See Chapter 2 for more details.

[27] Named for Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani Prime Minister Feroz Khan Noon.

[28] Indira Gandhi, India's prime minister during the Bangladesh Liberation War, initially supported the Liberation movement through financial and arms contributions, as well as opening India's borders to millions of Bengali refugees. Later, on December 4, 1971, the Indian Army entered the Liberation War shortly before it ended twelve days later.

[29] For Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheik Mujibur Rahaman.

both countries frequently reference the unfulfilled promise of the Land Boundary

Agreement, the state of all the *chhitmahals,* save Berubari and, to an extent,

Dahagram, remain unresolved and largely unchanged.

II. *Territorial Fetishes*

The *chhitmahals* along the India-Bangladesh border are not the only territorial

phenomena of their kind. Indeed, enclaves are more common than one might think.

Opposing narratives and assumptions of territorial contiguity, enclaves stand in

opposition to both bureaucratic (e.g., Curzon 1976 [1907]) and social science (e.g.,

Weber 1946) notions of the relationship between states, territories, and power. As

Vinokurov (2005) points out, despite the fact that such spaces appear "abnormal,"

their numbers, contrary to social science common sense about territory and state

formation, are increasing. Many of these new enclaves were fall-outs of the post-

Soviet break-up and included the enclaves of Sokh, a Kyrgyzstani enclave in

Uzbekistan with a population of roughly 40,000; Nakhichevan, an Azerbijani enclave

in Armenia with a population of roughly 200,000; and Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave

bounded by Poland and Lithuania with a population of over 430,000.[30]

The emergence and persistence of enclaves, however, cannot be reduced to the

chaos accompanying the ends of empires. As Van Schendel (2002) observes, such

spaces were often the outcomes of decentralized forms of rule that could

accommodate and tolerate discontinuous land holdings. While many enclaves have

indeed disappeared or been resolved with the emergence of centralized state systems,

enclaves cannot simply be dismissed as infrequent oddities. Indeed, a number of

longstanding enclaves persist throughout the world, including the twenty-two Belgian

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[30] Kaliningrad is a seaport on the Baltic bounded by two states, a condition that would rule it out from inclusion in technocratic definitions of enclaves. However, Vinokurov (2005) argues for a more inclusive definition of enclaves that classifies like spaces together as subtypes within a general phenomenon of enclaves, as opposed to opting for an overly rigid and deterministic definition.

enclaves of Baarle-Hertog located in the Netherlands and the eight reciprocal Netherlands enclaves of Baarle-Nassau located in Belgium (see Whyte 2004); the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco, intimately linked to the question of Gibraltar (see Driessen 1992; Gold 2001); and the Spanish enclave of Llívia on the French border in the Pyrenees (see Sahlins 1989; 1998). Indeed, perhaps the most well known enclave, West Berlin, was one of the central axes of Cold-War history and politics, starkly framing the contrasts between first and second world rule and highlighting the stakes of inclusion in one state versus another.[31] Enclaves, the debates over what they are and how they should be handled, and the individuals living within them continue to shape both local and international conceptions of borders, movement, and international relations.

Yet, even as enclaves, as territorial phenomena, are more prevalent than one might expect, they remain, somehow, aberrant. They are geographical and territorial oddities that run against the grain of territorial contiguity, sovereignty, and the modern state system. To the extent that they have been treated in academic studies of state formation they tend to be seen either as challenges to the valence of the territorial contiguous state (Van Schendel 2002) or as vestigial—historical spaces that were, at one point, important to the formation of a border (Sahlins 1989). Indeed, the Byzantine territorial configurations of the *chhitmahals* makes it easy to view them as anachronistic oddities. Not only do their tiny size and high number seem to defy logics of state borders. Some of the *chhits* offer even more strange spatial configurations, including several that contain tiny sub-enclaves—that is, Bangladeshi enclaves, territorially surrounded by an Indian enclave, territorially surrounded by Bangladesh. The improbability of such configurations, coupled with the practical impossibilities of

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[31] On West Berlin as an enclave/exclave, see Robinson (1953).

negotiating legal arrangements of such spaces, tends to encourage a view that both exoticizes, and in doing so naturalizes, the *chhitmahals* as territorial phenomena.[32]

It is tempting to think of enclaves as fragmentary evidence of the incomplete historical transformation to a political and spatial modernity. Yet, such a viewpoint, I argue, both accepts a nation and state-centric view of territory and over-privileges enclaves' geographical features. In doing so, it discounts problematic relations and complexities related to enclaves as either tied to their spatial oddity or epiphenomenal to it. I do not argue that we should ignore the territorial configuration of enclaves. Indeed, these spatial problematics are central to understanding the *chhitmahals*. Rather, I argue that it is critical to understand the ways in which these spaces are bound up in, reflect, and refract broader concerns over territory, state, and nation. In other words, it is not so much that the *chhitmahals* are sovereign pieces of one country bounded by another that makes them problematic. It is the way that these spaces are tied to a range of anxieties over the India-Bangadesh border, vague notions of security, nationalist and local politics of identity and belonging, and the legacies of and unfinished processes of Partition. Only through engaging these histories and politics can we move from a viewpoint of these spaces as territorial ephemera and towards an understanding the relationship between these fragments and the nations and states that claim and bound them.

To provide a concrete example, Dahagram—a *chhitmahal* that I focus on in this dissertation—is particularly problematic among the other *chhits*. It is the largest of the enclaves (4600 square acres) with a population of approximately 16,000. It is situated roughly 170 meters from the Bangladeshi "mainland" and, on its south-eastern shore, runs along the Tista river—a major waterway in North Bengal. Before

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[32] Indeed, there are numerous online communities and websites dedicated to the study and cataloging of territorial oddities such as enclaves. See http://geosite.jankrogh.com/exclaves.htm and http://www.vasa.abo.fi/users/rpalmber/enclaves.htm for just two examples.

the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, the enclave's size, strategic position, and religious diversity (roughly split between Hindus and Muslims) made it a frequent flashpoint for communal conflict. The agreement to open the Tin Bigha Corridor in the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement, the long political struggle over the Corridor (carried out both locally and nationally in both countries), and the eventual opening of the Corridor in 1992 continued to make Dahagram not just a territorial "problem" but a symbolic and material space of contestation over the meanings of belonging, state, and nation. Since the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor, the *chhit* has become a highly militarized space, literally ringed with Indian Border Security Force (BSF) camps and watchtowers and hosting two Bangladesh Rifles (BDR, Bangladesh's equivalent to the BSF) troop posts. The current status of the Corridor is far from the terms laid out in the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement. The Corridor is under full sovereign control of the BSF (as opposed to being leased in perpetuity to Bangladesh). Until recently, no electric lines were allowed to run through it. The Corridor is currently open for 12 hours a day, from 6AM to 6PM Bangladesh time. During this time, enclave residents and outsiders can pass through the Corridor without presenting any proof of identification, passports, or document. At night, the gates to the Corridors are closed, preventing movement out of the enclave except under cover of darkness. Arguably, the complications of Dahagram have as much or more to do with the range of uncertainties and tensions between various different pieces of the India and Bangladesh state system, the communal politics of the border, and anxieties and ambiguities over security than they do with the inconveniences of Dahagram's boundaries.

As I was told by a rather imperious member of an Indian Border Survey team, because of the existence of the Tin Bigha Corridor, Dahagram was no longer "truly" an enclave (and thus, to his mind, not a valid subject for my study). Yet, if Dahagram

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is not an enclave (at least during the day), it is most certainly a *chhitmahal*. Indeed, as I will show in chapter 2, the politics of nationality and access in Dahagram, the debate over its status, and the persistent legal and political questioning of the Tin Bigha Corridor have radically shaped the experiences, strategies, and arguments in other *chhitmahals*.[33] At the same time, while geography is certainly central to the debate over Dahagram, neither does its territorial complication explain the bitter national conflict over its existence, the panoptic observation of its borders, or the ongoing failure to adhere to the full terms of the 1974 Treaty.

Thinking Through Sensitive Space

To appreciate and understand the complications of the *chhitmahals* one must understand them in the broader context of cartographic anxieties in both India and Bangladesh. Through this lens, they emerge as sites where instabilities and contradictions of projects of nation and statemaking reach crisis. They take on symbolic and strategic value that appears radically disproportionate to their concrete economic, spatial, or even security concerns. The practices of spatial regulation employed and deployed by those who seek to control and administer such spaces and the negotiated strategies that residents of them employ to carve out lives and livelihoods are inseparable from a range of broad, yet ill-defined, fears. These areas become, in a phrase that is often used descriptively and uncomplicatedly in academic writing, journalism, and political discourse, *"sensitive spaces."*

The word "sensitive," a word that I heard repeatedly used to describe the *chhitmahals* throughout my fieldwork (see Chapter1), provides an apt way to think about such zones. With over 27 possible meanings or interpretations, according to the

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[33] For example, residents of several largely-Hindu Indian enclaves in Patgram Thana told me that they had initiated discussions and claims for establishing corridors like the Tin Bigha Corridor that would facilitate easy access to the Indian "mainland."

Oxford English Dictionary (2000), the word itself is wonderfully ambiguous. It means, variously, having perception or being perceivable; causing pain, irritation, or intense emotion or feeling; being receptive to external influences; being involved with national security; and something likely to give offence if mishandled. It is a word that appears to have a concrete and urgent meaning when used, but, on reflection is much more plastic, vague, and subsumable. It conjures feelings of urgency, pain, and danger without defining them. It summons concerns over security without specifying the nature of threats. It appears to proscribe and prescribe courses of action without explicitly stating causes or strategies. Sensitive spaces appear to variously involve all of these meanings, giving them the quality of objects that everyone "understands" implicitly, but are simultaneously vague, mysterious, and dangerous. They are both instantly recognizable and unknowable.

In this dissertation, I will disentangle some of the various meanings and processes that are bound up in the notion of sensitivity and sensitive space. I do not claim to offer a structural explanation of sensitivity, but rather argue that spaces such as the *chhitmahols* are strategic vantage points from which to think about a range of processes of state formation. It is my goal to work *with*, rather than to clarify, these ambiguities in order to move from an uncritically descriptive to an analytic understanding of sensitivity and sensitive space. As I will try to show, it is the very slippages that are involved in this term that both distinguish sensitivity as an analytic category and make sensitive spaces zones in need of urgent consideration.

I. National Belongings

At the heart of the anxieties called into focus [made sensitive] by the *chhits* are questions of national belonging. They problematize the notion of a national identity

bound to territorial space that, as many have noted,[34] is central to both the discursive and concrete practices of defining and imagining the nation. They at once pose the challenge of being inaccessible territory—pieces of "our" land inside of another hostile state—and of being holes in the net of sovereign spatial control—pieces of "their" suspect land in the midst of "ours." If the *chhits*, conceived of as abstract, symbolic space, are problematic, similar sets of dilemmas occupy imaginations of their residents. Across the communally defined border, these individuals and communities are, at once, beleaguered members of the nation hemmed in by a hostile populace and dangerous and criminal outsiders nestled within and amongst "us." That such imaginations of the enclaves have little to do with either their social or demographic realities—or the ethnic and religious make up of Bangladesh or India (Van Schendel 2001a)—has little bearing on the *chhits* framings as spatial crises of both national belonging and sovereign control. As such, the question of security is particularly acute in relation to these sensitive spaces. In addition to posing "real" (or perceived) threats,[35] they also pose symbolic ones. They are zones that reflect, produce, and amplify the politics of territorial instability, intermittent violence, and national symbolics of the border.[36] They are potential points of insertion, areas populated by groups with suspect loyalties, and spaces through and within which corrupting forces flow.

Regulatory power accrues in the translation of these symbolics into a range of projects that seek to define, regulate, and claim these spaces. Yet, these projects are

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[34] See for example Anderson (1991 [1983]), Goswami (1998; 2004), Malkki (1992), Taylor (1994), and Thongchai (1994).

[35] Much discourse around the *chhits* poses them as havens for criminals and bases for terrorists. See Chapter 2.

[36] For example, in 2001, in the midst of renewed debate over India's plans to fence the border, the BDR occupied an Indian *chhit* in Bangladesh. In retaliation, the BSF attempted to storm a BDR outpost in another region of the border. This incident led to both bellicose discourse about war and security in both states and to the initiation of a new round of negotiations to "resolve" the problems of the border at large. See Chapter 2.

carried out in uneven ways.[37] For example, Dahagram, largely because of the Tin

Bigha Corridor, is a highly militarized space surrounded and regulated by two

opposing paramilitary forces. More often than not these various forms of regulation,

control, and assertion of sovereign power respond more to broad framings of anxiety

over the territorial status of the *chhits,* the political allegiance of their residents, and

the ways that they resonate with broader concerns and conflicts along the border—that

is, responded to their sensitivity—than to concrete, lived-realities "on the ground."

Such projects tend to lead to both reconfigurations or bolsterings of power and

influence within the enclaves. While such projects may have had a range of

unintended consequences, they rarely contributed to "security" defined at either

national or local levels. Rather they reinforce, concretely, the symbolic ambiguities

and complexities of space in sensitive areas. The production of sensitive space, thus,

cannot be reduced to a set of practices that are "performed on" sensitive space. As

Sivaramkirishnan points out in his own study of zones of anomaly in colonial Bengal,

statemaking occurs "within places even as it produces them" (35). In other words, in

Dahagram, the anxieties of rule related to sensitive space are intimately linked to

claims to rule and power within them.

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[37] In recent years, there has been a veritable explosion of critical studies exploring local productions of informal sovereignties (for a comprehensive review of this literature, see Hansen and Stepputat 2006)[37] and instantiations of spatial control. (c.f., Li 2001; Mitchell 2002; Moore 2005; Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Smith 1992; Tagliacozzo 2005; Tsing 2005). These studies have highlighted the ways that local conflicts over opportunity and control articulate with broader framings of the colonial and postcolonial state and nation. A central trope of many of these studies, particularly in South Asia, has been the ways that contradictory and exclusionary claims to shared national identity are worked out and reframed in place (Ali 2010; Baruah 2006; Ibrahim 2009; Jalais 2009; Mayaram 2003). What engagements with sensitive spaces such as the *chhits* highlight and add to these discussions are the articulation between ambiguous projects of rule, the ways such projects are navigated, and the opportunities for rule and power that they create "on the ground." There is no lack of projects seeking to assert control over the enclave. What emerge from a grounded ethnographic engagement with the *chhits* are the ways in which these partial attempts to create control are, in-and-of themselves, complicit in the reconfiguration of power and opportunity within sensitive space. As such, my exploration of sensitive space also draws on and overlaps with ethnographies of development that have foregrounded the articulations between projects of rule and local reconfiguration of that rule (Da Costa 2010; Elyachar 2005; Ferguson 1994; Gupta 1998; Li 2007; Moore 1999; Mosse 2004).

If Dahagram is a constant focus of projects of regulation, other *chhits* are more intermittent subjects of violent claims to territorial control. On a day–to-day basis, residents of many of these enclaves lead their lives as though they were citizens of their bounding states, occasionally even standing for local elections or applying for and receiving passports from their bounding states.[38] This was particularly true in Indian enclaves that had largely Muslim populations, suggesting that a tacit doctrine of proxy citizenship still applied along the Bengal border. At crisis moments, however, these spaces are often subject to violent instability, where land and possessions are expropriated and residents are driven from their homes or worse. The threat of such violence is a persistent concern for residents, even in "peaceful" times. While I was conducting my fieldwork, for example, word had come that the Bangladesh Army was going to prevent Indian *chhit* residents from voting in the upcoming Bangladeshi national elections. As a result, several Indian *chhits* that I visited in the early days of my fieldwork had virtually emptied, with residents seeking more "legitimate" addresses in surrounding areas. The evacuation did not reflect a patriotic or civic zeal on the part of enclave residents. Rather, exclusions from the voter lists, for at least some enclave residents, forecasted the immanent possibility of other hardships and insecurities. For residents of such spaces, life is always precariously bound to a range of politics beyond their borders. The amplification of broad sets of instabilities within and through the *chhits* thus has grave implications for their residents.

The anxieties about belonging and national and state inclusion that drive projects, attitudes, and policies towards the enclaves thus find immediate and urgent resonance within them. As such, much of the history of the *chhitmahols*, from the perspective of their residents, might best be described as a history of elaborating and asserting various forms of belonging against, on the one hand, two nation-states with

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[38] Many of the wealthier residents of Indian *chhits* inside of Bangladesh maintain multiple addresses to negotiate any complications of land ownership and citizenship.

intermittently ambivalent and alarmed responses to their existence and, on the other, populations in surrounding areas attempting to assert their own particular national and communal identity on territory. As I will argue, the question of belonging frames the way history is remembered in the enclaves as well as the way politics within them are structured. For example, in Dahagram, the long struggle over political and territorial inclusion in East Pakistan/Bangladesh is, on the one hand, often framed as a history of suffering for territory that justifies both national inclusion and makes a case for increased access, resources, and rights. On the other, it also structures the notions of social and political inclusion within the enclave—who has the right to stand for local elections, speak for enclave residents, and claim access to various forms of aid, development, and relief. The tenuousness both of possessions and of rights has thus shaped the various processes through which enclave residents, particularly in Dahagram, have framed themselves as moral communities worthy and deserving of inclusion in the nation (Chatterjee 2004). The ways that these moral assertions of community are constructed and carried out, both by elites and non-elites within Dahagram, is more than just a claim. It has significant bearing on the ways belonging and membership are reframed at a community-level within the enclaves, producing a range of political rubrics of belonging and entitlement that are unevenly applied to various residents of the enclaves themselves—marking some as "outsiders" and others as legitimate members.

Yet, if such claims to membership are calls for and attempts to resolve the ambiguities of the enclaves, they cannot be reduced to the simple assertion of a nationalist identity or demand for formal citizenship. The politics of belonging within the enclaves is significantly more confused. Indeed, particularly in Dahagram, the historical debate over framing and claiming national belonging involved communal claims for inclusion in *both* India and Bangladesh. Muslim residents mounted active

campaigns for the implementation of the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement and the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor. Hindu residents were equally committed to asserting Dahagram's belonging within India, positing the space as only "accidentally" not part of their bounding state. This debate over national membership cannot even be drawn purely along communal grounds. Enclave residents have actively engaged in debates and considerations over the relative advantages of inclusion in either state. Many of the residents of Dahagram that I spoke with over the course of my fieldwork hinted at moments when the decision of national belonging, even for Muslim residents, was far from clear. Moreover, assertions of identity and belonging are often opportunistically deployed. In other words, the ambiguities of belonging in sensitive spaces such as the enclaves create opportunities for a range of different kinds of negotiations. The confusion and anxiety over the status of enclave residents is thus something that is not simply refuted by residents. At particular moments and in particular circumstances, this ambiguity can and is actively traded upon.

II. Fragmented Knowledges

The question of sensitive space is a dilemma of national belonging—a question of anxieties and ambiguities. Yet, these concerns themselves emerge out of and through concrete, historically specific practices of and assumptions about their status. In other words, the "sensitivity" of sensitive spaces is constantly reproduced both by state officials who administer and control information about the enclaves and by their residents. Critical to understanding the ambiguity and anxiety of such zones, then, are the ways they are bound up in broader and equally vague discourses of national security and practices of secrecy. In and in regard to sensitive space, there is a persistent feeling that, somewhere, there exists quantities of knowledge and expertise—information that could clarify the hazy picture of these zones. Yet the

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belief in such knowledge seems coupled to a commitment or acceptance that it must be vigilantly protected and kept secret—that elaboration could expose the sensitive nerve endings of such zones and simultaneously pose threats to state security. Simmel's (1906) classic study of the sociology of secrecy defines secrecy largely in economic terms—as both the expression and creation of value around ideas. In Simmel's sense, the fundamental sociological "purpose" of secrecy is in defining reciprocal relationships of power between groups. As he argues, "Secrecy is a universal sociological form which, as such, has nothing to do with the moral valuations of its content" (463). It is thus an eminently social form of control. Secrecy is a practice that in and of itself creates import around that which is being protected as a secret. It also reinforces this import to those who are "protecting" it.

Building on Simmel's critique, sensitive space might be thought of as having a reflexive relationship with both the practice of secrecy and the limits of knowledge around it. This relationship embodies a sense that knowledge about sensitive space should be kept secret for purposes of national and state security. In other words, the notion of sensitive space encourages the social practice of secrecy—particularly, but not exclusively, among government officials—without specifying its content.[39] As Simmel points out, the definition and formation of secret societies is intimately linked to the import (or perceived import) of the secret that they keep. Though reducing state security purely to a question of secrecy is dangerously reductive, understanding the relation of government officials to sensitive space as a secret society in Simmel's sense is suggestive. The import of secrecy related to such zones is unbounded, precisely because of the very ambiguity of its content. On the one hand, difficult questions about such zones can be explained by the invocation of sensitivity. On the

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[39] The social practices of secrecy have, perhaps, been most directly studied in the anthropology and sociology of science, particularly in the context of the link between national security and scientific research. See, in particular, Gusterson (1998).

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other, all information related to such spaces is, potentially, sensitive and thus in need of guarding. Information even potentially related to sensitive space is always already a security threat, because its relative significance is not easily assessed. Thus, and in part because, such spaces may not have "official" designation as "secret," there is constant informal policing and protection of knowledge related to them.

Yet, there is a further element to the practice of secrecy in relation to sensitive space. Not only are such zones the subjects of secrecy, they are also, I argue, areas that represent genuine gaps in official knowledge in part precisely because of social practices of and assumptions about their sensitivity. They are spaces that are less legible (Scott 1998; Sivaramakrishnan 1999) than those around them. This is not to say that bureaucratic knowledge about such spaces does not exist. Rather, it is to suggest that such knowledge itself is fragmentary and unevenly distributed throughout various branches of the state system involved in their administration. I would hypothesize (though can never be "sure") that there is no "central file" on the *chhitmahals*, in which the range of questions and inconsistencies in their administration are explained. Rather, there appear to be incomplete sets of experiential and empirical data held by various officials with various different administrative responsibilities. The administration and history of these zones appear marked by disjunctures, lapses, and reinventions of strategies of rule and regulation that speak to such gaps in knowledge. And indeed, the persistent emergence of such gaps themselves increases the anxiety around the *chhits*, their residents, and their governance.

III. Exceptional Inclusions and Exclusions

The history of the enclaves suggests that such gaps in knowledge afford moments and practices of violence and repression as well as opportunities for

negotiation and reconfiguration. They manifest in mutually incoherent projects of regulation and partially understood assertions of bureaucratic and diplomatic control. These overlaps become exceptionally complicated in enclaves such as Dahagram, where the question of sovereign control is balanced between the Indian BSF's attempts to regulate movement and manage the enclave's borders and the Bangladesh Rifles' attempts to secure the space as Bangladeshi territory and prevent India from violating its frontiers (Febvre 1973). At any given moment, these projects are shaped by: the local relationship between the BSF and the BDR and the whims of officers "on the spot," the responses of enclave residents to such projects, broader conflicts and tensions along the border, and the diplomatic relationship between India and Bangladesh. Yet, the complications of belonging, rule, and control in Dahagram are not only determined by state and paramilitary projects and local reactions to them. They are further shaped by national symbolics and projects that assert and celebrate their inclusion or exclusion from nation and state. As important to Dahagram's contemporary political moment, for example, are external projects that seek to capitalize on the symbolic import of the enclave through development and other forms of "aid" that are seemingly disproportionate to the *chhit*'s size, geography, and political economy (see chapter 4).

Sensitive spaces are thus "exceptional" spaces. Yet, equally, their history— read from outside the enclaves looking in *and* from inside looking out—is a story of the constant negotiation of what such a term might mean. As such, sensitive spaces are also places from which we might rethink the concept of "the exception," particularly its articulation in Schmidt's (2005 (1932)) theory of sovereign power—wherein sovereignty is conceived of as the power to decide on what is an "exception" to the rule of law—or Agamben's (1998) more Foucauldian reworking of the term—where exception is conceived as a state of exclusion from the *polis* and a biopolitical

reduction of lived existence to a condition of "bare life" (see Chapter 1). For Agamben and Schmidt, sovereign exceptions frame a dialectical tension of exclusion and inclusion. Through the act of excepting, not only is the exception excluded from broader society, but the contours of social life are defined. The enclaves are spaces that are certainly in dialectical tensions of belonging with the areas around them, but this tension is as much the result of the ambiguous status of the enclaves and their residents as it is a "decision" about their status—legal, discursive, military or otherwise. Indeed, the *chhits'* postcolonial history appears to be as much about failures to decide and inabilities to reach sovereign decisions as they are about the range of exclusions of the spaces by those who live in and around them. Neither can this exceptionality be wholly explained through the frame of exclusion. Dahagram is marked as exceptional through projects of both exclusion *and* inclusion. To understand these spaces, we must historically and ethnographically engage both the way these contradictory processes of inclusion and exclusion are constituted in sensitive space, and the ways that residents themselves navigate such claims; duck around processes that mark these spaces as both marginal and central; and selectively draw on, comply with, and defy a range of projects of rule.

While sensitive spaces are exceptional, they are by no means stateless zones or spaces where residents passively accept a range of expropriations and exploitations. In other words, sensitive spaces, and all of their attendant ambiguities and anxieties, are not simply places within which people live. Their meanings are something that residents are constantly engaged in negotiating, redefining, and shaping. In other words, to paraphrase E. P. Thompson (1966), *chhiter lok—*residents of the *chhits—*did not rise like the sun at Partition and fall victim to the historical vagaries of life in sensitive space. They were very much present at its making.

Thinking with Sensitivity

For all of the complexity, confusion, and richness of the *chhitmahals*, they are, after all, tiny spaces on the border between India and Bangladesh, occupying small amounts of land with a relatively modest total population. Why, then, devote time to studying them sociologically? This question, as I hope will be apparent throughout this dissertation, can be answered in a number of different ways. However, before beginning, let me offer an initial two reasons—one grounded in academic debates and one grounded in politics—why understanding sensitive space is important.

In the past twenty years, borders and boundaries have both become the subject of historical inquiry, ethnographic research and theoretical modeling.[40] Much new literature explicitly reverses the gaze of older research by directly interrogating state, identity, and nation formation at borders. Writers approaching borders, frontiers, and boundaries from this perspective employ various historiographical strategies and theoretical approaches, but all seek to understand borders not as the naturalized limits of state space, but as zones of complex interactions between people, things, and state institutions. Such studies reframe the debate not as a problem of understanding "the" border but rather as understanding *borderlands*.[41] These new studies have critically reformulated the border as "a privileged site for assessing the power and limitations of the nation state" (Aggarwal and Bhan 2009: 521).

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[40] This emerging literature is vast and varied. For historical studies, see for example, Sahlins (1989), Tagliacozzo (2005), White (1991); for ethnographic studies, see, Aggarwal (2004), Aggarwal and Bhan (2009), essays in Donnan and Wilson (1999), essays in Kumar Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2007), Reeves (2005; 2009), and essays in Wilson and Donnan (1998a); and for theoretical studies see Anderson (1997) and Prescott (1997).

[41] As Baud and van Schendel put it, this entails a "cross-border perspective in which the region on *both* sides of the border is taken as the unit of analysis" (italics in original, 1997: 216). Sharing much with sociological approaches to understanding state territorialization (Scott 1998; Vandergeest and Peluso 1995) and anthropological studies of marginality (essays in Das and Poole 2004), they undermine evolutionary models of boundary formation and call attention to the ways that boundaries are mutually formed and maintained both in metropoles and at peripheries.

Yet, there is a tendency in some of these studies to allow the border to over-determine historical inquiry. Indeed, viewing the border as a structuring phenomenon has become a central, though not exclusive, tendency in the emerging comparative historical analysis of borderlands. This has three potential critical consequences. First, it subordinates other social and spatial processes at work in borderlands, tending to see them as *produced by*, as opposed to *producing* or mutually constituting, borders. Second, such a view tends to reify borders, constructing them as actors in and of themselves—things that "produce" borderlands. Third, this perspective carries with it an assumption that borders constitute *a priori* empirically similar categories suitable for comparison across time and space. This ascribes universal characteristics to borders that foreground their, primarily, repressive and oppressive characteristics, regulatory features, and the generalized tension and exclusion of populations in borderlands. While many borders and borderlands may share such features, the historical differences and contingencies of their formation are subordinated to general models of their behavior.[42] As such, comparative studies of borderlands often presume a shared empirical focus embodied in the border itself, rather than exploring the resonances and constructions of particular processes in particular spaces.

In this sense, studies of borderlands risk falling into a "methodological stateism:" a reliance on, as opposed to an unpacking of, a set of concepts that emerge out of and are defined through the modern state system. As several authors have pointed out, this analytic and linguistic trap both limits and directs social scientific inquiry towards a set of prescribed questions and answers (Goswami 1998; Wallerstein 1991). I wish to make a modest suggestion that exploring the anxieties and ambiguities around sensitive space might provide one possibility, among many, for

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[42] Andrew Walker's (1999) ethnography of border economies on Laos, Thai, Chinese, and Burmese borders is a notable exception to views of borders as spaces of pure oppression. It demonstrates how the presence of complicated border configurations facilitates a range of advantageous economic relationship for residents of the Mekong hinterland.

moving beyond this impasse. In what follows, I will attend to a range of processes of

state and nation formation that might productively speak across a range of areas that

are "sensitive" to ongoing processes of state formation in South Asia and, perhaps,

beyond. In so doing, I hope to rethink or unthink the notion that borders and

borderlands, in and of themselves, are limit concepts of the nation state, and rather

refocus attention on anxiety, ambiguity, and belonging as contested processes that

shape the postcolonial state in critical ways. Cartographic anxieties are mutually

constituted with sensitive space. These areas thus offer strategic spaces to engage in

incorporated comparative explorations of the processes of state and space making.[43]

By reengaging with the empirical fragmentations of sensitive space—that is, by

focusing on its tensions, anxieties, and ambiguities—we might imagine productive

comparisons with other regions where questions of legibility and governance are

problematic.[44]

      This is not to propose an equally ahistorical comparative project of identifying

and cataloging the existence of sensitive spaces throughout history and across the

globe. It is rather to suggest a different project. By learning to recognize the tensions

and uncertainties that accumulate in sensitive spaces, and engaging in historical and

ethnographic analyses of the various productions of such spaces, we stand to learn

about more about various processes of state and nation formation and the ways such

processes buckle under a range of contradictory claims, administrative failures, and

resistances. Sensitive spaces are mutually constituted with their various nations and

states. Yet, they also embody the frayed and fraying ends of concepts that are central

to legitimacy and rule at the heart of politically organized subjection. By

understanding further how such spaces do or do not articulate with one another, we

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[43] On incorporated comparison, see McMichael (1990; 1992).

[44] For example, the tensions described in "zomia" by James Scott (2009) suggest ways in which physical geography might be as central to the productions and complications of sensitive space in upland South East Asia.

might begin to move from comparative studies that focus on the empirical trappings of the modern state and towards a historically grounded, comparative understanding of the conceptual limits of the state idea (Abrams 1988).

This brings me to my second point about the politics of studying sensitive space and also returns me to Ahmed's challenging interface of democracy and security. Ahmed's propositions, as I earlier argued, casually roll together a range of projects of rule that are neither "naturally linked" nor, necessarily even mutually coherent. As Agamben (2005) forcefully argues, states of emergency, such as those declared in Bangladesh, are increasingly part of the landscape of parliamentary (and other) democracies in the contemporary moment. States of exception are zones and moments within which the rule of law is selectively and opportunistically removed and deployed in the service of the expansion of state power. Yet, they are also moments in which such projects are fused together in ways that are presented as natural, logical, and critical to the survival of state and nation. Sensitive spaces, I would argue, are places within which these combinations are forged, tried out, reworked, and contested. They are spaces within which states of exception—both inclusionary and exclusionary—are intimately linked to history, landscape, and the politics of belonging. If, as Agamben argues, the "exception" is rapidly becoming the rule, sensitive spaces provide opportunities to rethink the histories of nation and state in ways that provide more contextual and processual understandings of the selective suspension of rights in the name of national and political survival. They are spaces where the contradictions and lapses between various projects of rule might be seen more clearly as the outcomes of historical projects of spatial regulation and nation building. What is more, when viewing states such as Bangladesh and India from within them, states of exception and emergency stop looking like emerging phenomena and rather appear as ambiguous but crucial and longstanding aspects of

their postcolonial history. While the enclaves and other sensitive space do not offer models to explain broad political crises, they do offer locations from which to view them and to disentangle their justifications, claims, and projects.

In this sense, this project's title, *The Fragments and Their Nation(s)*, does more than take the name of Chatterjee's (1993) well-known treatise on nationalism in vain. The *Nation and Its Fragments* offers an exploration of the fragmentary creation of an anti-colonial nationalism, a framing of a national identity that engaged, however tenuously, in a series of incorporations and resolutions. As Chatterjee argues, "Now the task is to trace in [subaltern and elite's] mutually constituted historicities the specific forms that have appeared, on the one hand, in the domain defined by the hegemonic project of nationalist modernity, and on the other, in the numerous fragmented resistances to that normalizing project" (13). This project pursues that goal, though, perhaps, not from the perspective that Chatterjee had in mind. It seeks to avoid and unpack totalizing explanations of territory, nation, and state through attending to the inseparability of nationalist projects from fragmentary and troubling space. It engages the projects of making national and state space in zones where such projects are called into crisis. And, perhaps most importantly, it shows how the local framings and experiences of struggles over these fragmentary identities and concepts are more than merely incidental to the postcolonial histories of India and Bangladesh.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is organized into four chapters, each exploring different issues related to the production of sensitive space at the India-Bangladesh border. These chapters are as follows:

Chapter 1: Sensitive Spaces? Rethinking Exception Along the India-Bangladesh Border

I frame my exploration of sensitivity through an examination of how the term became central to my research and what it means to live in sensitive space. I ask what makes spaces such as Dahagram "sensitive" areas in need of scrutiny and subject to suspicious governing? I examine how discourses of sensitivity manifest in daily-life and how they produce, rather than merely describe, sensitive spaces. Sensitive spaces are exceptional spaces, where questions of law, sovereignty, and security are unsettled and unsettling. Understanding them requires attention to threats, uncertainties, and vaguely defined fears articulated through practices and performances of sensitivity (Corrigan and Sayer 1985). Attending to such tensions and performances helps complicate notions of "the sovereign exception" that have come to dominate recent studies of borders and frontiers. I examine questions related to land disputes, access, to health care, and movement through the Tin Bigha Corridor. For enclave residents, these issues are intimately linked to ambiguities of rule, the intense regulation of "official" knowledge, and the persistent circulation of rumors and constant feeling of threat that produce a space that is rife with insecurity. Finally, I return to the vexed question of loyalties within the enclave to ask how the tensions of belonging emerge in often-painful ways within sensitive spaces.

Chapter 2: Histories of Sensitivity: The Production of Sensitive Space

Interrogating the ways the enclaves both surface in and disappear from broader debates over the border, territory, and nation, I develop a reading of the historical processes through which sensitivity emerges as a category of rule. Drawing on archival and newspaper data and public records of parliamentary debates, I examine the transition from the enclaves as an administrative complication—a set of local

problems that can be rationally dealt with through diplomatic negotiation—to sensitive

issues that are indexed to, on the one hand, tensions over fear, security, and national

territory and, on the other, claims to citizenship and national protection. I focus on the

public debates around the opening of the Corridor in 1992, the 1974 Indira-Mujib

Accords, and the earlier 1954 Nehru-Noon Accords to show how the enclaves became

bound up in various projects of asserting national space. In doing so, I examine the

ways in which the enclaves as empirical spaces "on the ground" are effectively erased

by the enclaves as symbols of territorial conflict between India and Bangladesh. I

conclude by looking at how the enclaves are deployed in ongoing discussions over

issues such as illegal migration, smuggling, and the border fence constructed around

Bangladesh by India. My examination raises the question of why the enclave "issue"

appears insurmountable. Unlike other authors who have suggested that this is largely

an administrative problem (Ahmed 2007; Jacques 2000), I answer this question

through a cross-border historical interrogation of the various insecurities,

uncertainties, and anxieties that are bound up in nationalist discourses around

territorial integrity. As such, I explore the particular historical contexts out of which

the enclaves emerge and structure political and administrative possibilities at the limits

of state control.

Chapter 3: Histories of Belonging(s): Narrating Territory, Possession, and
Dispossession in Dahagram

 In this chapter, I explore the various histories of belonging historically

sedimented (Moore 2005) in the landscape of Dahagram. Exploring these histories

provides a strategy for understanding how people frame particular claims to

membership—in communities, in nations, in states—and how they seek to actualize

tenuous rights. In Dahagram, citizenship, displacement, security (national *and*

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personal), and rights are all subsumed within a range of grounded notions of belonging as well as *belongings* (material goods). Movement and the ability to hold and dispose of possessions—land, clothing, houses, crops, livestock—are central to this exploration. Yet, belonging is more than purely an issue of possession. It is also a question of community and identity: who has the right to belong and why. I explore the intertwined political economies and cultural politics of belonging(s) in Dahagram through oral-history accounts of its residents.

My use of "belongings" is intended to draw attention to the ways that the politics of membership within the enclave are inseparable from debates over and claims of ownership. In contrast to more narrowly defined problematics such as "statelessness" or "citizenship," I argue that exploring ways that membership and property are linked is a productive way to understand the enclave's contested history. I explore a 1965 refugee crisis in Dahagram, the daily negotiation of security forces that characterized life in Dahagram before 1992, the long struggle over the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor, and the politics of membership in Dahagram since the Corridor's opening. By focusing on this historical junction between possession and membership, I examine the histories and "politics of the governed" that undergird ongoing struggles to establish rights for enclave residents.

Chapter 4: Spatial Corruptions: Crime, Security, and Development in Dahagram

My final chapter analyzes the simultaneous definition and erosion of space in Dahagram. In South Asia, it is fairly common to casually draw connections between projects seeking to "define" the border, increase security, and reduce corruption. However, it is significantly rarer for scholars, politicians, or journalists to explore the various—and far from obvious—overlap between these processes and the ways that they interact with representatives of local government, tensions between border

security forces, and individuals who live in the fraught areas along the India-Bangladesh border. This chapter explores the entanglements between border definition and security; development projects seeking to incorporate the enclaves into nation and state; and crime, corruption, and opportunity within Dahagram. I argue that these implementations, negotiations, and contingent overlaps are both a constituent part and a product of the politics of sensitivity that structure life within it. Such entanglements are most often experienced as expropriations and dispossessions as well as political favoritism, clientelism, and cronyism by residents of Dahagram. In such contexts, neat divisions between legal and non-legal, law enforcement and transgression, and spatial definition and corruption are far from clear.

I chart the micropolitics of space, security, and crime in Dahagram through a range of ethnographic explorations. First, I examine processes and local contestations of a project seeking to demarcate the enclave's border. Second, I examine the politics and contradictions of development in Dahagram as exemplary of tensions between the enclave's symbolic status within national imaginaries and perceptions of it as a marginal and, presumed, dangerous place. I explore how this tension produces graft, power, and opportunity for both of border security forces and Dahagram's political elite. Third, through an exploration of a project mounted by the BSF to stem cattle smuggling, I explore the overlapping sovereignties at play in the regulation of criminality and definition of border security. Through each of these case studies, I ask how configurations of sovereign power in the enclave often re-enforce and create new opportunities for those engaged both in "criminal" and regulatory practices.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I revisit the enclaves, examining developments in them since I concluded my fieldwork. I draw out the methodological question of sensitive space

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as a comparative optic, reflecting on the particularities and generalities of sensitivity. Finally, I return to the challenging interface of democracy and security, reflect on the possibilities of transforming the enclaves administrative "status," and ask what role enclave residents themselves might play in forwarding and shifting debates over their futures.

CHAPTER 1:

"SENSITIVE SPACES": RETHINKING EXCEPTION ALONG THE INDIA-

BANGLADESH BORDER

Let me take you into a "sensitive" space along the India-Bangladesh border.

Traveling to the Bangladeshi enclave Dahagram[45] from Patgram—the closest market

town in Bangladesh, roughly 11 km away—you must take a long and winding bicycle-

rickshaw journey that lasts between one and 1.5 hours depending on the driver, the

repair of his vehicle, and the weight of the load. Patgram is a busy and dusty town. In

addition to hosting a large bi-weekly *haat* [market], Patgram is notable as a stop-over

for truckers traveling to and from India through the nearby Burimari border crossing.

On *haat* days, Patgram becomes a traffic jam of rickshaws, rickshaw vans,

pedestrians, local farmers selling their crops, and regional buyers purchasing bulk

goods for shipping to Dhaka. Yet, leaving Patgram's bustle, you quickly enter a

sparsely populated—for Bangladesh— countryside. You travel through an expansive

patchwork landscape of rice, maize, tobacco, and vegetables, passing only an

occasional hamlet or tea stall. From the elevated roadway—built on a dike running

above the fields—one can see for miles across this flat and strikingly beautiful

landscape, characteristic of much of Northern Bangladesh.

As you ride, your driver might point out seeming randomly placed border

posts, rising incongruously out of fields. *Look, there is India, and on that side,*

Bangladesh. These mark the borders of small *chhitmahols*, or enclaves, many of which

are no more than fields (see Figure 3). Despite the oddities of the border pillars, and

the precarious legal and territorial position of the lands that they demarcate, there is

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[45] Dahagram is actually two conjoined Bangladeshi enclaves—Angorpota and Dahagram—situated just
over the border in India in the district of Cooch Behar. For simplicity sake in this paper I follow local
custom and refer to them simply as "Dahagram."

little else to remind you that you are traveling along an archipelago of Indian enclaves. There are no fences, border guards, or gates to mark these spaces as distinct and sovereign parts of India. The barbed-wire border fence, which looms in the hazy distance, is the only proximate reminder that you are traveling in a contentious, and intermittently violent, border region. All of this changes dramatically as you approach Dahagram (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Border posts demarcating *chhits* along the Dahagram Road

Coming into Panbari, the last small village before the border, you encounter a Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)—Bangladesh's border security force—camp and troop post. Even here, the setting remains fairly peaceful, as off-duty *jawans* (troops, soldiers, or subalterns) lounge together in *lungis*, doing laundry, playing games of *karom*. Yet as you round the last bend leading to the Corridor, a tensely regulated landscape emerges (see Figure 5). On the left, you pass a BDR checkpoint, always occupied by two or three armed soldiers. Immediately following this you pass through the gates of the Tin Bigha Corridor, a land bridge to Dahagram maintained by the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF). The Corridor connects Dahagram to "mainland" Bangladesh, albeit precariously.
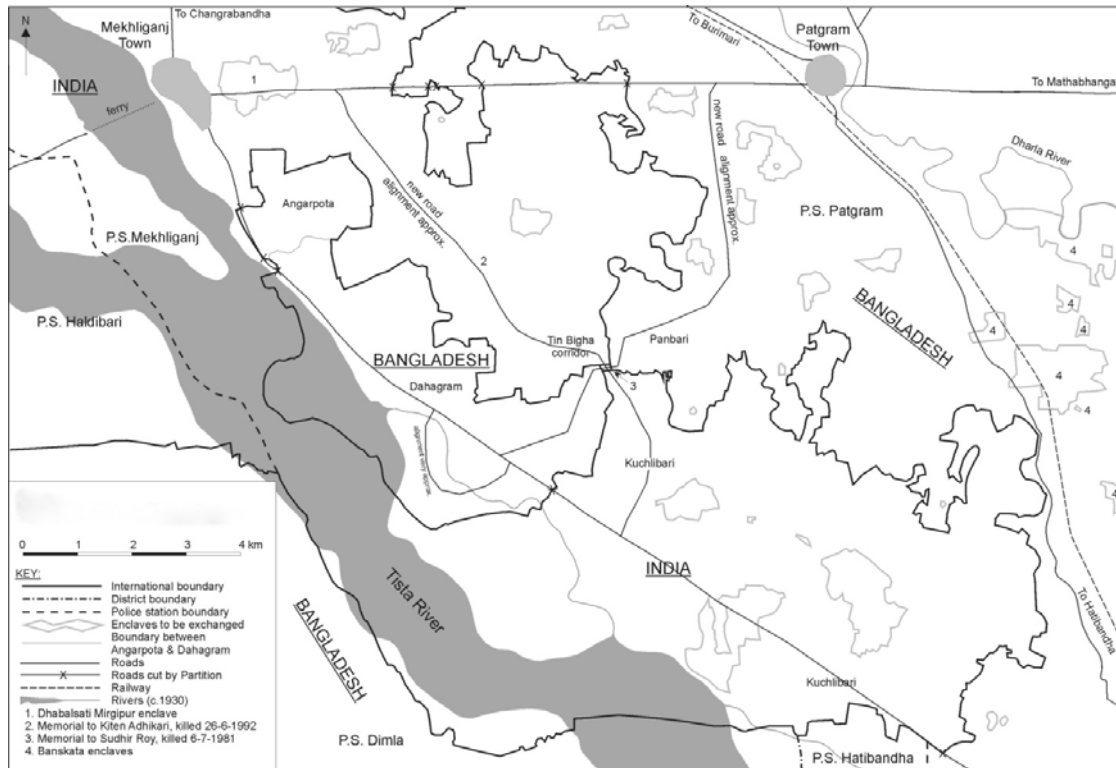
Figure 4: Patgram *Thana*, Dahagram, and the Tin Bigha Corridor[46]

As you enter the Corridor, on the immediate right is the first BSF camp, where a senior officer and armed *jawans* take scrupulous note (and notes) of all who pass. Mid-way between the Corridor's gates is a cross-roads, where the North-South running "Dahagram" road is bisected by the East-West road that links two different neighborhoods of Mekhliganj Thana in India. A uniformed member of the West Bengal Traffic police stands near a monument to two Indian activists, killed when the BSF fired into a crowd protesting the opening of the Corridor in 1988. He guards the intersection, *lathi* in hand, ensuring that no passers-by make either right or left turns, veering from one country into another. Beyond the intersection, you pass by yet another BSF station on the left, also staffed with armed *jawans* and note-taking officers. This BSF station has a counterpoint BDR post on the right as soon as you

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[46] Map by Brendan Whyte.

pass over the border into Dahagram. This is also staffed with armed guards, also

taking scrupulous note of who and what enter and leave the enclave. Moving through

the Corridor it is impossible not to feel the suspicious scrutiny: *Who are you? What*

are you doing here? Where do you belong?
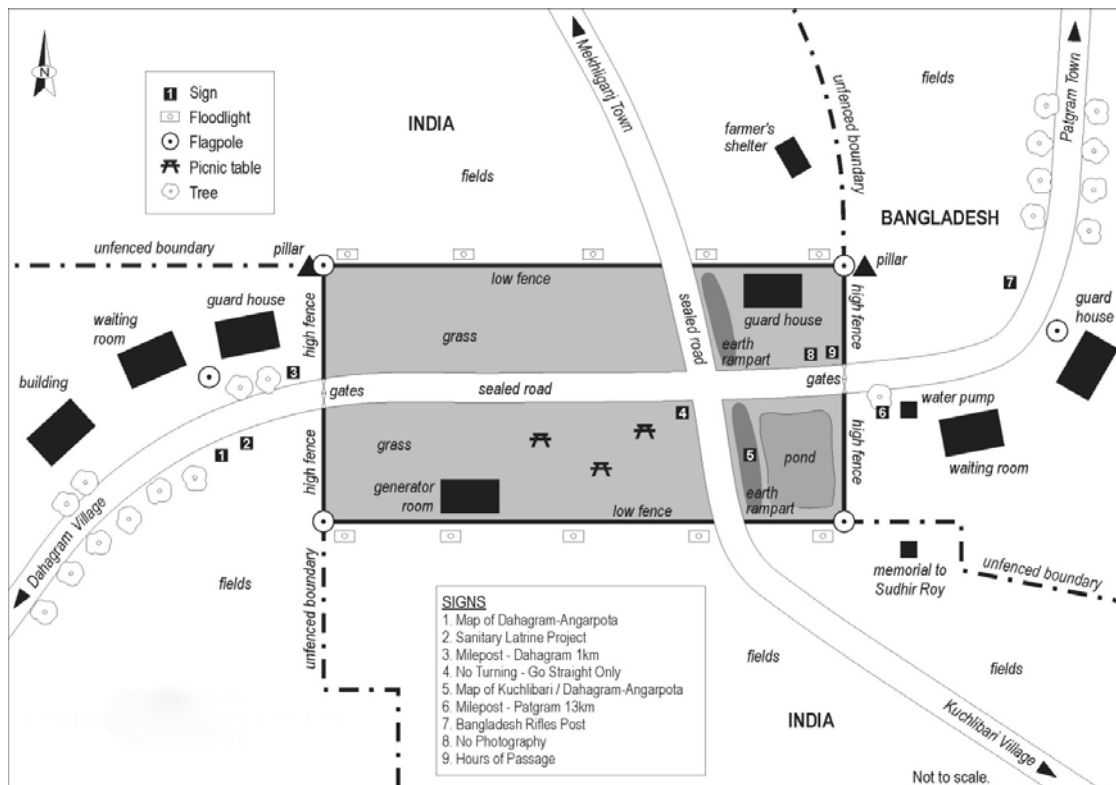
Figure 5: Tin Bigha Corridor, Detail[47]

Dahagram is clearly exceptional in the way it is scrutinized and "secured."

Monitoring, regulation by a hostile force, and precarious status are part of the fabric of

daily life in Dahagram. Yet they also do not tell the whole story of Dahagram's, or any

of the other *chhitmahol's*, exceptionality. Equally critical to understanding the *chhits*

is an appreciation of the enormous ambiguity, confusion, uncertainty, and insecurity

that are part of the ways *chhits* are understood by those outside of them and, crucially,

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[47] Map by Brendan Whyte.

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part of life within them. The status of these spaces within competing notions of nation and state is highly unstable. Knowledge about them is difficult, or impossible, to access. And projects that seek to establish order and rule within and in relation to the enclaves often serve to produce new and confused configurations of power, exploitation, and oppression. Indeed, much of the instability that characterizes life within Dahagram emerges out the tension between this ambiguity and intense scrutiny by security forces. In this chapter, I explore this link by outlining what I call a politics of sensitivity that structures political possibility in relation to the enclaves. Understanding the process of producing sensitive spaces, I suggest, requires as much attention to slippages, uncertainties, and vaguely defined fears and threats as it does to overt force, regulation, and practices of maintaining "security" along the border.

The Corridor is not an "official" border crossing. Indeed, though all traffic going into and out of the enclave passes through sovereign Indian territory, no passports are needed for this movement. As such, unlike other *chhits*, Dahagram is administratively, as well as theoretically, part of Bangladesh. It is an official Union Parishad under Patgram Upazilla in Lalmonirhat district.[48] The government imposes taxes and distributes aid through food-for-work schemes and VGD/VGF programs.[49] Yet it is unmistakably a zone apart, an exceptional space where the practice of movement falls under intense scrutiny. The long struggle to open the Corridor and ongoing tensions around it are part of what continue to make Dahagram a contentious and exceptional space within and between India and Bangladesh.[50] Within the Corridor, the BSF has authority to implement random inspections, create often arbitrary-seeming conditions for passage, and generally to scrutinize and, as many enclave residents have it, intimidate passers through. Tin Bigha is a militarized space,

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[48] Part of Rangpur District before 1983.
[49] Vulnerable Group Feeding/Vulnerable Group Development programs that are nation wide, largely locally administered, and notoriously corrupt.
[50] I attend to this history in Chapter 2.

one that is held and protected by an armed paramilitary force that only grudgingly allows enclave residents to pass. It clearly *belongs* to India at the same time that Dahagram is unquestionably not a "normal" part of Bangladesh.

Figure 6: BSF Observation Tower on Dahagram's Northern Border

Unlike other Indian and Bangladeshi enclaves, the borders of Dahagram are regularly patrolled by both the BSF and the BDR. The enclave is surrounded by panoptic BSF watchtowers and six BSF encampments (see Figure 6). Most residents of other *chhitmahols* in India and Bangladesh can freely leave their enclaves. However, ingress and egress for residents of Dahagram is difficult, dangerous, and clearly illegal except through the gates of the Tin Bigha. The Corridor dramatically structures the movement of enclave residents, transforming a departure from the enclave into an act of passing through a contentious and hostile space. This passing through is an enactment of the often-tense national and communal politics of the border, the movement of Bangladeshi Muslims under the scrupulously watchful gaze

of a largely Hindu security force.[51] At six PM, these gates are shut, effectively locking residents into the enclave for the night.[52] Enclave residents are fond of describing themselves as *like chickens. They let us roam about during the day before locking us into the coop at night* [*amra holam murgir moto. Amaderke shokale chere dai, abar shondha bela, kachay firte hoi*].

Yet why is this border space in need of such regulation? What makes it such a "sensitive" area, in need of such scrutiny and subject to such suspicious governing? My use of the term "sensitive" in describing this space is not arbitrary. The term arose regularly during the course of my research. Often, it was employed by state officials—always in English—as a means to explain why information was unavailable, why particular things were or were not possible, and why these areas were markedly different or beyond the norm. As I worked, this seemingly descriptive term began to take shape as a process that marked spaces as exceptional in both discursive and concrete ways. While the term "sensitive" is often casually deployed by both state officials and academics to describe self-evidently "problematic" areas and topics, I argue that sensitivity is better understood as a political process that both regulates knowledge about sensitive spaces and structures actions, behaviors, and possibilities within them. I strive to understand what the production and negotiation of sensitive space means in practice for those who live within the enclave and for those that seek to govern it.

I am further concerned with the way that discourses of sensitivity produce, rather than merely describe, sensitive spaces. Sensitive spaces are exceptional spaces, where questions of law and sovereignty are unsettled and unsettling. Understanding

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[51] The communal dynamics of these border politics are accentuated by the BSF's policy of staffing non-Muslim and non-Bengali speaking staff along the Bangladesh border. On the often communal character of border regulation along the India-Bangladesh border, see Samaddar (1999), Van Schendel (2005), Banerjee (2001), and Jones (2009a).

[52] The gates are open from six AM to six PM Indian time, 6:30 AM- 6:30 PM Bangladeshi time.

them, therefore, requires attention to threats, ambiguities, and vaguely defined fears articulated through practices and performances of sensitivity. Attending to these spaces, and the confused terrain which often characterizes them, helps complicate notions of "the sovereign exception" (Agamben 1998) that have come to dominate recent studies of borders and frontiers.[53] It also highlights the tensions and insecurities of life and unsettles discrete framings of state and society in borderlands (Baud and Van Schendel 1997).

I will examine these dynamics through an ethnographic engagement that brings together my experiences conducting research in and on Dahagram in 2006 and 2007 with everyday experiences of enclave residents. First, I interrogate the notion of "sensitivity" through a series of experiences from my archival and ethnographic fieldwork and ask how this concept is complicit in structuring actions and behaviors in relation to, and subsequently complicit in producing, "sensitive spaces" such as Dahagram. I then ask what it means to live in a sensitive space for residents of Dahagram. The ambiguities of sensitivity, the intense regulation of "official" knowledge, and the persistent circulation of rumors and constant feeling of threat produce a space that is rife with insecurities and uncertainties. They also create opportunities for individuals, institutions, and organizations to exploit the ambiguous terrain of sensitivity to various ends. Finally, I return to the vexed question of loyalties within the enclave to ask how tensions of belonging emerge in often-painful ways within sensitive spaces.

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[53] C.f., Doty (2007), Basaran (2008), and essays in Kumar Rajaram and Grundy-Warr (2007).

Taking "Exception"

The project of denaturalizing the state in the historical social sciences[54] has yielded numerous studies that undermine the notion of the state as a uniform, monolithic institution existing and operating with an internally coherent logic. Further, it has problematized the assumption that state, economy, and society exist as independent and discrete spheres that act on and in relation to each other.[55] These studies emphasize the historical and contingent formation of states through specific practices of consent, conditioning, and force, as well as the ideological construction of states as things that exist "out there." Yet in destabilizing the notion of "The State," these studies have complicated, and occasionally undermined, analytic language for discussing the differential political treatments of space and the relationship between official "norms" and "exceptions."[56] Such work importantly focuses attention on the ways things that are presumed to be "exceptional" are often particular manifestations of everyday forms of rule and examples of broader patterns of regulation and control. While this essay seeks to contribute to this growing literature, I also wish to preserve and explore a critical language for understanding exceptional spaces that attends to both the specific dynamics of producing "zones of exception" and provides an analytic strategy for seeing such spaces in relation to one another.

My exploration of sensitivity is, as such, formed in dialogue with and in response to Giorgio Agamben's (1998; 2005) now famous elaboration of the "exception" as *the* central category of contemporary political life.[57] Grounding my

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[54] This project is perhaps most directly linked to the writing of Philip Abrams (1988), Corrigan and Sayer (1985), and Timothy Mitchell (1991b; 1999).

[55] A limited list of such studies include Hansen and Steputat (2001b), Steinmetz (1999), Sharma and Gupta (2006), Joseph and Nugent (1994), Artexaga (2003), Comaroff (1988), and Stoler (1992).

[56] Textured exceptions to this are Sivaramakrishnan's (1999) discussion of "forested zones of anomaly" in colonial Bengal and Moore's (2005) analysis of the sedimented terrain of struggle in upland Zimbabwe.

[57] Agamben's work has become a theoretical centerpiece in a vast number of publications since *Homo Sacer's* translation into English in 1998. An extremely limited list of such works includes: Onge (2006), Diken (2005), Chowdhury (2007), essays in Das and Poole (2004), and essays in Hansen and Steputat

reading of Agamben in critical studies of state formation, I take "exception" to his notion of the exception. The idea of the exception—or at least Agamben's articulation of it—draws its political and legal formulation from Schmitt's dictum that "the sovereign is he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 2005 (1932): 5). The sovereign exception, for Schmitt, is the primary axiom of state power—the ability to dictate who and what falls outside of the bounds of legal practice, and, as such, membership within the *polis*. Through the exception, sovereign power is conceptualized as the ability to banish—to place a space, an individual, or group of people beyond the protection of law. Banishment, as Agamben is at pains to explain, exposes the banished to a series of violences that are at once beyond the bounds of legal practice and unpunishable within "normal" legal frameworks.

Agamben extends Schmitt's conceptualization to rethink the sovereign ban, as Andrew Norris has it, as "not just a historically specific form of political authority that arises with modern nation-states . . . , but rather the essence of the political" (Norris 2003: 6). The political, for Agamben, is re-conceived as fundamentally biopolitical— that is, a question of authority over life and death. To suffer the sovereign ban—to become an exception—is to be reduced to "bare life," where the banned individual is beyond rights (in terms of recourse to a legal system that might uphold them). At the same time, others (citizens) are exempted from legal repercussions for crimes or violence committed against the banned individual. Equally critical to Agamben's analysis, however, is the point that the exception and norm are inexorably linked in a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion. Through marking a "beyond" to the rule of law, the sovereign, in effect, defines the boundaries of political, and indeed, social membership.[58] The exception is thus inexorably linked to the whole from which it is

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(2005). This is *not* to say that all of these studies either adopt Agamben wholesale or fail to offer their own readings and critiques.

[58] For a radically different reading of the political that sees political society as precisely the ground on which negotiation between the "excluded" and the "excluding" takes place, see Chatterjee (2004).

banned. Forcibly included through the act of exclusion, the exception "*cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already a part*" (1998: 25, italics in original).[59]

Agamben's writing has received enormous attention within the social sciences, in part, because his work is particularly salient in, as it is a reflection on, the contemporary political moment. Whether thinking about the various corrosions and eliminations of legal rights in the US's "War on Terror," or the suspension of democracy in Bangladesh from January 2007 to December 2008 during the "state of emergency," the exception, as several have noted (c.f., Mbembe 2003; Mitchell 2006), appears to be fast becoming the rule.[60] At the same time, this attention to the role of emergencies and exceptions has refocused scrutiny on margins and zones where states of exception appear to have long characterize everyday practices of rule. Agamben's notions of sovereignty and exception have become central heuristics in explaining *why* and *how* spaces like enclaves, borders, upland regions, and contentious zones are both different from, yet increasingly like, other places.[61]

Yet his writing is also limiting in understanding the complexities of such exceptions and the nuanced and myriad ways in which they are historically constituted through, manifest in, and deployed as categories of rule. Agamben's construction of

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[59] It is not my intent to fully rehearse Agamben's argument here. For excellent discussions, critical and appreciative, of Agamben's writing see the volumes *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life* (Calarco and DeCaroli 2007) and *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: Essays on Giorgio Agamben's Homo Sacer* (Norris 2005). For critical summaries of his argument see Gregory (2004), Sanchez (2004), Norris (2003), and Mitchell (2006).

[60] Indeed, the central argument of *State of Exception* (2005)*,* Agamben's companion piece to *Homo Sacer,* is that the state of exception has become both the paradigm for modern liberal democratic government and the vehicle through which parliamentary democracies transform themselves into totalitarian states. Yet, as this assumption provides a framework for thinking about the thin line between democracy and totalitarianism, it also entails a flight from the empirical for Agamben that allows for an often careless conflation of radically particular and dissimilar forms of exceptionality.

[61] Indeed, prior to the publication and widespread circulation of *Homo Sacer*, many studies of borders struggled to articulate what made borders "different" from everywhere else (c.f., Wilson and Donnan 1998b). Exceptions to this pattern are studies that are grounded in detailed historical explorations of border formation that focus on the way patterns of rule unevenly emerge and are produced through constructing and contesting borders and frontiers (c.f., Febvre 1973; Sahlins 1989; Sivaramakrishnan 1999; Tagliacozzo 2005).

the exception has been—justly—critiqued and criticized for providing little scope to imagine a politics of the excluded themselves as central to defining the terms of their own exceptionality (c.f., Rancière 2004); for limiting our ability to more fully imagine and describe conditions of destitution and exceptionality beyond the stark and reductive conception of *homo sacer* (c.f., Butler and Spivak 2007); and for a failure to attend to, or even acknowledge, the gendered nature of exceptionality that undergirds a more nuanced reading of the difference between "displacement" and "exclusion" (Sanchez 2004). Indeed, many of these critiques point to ways that Agamben's reduction of the political to the purely biopolitical brackets a range of critical factors that constitute the politics of exceptionality and, indeed, the concept of the "political" itself.

For my purposes, I would like to raise an additional concern about Agamben's articulations of exception and sovereign power. Even the act of simply passing through the Tin Bigha Corridor reveals Dahagram's exceptionality. Yet the experiences and ambiguities of power and knowledge that I will outline here point to a more unstable terrain of exception than that articulated by Agamben. Indeed, my experiences working in and on Dahagram point to ways that Agamben and Schmitt's notion of the sovereign exception lead to a misapprehension of state power. Schmitt's critique is grounded in a unitary notion of "state," "sovereign," and "exception." Schmitt's axiom that the sovereign is the entity that decides the exception is built on the premise that there is a singular supreme state power, principally in charge of the legal apparatus of governance, that might declare such a "thing" as "an exception." Agamben's modification of Schmitt adopts a more Foucauldian understanding of sovereign power—as an uneven field of power relations with and through which rule and exceptional states becomes marked, structured, and accomplished. If sovereign power in Agamben's reading is more dispersed, it is still imagined as accomplishing a

similar end—the sovereign decision on the exception. Further, it suggests a functionalist understanding of exception that radically collapses diverse, historically constituted conditions into a unitary dialectic with state power. Within Dahagram, exception is anything but static. It is a process that unfolds differentially and contradictorily in space and time.

My experience in the *chhits,* then, suggests a significantly different vision of exception that demands attention to the way different sovereign powers overlap, combine, and contest one another on ambiguous terrain. Dahagram is an exceptional space and one in which the dialectic of inclusion and exclusion is central to daily life, but not because a singular sovereign power decreed it beyond the boundaries of law, or even within a different category of law. Rather, it is repeatedly and, crucially, differently marked as exceptional by numerous institutions and actors. Neither are these markings uniform or even mutually or collectively coherent. Indeed, part of the very day-to-day nature of the enclaves' (in general) and Dahagram's (in particular) exceptionality is a broad confusion and disagreement, rather than consensus, about what they are, how they should be treated, and what rights and privileges their residents are, or are not, entitled to.

Exception, in such contexts, cannot be reduced to a *thing* that, once declared, operates in particular ways. Rather, exception and sensitive spaces are made and remade on a daily basis through a myriad of social and historically grounded processes. The conditions of exceptionality are enacted in different ways by different people, often as much out of confusion as out of clear intent. The decisions and strategies of security forces, local government officials, and residents are all part of what makes Dahagram exceptional. Yet these decisions and strategies are made on extremely unstable terrain. They are grounded in rumor, suspicion, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Their outcomes are fragmented and fragmentary, producing new and

often surprising reconfigurations. Exceptionality in Dahagram manifests as much in the concealment and fetishization of official documents as it does in attempts to regulate space and manage "criminal" activities. To understand places such as the *chhitmahols*, I argue, it is critical to be attentive both to these enactments and the ways the ambiguous terrain on which they are performed emerge.

To understand sensitivity and exception in Dahagram, I first examine the process by which knowledge is, or is not, produced about the enclaves and the unstable ground such practices produce. I will start, then, by thinking through several experiences from my own research. These experiences will be familiar, or at least unsurprising, to anyone who has worked on "sensitive" areas or issues. My goal is to understand the conditions under which knowledge about the enclaves, and sensitive spaces more generally, is linked broadly to concepts of state security and national survival. In short, I am concerned with the ways sensitivity emerges as a form of governmental rationality and the ways this rationality is complicit in the production of sensitive space.

Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the Bangladeshi State

Philip Abrams begins his classic essay "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State" (1988), by offering an observation about the relationship between states and information. "Any attempt to examine politically institutionalized power at close quarters," he writes, "is, in short, liable to bring to light the fact that an integral element of such power is the quite straightforward ability to withhold information, deny observation and dictate the terms of knowledge" (62). Navigating the artifices of this protection (both successfully and unsuccessfully) tends to occupy an inordinate amount of time for anyone interested in understanding the workings of the state. "It seems only reasonable in the face of such elaborate efforts at concealment to assume

that something really important is being concealed" (62). Yet, Abrams asks, how reasonable is such a suggestion?

> So often when the gaff is blown the official secrets turn out to be both trivial and theoretically predictable. More often still when the state papers are opened and the definitive scholarly work is done it only serves to affirm or add detail to the interpretations read from the surface of events by sharp-eyed and theoretically informed observers thirty years earlier (62).

Abrams' point in calling attention to such projects of concealment is not to highlight their futility, but rather to raise questions about the nature of "the state." Abrams suggest that we move beyond a vision of states as uniform, concrete entities that operate at a perceived distance from "society" to govern political, social, and economic life. As he argues, "the state is not the reality that stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask that prevent our seeing political practice as it is" (82). For Abrams, the state is better understood in a double sense, both as a system—a group of more or less connected institutions and practices that have historically specific relations and connections—and as an idea or ideological edifice that produces a unified vision of "stateness," a sense that there is such a coherent entity as "the state" that operates with a reasonably unified logic and institutional legitimacy. In such a vision, projects of obfuscating and obscuring information that may, or may not, be of political "significance," are part and parcel of the production of the state idea. The point is not that the various organs of state power, information, and security work to diligently protect secret information vital to national security, but rather that they serve to develop the illusion that something truly critical to "security" lies underneath the veil of official secrecy. In other words, their main purpose is to forge the veil itself.

Abrams' observations are particularly relevant to understanding sensitivity in relation to the enclaves. The enclaves seem to exemplify the kind of space around which the apparatus of state security works to conceal information. Take, for example,

the experience of Brendan Whyte, an Australian geographer who also conducted extended research on the enclaves in both India and Bangladesh. Whyte faced numerous difficulties in accessing information about the enclaves including the inability to get a research visa in India, difficulty in setting up meetings with officials, confusion in archives, and general harassment by officials while he conducted his work. Of his archive experience, he writes:

> One of the greatest problems for this researcher was political sensitivity. . . . While in theory *bona fide* researchers can seek permission from the Home Ministry to view closed files, the approval process takes several months. . . . Other files are on restricted access. They can be read, but all notes taken from them must be submitted via the archive authorities to the Home Department for censorship. This was the case with a file located in the West Bengal State Archives. After five months a letter was received admitting to delays in censorship because the submitted notes 'appear to be illegible and could not be read in full due to frequent use of abbreviation. Coupled with the political sensitivity of the research topic, even requests for innocuous information became endless labyrinthine missions to secure the necessary permissions from the superiors of the bureaucrats approached (2002: 20-22).

The notion of "political sensitivity" appears to be a self-evident characteristic of research on topics such as "enclaves." Yet the meanings that are embedded in the complications of research seem complex and ambiguous, not simply to Whyte, but also to those that he encountered in his work. The question of "censoring notes" appears, on the surface to be a bizarre and Kafka-esque strategy. After all, if truly "sensitive" information was embedded in them, is it not likely that the note-taker would remember such data? Is sensitive information a slippery and indefinable thing that a researcher—or indeed a bureaucrat—might not identify at first inspection? Why would a bureaucracy wish to censor notes taken on a "sensitive" document, rather than simply denying access to it? What seems most suggestive, in reflecting on these questions, is the ambiguity of the notion of "political sensitivity" itself. There are a number of possible interpretations of the challenges faced by Whyte in his research. Is

it not plausible to assume that, for example, the concern with "abbreviations" in Whyte's notes suggests a genuine ambiguity and fear that sensitive information *might* be contained within the notes themselves in a way that would evade notice by petty bureaucrats? Whatever the interpretation, there appears to be more at stake in such active or passive strategies to complicate research and restrict information. Part of the confusion appears to be inability to readily identify what is *sensitive* and what is not.

Abrams' observation and Whyte's experiences resonates with my own research, which was hampered by any number of 'official' barriers, including impenetrable bureaucratic processes, visa woes, subtle and not so subtle obstructions by archival and other officials, paper-shuffling games in regional and national archives (where the physical location of things from maps to land records were mysteries), and 'official' inquiries. Again and again, I was told, often by mournfully apologetic officials that these difficulties were because I worked on a "sensitive" topic. Over the course of my research, the term began to develop a tangible, if still elusive, shape. Sensitivity seemed to signal vague, indefinite, and undefined threats to national security. Indeed, its power seemed to lie specifically in this vague implication, not in concrete links between the information I was seeking and "real" threats to the state.

As I argue in the introduction, sensitivity is intimately linked to a range of cartographic anxieties in contemporary South Asia.[62] Such cartographic anxiety means that research on areas such as the enclaves is, by definition, "sensitive," not just because it takes as its focus unstable border regions where often violent projects of state-building are manifest, but also because the results of such research threaten to pose challenging questions to notions of national identity, territorial integrity, and state

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[62] As Van Schendel poses the problem, "The capacity of the enclaves to arouse intense emotions in their mainlands is directly related to the fact that they puncture putatively contiguous national spaces. They are an affront to the nation's imagination. However, they appear as 'foreign' bodies within the nation's territory, each nation is able by means of its own enclaves to penetrate the other's territory" (2002: 141). As such, the enclaves are a simultaneous injury to national pride and a salve to that injury.

legitimacy. In other words, information on such regions posses potential threats to a range of national symbolics. At the same time, the notion of these sensitive areas as simultaneously security issues and tenuous parts of the nation raises fraught questions both about those living within them (and their status as citizens) and about those seeking to learn more about them.

Yet sensitivity is not a "thing" that exists and acts in particular ways. It is produced through a range of interactions and processes. When I first began work in the National Archives in Dhaka, I was assured by one of the head archivists that I was unlikely to find anything of use there or anywhere else on the *chhitmahols.* When I asked why not, he replied, "Because they are very [pause], *sensitive* areas." Several weeks later, I pursued permission to photocopy documents from the same archivist. "How many pages do you need to copy?" he asked me. I told him that I wanted to copy perhaps as many as 100-200 pages that day. "Oh, well, that's a problem. You are only allowed to copy 20 pages per day." Frustrated to hear this unwritten and seemingly arbitrary rule, I asked for clarification on archival procedures. The archivist told me, "You see, we always try to help foreign researchers. But, you do research on a *sensitive* topic. I am an archivist, but a citizen of Bangladesh first. I cannot provide you with access to anything that would threaten my country's security." When I countered that records of fifty year old post-Partition border incidents—the subject of the series that I was reading—did not seem 'sensitive,' he merely shrugged and said, "They are border areas." Discouraged, I again asked about additional restrictions. "There are no restrictions," he replied, "You may copy 20 pages a day. As long as they are not secret." "How do I determine if a document is secret?" I asked. He solemnly responded, "I will decide."

What I would like to call attention to in this encounter are the multiple meanings bound up in the ties between sensitivity and citizenship. The politics of

sensitivity in the archive serve to obfuscate and misdirect, veiling documents and data that might not even be there. Such documents may or may not contain *sensitive* information on a *sensitive* topic. The concept of sensitivity draws power from this very ambiguity. Its ties to equally vague concepts of national "security," however, forge implicit links with more concrete notions of citizenship, national pride, and, job security. These in turn structure relationships between, among others, archivists and researchers. Sensitivity is a self-policing and structuring concept based not only on tangible security threats, but equally, if not more, on the possibility that they *may* exist. The suggestion embedded within the archivist's statement is not so much that he is holding sensitive, secret, or "secure" documents, but rather that *all* topics related to borders *may* fall into such a category. Indeed, the request for information from someone working on a "sensitive" topic is a suggestive indication that information, unthreatening in other contexts, may indeed be sensitive. Sensitivity, as such, is a kind of infectious suspicion that is more rooted in ambiguity than in the concrete.

Yet sensitivity implies more than dangerous ambiguity. If sensitivity is an implicit, yet vague, indication of official secrecy, then it carries with it a set of responsibilities. It is the *duty* of citizens, and particularly of state employees, to protect its unknowability. Sensitivity is linked to a question of *national* survival, not simply state security. Yet this obligation is more than an impulse towards patriotism. The invocation of sensitivity is also a strategy of deferral and control, whereby government officials avoid accepting the ability or responsibility for revealing potentially compromising material. At the same time, by assuming control of regulating such information through restriction—"I will decide"—officials also assume responsibility for state protection. As sensitivity is linked to duty and citizenship, it is thus also linked to professional reputation, prestige, and the threat of loss of employment or worse.

Sensitivity, then, is a form of moral regulation, or, in the words of Corrigan and Sayer, "a project of normalizing, rendering natural, taken for granted, in a word 'obvious,' what are in fact ontological and epistemological premises of a particular and historical form of social order" (1985: 4).[63] The "obviousness" of sensitivity is an embodiment of the suggestion of ambiguity, obligation, prestige, and threat.[64] Yet if sensitivity is a form of moral regulation, a governmental rationale that creates a silent internal logic of behaviour, it is equally an enactment of state security. Such enactments themselves are complicit in producing sensitive spaces, topics and issues. Sensitivity is a self-fulfilling prophecy that relies as much on the treatment of topics as "sensitive" as it does on the conviction that their content truly poses threats to state or nation. Sayer observes that "individuals live in the lie that is 'the state' and it lives through their performance. Their beliefs are neither here nor there. What is demanded of them is only—but precisely—performances" (1994: 37). These performances are the heart of the production of sensitive space, zones that come to embody the very ambiguities and suspicions inherent in the concept of sensitivity itself.

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[63] There is a close affinity between Corrigan and Sayer's (1985) notion of moral regulation and Foucault's (1991) much-employed concept of governmentality. Both imply an internalization of imperatives of rule to "naturalize" unnatural forms of political regulation. Both terms are useful analytics in examining how "practices of rule articulate elements of government, sovereignty, and discipline" (Li 2007: 12). There are several analytical advantages to Corrigan and Sayer's articulation of moral regulation. Particularly, as many critiques of Foucauldian governmentality point out (e.g., Mitchell 2000; Moore 2005; Sivaramakrishnan 1999) Foucault's discussion is grounded in an Eurocentric idiom that tends towards generalizing governmentality as a universal logic of political modernity rather than attending to the empirical specificities and disjunctures of particular cases. In contrast, Corrigan and Sayer insist on an empirically and historically grounded understanding of specific forms of moral regulation. These two different perspectives harbor significantly distinct epistemological perspectives. Rather than trying to resolve this tension, I argue, following Hansen and Steputat's (2001a) critique of the links between Foucault and Gramsci, that "keeping these two perspectives in a productive tension with one another affords a somewhat broader perspective on the ambiguities of the state: as both illusory as well as a set of concrete institutions; as both distant and impersonal ideas as well as localized and personified institutions; as both violent and destructive as well as benevolent and productive" (4-5).
[64] I argue, following Corrigan and Sayer, that sensitivity is a historically and contextually specific form of moral regulation. I develop this history in Chapters 2 and 3.

Performing Sensitivity at the Border

If the politics of sensitivity produce obfuscations, elisions, and deferrals when viewing the enclaves from Dhaka, at the border they also produce bizarre information loops, discontinuities, and paths through which information is transformed in fascinating, albeit frequently disturbing, ways. One day, as my research assistant, Sayeed, and I passed through the Tin Bigha Corridor, we spotted a BSF *jawan* with whom we had chatted a few days earlier. He flagged us down and with a scowl said, "Why did you lie to me?" Puzzled, we assured him that we had not, to our knowledge, conveyed any untruths. He replied, "You told me that you are here to do research, but our informants inside the enclave tell us that you are here to buy eight *bighas* of land." Surprised, we did our best to reassure him of our intentions. He angrily dismissed our protests. "What is there to research here? Living by the border there are only thieves, smugglers, and *dacoits*." Refraining from asking him the obvious question of why, in that case, we would want to purchase land there, we proceeded into the enclave and continued with our work.

It is not uncommon for researchers to become the subject of local speculation and gossip. But this particular rumour, which spread through Dahagram and infiltrated the BSF and BDR camps, continued to have alarming results. The following day, a plainclothes BDR liaison arrived at our guest-house in Patgram. He informed us that I, as a foreigner, was required to check-in with the BDR before venturing into "sensitive" border areas. Sayeed and I assured him that we weren't aware of this procedure, but that we had spoken to numerous individual BDR members at various checkposts in and outside of Dahagram. Indeed, several of them had already taken our names and, we presumed, communicated our information back through official channels. He took our particulars and left.

But that night a fully uniformed and armed contingent of BDR *jawans* and the Patgram BDR commander showed up, accompanied by the plainclothes 'security official,' to learn more. Four of them crowded into my tiny room, where we had been recording the day's fieldnotes. The commander, a large man with scars on both cheeks and a menacing glare sat in one of the two chairs in the room, while two other uniformed officers and the plain-clothed security official stood around him, conspicuously blocking the only exit. Two *jawans* took up position outside the door in the hallway. The commander remained silent, while one of the other officers began rapidly asking questions. I did my best to explain myself. After my halting attempts, the officer turned to Sayeed and told a long story about another Bangladeshi who had befriended a foreign gentleman. The gist of the story was that the Bangladeshi found himself in a great deal of trouble when the foreigner was found dead in his hotel room. What would happen to Sayeed if I was found dead? Did we imagine that we were, even now, safe? Now truly alarmed, I launched into an extended explanation of my work, my university affiliation, my non-affiliation with any government body, and my desire only to write academic works about these interesting areas. We apologized profusely for not having been aware of the policy of "checking in" and promised to do so in the future. After a few minutes, the tension eased. The Commander, for the first time since arriving, spoke. He complimented me on my Bengali and asked several curious questions about how I had become interested in Bangladesh. We chatted for several minutes and, assuring the Commander that from here-on-out we would visit the Patgram command-post every time we came to and left the area, we eventually parted amicably.

Sayeed and I, breathing sighs of relief, began to try to account for the incident. Why was the late night visit necessary when, at any moment, the BDR could have simply demanded that we leave the area? Why had they seemingly relented and

departed on friendly terms after an interrogation that was so clearly designed to intimidate and frighten us? A late night arrival by armed security forces is certainly a dramatic performance of state power. Indeed, everything about the visit seemed carefully calculated to communicate the instability of our position in relation to a paramilitary force in a sensitive and unstable zone. The sheer display of power involved in the number of men who attended the meeting, the not-so-subtle threat and menace of the story conveyed to Sayeed, and the carefully performed roles throughout the incident—from the silence of the commander to the rapid questioning of the inquisitor—all spoke to their ability to not merely conceal information but to a preparedness to inflict harm.

The Commander's role was particularly suggestive. His own performance of state power conveyed a clear message. Though the story we conveyed to him that night was no different from the one we had shared with countless other BDR officers and *jawans*, we had now told it to him. The rapid move from silent menace to collegial conversation emphasize that our presence in the region was contingent on his decision and judgement. The Commander's performance also interpolated us into the roles of both audience to and performers of subjectivity to state power. In effect, our own ability to move freely within the region was being decided by the quality of our own performances and our submission to proper channels of information, deference, and command.

Such ruses of state power and elaborate stagings of rule call to mind both a Schmittian notion of sovereign power and Sayer's observation that "it is the exercise of power pure and simple that itself authorizes and legitimates; and it does this less by the manipulation of beliefs than by defining the boundaries of the possible" (1994: 375). Yet despite such clear cut exercises of force, an ambiguity permeated the event .Why had we suddenly become "visible" to the BDR? What was the relationship

between the rumour about our intentions that had made its way to the Indian BSF and the sudden interest in our movements by the Bangladesh Intelligence Services? An interplay of multiple demands, unstable knowledges, rumours, anxieties, and claims to rule seemed to undergird the event. Naked displays of power appeared to both obscure and emerge out of the uncertainties and instabilities of these relationships.

If interpretations of such events within sensitive space remain highly unstable and speculative, they do offer clues to the ways that spaces like Dahagram are produced. The dynamics of 'sensitivity' and 'security' that undergird the production of knowledge about sensitive areas *also* structure the lives of their inhabitants in often-oppressive ways. The discourse of sensitivity defines sensitive spaces as exceptional: dangerous places outside the bounds of 'standard' political practice, places occupied by criminals and others who threaten state security and national integrity, places of unpredictable and menacing danger, and places where knowledge must be regulated and limited for the good of the state. This marking has tangible effects not just on researchers but, even more so, on residents and security forces at the border. My encounter with the BDR hints at a number of different relationships at play within Dahagram: the dynamics of information and rumour between the BSF and its 'informants,' the protective yet watchful relationship between the BDR and enclave residents, the rituals of power and control—and their limits—that are part of daily life within Dahagram, the relationship between the BSF and BDR in their antagonistic but mutual task of policing and securing the border, and, of course, the arrival of a researcher with seemingly ambiguous intentions, into a sensitive border area.

Sensitive Insecurities and Lived Ambiguities

Thinking back to the observation of the BSF *jawan* recorded above, the careless identification of all border residents as thieves and smugglers seems, on first

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inspection, to be a cruel generalisation and my intent to purchase land an amusing misinterpretation. Yet these facets of the *jawan's* statement also point to the ways that politics of sensitivity produce a space where everything is uncertain and unstable. The generalisation that all enclave residents are criminals leads to regulatory practices that frequently make 'criminal' activities, such as illegally crossing a border to get to market, critical for survival. The processes of securing the enclave produces insecurity for enclave residents. The jurisdictional ambiguities of the enclave create areas where multiple individuals and organisations claim sovereign control of both spaces and resources to their own benefit, without providing collateral services to their constituents. New assertions of such control produce unexpected reshufflings, redistributions, and consolidations of power, money, and allegiances. It is this uncertainty and instability, the quotidian experiences of living in a sensitive space, to which I will now turn.

One of my informants, a woman who grew up outside of the enclave and married a resident of Dahagram shortly after the Tin Bigha Corridor opened in 1992, described life in Dahagram as a constant feeling of instability and transience. "For the first few days of our marriage," she said, "I would feel sort of breathless during the night [*amar dombhando hoye ashto*]. A sense of insecurity [*ek rhokom ashohoy lagto*]. What would happen if we were not allowed to cross the Corridor anymore? I would stand in the yard of my in-laws' house and look eastward towards where my parents' house lies." This insecurity and persistent perception of threats and instability are common throughout the enclave. As I was reminded over and over, the Corridor is seen by many as an impermanent passage, something that could be taken away at any point, leaving residents effectively trapped and hemmed in by the BSF. And though

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the enclave residents have varying relationships to the Corridor,[65] all agree that the

partial fulfilment of the '74 Land Boundary Agreement—the Corridor has not been

leased in perpetuity to Bangladesh, as the terms of the Agreement state, but rather is

controlled exclusively by the BSF—is an arrangement that has made their lives and

livelihoods contingent on a hostile force that could decide to close the Corridor for any

number of reasons.

Because of the tenuousness of the Corridor, the often heavy-handed forms of

regulation and ordering that occur there, and the ambiguities of its status, there

remains a marked shortage of services that could improve the lives of individuals

living in Dahagram. Several microcredit organizations offer loans, though several

others operating in the Patgram region told me that they wouldn't work in Dahagram

because either *Chhit-lok* [enclave residents] would never repay their loans or they

would not be allowed to enter the enclave. Such perceptions map to a general

assumption that Dahagram is off limits and filled with criminals.[66] Most residents

complain of a lack of jobs and reliable political representation. Government relief

programmes are prevalent, but rife with notorious corruption. There is a police

investigative unit in Dahagram, but it does little to serve the immediate needs of

residents. Indeed, one informant cynically quipped, "At times of [border] tension, girls

will cross [the Tin Bigha] wearing police uniforms and the police will cross wearing

saris." Residents often look to the BDR to address their problems and, indeed, most

report that since the BDR entered the enclave in 1995, harassment by Indians and

Indian officials has decreased markedly. Still, the BDR is limited in its ability to help

residents by its mandate to work/negotiate with the BSF and its lack of jurisdiction in

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[65] Migrants, known locally as *Bhatiyas*, who moved into Dahagram after the opening of the Corridor in 1992, tend to see the Corridor as a barrier to economic growth, whereas longer-term residents often perceive it as a constant and palpable threat. See Chapter 3.
[66] Indeed, when I told many outside the enclave about my intention of working within it, they would respond with shock, saying *you cannot go there. It is a lawless place. You will be robbed or worse!*

matters pertaining to many of the day-to-day lives of residents. At best, the BDR plays a mediating role.

This is particularly critical in the case of health care. The lack of facilities inside the enclave pose serious problems in the cases of medical emergencies that take place during the night, when the Corridor is closed, making the enclaves a particularly dangerous place for pregnant women and young children.[67] One day, over a cup of tea, a BDR officer in charge of handling frequent local negotiations with the BSF highlighted this issue. "Yesterday morning, just after the morning prayer [before dawn], my sentry knocked at my door to inform me that there was a critical patient with a baby who needed to go to Patgram. I ordered two Jawans to take her up to Tin Bigha and make a request to the BSF. They allowed her to pass. These sorts of necessities frequently occur and we have to play our part. The problem happens during the night. If it is nine PM or later, the BSF has many formalities [*onek niyom kanun*]. They call here and there to their company headquarters or somewhere else. And these processes swallow one hour or more of time, which is critical for a patient or someone in medical emergency or labour pain." Even after crossing the Corridor, it is still over an hour by bicycle-rickshaw to the nearest medical facilities in Patgram. There are no formalized processes that guarantee this passage. The decision to cross ultimately lies with the BSF. Speaking with bitterness, the officer continued, "They dilly-dally and sometimes they just don't allow. They don't categorically deny passage because they may be condemned for violating international law. But they pretend to talk to other

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[67] There is, in fact, a hospital facility in Dahagram constructed during the Ershad period (see Chapter 3 and 4), but it has never seen any patients due to a lack of staffing and the refusal of the BSF to allow electricity through the Corridor. This was also in violation of the terms of the 74 Land Boundary Agreements, which makes specific provision for running power lines through the Corridor. In 2008, the BSF changed this policy, though I have not been able to verify whether the hospital has opened its doors. At the time of research, part of the hospital was being used by Dahagram's Family Planning Unit and by a doctor who visited Dahagram twice a week from Rangpur. According to residents, this doctor largely referred patients to his practice, over 100 km away, for expensive procedures that few could actually afford.

authorities, and after some time come out suggesting 'our company commander isn't available now, so we can't allow you . . . '"

The uncertainties of life are further compounded by constant rumours about what will and will not happen with the precarious status of Dahagram as a whole. While I worked in Dahagram, these rumours ran the gamut from suggestions that the Corridor would finally be opened for 24 hours a day to a concern that Indian authorities had built a barrage upstream on the Tista river that would redirect the river flow to produce rapid erosion within the enclave, literally wiping it off the map. Such rumours speak to the perceived tenuousness of residents' status, hopes and fears, the sheer ambiguity of daily life within the enclave, and the way the livelihoods of residents are overdetermined by questions of space, movement, and belonging. While most agree that life has become more stable since the opening of the Corridor, residents constantly worry and hope for changes in status of the Tin Bigha. As a farmer told me, "We get everything like other people – the sun, rain, air. Still we cannot move like others. This Corridor is our main problem. It opens at 6:30 am and closes at 6:30 pm. The *chhitmahol* is a poor area. There is uncertainty [*anishchaiyota*], always. What will happen and what will not? We are always occupied with the thought of how to live."

Yet the Corridor is not the only form of uncertainty linked to land and territory within the enclave. Who owns and has the right to property is a particularly complicated and ambiguous question that is difficult to negotiate, especially for Dahagram's more recent immigrants and poorer residents. Several months before I began my fieldwork, for reasons no one, including local government officials, seemed able to explain, land registration had stopped inside the enclave. Residents adopted various different informal strategies to exchange and sell parcels of land, but these

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were tenuous at best, as any disputes were resolved by the local UP Chair, who many claimed decided cases in favour of the party able to pay the largest bribe.

What is more, the boundaries of plots of land were often unclear. This was due in part to the inability of enclave residents to access land surveys and maps of the enclave. Such maps did exist. Indeed, while I was working, a joint border survey team from India and Bangladesh was in the process of conducting a new survey to correct boundary lines and markers around Dahagram. One day, I encountered the Bangladeshi representatives of the team in a local tea stall. One of them carried a large tube at least three feet in length slung over his shoulder. "What is that," I asked. "A map of Dahagram," he responded. I asked if I could see it and he opened the case and began to unroll a large-scale cadastral map of the enclave. Unfurling half of the map, he turned to show it to me, arms out-stretched. After roughly 30 seconds and a stern glare from his superior, he rolled the map back up and started to put it back in its case. "Wait!" I exclaimed. "Can I have a closer look at that?" The surveyor shook his head. "May I take a photograph of it?" "No," he replied, closing the tube.

Though the map provides a nominally public tax record of the lands within the enclave, in a sensitive space, such documents, public or otherwise, seem to constitute potential security threats. As such, though they are regularly "produced" they cannot be "used" by the public.[68] Indeed, access to the map was not simply restricted to me, but to all enclave residents.[69] Even local government officials—the very ones who were adjudicating land disputes—did not appear to have access to any formal maps, let alone full cadastral surveys showing current property divisions. When I asked to see a map at the UP office one day, I was shown a hand drawn and somewhat oblong

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[68] Unlike in India, there is no official policy restricting access to or making it illegal to possess maps of border areas, though in practice, such maps can be equally difficult to come by. For a discussion of the restricted access to maps in India, see Brian Axel (2001; 2002)

[69] It is worth noting that such difficulty in accessing land records is not in and of itself unique to Dahagram. People in structurally insecure positions in rural Bangladesh often struggle to prove land claims due to limited access to government records.

sketch of the enclave in a ledger recording council meeting minutes.[70] "Are there any other maps that you have at the office?" I asked. Looking somewhat puzzled, the council member I was talking to produced an equally hand-drawn and equally out-of-proportion map. "There's this," he told me, "but we don't use it" (see Figure 7).
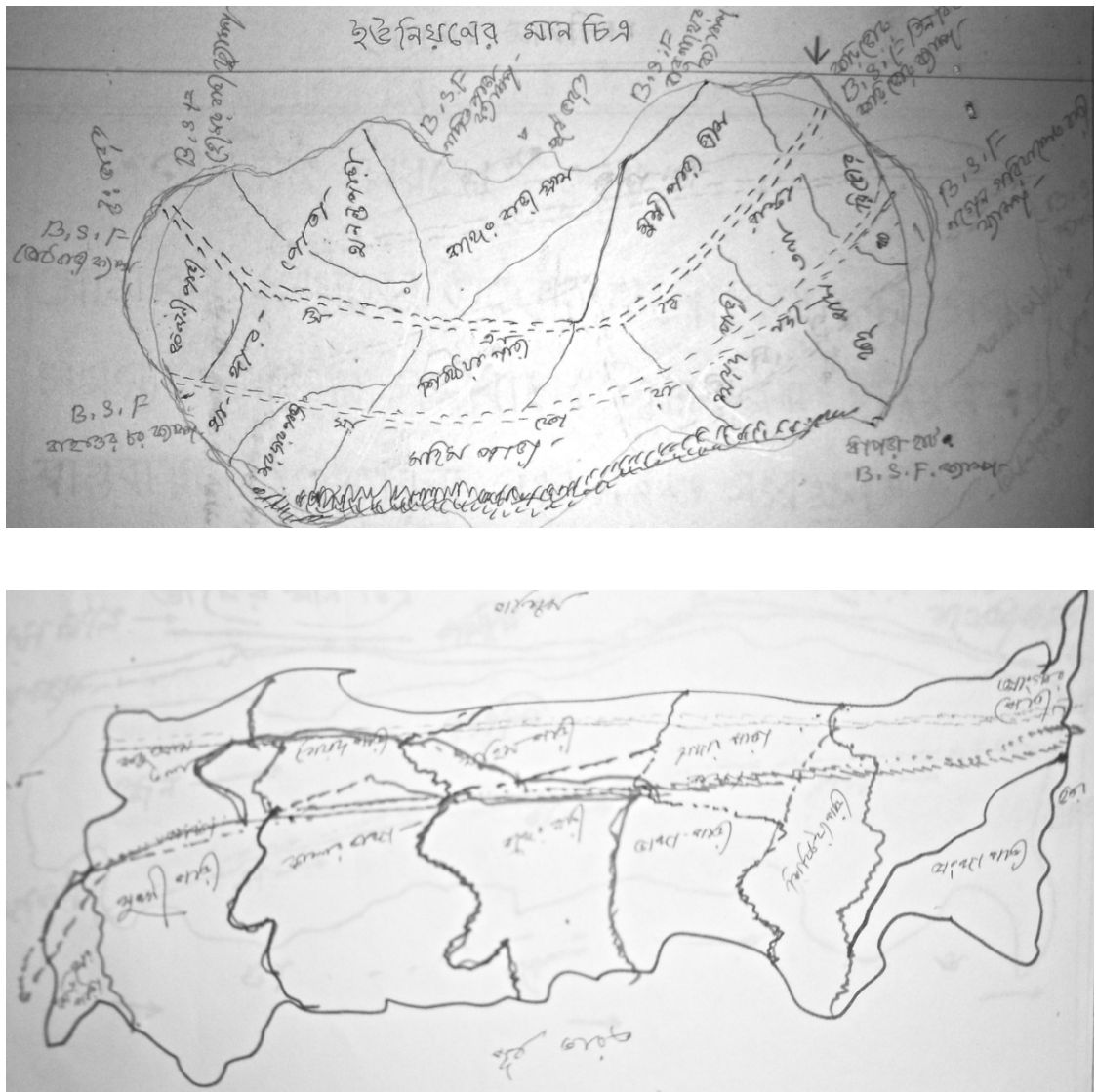
Figure 7: Maps Available in Dahagram's Union Council

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[70] I would like to emphasize that these sketch maps were not "counter-claims" or alternative representations of space (Cons 2005; Peluso 1995). Rather, they simply provided a rough division of Dahagram into *paras* that had representation within the Union Council.
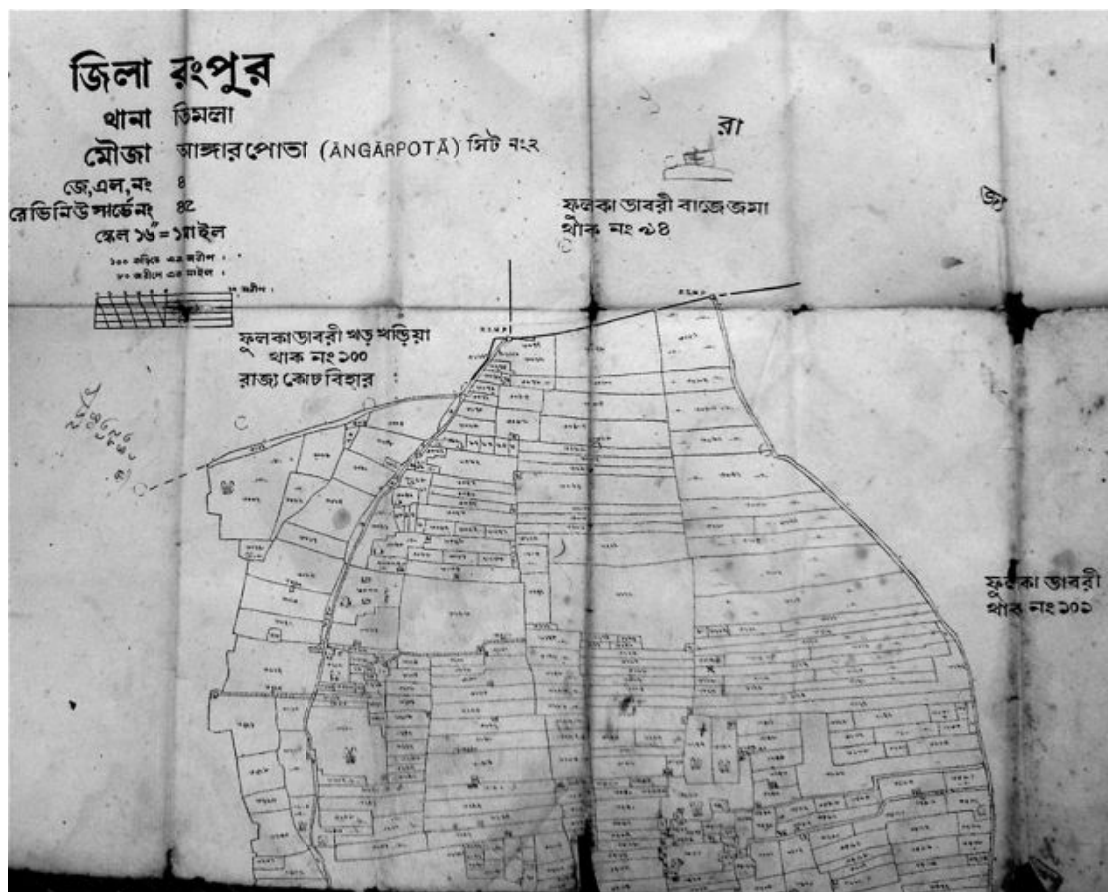
Figure 8: Map fragment, Dahagram

In the absence of access to formal documentation—"official" knowledge—legal documents, even if only scraps of paper, acquire an almost talismanic quality.[71] One day, I was discussing land disputes with an elderly man who lived near the border in Angorpota at the northern tip of the enclave. "My neighbours on either side are slowly eating up my lands," he told me, "and over there, the BSF is moving the border year by year." To prove the point to me, he pulled a scrap of a cadastral map from his shirt (see Figure 8). The map was falling apart from being handled and folded countless times. While there was no date on the map that I could see, it was clearly

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[71] While there exists a large and growing literature on the power of maps as a tool of governmental power (Edney 1997; Harley 2001), as particular forms of bureaucratic knowledge (Kapil 2002; Mitchell 2002), and as tools of nation formation (Thongchai 1994), few of these texts have attended to the symbolic power of maps for individuals (but see Sparke 1998).

many years old. The map was at a small scale for a cadastral map, and plots were marked off in sizes smaller than a fingernail. The map was hopelessly out of date, stemming from before the opening of the Corridor, when there was a massive reshuffling of land. The plots of land bore little resemblance to those marked on the map. Yet in the absence of other documentation, the map seemed to hold the veneer of official fact. "You see?" he said to me, vaguely, gesturing towards the top of the map.[72]

Sensitive spaces are characterized by an intense restriction of information and an almost jealous guarding of official knowledge and documentation in the name of vaguely defined notions of security. Access, or lack thereof, to documentation such as maps in no small way dictates the terms of power and ability to make claims about ownership and rights (Orlove 1991). However, the very ambiguity and regulation of knowledge also destabilizes such official markings of space. Who can and cannot claim territory, and what does and does not count as proof of such claims, has less to do with the "evidence" one can bring to bear, than the simple ability to exercise influence and power. Documents such as maps are simultaneously fetishized and undermined. They are imbued with symbolic meaning as they are hollowed of legal power. The "lawlessness" of the enclave, as such, has less to do with the criminal predilections of its residents then the insecurity, uncertainty, and instability produced in the collision between rigid regulation of space and the destabilization of legal and official process through the intense restriction of access.

Tangled Loyalties

If sensitivity is, at its root, a tenuous and troubled link between security and national identity, those living within sensitive areas have questionable loyalties by

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[72] I encountered similar experiences in other enclaves. In one, a land-owner provided a stamped title with the Raja of Cooch Behar's seal on it dating from the late 19th century as proof of ownership.

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definition. They are in need of monitoring, observation, and control in part because of their presumed lack of adherence to and intelligibility within the national project. Ironically, though not surprisingly, residents of Dahagram are, or at least regularly present themselves as, ardent nationalists and patriots. This is, in part, because there is so much at immediate stake in their inclusion or exclusion from the nation. Within Dahagram, it is a point of pride for residents to narrate their fraught history as uniformly and constantly supporting inclusion and belonging within Bangladesh. Dominant narratives of Dahagram's history position Muslim residents as tirelessly resisting Hindu projects of forcible incorporation into India. Yet the confused and overlapping modes of sovereignty that emerge within sensitive spaces implicitly stretch allegiances and confuse loyalties for those who are living there. Elsewhere, I problematize this uniform narrative, showing how the history of belonging within Dahagram is much more fragmented and contentious than it appears on the surface.[73] Dahagram is full of internal divisions and politics, many of which hinge on ethnic and class divisions within the enclave. Here, I would like to examine the painful and not always clear *national* choice that is constantly forced on residents of this sensitive space.

One day, as we were discussing the political struggle leading up to the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor, our friend Shamsul Ali shared a long and fraught narrative with us that highlighted, among other things, the uncertainties and inadequacies of Bangladesh's claiming of the enclave. Shamsul, though a member of the outer circle of Dahagram's political elite, had always felt himself an outsider within Dahagram. His father had migrated to Dahagram in the 1950s, making his family, effectively, one of the first post-Independence families to move into the enclave from the outside. Shamsul had always felt on the margins of acceptance in Dahagram's community.

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[73] See Chapter 3, "Histories of Belonging(s)."

Though initially put off by our presence, he became one of our closest friends in Dahagram and often accompanied us as we roamed around the enclave. As we spoke, he started a story several times, then haltingly stopped. This was unlike him, and we tried to draw him out. After a few more halting starts, Shamsul began:

> There was an old man, whose name I won't say. He is very respected even now. One day he sent for me. I went to his house and saw a plain clothed BSF official sitting there. Maybe he was from other Indian Secret Services. This was in '89, after the flood waters receded. Maybe late '88. This man, if he was from the BSF, was at least a company commander, or of higher position. He fed me a couple of times at Indian *haats*.
>
> They sent for me for two or three consecutive days, but I wasn't in. The old man arranged the meeting and following this incident, I didn't talk to him for seven years. I began hating him. He was a *dalal* [traitor]. The old man sent for me. When I reached his home, he said, "This man wants to talk to you." He pretended that he didn't know the purpose.
>
> At first this Indian officer tried to befriend me. He kept on coming for three days. Each day he would meet and talk to me. Then one day, he met me in an Indian market, took me to a two-storied shop, which belonged to a retired police official. We went upstairs. He fed me and offered me any goods from the market I wanted to take with me. I took a few pieces of cloth. He wasn't yet telling me anything direct. I decided I shouldn't take that much from him. I took three or four saris. He said, "As you are doing this, never hesitate to ask me for any help or take anything from me. You don't have to carry 500 or 1000tk to India to buy cloth. Just remember me. And if you are caught, tell that I am Chowdhury Babu's man. Wherever I am, they would inform me. If you give my reference, none will torture you. I will get the message even if I am in Siliguri or even farther, and I will order them to release you." This went for a couple of days. At a point, I myself started repenting, thinking, "It isn't fair. I shouldn't take this charge."

Shamsul paused and seemed as though he was reluctant to proceed. As his meaning began to dawn on us, Sayeed asked him "Did this man suggest anything directly?" Shamsul paused, then replied:

> Yes, he did. He said, "We would give you necessary money, arms, and ammunition. We can provide you with extra man-power also, if you organize some men here. You and your team will stay in India. Your job is just to kill a few people from Dahagram. Afterwards, you will administer this area [*erpore*

tomrai ae jaiga niyontron korbe] .” Maybe the man was good. I felt very sorry. One particular day, I touched his feet [*paye porci*], saying, “I cannot do this.”

While Shamsul abruptly changed the subject and clearly wished to say no more about it, his meaning was clear. The “few” who he was being asked to kill in Dahagram were almost certainly the leaders of the *Dahagram Shangram Shomiti* (DSS), a group of students who were at the time advocating for the opening of the Corridor and attempting to draw national attention to the plight of Dahagram’s residents.[74] During the period when the DSS was active, there were regular attempts to capture key participants by the BSF. Many of the members rose to political prominence within the enclave and held positions of power and influence in Dahagram. These men were all among those who Shamsul called his friends. Yet what was more striking than the suggestion of an overt attempt by the Indian Security Services to arrange the assassination of pro-Bangladesh Activists within Dahagram, was the agony of the decision that Shamsul was trying to convey. The choice still pained him. This was apparent in his mannerism and behavior, the look of tension on his face as he told the story. It was clear in his explanation of the torturous way he declined the offer of the Security Service member and in his vehement hatred of the man who had arranged the meeting to put the dilemma before him.

Shamsul’s narrative certainly highlighted the stress of living in the enclave during the turbulent years leading up to the opening of the Corridor. Yet there was more to the point he was trying to convey. Shamsul redirected the conversation to a seemingly innocent topic. He began to explain marriage patterns within Dahagram. Many marriage contracts, he explained, were made with families in neighboring Indian districts. As he spoke, he suddenly became upset.

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[74] I address this elsewhere through an extended history of belonging(s) in Dahagram.

You will find here many a boy whose maternal grandparents are Indian. Many are from Kuchlibari, which is a Muslim majority area. Though they are Muslim, they are affectionate to India [*tara Indiar proti durbal*], unlike Bangladeshi Hindus. These Muslims will never opt for any other country than India. Is there anything special about Indian soil [*Indiar mathir ki kono bishesh goon ache*]? Are they blessed by some saint so that most of the men are devoted to the country [*kon peerer doai tader ato desh prem*]? They say there were many saints in Bangladesh also. If so, then why are our people of such low morals [*nitihin*]. I won't say that India is free of bad people, but what I have noticed is that they seldom tell a lie, cheat someone . . . At this point, I am bound to praise them.

Shamsul's heated explanation seemed to shed new light on his earlier narrative. Shamsul's bitterness and frustration with the confused agendas and resentful politics of the enclave, coupled with his always-partial inclusion within the community of long-term residents, fueled his indecisions over belonging. The affinity he felt with the Indian Security Officer, the enticing appeal of escaping from the sensitive space of the enclave, and the ability to move to and from market without the threat and fear of jail by Indian authorities, all contributed to the tortured decision. Shamsul's sudden and surprising explanation of why Indians were, as a nation, a better and more just group, seemed an attempt to make us understand those tensions of belonging, to explain why accepting the officer's offer might have seemed the right, or at least not the wrong, choice at the time. I do not wish to suggest that such choices are only difficult or only emerge in sensitive spaces, but rather to call attention to the tension that belonging within a sensitive space places on its residents. If sensitive spaces are characterized by overlapping sovereignties and competing claims to rule, life within them is also fraught with the pain of choosing to belong in particular and often complicated ways. Courses of action are often unclear. Loyalties that in retrospect seem, or are presented as, obvious, are in practice contingent, fraught, and pained for those who are often forced into unsavory choices and betrayals.

Yet not all decisions, allegiances, and loyalties are necessarily so painfully considered in the enclave. Indeed, casual actions, taken for a variety of reasons, also contribute to the sensitive ground of Dahagram. Several days after our night visit from the BDR, Sayeed and I were returning to Dhaka to regroup. We stopped by the Patgram BDR post to inform the Company Commander of our movements. The day could not have been more of a contrast with our last tense meeting. It was a late winter day in Northern Bengal: cool, sunny, and breezy. The Commander, the same man who had silently regarded us through our interrogation several nights before, invited us for tea in the company court-yard. Since the late night visit, we had been in constant speculation about what had prompted the sudden recognition and alarm at our presence in the enclave and whether there was a connection between the strange rumour conveyed to the BSF and the sudden appearance of the security-official. Though we guessed that the BSF had made an official inquiry to the BDR about our presence and intentions, we had no way to verify this speculation.

As we sat, talking, the Commander asked how much more time we would be spending in Dahagram. I told him that we expected to be working there for many months to come. As we chatted, an officer approached and handed him a piece of piece. Glancing over it, he grunted, whispered instructions to the officer, and took a long sip of his tea. "Another inquiry from the BSF," he said, frowning. "So many inquiries. Every day they are sending them." He placed his cup of tea down, shook his head, and smiling said. "Come as often as you like. Keep us informed, and please let me know if you ever have any difficulties." Though the Commander was certainly a generous man, indeed, in the months to come, we came to know him quite well, I suspect that his accommodation of our presence there had as much to do with his ongoing relations with the BSF over sensitive ground as with his willingness to accommodate a foreign researcher. Sayer observes that moral regulation "works

through the way it forcibly organized and divides subjectivities and thereby produces and reproduces quite *material* forms of sociality" (1994: 374 ital. in original). Yet within performances of state power, particularly in sensitive spaces, such reproductions and divisionings also provide ample room for the additional navigation of personal animosities and minor political victories. Our presence certainly served as an irritant and a source of constant speculation to the BSF, an irritation that the Commander may have been willing to encourage as a small measure of satisfaction for the constant official inquiries from his opposite numbers. And with his casual encouragement and endorsement of our presence, we were further incorporated into the sensitive and uncertain terrain of the enclave.

Conclusion: Making Sensitive Space

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate the ways in which attending to the politics of sensitivity can help us to rethink the concept of "exception" and the way we understand spaces that are often described as "sensitive" such as border areas. Sensitive spaces are complex zones within which questions of sovereignty, belonging, and territory are contingent on the dynamics of ambiguity, various and often competing projects of regulation, and opportunistic and accidental overlaps of different claims to rule, authority, and power. Rather than emerging out of an organized and declarative decision taken at an executive level, such spaces are the product of these confused, ambiguous, and overlapping claims. Yet these spaces are also the outcome of assumptions, conditioned responses, and moral regulations about what kind of things are "sensitive" and how one must, consequently, react and behave towards them. As such, sensitive spaces are not "things" that, once marked, exist "out there." Rather, they emerge out of enactments of sensitivity by: state officials such as archivists, ministers, and civil servants who preserve the ill defined links between

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knowledge and security; citizens of the countries to which they belong (or are bounded by) who re-enforce assumptions about such spaces; security forces who partially and unevenly administer such zones in constant contention and complicity with others seeking to exercise various forms of power and rule; the residents of such spaces who carve out lives and livelihoods on often adverse and ambiguous grounds; and researchers who seek to produce "knowledge" about these contentious areas.

Yet, as I also have tried to show, performances of sensitivity have fluid boundaries and ambiguous ends. If sensitivity provides an organizing logic for restricting access, it also creates spaces within which a broad array of interests, goals, intents, hopes, and fears compete with each other and produce new configurations of ambiguity and power. Sensitivity is not an omnipresent, structured phenomenon. Rather, different and conflicting manifestations of sensitivity are not only historically and contextually determined but also individually negotiated and articulated. While being "sensitive" to the politics of sensitivity can provide clues to the ways such ambiguities emerge and strategies for reading sensitive spaces, it does not provide a uniform template for analysis. Indeed, the interpretation of what counts as "sensitive" is radically different, for example, for an elderly man whose borders are being eroded year-by-year than it is for an archivist protecting collections that may or may not hold contentious information. Attending to the politics of sensitivity, then, does not provide a way to rank or classify space as more or less sensitive. Rather it provides a way to think through the ambiguities, insecurities, and threats that are present at and complicit in producing such spaces. Thus, while sensitive spaces emerge out of complex and historically specific situations, attending to the politics of anxiety and uncertainty at the heart of such zones may help understand them in relation to each other.

I call sensitivity a process of state formation precisely because it provides vaguely defined, though tangible, articulations between specific people, places, and

things and broader, more nebulous concepts such as national survival and state security. This link conditions behaviour as it also produces spaces (Lefebvre 1991). Ambiguity permeates everything about Dahagram, from its internal political workings to its very status as a part of Bangladesh. The politics of sensitivity at play in the enclaves both constitute and are constituted by this ambiguity. The notion of "sensitive" areas regulates knowledge of and about Dahagram. At the same time, sensitivity complicates and facilitates the multiple overlapping of sovereignty and jurisdiction both within and linked to the enclave as a whole.

One of my informants once told me, "Dahagram folks are always in tension. They are concerned about what will happen next. Though maybe nothing will happen, in fact, but this sense of insecurity is really suffocating [*ae onishchoyota khubi dombondho lage*]." Indeed, this is the central point about sensitivity and sensitive spaces. They have a profoundly destabilizing effect on those who live within them. While sensitivity articulates with broader and often shifting cartographic anxieties, they produce zones within which lives and livelihoods are contingent on ambiguous, confused, and overlapping processes. These processes are discussed and analyzed, debated, interpreted, and subject to rumours and theorizations by both residents of such spaces and by state "security" officials who attempt to administer them. These theorizations themselves are often interpolated into the broader politics of sensitivity and, as such, become complicit in producing new configurations of power and regulation. When viewed in light of the ambiguity so integral to the production of sensitive spaces, such questionings of what will and will not happen are both unknowable and profoundly unsettling.

CHAPTER 2:

HISTORIES OF SENSITIVITY: THE PRODUCTION OF SENSITIVE SPACE[75]

How do spaces become marked as sensitive? What are the historically specific
conditions of the production of sensitive spaces? And how do sensitive spaces emerge
within broader debates over territory, nation, and state? These are not the questions
that are running through my head as I speak to Bhoktiar Ali, a retired member of the
Bangladesh Civil Service. Rather, I am imagining that I am about to find answers—
tangible explanations of the bizarre failures to resolve the question of the enclaves that
I have been trying to understand over the past several months. We are sitting in a
ramblingly large building in Dhaka, full of the offices of various civil service
functionaries. It is after closing time and what, I imagine, must be a chaotic building
during the day is relatively quiet. Even now, however, there are still people moving
briskly through its wide, poorly-lit halls. Sayeed and I have come here to meet Ali, a
friend of several friends, who, I have been told, was somehow intimately involved in
the administration of the enclaves. I have heard about Ali from several different
people in Dhaka, all of whom assure me that he will be able to help. I have been trying

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[75] A note on sources: this chapter draws from two different sets of data collected during my fieldwork.
First, it draws on newspaper and press coverage of the enclaves in both English and Bengali-language
papers. Translations from Bengali papers are by Xulhaz Mannan with assistance from me. Second, it
draws on records from the Home Political Office's Confidential Records, housed in the Bangladesh
National Archives in Dhaka. Following Van Schendel (2005), I have referenced these as "CR" followed
by their file number. Where applicable, I have included the specific document numbers and dates from
the archival files, though these rarely corresponded to an order or continuous sequence within the files
as they are now stored. I have also drawn extensively on two publically available documentary archives.
The first are the Appendices of Whyte's *Waiting for the Esquimo* (2002), which collects an abundance
of documents related to the enclaves. I have referred to these documents by Appendix number. The
second is Bhasin's two volume *India-Bangladesh Relations 1971-1994: Documents*, which collects a
vast number treaties, Parliamentary discussions, and speeches (including relevant documents from
before 1971). I have referred to these documents, where applicable, by both document number and page
number. Additionally, I draw on Whyte's enormously detailed history, which offers a comprehensive
study of the enclaves from the colonial to the postcolonial period. As will be apparent, though my
intentions in this chapter are different from his, I have found is carefully researched and methodical
study invaluable. Further, unless otherwise noted, the maps in this section are drawn from *Waiting for
the Esquimo* and are used by kind permission of their author.

to set up this meeting for several months and am imagining that this will be a critical step in my hunt for information about the *chhitmahals* and their problematic history. Upon arriving, we are shown into a modestly sized office that, we are told, the retired civil servant has borrowed for the meeting. We drink tea and biscuits as we patiently await his arrival. After a short time, he enters, a thin and spry man in his late 60s, carrying a single thin folder.

After greetings, another cup of tea, an explanation of my project, how I became interested the enclaves, and where I learned to speak Bengali (though the interview is conducted in English), we get down to business. Ali is vague about what capacity he served in, but he seems to have occupied several positions in both Rangpur and Lalmonirhat over the course of his career. He was, he assures me, involved over many long years in working to resolve the "problem" of the enclaves and bring some relief to their beleaguered residents. He had even written an article summarizing and making a case for resolving the enclave issue.[76] It seems that we have come to the right place.

Yet, as I begin to ask him for details about what he did and how and when he was involved, his opinions about why the problem of the enclave persists, and about the enclaves' history and status, he is maddeningly unclear. Almost every question I ask him prompts him to open the folder that he has brought with him, ponder its contents, close it, and offer an answer so broad and general that it might have come from one of the occasional newspaper reports that appear on the *chhits*. "The people who live there are in terrible condition." "India has not fulfilled its part of the 1974 treaty." More. My notebook, open in front of me, remains all but empty.

At several points in this conversation, I wonder if he is uncomfortable recounting long stories to a foreigner. I wonder if he has a cache of "sensitive"

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[76] I was unable to track this article down, though have no reason to doubt its existence.

information that he is trying to navigate. I wonder if the thin folder he has brought

with him and that he so often consults holds government information about the

enclaves that is absent from published accounts. Running out of new ways to ask the

same questions and not sure what else to do, I ask to see the folder. Ali refuses. We

continue in the same vein for several minutes—more questions with vague answers.

New questions (perhaps I am asking the wrong ones). I ask about the folder again.

Again, he deflects my request. We run out of questions to ask and begin to make our

departures. "*Ohnek koshto dilam* (We have given you much trouble)," I say and thank

him for his time. He invites me to call on him again if I have any additional questions

he can help with. As we stand, Sayeed says, "Sir, it would be a big help to us if we

could just quickly look at the folder you have brought with you." Ali takes a long and

steady glance at the folder in front of him, then, passes it across the table. I eagerly

pick it up. Inside are five type-written pages. They are a list of the enclaves, their

names, and their approximate size in acres. The list appears to be a reprint of a list that

appeared as a supplement to the 1961 census. This list is well known and is readily

available.[77] There is nothing more inside the folder.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

I am unable to ascribe a definitive explanation to what happened in this

interview. Numerous possible and plausible interpretations exist. Perhaps Ali's

involvement in the enclaves' history had been overstated, a boast that became more

tenuous as I asked more detailed questions. Perhaps Ali, like the archivist described in

the previous chapter, felt that he was protecting sensitive information from a prying

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[77] More specifically, this list came from an Appendix to the 1961 Census including a short piece on the enclaves by Banerjee (1966). As Whyte (2002) points out, this article was reprinted in a slightly abridged version (but including the enclave list) in a 1969 article appearing in *India Quarterly*.

foreigner with ambiguous intentions and credentials. Perhaps I had been unsuccessful in asking the right questions or establishing the right *bonhomie* to get the official to open up and share his story. Perhaps there were a combination of these and other reasons at work in his reticence. Yet what also seems plausible is the explanation that occurred to me in the long rickshaw ride home: that there was, in fact, a marked lack of information about the enclaves available—that Ali had been as involved as he claimed, and still had little access to information (and answers) about these troublesome spaces.

This interpretation is consistent with my arguments about sensitive space in the previous chapter. My suggestion is not that there is no information about such spaces available to particular government officials in particular positions and locales. My own experiences and encounters within the enclaves indicate that there is a constant, if uneven, production of information about these contentious zones. Rather, there may be no such thing as a comprehensive, data-rich vision of spaces such as Dahagram that can uniformly be accessed by various members of the state system. The enclaves, I would suggest, are singularly ambiguous and ill-defined spaces, unintelligible within standard models of bureaucratic administration and mis-understood as empirical spaces within which complicated formations of security are worked out through and in relation to suspect populations. Indeed, as I have argued in the previous chapter, such ambiguities are central to the condition of sensitive space and the anxious regulation of information within and relation to it.

Yet, the official's constant reference to the long list of tiny enclaves during our conversation also hinted at another problem of understanding these sensitive spaces. The bland list, marking out tiny and seemingly insignificant territories, did little to explain the tension, fear, and heated reactions that these marginal areas have inspired throughout their postcolonial history. Neither did it illustrate a logic that captures why

these spaces persist despite two treaties and numerous "good faith" agreements to absorb them into their bounding states. In short, when comparing the enclaves' tiny size to the tensions they have stimulated, the numbers did not add up.

In the previous chapter, I examined the tangible effects and affects of sensitivity on those who live within and those who seek to regulate the enclaves. In this chapter, I will address the historical production and specificity of the enclaves as sensitive space. I will argue that political and administrative responses to the "problem" of the enclaves cannot be easily reduced to rational analysis of intentions and outcomes. Rather, they are bound up in the cartographic anxieties specific to the postcolonial histories of India and Bangladesh which underpin much of the contemporary conflict over territory between the two (Krishna 1996). The outcomes of political debates in relation to the enclaves are about more than concrete information, diplomatic negotiation, or mutually agreeable outcomes. They are also about the way these spaces articulate with broader narratives and anxieties and the ways they are re-deployed in arguments that seek to define both the real and imagined contours of the nation-state. In relation to the enclaves, seeing like a state (Scott 1998) is thus to view these spaces with exceptionally poor vision—or at least through glasses with tinted lenses. The empirical reality of the enclaves as "concrete" space, populated by "real" people, is utterly overdetermined by the various ways that they are caught up in and shape debates and fears about territory and space.

With this in mind, I approach this chapter as an exploration of the historically specific, discursive construction of the enclaves as sensitive space. I will show that the production of sensitive space is, effectively, a process of making the enclaves loom disproportionately large in their intermittent incorporation into political and public discourse. I will outline a historical process through which the enclaves come to intermittently symbolize a range of broad struggles over space. This symbolic

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appropriation transforms the enclaves from small and comparatively insignificant zones to vectors and sites for a range of struggles, debates, and fears. Examining the enclaves' history as the *construction* of a problematic space, rather than as an *explanation* of one, sheds important light on the apparent intractability of issues linked to the enclaves—issues that staunchly resist realist explanations and logics.

The Values of Exchange

My encounter with Bhoktiar Ali is suggestive of ways that the empirical realities—the *chhits* as concrete spaces "on the ground"—appear somehow unknowable, as grey areas of official knowledge. This theme of "lack of evidence" runs through much of the political history of the *chhits*. Arguments about this "lack" stake out a particular set of claims about the enclaves themselves—claims that the details matter and that the problem of the *chhits* has a technocratic solution that is grounded in facts and figures about the enclaves' locations in space, their populations, and their sizes.

To provide another example, on December 23rd, 1960, in a speech before the *Rajya Sabha,*[78] West Bengal Member of Parliament (MP) Atindra Nath Bose made a formal complaint about the lack of information available to members about the provisions of the proposed 1958 Nehru-Noon Accords, the first major treaty attempting to resolve the enclave issue. The Accords, according to Bose, suffered from an order-of-operation problem. The proposal before the *Sabha* was one that asked them to first ratify the agreement and *only* then to demarcate and transfer the lands.[79]

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[78] The "Council of States," or the Upper House of the Indian Parliament
[79] The theme of "demarcation before agreement" has been a consistent theme in debates over enclave exchange. In particular, since the 1974 Indira-Mujib Pact (discussed below), the official stance of the Government of India is that full demarcation of the border must precede exchange. As such, disputes over the demarcation of several areas along the border itself, as opposed to failure to demarcate the enclaves, are positioned as preventing the exchange of the enclaves. See *The Daily Star,* 2006 (February 7), "Media Reports Misleading, Says Indian HC."

This meant that Parliamentary members could not adequately assess what was being gained and lost in the transfer.

> The two Bills [one to divide Berubari Union No. 12 in half and one to exchange the remaining enclaves] are like blank cheques which we are required to sign. . . . We are going to give our consent to giving away our territory without knowing exactly what amount of territory in what area we are giving. . . . There is not even a map of the area showing the territory along which the demarcation will follow. . . . Further, there is going to be an exchange of enclaves. What are these enclaves? We do not know how many enclaves are there in India and how many in Pakistan (quoted in Whyte 2002: 186-187).

Bose's consternation is, perhaps, understandable. As an MP being asked to pass judgment on the transfer of ambiguous territory, one might expect a desire for clarity on the general parameters of the exchange. Yet, it also presents a puzzle. Bose was not the only person to make this complaint in a Parliamentary debate over the enclaves. Such complaints and concerns have been part and parcel of such discussions since Partition. For those seeking to adjudicate decisions about the enclaves' future, there never seems to be enough information available.

Yet, why is it that these spaces persist as seeming administrative lacunae and what else is contained within arguments that reduce the enclaves to a problem of "lack of data?" The broad boundaries of most of the enclaves, Berubari being a notable exception discussed in more detail below, have never been disputed. Indeed, these boundaries were mapped in detail in a 1934 survey of the boundary between Cooch Behar and Rangpur.[80] Why were these maps and reports unavailable? What does the lack of availability signal? And, perhaps more to the point, why do such details matter?

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[80] This survey, which combined aerial and on-the-ground approaches to surveying, is detailed in Arthur Hartley's *Final Report of the Rangpur Survey and Settlement Operation, 1931-1938* (1940). The appendices of Hartley's report deal extensively with the surveying of *chhit* land. They detail the creation of pillars to visually mark the space of the enclaves, the process of mapping the enclaves, and, indeed, the very sheets within the broader survey on which the enclaves appear.

One way to account for this seeming anxiety over information would be to take it at face value. The discourse around maps in border regions in India is particularly "sensitive," and such maps are difficult to access, even for officials seeking to use them for administrative purposes.[81] As Axel argues, maps of border areas in postcolonial India "[demand] careful surveillance because, being contiguous with an international boundary, the periphery of the nation-state's territory may constitute a conjunction as well as a disjunction between interiority and exteriority" (2002: 254). For Axel, the fragmentary claims to community within South Asia problematize the image of a self-contained and bounded nation-state in official cartographic representation.[82] Echoing Krishna (1996), Axel suggests that broad fears and anxieties around territorial sovereignty are translated into concrete regulations of, among other things, maps—documents that may physically show the tenuousness of the post-Partition Boundaries and the fragility of claims to a singular Indian identity. Such concerns seem particularly cogent in the case of the *chhitmahols.* The possibility that borderlands might be *cartographically* exposed as spaces of ambiguity is, perhaps, nowhere more apparent than at the Cooch Behar border, where the scattering of the enclaves along the boundary creates a visual illusion of two states dissolving, or disintegrating, into each other (see Figure 9).[83]

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[81] The Survey of India designates India's border regions as falling within a "Restricted Zone," where the publication of maps at greater than a 1:1 million scale is not allowed. Maps published on an "acceptable" scale cannot depict a range of clarifying cartographic details such as contour lines, kilometer ticks, or spot heights. This restriction makes the publication of "accurate" maps effectively illegal. What is more, the publication of maps that "inaccurately" depict the boundaries of India is also illegal, and, according to the Survey of India, "tantamount to questioning [its] territorial sovereignty" (1987). This paradoxical situation effectively makes the possession or creation of maps of borders within India fraught with danger.

[82] Axel is particularly concerned with the formation of a transnational Punjabi identity that lays claim to a unified Sikh homeland transcending the India/Pakistan Partition boundary.

[83] Though the government of Bangladesh does not have any "official" policy that mirrors the Survey of India, the process of getting maps in Bangladesh can be equally complicated and fraught with both frustrations and difficulties. As my experience recounted in the previous chapter suggests, local government officials have as little access to "official" maps, at least in Dahagram, as those they spatially govern. In various different administrative offices in Patgram, I saw numerous maps that depicted the exact locations of the enclaves. These may have been based on Survey of Bangladesh
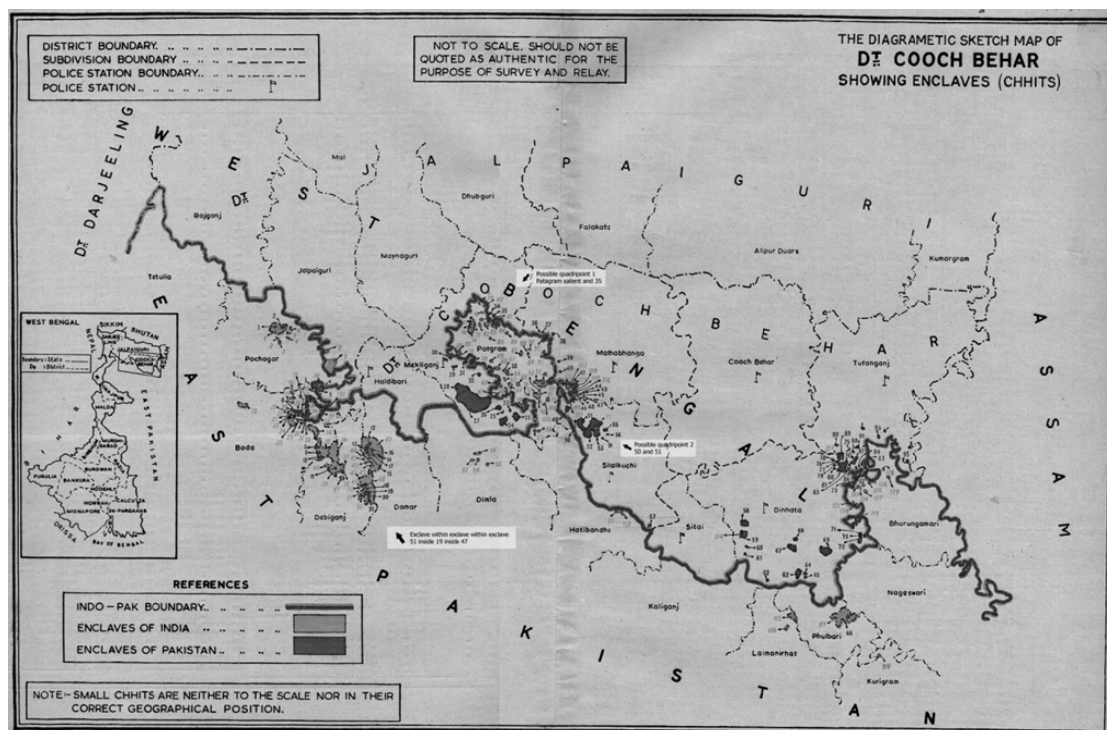
Figure 9: Map of the Rangpur/Cooch Behar Border from the East Pakistan Period[84]

Yet, the absence of maps and other detailed information about the enclaves from debates over their future cannot be fully explained through the optic of regulation. The enclaves, as their intermittent history suggests, are spaces that remain ambiguous despite regular inquiries into their size, shape, and number. The discourse around measuring and quantifying the enclaves, whether such information is available or not, misleadingly frames the question of enclave exchange as one that is fundamentally concerned with equitable trades of space. Such concern is reflected through the frequent reference to the exact size and differential amounts of territory occupied by the enclaves. Indeed, stories regularly appear in newspaper articles on the

maps, though I never saw an official, government issued map while conducting my research except for cadastral map briefly shown to me by the Survey Team member (See Chapter 1).

[84] Map source: Strange Maps Blog: http://bigthink.com/ideas/21160. Original source unknown, though it is interesting to note that this map, which is readily available online, often makes appearances in writing about the enclaves, even those produced by government officials, C.f. Jamwal (2004).

enclaves that analyze the politics of exchange in terms of difference in square kilometers that will be gained by Bangladesh in an enclave trade with India.[85] While it is accurate that there would be small net territorial gain to Bangladesh in such an exchange, one might be surprised that such a small amount of land might cause such a disproportionately large amount of concern, alarm, and debate.

My suggestion here is not that such claims be discounted. Indeed, throughout the enclaves' colonial and postcolonial histories there has indeed been a marked tension over their mapping and demarcation—even as there has been no dispute over their existence or ownership *per se*. Rather, I argue that we should read discussions over the enclaves as empirical, ontological spaces against their discursive production as sensitive spaces—that we examine and take seriously the tension between the enclaves as small, out-of-the-way spaces occupied by marginal populations and the enclaves as symbols of danger, security, and belonging along the India-Bangladesh border. In this debate, one might say that the enclaves, as such, are subsumed by their "exchange" value—as symbolics of state control and national territory. That is to say that the empirics of the enclaves, discussions over their territorial definition, the availability of information about them, and the practicalities of their administration are bound up within and inextricable from anxieties about space, tensions over the meanings of citizen and subject in the wake of Partition, and their political utility in nationalist, communal arguments about the border. Though I am not arguing here that we understand the enclaves and their histories narrowly through the lens of Marx's commodity form (1992 [1867]), these spaces do emerge as particular kinds of territorial fetishes. Like the table described in the opening paragraph of "The

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[85] Though these numbers are frequently precise down to fractions of an acre, they often disagree with each other about the total amount of space involved in such a trade. See *Ittefaq,* 1998 (March 19), "*162 ti Chhitmahaler Binimoi 24 Bochereo Hoy Nai* [Exchange of 162 Enclaves Was not Implemented in 24 Years];" and *Shangbad,* 1974 (May 17), *Chhitmahal Vagavagi: Bangladesh Bharater 49 Barga-mile Peyechey: Bharat Peyechey Bangladesher 18 Barga-mile* [Chhitmahol Exchange: Bangladesh Gets 49 sq. Miles of India: India Gets 18 sq. Miles of Bangladesh]."

Fetishism of Commodities," the enclaves may "stand on their feet"—as tiny spaces peopled by a handful of residents with real and urgent concerns about movement, lives, rights, and livelihoods—but in relation to these broader problematics, they also "stand on their head" and evolve out of their spatial brain grotesque ideas about the nationalist and communal politics of space.

The process whereby this transformation happens is one that is historical. In other words, the enclaves were not conceived out of cartographic anxieties, nor did they come to embody them at the moment of the Partition of Bengal when their territorial location placed them on the wrong side of a new and contentious border. Rather, the enclaves emerged over time as sensitive spaces. Their history is one that speaks of their transformation from one of a range of administrative complications to be worked out in the Colonial and post-Partition moments to seemingly intractable "problems" that signify competing and conflicting visions of space. In what follows, I will map this discursive process through an exploration of the enclaves' public histories. This discussion will move rapidly through the colonial period and Partition to explore debates over the 1958 Nehru-Noon Accords, the 1974 Indira-Mujib Pact, and the 1992 opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor. I will conclude by exploring the ways that the enclaves, and the sensitivities that they have come to symbolize, are re-deployed in ongoing concerns and negotiations over the securitization and maintenance of the India-Bangladesh border.

Colonial Confusions

The pre-Partition history of the enclaves displays, if not the fraught sensitivity of the contemporary moment, at least significant administrative confusion. Indeed, even origins of the enclaves are somewhat confused and disputed. As Banerjee (1966) argues, they were largely left out of early accounts of the area by colonial historians

and Gazette collectors such as Buchanan and Hamilton, due to both their small, seemingly insignificant size and their complicated and hazy origins. However, there is a general consensus that the enclaves emerged out of the expansion of the Mughal kingdom in Dacca northward into the Kutch kingdom (present day Cooch Behar). Whyte (2002), synthesizing arguments found in various census and gazette accounts collected in Vas (1911), Mitra (1953), Banerjee (1966), and Majumdar (1977), argues that these spaces first assumed administrative shape out of a 1713 treaty between the Mughals and Rup Narayan, the Maharaja of Cooch Behar granting the *chaklas* [administrative districts] of Boda, Patgram, and Purvabhag to Mughal dominion. Mughal rulers were unable, or unwilling,[86] to dislodge a number of powerful local landlords and estate holders. These lands remained under the dominion of Cooch Behar. Similarly, Mughal soldiers had occupied land inside of Cooch Behar, which became, effectively part of the Mughal Empire. The 1713 Treaty thus laid the groundwork for a system of detached fealties, offering tax and tribute not to a proximate political ruler, but rather to a more geographically distinct (and religiously marked) one. As Van Schendel (2002) observes, such arrangements were neither unique to this particular boundary nor to the region. Rather, they were reflective of systems of political administration where "sovereignty was expressed not so much in terms of territorial contiguity as in terms of jurisdiction and tax flows" (2002: 119).

Such forms of sovereign power did not necessarily overlay with modes of spatial control associated with colonial rule, which saw territorial rationalization, mapping, and administrative divisioning as central to monitoring, accounting, and

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[86] Banerjee points out that the large presence of Mughal soldiers settling in the area led to peasant unrest. In such a volatile setting, the presence of Hindu landlords may have been seen as palliative. As Richard Eaton details (1993), the Mughal conquest along the Northern frontier from the 17th century on was much more prone to resistance and rebellion than, for example, along its Western frontier. According to Eaton, "In Kuch Behar and Kamrup a monetized economy replaced a non-monetized one; a distant governor replaced a local king; and an armed militia paid from a general tax levied on the whole peasantry replaced a corvée militia paid by a system of customary service to a king. These disruptions explain the widespread and popular resistance to the imposition of Mughal authority" (191).

revenue (Bayly 1999; Edney 1997). When a British expedition invaded and conquered

Cooch Behar in 1772, the territory was incorporated into the province of Bengal as a

Princely Kingdom, providing nominal control of the region to the Maharaja of Cooch

Behar. This created an administrative boundary between Cooch Behar and directly

administered districts of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, and Assam, all organized under the

Bengal Presidency.[87] All of these districts held various *chhits* belonging to Cooch

Behar and vice versa. This odd geographic dispersal complicated processes of excise

and taxation, leading to periodic frustrations throughout the Colonial period. Much of

this frustration was framed as a failure of indigenous land-tenure systems to fit into

rational models of colonial governance as expressed, for example, through the

Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793.[88] For example, as W.W. Hunter observed in

his famous *Statistical Account of Bengal:*

> The fact that, although the Mughals forced the cession, they never wrested the
> *chaklas* out of the hands of the Kuch Behar Raja accounts for the irregular
> nature of the boundary which exists between them and Kuch Behar Proper. A
> long narrow strip of Kuch Behar territory extends from the north of Patgram,
> crossing the present Tista, and divides Kazirhat from Boda. This would no
> doubt have been included in the ceded tract if the boundary had ever been
> regularly laid down. In Patgram the very fields are intermixed, one forming
> part of the *chakla,* and the next belonging to Kuch Behar territory, to the great
> confusion of the administration (Hunter 1877: 317).

The enclaves' peculiar territorial configuration—discontinuous landholdings that fell

across an important administrative divide—made them sticking points in projects of

rationalizing a territorial model of sovereignty onto a space with land tenure

arrangements and histories of a different kind.

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[87] For more on the politics of colonial sovereignty in relation to Princely States, and particularly on the links between Princely sovereignty and anti-colonial nationalism, see Bhagavan (2003).

[88] The Permanent Settlement was a system put in place to structure revenue collection and production. For the classic study exploring the settlement's impact on land tenure, agriculture, and colonial and anti-colonial politics, see Guha (1996 [1981]).

Hunter's description gives the impression that the administrative boundaries of these spaces were unknown or poorly marked. This may have been true, in part, though as Whyte (2002) points out, a number of the larger enclaves appeared in J.J. Pemberton's 1856 map of Rangpur and again in his 1859 survey of Cooch Behar, the earliest colonial maps of these districts.[89] Further, the enclaves appeared on the *thakbust* maps of the area, non-official maps that did not constitute legal evidence of ownership or boundary demarcation but that were, none-the-less, regularly used by the Colonial administration in areas that had not been formally surveyed (Syed and Woodroffe 1907). These maps suggest that the boundaries of the enclaves were ascertainable, at the very least, at a local level. Yet, the existence of the map did little to clear up administrative confusion over the *chhits* or, even, to stem questions about whether they truly existed as recognized parts of the border.

For example, in a series of letters exchanged in 1911 between the provincial governors of East Bengal and Assam and Cooch Behar, the reality of the enclaves themselves were called into question. The Eastern Bengal Department of Revenue submitted a query asking for explanation of records from Cooch Behar showing revenue collection in *chhits* situated in Rangpur. The letter further demanded documentation that such *chhits* existed and were under the jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. In a somewhat heated response, the Superintendent of Cooch Behar State, a colonial officer dispatched to aid in the administration of the district, wrote:

> I have the honour to state that these "chits" have formed part and parcel of the Cooch Behar State from time immemorial representing as they do those portions of the old kingdom of Cooch Behar which were not taken possession of by the Moghuls, just as certain British "chits" in the Cooch Behar State were formerly outlying portions of the Moghul Empire. . . .[90] But if paragraph 2 of the above letter be construed to be an assertion of a claim by Eastern Bengal

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[89] James Rennel's famous 1779 *Atlas of Bengal* does depict the area, though not at a large enough scale to include any details of boundaries in the region.

[90] It is worth noting, here, that "time immemorial" is shorthand for "prior to colonial rule," the moment when, in colonial views of liberal governance, India began to acquire history (Mehta 1999).

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and Assam Government to the "chits" in question, which are shown in the Government revenue survey and thakbust maps as belonging to the Cooch Behar State, then the Cooch Behar Durbar, having been in possession of these "chits" for centuries, do not feel called on to state in greater detail the grounds on which they base their claims to these "chits" as they are of the opinion that such onus should be thrown on to the claimants to the "chits" and not on the party which is admittedly in possession thereof (Whyte 2002: Appendix 1-12, pp 257-258).

If the existence of the *chhits* was a source of administrative confusion in the late Colonial period, it also appears that they also may have been sensitive spots of sorts, calling up questions of ownership and eliciting somewhat sharp responses between colonial officials and others with claims to sovereign territorial control.[91]

If the enclaves themselves were sources of confusion for colonial administrators, the question of exchanging them to rationalize the colonial border proved equally vexing. The most concrete move to change the configurations of sovereignty across the Princely frontier appears to have come in 1917 in response to questions of smuggling. The presence of the enclaves on either side of the border facilitated the rapid expansion of licensed shops selling a range of dutiable goods in the border region. These goods were subsequently smuggled across the border to avoid excise taxes and tariffs.[92] The concern over the illicit movement of goods across the Cooch Behar border prompted the Bengal government to normalize the economic space by declaring the enclaves as de facto economic zones *within* their bounding states (Whyte 2002). In other words, while the enclaves were to technically remain parts of their "home" territories, for purposes of taxation and excise they would be considered part of their bounding administrative spaces. Under this arrangement, a ban

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[91] Part of such sensitivity may have been due to disparities in revenue collection, as the query from Eastern Bengal and Assam seems to suggest ignorance of colonial land holdings inside of the Princely State. If so, the Cooch Behar Darbar may have been enjoying revenue from both enclaves within and outside of its borders.

[92] Though the enclave presence may have made such movement easier, little comparative evidence exists to suggest whether enclaves facilitated an increase in such smuggling or merely provided convenient outposts for smugglers and advantageous locations for licensed shops.

was placed on opening new shops within three miles of the border and shops situated in Cooch Behar *chhits* in Bengal paid Bengal excise tax and vice versa. In addition, the Bengal state agreed to pay a compensation to Cooch Behar to account for comparative loss of revenue, as the Cooch Behar *chhits* in Rangpur were larger in terms of number, area, and population.

The equation of the enclaves with smuggling was to become a theme of administrative debates in the postcolonial era as well. The enclaves' peculiar geographic situation almost certainly has made and continues to make them sites within which certain kinds of criminal activities take place. In a sense, any economic activity that bridges the enclaves' borders could be constituted as "smuggling." Moreover, their conception as territories at once inside and outside of the bounds of regulatory control also make them potent spaces for the imagination of crimes committed by colonial subjects, such as smuggling, that are predicated on territorial transgression. It is interesting to note that, despite such concerns, real or imagined, the colonial administration was only able to effect a political economic reconfiguration of enclave territory, rather than a wholesale territorial exchange.

Indeed, such exchanges, which were proposed and abandoned at several points during the late colonial period, appear to have been contentious. *The Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Jalpaiguri District, 1906-1916* (Milligan 1919), makes reference to several proposals to exchange the enclaves in order to create territorially contiguous and easily administrable districts, however no concrete moves to implement these proposals were recorded. Again, during the 1932 Survey of the Rangpur/Cooch Behar Border, the Director of Land Records and Surveys for Bengal made a proposal to the central government that the Survey presented an opportunity to value the land in the *chhits* and make a full exchange, paying compensation to Cooch Behar for any difference in land price. "If this exchange can

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be effected, each of the districts and State concerned will have a compact area and from the administrative point of view it would be a great advantage to both the State and to this Government" (Hartley 1940: Part III, Appendix III, p. 140). Hartley's *Final Report of the Rangpur Servey and Settlement Operations 1931-1938* contains no further account of the discussion around this proposal. However, it does contain a letter dated two years later from the Revenue department stating that, "in view of the strong local objections to the proposed exchange Government have decided to abandon the proposal" (Part III, Appendix III, p. 141).

The difficulties of exchanging the enclaves were greater than the value of such an exchange from the perspective of either administration or revenue. Whether this is because the local tensions over exchange were truly intractable, or whether they simply posed more problems than the rationalization of these small spaces were "worth" is unclear. The *chhits* do seem to have been spaces that were sensitive, to the extent that there was resistance over their incorporation into colonial visions of space. However, their position across an administrative boundary does not appear to have marked them with the same kinds of tensions that they came to embody following Partition. Yet, importantly, several themes that emerge in the colonial discussion of the *chhits*—particularly the questions of smuggling and "local resistance"—would re-emerge as central problematics in the postcolonial discussion of the enclaves' fate.

Partitioned Spaces

The colonial administration of the enclaves hints at ways in which these spaces may have been points of tension between colonial and more localized visions of territory, sovereignty, and space. However, the contemporary transformation of the enclaves into sensitive spaces—their move from administrative complications to problems embodying a range of broader anxieties—began with Partition in 1947.

Partition heralded the end of Colonial rule in India and also a resolution of the contentious and communal politics of the anti-colonial movement by dividing Punjub in the West and Bengal in the East into the new states of India and Pakistan. This division precipitated a massive, violent, and traumatic displacement across these new national borders. The ensuing social and political reconfiguration, as well as the memories and politics of this division, continues to reverberate differently in contemporary politics. While the broad outlines of the history of Partition in the East are well known, the processes of thinking through the Bengal Partition's unfinished history is still an emerging project. Feldman notes that in the vast outpouring of writing on Partition since the mid-1980s, the experience of Partition in Bengal has been notably silent, "leading one to assume either that Partition is insignificant for East Bengal or that the East Bengal experience is insignificant for understanding Partition in India and Pakistan" (1999: 180). Restoring historical and spatial specificity to the narrative of Partition, Feldman suggests, helps to complicate grand narratives and highlights the contradictions embodied in both the moment of Partition, its experiences, and its aftermaths.[93]

In a turn of phrase that is particularly useful in thinking about the poscolonial histories of the enclaves, Zamindar (2007) has recently framed such explorations as studies of the "Long Partition:" engagements with the way the displacements of Partition were central to, as opposed to simply preceding, the emergence and ongoing formation of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.[94] The enclaves' emergence in the post-

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[93] In the past decade, the experience of Partition in the East has begun to be reinterpreted and rewritten back into broader narratives of Partition in some of the ways that Feldman suggests. For example, on the politics leading up to Partition, see Chatterji (1995) and Roy (2009), on the politics and experiences during and immediately after Partition, with particular reference to the border, see Chatterji (1999), Van Schendel (2001b; 2005), Rahaman and Van Schendel (2003), and on the aftermaths of Partition in Bengal and the massive displacement and social reconfiguration it engendered, see Chatterji (2007), Feldman (2003), Samaddar (1997), and Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal (2007).

[94] Zamindar is, of course, far from alone in making this observation. As Chatterji notes, "partition was a messy, long-drawn-out process. It was in no sense finally or tidily concluded in August 1947; indeed,

Partition moment as, at once, seemingly problematic artifacts of the sundering of Bengal into East and West and, on the other, as sites of tension in and around which the communal politics of territory making become amplified in particular ways, is suggestive of the ways in which Partition is productively reconsidered as a "contestatory process of state formation" (Feldman 1999: 168).

The boundary between West Bengal and East Pakistan was formally laid out by the Radcliffe Award on August 17, 1947. The Award nominally divided Bengal by contiguous majority population mapped out at the subdivision, *thana,* or *mouza* level,[95] such that contiguous Muslim majority areas would be awarded to East Pakistan and contiguous Hindu majority areas to India. The Award itself was not based on survey work or on-sight observations and was worked out as much in relation to the dueling proposals of Congress, the Muslim League, and various other political parties as it was based an independent evaluation of the division of space (Chatterji 1999).[96] Indeed, even in its moment of conception, the new border appeared to substitute a political vision of space for an empirical one assessed, as it were, "on the ground."

The emergent border produced as much ambiguity as it did clarity about the boundaries of the two new states. As Van Schendel argues, "the Bengal Boundary Commission's Brief was to partition the territory on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority areas, and population figures were available only for districts and other administrative units (subdivisions, *thanas*, *mouzas*) whose shapes owed much to precolonial demarcations. Not surprising, the Commission opted to follow the

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one could argue that the process had just begun, and that it is still unfinished today" (Chatterji 1999: 186).

[95] *Thana* translates as Police Station. Used as an administrative unit, it means the area under the jurisdiction of a given police station. Patgram *Thana* is thus the area under administration of the central police station in Patgram town. *Mouza* is a revenue unit corresponding to a specific land area containing one or more settlements.

[96] Despite a significant amount of political lobbying and competing plans, the final Radcliffe line most closely resembled the Congress Party's proposal for Partition. See also, Chatterji (2007).

boundaries of these units wherever they could" (2002: 120). The zigzag border that emerged was approximately 4100 kms in length (not including the border with Myanmar or coastal areas).[97]

The twist and turns of the border proved particularly complicated to negotiate both for those seeking to regulate them and those living within them. As Van Schendel (2005) argues, very little of the border actually separated majority Muslim and Hindu districts and, in practice, the border more frequently ran through areas where there was a majority of the same religious group on both sides. Further, there were numerous spaces where the nominal designation of a village in one country or the other was questionable at best. There were numerous pockets of territory that were connected to their home state by only narrow strips of land that could be easily controlled and blocked by police and border officials from their surrounding states. Some of these spaces, effectively became incorporated into their bounding state in "adverse possession."[98] Further, "the clear lines that appeared on the maps used by colonial officials, including the Bengal Boundary (or Radcliffe) Committee, did not correspond with anything visible 'out there.' There was no way unequivocally to recognize the new border on the ground" (55-56). In practice, the border was worked out and established through lengthy and often contentious legal and political negotiations between India and Pakistan, negotiations that, in several areas, remain unfinished.[99] To adjudicate several of these disputes, an international committee—known as the Bagge

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[97] Not all of the border was based on administrative subdivisions. Areas of the border mapped out based on geographical landmarks proved equally problematic. The rivers that made up portions of the new border were much less stable and fixed in place than they may have looked from the survey maps. The physical location of these rivers frequently moved with the fluctuation of seasons in the alluvial delta regions of Bengal. Further, siltation island known as *chars*, regularly emerge and sometimes disappear in rivers throughout Bengal. When such islands emerged in the midst of rivers that made up the new border, disputes arose over their ownership and who was entitled to their fertile land (Chatterji 1999; Van Schendel 2005). Indeed, two such disputes, over New Moore Island and Mahuri Char became closely tied to the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor (see below).

[98] Technically defined as a territory of one state occupied and controlled by another.

[99] Conflicts over the location of the boundary in three sectors along the India-Bangladesh border mean that there remains several kilometers of officially undemarcated border area (Jamwal 2004).

Tribunal after the Swedish judge who presided over it—was set up in 1949. Yet, despite these interventions, the post-Partition period was characterized by literally hundreds of local "testings" and negotiations of the new, confused, and far from concrete boundary.[100] Many of the ambiguities resulting from this process, including the enclaves themselves, continue to plague border residents and are the source of ongoing conflicts.

A number of the *chhits* fell on either side of the new border.[101] Residents of these enclaves now were nominal citizens of a state other than the one in which, for all intents and purposes, they resided. From a legal standpoint, this meant that enclave residents effectively violated the border every time they went to market, leaving them vulnerable to arrest and persecution whenever they left their home territories. Further complicating this issue were the claims that India and Pakistan made for the protection of members of their majority religion beyond their territorial boundaries. This doctrine of "proxy citizenship" (Van Schendel 2002) meant that Muslims residing in India were technically under the protection of the Pakistani State and vice versa.[102] Indeed, much of the back and forth in the 1940s and 1950s between the Home Political Offices of the two states—the departments charged with overseeing a range of issues related to Partition including disputes over the new border—involved advocacy for and attempts to address various forms of abuse towards minority communities in the other

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[100] Many of these incidents are cataloged in the Confidential Home Political Records (hereafter CR) from the period housed in the National Archives in Dhaka. For studies that detail this process of making the border, see Chatterji (1999) and Van Schendel (2005).

[101] A number of other enclaves remained across the Cooch Behar/Jalpaiguri border. As both of these districts were now sub-districts of West Bengal, this posed little difficulty for residents. The Cooch Behar *chhits* in Jalpaiguri were formally transferred to Jalpaiguri in two waves, in 1952 and again in 1955. The Jalpaiguri *chhits* were formally transferred to Cooch Behar in 1960, effectively eliminating internal enclaves from the greater territory of Bengal (Whyte 2002).

[102] This informal policy was solidified by the Nehru-Laiquat Agreement in 1950 which provided an official rubric for the protection of minority communities in each state and provided a platform for the pressuring the other state to protect and uphold their rights. See Bhasin (1996: No. 656).

country.[103] This arrangement meant that enclave residents sharing religious identity with the majority religion in their bounding state were both *de jure* citizens of their "home state" and *de facto* citizens of their bounding ones. This allowed them to make claims not just on government officials from both states, but often on residents of adjacent communities with shared religious affiliation. In the years before the Liberation War, Hindu residents of Dahagram were able to move freely into and out of the Hindu majority *thana* of Mekhliganj, go to market without fear of persecution, and more easily achieve positions of power within the enclave itself.[104]

If life within the enclave was *legally* complicated in the period immediately following Partition, in practice it may have been similar to life in other areas along the confused border. Movement across the border was largely, at least before passport and visa regulations were established in 1955, unregulated and people regularly moved across the new boundary which had bifurcated families, villages, land holdings, and even households (Chatterji 1999; Rahman and Van Schendel 2003). Violence often erupted out of this quotidian movement, particularly during harvest periods when valuable crops were easily carried off for sale elsewhere. The presence of the border meant that disputes over livestock and crops often took on an international character, where police, border officials, and administrators became embroiled in adjudicating claims and counter-claims. In this context, the kinds of disturbances reported in enclave areas were often not dissimilar to those in other areas.

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[103] This included everything from the publication of communal propaganda to physical violence against minority communities.

[104] This was particularly so in Dahagram because of the enclave's peculiarly sensitive role in the relationship between India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh (see below and Chapter 3). It should be noted that proxy citizenship did not necessarily guarantee social protection for enclave residents. Many Muslim residents of Indian enclaves in Bangladesh shared stories of expropriation by their Muslim neighbors during the East Pakistan period. Effectively, whether or not one shared religious affiliation with those in surrounding communities, residing in an enclave where it was difficult to call on police or other branches of "one's own" state system placed residents in positions of increased vulnerability.

Yet, the administrative ambiguity around these spaces marked them, and their residents, as particularly vulnerable and problematic within this broader pattern of negotiating the border. As the two countries began a formal process of demarcating the border in the late 1940s and early 1950s, there were discussions at both local and central levels of simply leaving the *chhits* out of the demarcation process, as it could not be decided how best to handle them.[105] Such discussions officially, marked the *chhits* as administrative grey zones, areas that by necessity had to be treated as "different." Regular questions of ownership arose in relation to land within them, particularly in cases where old residents had fled the land in the confusion of Partition and the enclaves had been re-occupied by residents of the majority community.[106] The enclaves featured prominently in a number of disputes over cross-border raids on livestock and crops, forcible subscriptions and extortions by police and other officials from surrounding areas, and the spreading of threatening communal propaganda.[107] Though similar events are recorded elsewhere along the border, the territorial position of the *chhits* made committing such acts relatively easy, as perpetrators could quickly escape into their home state and rapid response by authorities was unlikely. Most problematically, the easy access to the enclaves resulted in several cases in the early and mid-1950s in which the enclaves were invaded and over-run by residents of surrounding areas, resulting in wholesale displacement of enclave residents to surrounding areas or across the border.[108]

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[105] See CR 3C2-2/52-36 (Decisions Taken at the 26th Chief Secretaries' Conference Held at Shilong from 6th November to 8th November, 1952).

[106] See CR 1B2-9/51-34 (Memo No. 154, February 16, 1953).

[107] See CR 1B4-16/51 (Proceedings 2342-2348, January 1955).

[108] In once instance, recounted by Van Schendel (Van Schendel 2002), Muslim residents of the Pakistani enclave of Dhabalshuti were intimidated out of their homes: "One day [in 1955] they found a poster on a tree just outside their enclave that made them realize that it was now almost suicidal to enter Indian territory. 'Muslims! The day has come to sell your blood to the Hindus. Hindus! Get your money ready.' A month later, a group of armed Hindu volunteers from India entered the enclave, sat down in the house of a Muslim villager, called his neighbors, and told them that the enclave had been taken over by India" (131).

Through the 1950s, as a range of both small and lager conflicts continued to plague the border, and as tensions between India and Pakistan over the question of Kashmir made diplomatic relations between the two states increasingly frosty, administrators scrambled to develop strategies for managing the *chhits.* In 1950, the two countries established a formal protocol for allowing police and other administrative officials to legally travel across the border and enter "their" enclaves.[109] This allowed for the administrative completion of a range of tasks, from collecting revenue to adjudicating local disputes. As Van Schendel (2002) notes, while these arrangements facilitated the visits of officials for such tasks as the collection of revenue, it did little to ameliorate the difficulties of movement for residents themselves or to address their need for access to services and protections. The process for arranging the complicated passage across another state's sovereign territory was time consuming and officials were rarely able to respond to crises within the *chhits* in a timely fashion. Moreover, the ability of officials to move into and out of the enclaves did as much to accentuate the exceptional status of these spaces as it did to resolve them. The actions of officials while in enclaves occasionally seemed to reaffirm views of the enclaves as problematic spaces. For example, in 1954, a complaint was filed by the Deputy Secretary of the Home Political Office against several members of a Pakistani police force situated in Dahagram,[110] claiming that they had kidnapped two Hindu women from Mekhliganj and held them prisoner in Dahagram until the women were able to escape several hours later.[111]

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[109] CR 3C2-5/50 (Decision Taken at the at the 17th Chief Secretary's Conference held at Dacca, 29th and 30th August 1950) and CR 3C-61/49 (Memo No. 250, Government West Bengal Home Political Office, 24th March, 1949).

[110] As far as I have been able to ascertain, Dahagram was the only enclave that had a separate police force within it. This police force remained at least until the Dahagram War in 1965 (see Chapter 3).

[111] The District Magistrate of Rangpur countered that these accusations were baseless and that the women were the daughters of a prominent Hindu resident of Dahagram. According to the Magistrate, the women were simply visiting their father's household. See CR 1B2-24/54 (Memo No. 189 CR-1b-87/53, Government of West Bengal Home Political Section, January 19th, 1954).

It appears that the process facilitating administrative visits to the enclaves was largely abandoned by 1955, when a formal passport system was established between the two countries. The passport agreement made formal acknowledgement of the complications of life inside of the enclaves, allowing for the issuance of special visas that would allow unlimited journeys in transit along "one or more specified routes between the enclave and the mainland of the country to which the enclave belongs" (Whyte 2002: Appendix 1-22, p. 323). It further stipulated that holders of these special visas would not be obliged to travel through official border crossings.[112] This visa system, on paper, resolved many of the complications of living in the enclaves. In practice, however, it was short-lived. As tensions continued to increase between the two countries, travel even with a visa become more and more risky for residents. By the time the controversy over the Nehru-Noon Accords erupted three years later, the visa allowance for *chhit* residents appears to have been all but abandoned.

The 1950s might be thought of as a period during which the administrative claims to including the enclaves in their home state—the practical negotiations over the *chitts'* quotidian management—were gradually removed and replaced with more broad debates about what the status of the enclaves and their residents *should* be. As such, the practicalities of regulating movement and allowing officials to visit the enclaves were replaced by broader and much less tractable discussions about exchange (see below). Even attempts to collect revenue from these troublesome areas seem to have ceased by the mid-1950s (Van Schendel 2002). Concomitant with various strategies of formalizing the border, this period marks the transition of the enclaves from one of a range of issues related to the new border in need of "working out," to special cases to be dealt with at a higher administrative level.

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[112] As both Whyte (2002) and Van Schendel (2002) note, the agreement made no comment on how enclave residents were supposed to make the journey to apply for and receive these visas.

This breakdown itself made the enclaves into sensitive issues—special cases among the range of problems of administratively controlling the border. Yet, this emergence was not purely linked to administrative breakdown. Indeed, through particular incidents in the post-Partition moment one can glimpse the ongoing linking of the enclaves to a range of emergent fears over the tenuous border. Most notably, the *chhits* came to be further identified with and symbolic of smuggling along the border. For example, in 1951, the Deputy Secretary of the Government of West Bengal sent an urgent complaint to his counterpart regarding a reported sanctioned blockade of the enclaves.

> This Government have received further reports that the East Bengal authorities have announced by beat of drums at the border *hats* [markets] at Ambari, Mirzapur, etc. that people living in Cooch Behar enclaves surrounded by Pakistan territory will not be allowed to buy and sell articles in the *hats* located in Pakistan and if any of them are found marketing in those *hats*, they will be arrested and suitable action taken against them. It is also reported that the bi-weekly *hat* in the vicinity of the Akhuara Customs Checking Station, within a mile from the border, could not sit on the 16th June, 1951, due to the cordon made by the local *ansars* [members of the East Pakistan police]. . . . If the reports be correct, there appears to have been a move for the economic blockade of Cooch Behar enclaves surrounded by Pakistan territory (CR 1B2-35/51 [5563-CR, June 7th, 1951]).

A blockade of even the largest enclaves essentially placed a strangle-hold on residents. The enclaves were in no way self-sufficient or self-contained and the survival and economic livelihood of their residents relied on constant interaction with their surrounding areas. The double threat—first of arrest within local markets and then of the physical removal of those markets—posed serious challenges to the negotiation of the awkward territory of the enclaves themselves. It essentially mandated that residents would need to make the dangerous crossing into West Bengal to go to market—a movement itself fraught with danger, particularly when laden with goods.

In a curt reply, the East Pakistani Deputy Secretary sarcastically observed that it was "really strange that the West Bengal Govt. should start taking interests even in the internal administration of the district." He went on to argue that the economic actions had been taken to stem rampant smuggling, appending a report from his travels in the area in which he recommended the closing of *haats*:

> During my tour [of the area] I found that big *Hats* are being held right on the border which cater mostly to the requirements of the Indians. This is a very dangerous aid to smuggling because it leads to an outward flow of all commodities. This should be controlled and stopped as early as possible. I will like you to examine the shifting of all such *Hats* to places at least 5 miles away from the border. I also found a number of traders very close to the border storing jute and paddy with the sanction of Government Officers. This amounts to an active connivance at smuggling. No person should be allowed to store more than his personal requirements if his house is situated within 5 miles of the border. (CR 1B2-35/51 [16 June, 1951, Memo No. 1054 c.])

There are several implicit implications of such a response. First, markets in border areas are seen as primarily intended for enclave residents—suspect subjects of another state—and not for citizens of East Pakistan residing in the border region, who presumably could make the five-mile journey inland. From this perspective, all economic activity in the border area is linked to smuggling with the *chhits* as spaces that facilitate illegal trade. The suggestion appears to be not only that the purchase of and movement across the border of goods is a primary goal of markets in the borderland, but also that the transportation of goods *into* Indian enclaves in East Pakistan itself constitutes smuggling. The question of administering and dealing with these territorially problematic spaces is thus reframed purely around curtailing the activities of criminals. This is reinforced by the leap from a ban on shopkeepers stockpiling goods to a general ban on all stockpiling of rice and jute in the area. In a region where the majority of residents were smallholder farmers making a living through agricultural activity, the effect of such a blockade was thus not just to prevent

residents from accessing markets critical for daily survival, but to also criminalize their very livelihoods.

Addressing the "Odd Bits"

If the discursive production of the enclaves as sensitive space can begin to be glimpsed in exchanges such as the one discussed above, their incorporation into national debates over territory transformed the *chhits* from one among a range of complications in the post-Partition moment to problems of national concern. Public and parliamentary discussions of the meaning of these spaces—and as importantly, their residents—in the later 1950s began to frame the sensitivities around these spaces as linked to not just danger and crime but also to belonging and territory. Such a move played on emerging dynamics of transition from colonial to national territory and, importantly, from colonial subject to national citizen. (Mamdani 1996; Sherman, Gould, and Ansari 2010). In other words, the enclaves were transformed from spaces within which unruly and criminal subjects violated laws and transgressed boundaries to zones within which contestations over space were *also* framed against the discourse around rights and political and national membership.

The mixing of a range of these discourses of concern can be read, for example in a 1953 article in the *Hindusthan Times*, one of the first extensive public pieces on the enclaves in the post-Partition era.[113]

> Condition of the inhabitants of these enclaves of both the States is very deplorable. Surrounded by a different State, these inhabitants are living like Robinson Crusoe in isolated islands. The only difference is that Robinson Crusoe has no neighbors to disturb him. Whereas these chitlanders are daily persecuted and harassed by neighbors of the majority community. As there is no power to enforce law and order (for communication difficulty) "Might is

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[113] The article also contained a comprehensive list of enclaves on either side of the border and a special plea from residents of Haldibari, a town in Cooch Behar, that in such an exchange, several Indian enclaves situated just over the border should be retained by India, as they contained a population that was claimed to be almost 100% Hindu.

right" there. For this reason, these chit lands have become dens for all sorts of miscreants (Reprinted in Whyte 2002: Appendix 1-24, p. 326).

Though this article does not depict the conditions of the *chhits* as nationalist concerns *per se*, it does seem to illustrate a somewhat ambivalent mixing of claims about the enclaves and the problems that they represent. On the one hand, the conditions of its residents are "deplorable." They live in isolation, like "Robinson Crusoe," though presumably without a metaphorical "Man Friday." Residents are persecuted by their neighbors and in need of rescue by the State. On the other hand, the enclaves are also "dens of miscreants:" lawless spaces of danger and crime. This double argument is representative of a view of the enclaves that would both characterize and complicate debates over exchange in the 1950s. It signaled the enclaves as an issue within which a number of different complex narratives about state protection were mixed and reframed.

In 1953, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani Prime Minister Chaudhry Mohammed Ali met twice to discuss the standoff on Kashmir. While little progress was made on this issue, the two agreed that the enclaves should be exchanged as soon as possible. This "in principle" agreement proved publically contentious even before it was adopted as official policy. The total area that would be exchanged in an enclave swap gave a net advantage to Pakistan, as there were more Indian enclaves in East Pakistan than Pakistani enclaves in India. The popular press took up this question and began to put forward a range of solutions to this imbalance.[114] One was that Patgram *Thana*, which had been a Hindu Majority Area at the time of Partition,[115]

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[114] Indeed, one of the spaces where the Patgram exchange was put forward was the *Hindusthan Standard* article mentioned above.

[115] The Radcliffe Award marked Patgram as part of East Pakistan only because the accession of Cooch Behar, as a Princely State, was still in question. If Cooch Behar had opted to join Pakistan, Patgram would have been stranded as a large enclave hemmed in to the West, North, and East by the potentially Pakistani district of Cooch Behar and, to the South by the Pakistani District of Rangpur.

should be transferred entirely to India.[116] This proposal was met with enthusiasm by residents of Haldibari and Mekhliganj, as the central road providing access to Mathabhanga and Cooch Behar towns ran through Patgram *thana*, an area that was now officially cut off by the Partition boundary. This necessitated a round-about route to travel to other areas of Cooch Behar state. On the other hand, Muslims living in Patgram voiced their strong opposition to such a transfer, professing their desire to remain within Pakistan (Whyte 2002).

Despite the public debate, no concrete actions were taken on enclave exchange until 1958. On June 4th of that year, in a somewhat cavalier statement made in his monthly press conference, Nehru claimed that the ongoing border disputes between the two countries were relatively minor and that "any two reasonable people on behalf of the two Governments could sit together and decide them in a day or two" (Whyte 2002: 91). This "responsible" counterpart presented himself in Feroz Khan Noon, who assumed the Prime Ministership of Pakistan in December 1957. Noon had already moved to temper the Muslim League's bellicose rhetoric in relation to the border issues in the East and appeared ready to negotiate a solution to outstanding border issues.[117] In early September, Nehru put this theory to the test when the two heads of state met in Delhi to hammer out the contours of what would be known as the Nehru-Noon Accords, provisions that aimed to address many, if not all, of the outstanding "minor issues." The Accords did address a number of border problems, including the exchange of the enclaves, and questions around the transfer of Berubari, a disputed

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[116] Though it is not clear that, given the high density of enclaves in Patgram Thana, that such an exchange would not have re-balanced the territorial scales in favor of India.

[117] Noon apparently feared that the US would cut off military aid to Pakistan if a war broke out. See *Time,* 1958 (September 22), "Pakistan: Border Trade." It is worth noting the dismissive view that this article takes to the enclave problem. Describing Noon's arrival with his wife in Delhi for the 1958 talks, the article writes: "Nehru sprang gallantly forward to retrieve Begum Noon's golden slipper when it fell as she stepped out of the plane. He escorted them to the high-domed Presidential House, and the talks began. The two leaders quickly worked out an agreement to trade several small enclaves along the disputed East Pakistan border 'with a view to relieving tension.'"

area situated precariously on the border between Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and Dinajpur in East Pakistan.

In a triumphant Statement to the *Lok Sabha*[118] outlining the results of the Accords, Nehru offered a somewhat dismissive account of his presumably successful resolution of the minor problem of the *chhits*:

> There is one thing more, which has been long causing us, and I believe, Pakistan, a great deal of trouble. These are the Cooch-Behar enclaves. The Cooch-Behar State had little bits of territory all over, and some of those fell in Pakistan and some in India on partition. . . . Therefore, the result is that we have some territory in Pakistan, little enclaves, little islands, and they have some here, which is very awkward. They cannot deal with their territory inside India, and we cannot deal with our territory inside Pakistan. In fact, nobody deals with those territories. In law, we cannot, in practice, we cannot, and they are just odd bits, usually the home of smugglers and other fugitives from the law. So, it has been decided ultimately that we should just exchange them (Bhasin 1996: No. 660, p. 1512).

Nehru's remarks reduced the enclaves to administrative hassles—tiny spaces that could be easily dealt with by rational intervention. The repeated reference to their insignificant size and oddity and the use of terms like "awkward," positions the *chhits* as inconsequential spaces in need of an easy and obvious solution. Moreover, the speech continued the marking of these zones as largely criminal spaces, outside of the bounds of national territory and in need of elimination for, if no other reason, purposes of law and order. However, Nehru radically underestimated not just the complexity of the enclave issue, but also the enclaves' potential resonance in nationalist narratives of space that both reaffirmed the link between nationality and the geo-body of India and drew on such links to make particular oppositional claims to Nehru's nominally secular Congress Party.

Goswami (2004) charts the emergence of territorial nationalism in India in the lived experience of colonial state space and capitalist economy. As Goswami argues,

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[118] The "lower" or "people's" house of Indian Parliament

"the materialization of colonial space in everyday landscapes made possible emergent popular imaginings of colonial India as a temporally dynamic and spatially bounded entity" (9). This landscape facilitated a particular form of territorial nativism, that at once allowed for a territorialization of history and a spatial delimiting of differences— twin processes that were at the heart of anti-colonial nationalisms in India. Though Goswami's analysis focuses specifically on the Colonial moment, the production of such territorial nationalism has informed the politics of communal and oppositional nationalism in post-colonial India in marked ways. One such way is the production of a particular nationalist view of territory that sees any question of territorial reduction as a physical assault on the metaphorical body of the *Bharat Mata* (mother India) (Axel 2001; Krishna 1996). Taking on board these considerations, it is no surprise that though the Accords effectively addressed many of the complications that Nehru had suggested that they might, the enclaves and Berubari proved a significantly more sensitive affair than Nehru had imagined.

At the heart of the emergent controversy was an ongoing debate at both the local and national level over the fate of Berubari. The debate arose from an ambiguity in the Radcliffe Award in which a section of the Jalpaiguri-Boda boundary was, due to an apparent oversight, not mentioned. This left South Berubari Union No. 12, an area of approximately nine square miles in size, connected to Jalpaiguri district in West Bengal by a narrow neck no more than 500 feet in width. As early as 1948, East Pakistani officials had claimed that the Union should have been included in the Pakistan part of the award. Pakistan, from Partition, had effectively controlled the 500-foot strip connecting Berubari to mainland India, transforming South Berubari into an enclave in practice if not in name. Berubari had been a constant source of debate in the preceding decade, resulting in repeated resolutions by border surveying teams to avoid demarcating the contested zone and to wait for a higher-level administrative decision

on the fate of the Union and its residents.[119] Thus, even before the Accords, the space had been constructed as a zone of contention within which the definitive designation of territory could not be negotiated locally. Thus, surveyors had deferred a decision on this sensitive area to higher, though no less contentious, levels of administration.

Though Berubari was not an enclave, Nehru's speech had lumped the border dispute together with the question of enclave exchange, effectively tying the two issues together. Yet, from a technical standpoint, the space not only belonged to India, but was also geographically contiguous with it. The issue was further complicated because of the large and predominantly Hindu population of the 12,000 person Union, approximately 8,000 of whom were refugees from East Pakistan who had been resettled by the West Bengal State (Whyte 2002). The Accords proposed to address the dispute over the Union's ownership by simply dividing Berubari Union No. 12 in half. This solution meant that some portion of these refugees, as well as more long-term residents of Berubari, would either be again displaced or be deprived of their Indian citizenship, as the Accords had made no provision to address the change in citizenship status of residents of exchanged territories.

Almost immediately following the September 10th announcement of the Accords, both Nehru and Noon were criticized by conservative oppositional parties within their own countries for having betrayed national interests and national sovereignty. In Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman, a Muslim League representative in Parliament, mounted an attack of Noon for what he claimed was a blatant attempt to "to hoodwink and mislead the people to hide the fact of the shameless surrender of Pakistan's vital interests at the alter of Bharati [Indian] appeasement."[120] Meanwhile, in India, Nehru was attacked by the Hindu right for his decision on Berubari. The

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[119] CR 1B2-18/52-30 [Precise by M. Asir and S.A.A. Haider, Janury 17, 1953].
[120] *Dawn,* 1958 (September 17), "Border Accord is a Betrayal of Pakistan Interests." The Muslim League was a primary advocate of taking a more aggressive military stance on border issues in the East.

Bharatiya Jana Sangh[121] claimed that the enclave exchange was part of a "policy of appeasement" towards Pakistan, while Hindu-right wing West Bengal Hindu Mahasabha[122] began to advocate for an organized resistance movement to oppose the Berubari exchange "against Nehru's playing with the life and property of such a large number of Hindus."[123]

Later that year, in a speech in the *Lok Sabha* attacking the Accords, then Jana Sangh member and future BJP leader and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee claimed that the Accords were not only illegal, but a betrayal of national interest and indeed of the rights of citizenship of Berubari residents. Lumping the debate over the Accords together with recent reports of cross border raids, Vajpayee lashed out at Nehru and at Pakistan. "Nobody, not even the Prime Minister, has the right to deprive any Indian citizen of his nationality and citizenship. . . . We should not accept that agreement." (quoted in Chitkara 1997a: 123). By tying the question of territory together with citizenship, the Jana Sangh drew out one of the emerging problematics of sensitive space. They reframed the enclaves as not just as problematic zones filled with criminals and smugglers, but also as spaces within which Indian [Hindu] citizens precariously held on to tenuous national territory.

The Accords proved an unpopular political stumbling block for Nehru's Congress Party.[124] Indeed, in the face of increasing opposition of the Accords from the Hindu Right and from the West Bengal Congress Government, which also opposed the question of exchange, Nehru was forced to qualify his earlier enthusiasm. While refusing to abandon the principle of the Accords, in December of 1960, Nehru

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[121] The Jana Sangh was the political arm of the Hindu Nationalist movement in India and the predecessor of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It was closely ideologically affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). For an overview of Hindu Nationalism in India, see Jafferlot (2007).

[122] Also closely affiliated with the RSS.

[123] *Dawn,* 1958 (September 18), "Sabha Move to Resist Return of the Enclaves"

[124] For a breakdown of the different Party positions on the Berubari split, see Appadorai (1981).

publicly retracted his earlier unqualified enthusiasm for the Berubari split and *chhit* exchange:

> At the time I was clear in my mind that the whole agreement, including Berubari, in spite of certain aspects of it which were not agreeable to us, was profitable and advantageous to us. That is why I took that step and I remained with that opinion for a considerable time; and I am still of that opinion. But there is a "but." I did not realise then that there is a certain human aspect of it. It is perfectly true. My mind was not applied to it, nor did anybody tell me what the population was and how many people will be affected. Somehow it happened. I am sorry it did not come before me and it was not put before me. And subsequently when this aspect has come before me, I have felt troubled in my mind (Bhasin 1996: No. 673, P. 1562).

Nehru's qualification represented its own particular kind of appeasement of an increasingly contentious political outlook on territory. It highlighted the stakes of not treating the enclaves "sensitively," that is, both as spaces of confusion and danger *and* spaces containing symbolic value as territory peopled with citizens at the mercy of criminals and [Muslim] others. As a 1961 editorial in the Indian paper *Vigil* put it, "At the time of making the agreement, the human aspects and the possible political consequences of the proposed transfer of territory were not taken into consideration. Whether even after such consideration the deal might be regarded as justifiable is another question (Reproduced in Whyte 2002: Appendix 1-34).

If the political appropriation of the exchange issue extended the debate over the Accords in India, in Pakistan, the question of approving the Accords was quashed when Parliament was dissolved, martial law declared, and General Ayub Khan installed as head of the government only a month after the signing of the Accords. Khan, making use of the executive privileges extended to him by martial law, simply ratified the Accords himself (Whyte 2002). In India, the process was much more complicated. Tension over the Berubari issue was only heightened with the emergence of the military government in Pakistan. Ongoing debate over the exchange eventually

led Nehru to refer the case to the Supreme Court to decide if legislative action was "needed" to allow the exchange. The Court agreed that the Constitution would need to be amended in order to legalize the Accords and, in December of 1960, accomplished this transformation with the Ninth Amendment.[125]

Yet ultimately, Nehru's recognition of the "human aspect" of the Berubari problem proved inadequate to address either national contention over the status of Berubari or local contention over the kind of legibility that might be acceptable to residents. As part of the agreement, a joint Survey team began to work in Berubari to survey the division. However, trouble abounded. There were disagreements within the Survey team on the appropriate method for demarcating the partition of Berubari Union. Moreover, there was vehement opposition from residents who opposed the split. In one incident in November of 1963, a group of residents attacked a survey team, throwing bricks at them and preventing them from proceeding with their work. The team had to be evacuated by border security forces in charge of protecting them (Bhasin 1996: No. 1598). Such complications continued to slow the progress of the demarcation, which dragged on over the next two years. Though discussions would continue over the division of Berubari up until 1971, the 1965 War between Pakistan and India effectively destroyed diplomatic will to exercise the 1958 Accords.

Corridors to Contention

If the Nehru-Noon Accord exposed and marked the enclaves as sensitive topics, the post-Liberation War disputes over exchange deepened tensions over the *chhits* and continued to embody them with a range of broader territorial anxieties. The Liberation War, in 1971, marked a sea change in the relationship between India and East Bengal. During the Liberation War, India had opened its borders to Bengali

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[125] See Bhasin (1996: No. 674, pp. 1568-1572) for complete text of the Amendment.

refugees fleeing both violent campaigns targeted at the Bengali population by the Pakistani Army and fighting between the Army and the *Mukti Bahini* [Liberation Fighters].[126] This massive cross-border movement effectively, if temporarily, erased the contentious border (Van Schendel 2005). The mood of cooperation in the post-Liberation War moment was further marked by India's intervention in the war, which helped bring about its end in December of 1971. The transformation to Bangladesh also marked a critical, if again temporary, shift in the communal international dynamics between the two governments. Whereas previously, East Pakistan had been part of a religiously defined state, the movement for Bangladesh was identified with a linguistic and cultural Bengali nationalism. Indeed, the Constitution of Bangladesh defined the new state as founded on the tenets of secularism and socialism. Sheik Mujib's Awami League thus came to power after the defeat of the Pakistan Army in December of 1971 as a political party with deep ties not just to India, but also to Indira Gandhi's Congress Party.[127]

Against this backdrop of cooperation, another attempt was mounted to resolve the ongoing debate over the *chhits* and to settle any outstanding issues with the border. In May of 1974, negotiations over resolving border issues between the two countries began in Delhi. The resultant Indira-Mujib Pact essentially revisited the problematic Nehru-Noon Accords, but with slight modifications that attempted to address the complications and sensitivites around the 1958 treaty. While the plan to exchange the majority of *chhits* remained in place, Bangladesh would drop its claim to South Berubari Union entirely. Rather than simply ceding this territory, the Pact positioned Berubari as a land trade that would allow Bangladesh to extend sovereign control to Dahagram, the largest Bangladeshi enclave in India. In the words of the treaty, "In

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[126] As Saikia (2004a) points out, Liberation War violence, particularly gender-based violence, was not solely committed by Pakistani soldiers against Bengali women, but was rather a broader dynamic of the conflict.

[127] For a history of the Liberation War and the emergence of Bangladesh, see Van Schendel (2009).

exchange [for Berubari] Bangladesh will retain the Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves. India will lease in perpetuity to Bangladesh an area of 178 x 85 meters near 'Tin Bigha' to connect Dahagram with Panbari *Mouza* (P.S. Patgram) of Bangladesh" (Bhasin 1996: No. 383, p. 779). Additionally, the question of citizenship was directly addressed within the Pact. "The Governments of India and Bangladesh agree that when areas are transferred, the people in these areas shall be given the right of staying on where they are, as nationals of the State to which the areas are transferred" (Bhasin 1996: No. 383, p. 780). If the Nehru-Noon Accords had appeared to take a cavalier attitude towards the politics of exchange, the Indira-Mujib Pact attempted to reframe the issue in a more equitable light.

Despite this shift in tone and approach, the Pact proved even more contentious than the Nehru-Noon Accords had been. In Bangladesh, the Mujib Administration fell under immediate criticism for failing to address a range of pressing territorial questions in the Pact, notably the question of the Farakka Barage[128] and water sharing on the Ganges—a longstanding dispute and issue of pressing concern for Bangladesh residents living downstream of India.[129] As such, as Jacques (2000) notes, from its outset, the Pact was intimately linked to a range of territorial conflicts to which Indira and Mujib had not been able to negotiate easy solutions.[130]

Yet, the central issue around the 1974 Treaty in Bangladesh was the question of Berubari. The Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal, or the National Socialist Party, claimed that

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[128] The Farakka Barage is a barrage across the Ganges River situated in West Bengal. Its construction was begun in 1960 and completed in 1974. It has been at the center of a number of debates between the two countries over water sharing and, further, has been linked to a range of issues related to water quality and public health in Bangladesh. See Jacques (2000) and Islam (1992).

[129] See *Ganokantha*, 1974 (May 18), "*Ae Porajoyer Glani Dhakben Keamon Korey* [How Will you Cover Up the Same of Such Defeat?]; *Ittefaq*, 1974 (May 18), "*Jukto Ghoshonay Vashanir Protikriya* [Vashani's Reaction to Joint Decision]."

[130] Beyond the Farraka, these include the dispute over New Moore (South Talpatti) Island, a siltation island in the Bay of Bengal that emerged in 1970 and became the center of a dispute over the maritime boundary of the two countries and, later, Muhuri Char, a char in the Muhuri river on the border between Noakhali District and Tripura. See Jacques (2000).

the Pact transformed Bangladesh into a colony of India, ready to cede sovereign

control and territory to the Indian government at their whim. "Neglecting the basic

rights of his own nationals, Mujib has expressed his dictatorial attitude. Berubari was

recognized as an integral part of Bangladesh in the Radcliffe Agreement and in the

Nehru-Noon Accords. . . . [the handover of Berubari is a] serious attack on the

national interest of the country [that] chopped Bangladesh's interest with an axe."[131]

Other opponents took an even more grim view of the treaty. As an editorial in the

Bengali daily *Ganokantha* put it, "Every citizen of a country expects good, friendly,

and cooperative relations with its neighboring countries. But if that relation is to be

achieved at the cost of your own state's independence and sovereignty and that

relation is one of subordination and servitude than that relation is by all means

unwanted and unacceptable."[132] Mohammad Bhashani, a prominent left-leaning figure

in the Language movement who had split with Mujib's Awami League before the

Liberation War, roundly criticized the treaty and called for a day of national prayer to

"save the country from disaster."[133] Effectively, in the wake of an emergence from two

colonial relationships, the question of ceding territorial sovereignty of any kind proved

to be a problematic proposition.

Within days of the announcement of the Pact, a writ had been filed in the

Dhaka High Court for an injunction against the Berubari handover, claiming that the

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[131] *Ganokantha*, 1974 (May 19), "*Shimanto Chukti o Jukto Ghoshona Proshongay JSD-er Oveemot: Desh ke Noya Uponibeshe Porinoto Korar Padokkhep* [JSD on Border Treaty and Joint Declaration: Attempts to Turn the Country into a New Colony]." See also, *Ganakantha,* 1974 (May 19), "*Noya Uponibesher Jaal?* [Trap for a New Colonialism?];" *Ganakantha,* 1974 (May 25), "*Dilli Chukti Proshongay Jatiya Shanshad Shadassya Moinuddin Mank o Sattar: E Chuktir Shorto Bangladesh-ke Bharat-er Chiro Podanata Korey Rakhbey* [The Conditions of thie Treaty Will Make Bangladesh Subjugated to India Forever: MP Moinuddin Manik and Sattar on Delhi Treaty];" *Ganokantha,* 1974 (19 May), "*Banglar Sharther Proti Marattok Kutharaghat* [Serious Attack on Bangla's Interest]."

[132] *Ganokantha,* 1974 (May 22), "*Bangladesh Bharat Chukti Proshongay Bidhan Shiraj-er Bibitir Purno Biboran* [Full Details of the Statement of Bidhan-Shiraj: On India Bangladesh Treaty]."

[133] *Ittefaq,* 1974 (May 20), "*Shat-e June Vashanir Monajaat Dibosh* [Vashani's Prayr Day in 7th June]." See also *Ganokantha,* 1974 (June 8), "*Shadhinaota Sharbodhoumotto Bikie Debar Odhikar Kaoke Dea Hoyni: Shimanto Chukti Batiler Proshonge Bashani* [Nobody Has the Right to Capitulate the Independence and Sovereignty of the Country: Moulana Bhashani, While Discussing the Dismissal of the Border Treaty]."

Constitution did not grant Mujib the power to sign away any part of Bangladeshi land. The Dhaka High Court denied the writ, but granted the right of appeal to the Supreme Court.[134] Though the Supreme Court also dismissed the appeal as "premature," since the Pact itself needed to be ratified by the Parliament, it did agree that in order for the transfer of Berubari to be ratified, a Constitution amendment was needed. On the 21st of November, a bill to make this amendment was introduced into Parliament. As Whyte (2002) observes, debate on the bill was unusually, and, given the resistance to the Pact in the popular press, surprisingly short. Though discussion closely mirrored the debate in the Indian Parliament over the Nehru-Noon Accords—including the question of rights for residents of Berubari and a complaint about the lack of available maps for members to understand the actual terms of the exchange—the bill ultimately passed by an overwhelming majority after just four and a half hours of deliberation (Whyte 2002).[135]

If the debate over the exchange of Berubari in Bangladesh was heated yet relatively brief, the controversy over the Tin Bigha Corridor in India became much more protracted, this fraught issue highlighting the sensitive tension between security and belonging that would drag out for the next 18 years. Initially, the Pact appears to have been greeted with a comparative amount of warmth. As an editorial in *Anandobajar Patrika*, a Calcutta daily, observed, "The border demarcation treaty will end a long drawn out dispute, which could not be resolved during Pakistan period for the cunningness of Islamabad. That era of cunning diplomacy is over and now it will be easier to resolve the issues."[136] Yet, any concrete moves to either transfer the

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[134] *Ittefaq*, 1974 (May 21), "*Berubari Shongkranto Reet Aebondon Nakoch: Apeeler Onumoti Daan* [Writ Petition on Berubari Dismissed: Appeal Approved];" *Shangbad*, 1975 (May 21) "*Berubari Shomporke Injunction Aabedon Supreme Court-ey Utthapito* [Berubari Injunction Appeal Placed Before Supreme Court]; *Ganokantha,* 1974 (May 30), "*Berubari Mamlar Churanto Shunanir Din 14-ey June* [The Final Hearing Date of the Berubari Case is on the 14th of June]."
[135] See Butalia (2003) for a brief look at the present conditions of Berubari.
[136] *Anandobajar Patrika,* 1974 (May 18), "*Sahojogitar Pratishruti* [Promises of Cooperation]."

enclaves or to establish the Tin Bigha Corridor as a transit-way for residents of Dahagram were delayed by broader political transformations in both India and Bangladesh. In 1975, at the urging of the West Bengal Chief Minister Siddharth Sankar Ray, Indira Gandhi declared a State of Emergency in India to halt widespread protests against Congress over, among other things, alleged fraud in the 1971 elections. The Emergency, which in Gandhi's famous words "brought Democracy to a grinding halt," lasted for 21 months.[137] Following the lifting of the Emergency in 1977, Gandhi's Congress party was defeated by the coalition Janata Party and Morarji Desai assumed the Prime Ministership. In Bangladesh, shortly after the Emergency was declared in India, Sheikh Mujib was assassinated in a military coup. Following a period of confusion, Major General Zia Rahman assumed power as Chief Martial Law Administrator in 1976 and, in 1977, as President. Zia's administration marked a move away from a secular administration and a subsequent decline in relations between the two governments.[138]

While the Berubari issue had been resolved in 1974, the leasing of the Corridor remained both politically and legally problematic and unresolved in India.[139] This, effectively, meant that the Government of India was in violation of the terms of the Indira-Mujib Pact. In 1978 in response to continued prompting by the Zia government, the question of negotiating the terms of the perpetual lease were raised in the *Lok Sabha*. In response, Amar Roy Pradhan, a member of parliament from West Bengal, claimed that the lease undermined Indian sovereignty and placed residents of Mekhliganj at risk. "This type of gift of Tinbigha to Bangladesh must be stopped at all

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[137] For an account of the Emergency that focuses on the experience of living through it, see Tarlo (2003). For a study of Gandhi's political trajectory highlighting both her roles in the Bangladesh crisis and the Emergency, see Dhar (2001).

[138] On April 22, 1977, Zia pushed through a martial law ordinance to amend the official principles of the Bangladesh state by removing "socialism" and "secularism" from the Constitution and substituting them for "economic and social justice" and "trust and faith in Almighty Allah" (Anisuzzaman 2001).

[139] For a full description of the legal battle in India over the Corridor, see Whyte (2002).

costs. Certainly, we want friendship with Bangladesh, but not at the cost of our motherland. No more appeasement. No more surrenders. No more cessation of our motherland" (quoted in Jacques 2000: 45). Of particular concern for Pradhan was the question of what would happen to Kuchilbari, a town within Mekhliganj *Thana*, if sovereignty over the Tin Bigha was ceded to Bangladesh. Kuchlibari was situated to the South East of the proposed site of the Corridor and was surrounded to the North and East by Bangladesh, to the South by the Tista river, and to the West by Dahagram (see Figure 10). The only legal access to the rest of Mekhliganj, and India, was via the Tin Bigha Corridor. Residents of Kuchlibari feared that if the Corridor fell under sovereign control of Bangladesh, that Kuchlibari itself, an area with a population of 35,000, would, effectively, become an enclave (see Chapter 3).[140]

The question of Kuchlibari was to prove divisive both in the central government and in West Bengal. Two organizations, the *Tin Bigha Shangram Shomiti* (Tin Bigha Movement Committee)[141] and the *Kuchlibari Shangram Shomiti* (Kuchlibari Movement Committee), were formed to oppose the transfer. These groups were comprised of both residents of Kuchlibari and local politicians including members of *both* West Bengal's Left Front government and the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Notable among these supports were Kamal Guha, a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly and Pradhan, who championed the cause of the TBSS and the KSS in the *Lok Sabha* throughout the 1980s.

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[140] The exact population of Kuchlibari appeared to be a fairly plastic number. While Roy initially claimed that 35,000 Indian citizens were living there, he later revised the number upward to 40,000. The BJP adopted a higher number of 50,000 (presumably) Hindu residents in their campaign to block the opening of the Corridor (Whyte 2002: Appendix 1-45)

[141] *Shongram* might be better transferred as "struggle" or even "national struggle." I use "movement" here in the sense of social movement or organization of a group of individuals for collective action.

Figure 10: Detail of Kuchlibari, Mekhliganj, India[142]

In 1981, as a step towards resolving the question of Dahagram and pushing for implementation of the 1974 Treaty, the Government of Bangladesh attempted to conduct a census in Dahagram. Terms of passage through Indian territory were negotiated for census workers, but following the implementation of the census, the KSS organized a blockade of the enclave, cutting it off from access to both Indian markets in Mekhliganj and Bangladeshi markets in Patgram. The *Bangladesh Observer* reported that supplies of food and medicine in the enclave were scarce and that several residents had died from starvation and lack of medical care. It further reported that Indian authorities had refused Government of Bangladesh requests to

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[142] Map by Brendan Whyte.

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deliver emergency aid to the enclave. "Equipped with guns, arrows, *lathis* and hand

bombs, the Indian nationals are patrolling around these enclaves, preventing helpless

Bangladeshi nationals of Dahagram and Angarpota to come out and enter Bangladesh

main soil to purchase essential commodities" (Bangladesh Observer (August 9) 1981,

quoted in Bhasin 1996: 808).[143] The blockade was widely reported in the Bangladesh

press as a sign of the betrayal of Bangladesh's goodwill in expediting the Berubari

decision and as a blatant violation of the rights of Bangladeshi citizens living within

the enclave. Such violations confirmed popular sentiment about India's territorial

colonialism and flagged the question of enclave exchange as both symbolic and

symptomatic of India's willingness to discount Bangladeshi lives and the rights of the

Government of Bangladesh to protect them. As the *Bangladesh Times* wrote:

> The will of eight thousand people[144] in the border enclaves of Dahagram and
> Angarpota to live as Bangladeshis on the strength of the Indo-Bangladesh Land
> Boundary Agreement of 1974 seems resisted by a strong siege of armed Indian
> nationals and a thicket of BSF vigil to go with it. Thus an inherent and a
> legally vested right of a population and its natural custodian, the State of
> Bangladesh is going ignored" (Bangladesh Times (August 12th) 1981, quoted
> in Bhasin 1996: 808).

As conditions in the enclave continued to worsen, the TBSS announced that it would

accept the Tin Bigha Lease agreement under the condition that sovereignty and

jurisdiction over the Corridor was maintained by India, Bangladeshis passing through

be required to carry photo identification, and no members of the Bangladesh police or

military would be allowed to pass though.[145] In other words, the TBSS would only

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[143] A Red Cross team was eventually allowed access to Dahagram, though they were refused passage through the Tin Bigha Corridor and instead had to take a more circuitous route into the enclave via Changribandha (Bhasin 1996: No. 407).

[144] It should be noted that the population figures of Dahagram were as plastic as those of Kuchlibari.

[145] The blockade of the enclave also provided the impetus for residents of Dahagram to found their own resistance movement to advocate for the opening of the Corridor, the *Dahagram Shangram Shomitti* (see Chapter 3).

accept the Corridor under conditions of limited control for Bangladesh officials *not just* in the Corridor, but in Dahagram itself.

The media coverage of the blockade in Bangladesh raised concerns in the *Lok Sabha* about their overall impact on India-Bangladesh relations. In a heated debate on August 20th, Pradhan dismissed concerns over the census, suggesting that the suffering of residents of Dahagram was inconsequential compared to the suffering of over 100,000 Indian citizens living in Indian enclaves inside of Bangladesh. In Pradhan's words, "in Bangladesh, they are living under sub-human conditions—no administration, no police, no *chowkidar* [guards], no *panchayats* [political representation in local government], no voting, nothing of the sort. It is a matter of grave regret" (Bhasin 1996: No. 406, p. 804). Another MP, claimed that the Bangladeshi press was capitalizing on the blockade to stir communal tensions. "In Bangladesh, recently this Dahagram issue has been magnified in their press for anti-Indian propaganda. It has been alleged in Bangladesh press that Dahagram has been surrounded on all sides by the Indians and they cannot even call for medical aid *i.e.*, call for doctors and so on, and there has been death of certain number of people" (Bhasin 1996: No. 406, pp. 806-807). The actions of the KSS, the debate over the blockade in the Bangladesh press and the Indian Parliament, and the subsequent formation of organized opposition to the KSS within Dahagram (see Chapter 3) all indexed the enclave to broader concerns in the relationship between India and Bangladesh. These included the rights of citizens (of both states) at the border, the sovereign control of space, and the violent actions of, or sanctioned by, the opposing state on the bodies and livelihoods of those on the bleeding edge of territory. It further associated the Dahagram issue with the unfinished processes of Partitioning Bengal, the stakes involved in the marking of national space, and the communal politics of movement.

In September, after more than a month, the blockade ended and in November of 1981, representatives of the two governments resumed talks over the implementation of the Pact. Concluding the talks, the foreign secretaries announced that there was no barrier to outlining the terms of the lease and that the Tin Bigha Corridor would be implemented as soon as India ratified the 1974 Treaty. In October of 1982, the terms of the lease were finalized. In principle, these terms mapped to the broad outlines of the Pact, though with several important differences. First, the Corridor would be controlled by the Indian BSF and full sovereignty of the Corridor retained by India. Citizens of India would be allowed to pass through the space occupied by Tin Bigha Corridor (running across, rather than through it) at will. Bangladeshi citizens, including police, military, and paramilitary personnel would be allowed to pass through the Corridor, moving from Panbari to Dahagram and vice versa. The lease further noted that both countries would have the right to run power lines through the Corridor as needed (Bhasin 1996: No. 414).

Despite the agreement on the Tin Bigha lease, no concrete action was made on implementing the lease throughout the 1980s. As both the TBSS and the KSS worked in India to advocate for the blocking of the handover and the DSS worked to facilitate it in Bangladesh, the enclave became a site of intermittent blockades and constant harassment of residents (for more on Dahagram in the 1980s, see Chapter 3). A series of court cases challenging the legality of the lease filed both in the Calcutta High Court and in Delhi were dismissed. Despite the supposed clearing of these hurtles, there was no move to actually implement the lease agreement or to ratify the Pact. The reticence on the part of the Indian government to implement the treaty began to be seen as a lack of good faith in the agreement by Bangladeshi government officials, prompting several to publically proclaim the ceding of Berubari as a mistake (Bhasin 1996: No. 436). As the *New Nation,* an English language Daily in Bangladesh, put it:

"This baffling shilly-shally unfortunately characterizes not only the Tin Bigha agreement, but also other issues like those of sharing of Ganges water and South Talpatty, all of which look like a game between two partners where one partner is violating the rule of the game at will" (Bhasin 1996: 816).

The reasons for the ongoing delay in implementing the lease were not solely linked to the local activism of groups like the TBSS and the KSS or the advocacy of politicians like Pradhan. The issue itself was caught up in conservative shifts in both countries. In Bangladesh, General Hussain Muhammad Ershad came to power following the assassination of Zia in 1981. Ershad, whose controversial tenure as head of the Bangladesh government lasted until 1991, radically curbed democratic liberties and persistently blocked efforts to overturn military rule and restore Parliamentary Democracy within Bangladesh. Further, his regime continued the move initiated by Zia away from secular Bengali nationalism and towards a more overtly Islamist Bangladeshi state. Against this backdrop, the political relationship between India and Bangladesh remained strained. This relationship was further stressed by the increasingly virulent rhetoric of the BJP in India against the threat of illegal immigration from Bangladeshi Muslims and pressuring of the Congress Party to take action against it by, among other things, fencing the border (Van Schendel 2005).[146]

Indeed, the sensitivity of the issue of the Tin Bigha Corridor was effectively increased by both Ershad and the BJP championing the cause. Ershad hailed from Rangpur and was notoriously sympathetic to the needs of North Bengal. In particular, the Tin Bigha Corridor gave him an issue to both pressure the government of India with and to stir up nationalist sentiments over territorial aggression by an unfriendly neighbor. Ershad and several of his chief ministers visited Dahagram by helicopter

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[146] On BJP rhetoric over "infiltration" from Bangladesh, see Gillan (2002) and Ramachandran (1999). For details of the debate over fencing beginning in 1983 between India and Bangladesh, see Bhasin (1996: No. 435, and No. 437).

several times in the late 1980s, much to the consternation of Government of India officials, and used the visits to publically call for the handover of the Tin Bigha and a fulfillment of India's side of the Indira-Mujib Pact. Ershad began to propose a series of seemingly reasonable alternatives to the Corridor, such as the construction of a flyover bridge that would allow the passage of Bangladeshis to their home country without ever having to touch Indian soil. Such proposals, despite the likely impracticality of their implementation, highlighted the Government of India as an uncooperative partner in fulfilling the '74 Pact. In a visit to Dahagram in 1986, Home Minister Mahamadul Hasan publically lamented the breakdown in India-Bangladesh relations, recalling that even during the Pakistan period, there had been a police outpost in the enclave, an arrangement that claimed would be impossible now (Bhasin 1996: No. 439). Such claims, tinged with regret, highlighted the move away from cooperation and retrenchment of communal politics within the Indian Government.

In India, the BJP enthusiastically adopted the cause of the KSS and TBSS. Claiming to defend a country marred by Partition and betrayed by its political leaders, the BJP began to use the Tin Bigha issue as a whip to beat both Congress and West Bengal's left-front government.[147] As a pamphlet published in 1992, mirroring much of the rhetoric deployed in public and in the *Lok Sabha*, claimed:

> BJP . . . [was] not there in 1947 to resist that evil design, but today, in 1992, things have changed. Today we, the general people, refuse to be a mute party to the sinister design of transferring Tinbigha Corridor to Bangladesh by Roa Govt.—Jyoti Basu combined. . . .[148] Power or no power, India is one, its people are one, and will remain so in future too. So we appeal to all the Indians, all its valiant fighters for national integrity . . . to stand up, face the situation squarely and remove the danger of 50,000 people of Kuchlibari

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[147] Indeed, the BJP deployed the Tin Bigha issue as a way to increase its presence and power in West Bengal. See *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "To Build Bridges: Positive Turn in Indo-Bangladesh Ties" by SD Muno. For a discussion of the ways in which the BJP used rhetoric over the sundering of national territory throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, see Krishna (1996).

[148] The political reference here is to the Narasima Roa led Congress Party Government and the Jyoti Basu led CPI(M) government in West Bengal.

becoming Refugees at some point of time in future. Spoil the politically manipulative designs of Delhi and Writers,' show solidarity with the other suffering brethren to honour the blood and culture we have all inherited.[149] Refrain from assisting in any way the transfer of Tinbigha at all cost ("Save Tin Bigha, Save Kuchlibari," a BJP pamphlet, in Whyte 2002: Appendix 1-45).

BJP position seems to cover up the fact that the terms of the lease very clearly dictate that sovereignty over the Corridor would be maintained by the BSF and that residents of Kuchlibari would have free and clear passage through it. In doing so, it reframed the question of the Corridor as one of nationalist failure in the past—the betrayal of the nation at Partition—and a future threat to Indian citizens—through the implication that Bangladesh would, at some point in the future, assume sovereign control of the Corridor. Indeed, reports in the Indian press suggested that the BJP was, in fact, actively encouraging a misapprehension of who would maintain sovereign control of the Corridor locally within Kuchlibari by conjuring images of a renewed Partition displacement. As an article in *Frontline* reported:

'I came to Kuchlibari from East Pakistan in 1951 leaving all I had. I will become a refugee for the second time. I do not know where I will settle now,' said 65-year old Basanta Roy of Kuchlibari. Roy seemed to have been taken in by the view of the BJP leader, Mahant Avaidyanath, MP, who told *Frontline* that 'a conspiracy hatched by the Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Roa, and the West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, is rendering the people of Kuchlibari refugees for the second time.[150]

The moves of both Ershad and the BJP are best interpreted as capitalizing more on the deployment of Tin Bigha *as* a sensitive issue for political gain, than as a commitment to the welfare either of residents of Kuchlibari or Dahagram. Yet, the ways that these discourses are deployed also map to immediately recognizable rhetorical structures within India and Bangladesh. The Ershad administration

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[149] "Writers" refers to the Writers Building in Kolkata, the secretariat building of the State Government of Bengal.
[150] *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "The Tin Bigha Link: A New Lease of Friendship," by Kalyan Chaudhuri

positioned Dahagram as a question of an uncooperative, recalcitrant India, a territorially greedy neighbor unwilling to make reasonable compromise. The rhetoric of the BJP, on the other hand, marks the enclave as part of the ongoing narrative of Partition, a question of the erosion of national space, and an ongoing corruption and betrayal of the nation by those who refuse to protect [her] territorial integrity.

The Tin Bigha Corridor would continue to become—and be deployed as—a sensitive issue throughout the early 1990s as diplomatic talks moved closer to implementation. With the ousting of the Ershad government in 1990 through massive campaigns of popular protest and the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh, there was an easing of tension between the two countries. In this new and equally temporary mood of cooperation, plans were pushed through to open the Corridor. On March 26th, the Foreign Ministry in India announced that the transfer would take place three months later, on June 26th. Explaining the agreement in the *Lok Sabha*, the Minister for External Affairs observed, "Given time and goodwill, the Tin Bigha corrior which unfortunately generated much controversy and tension in the past will turn into a crossroad of friendship between India and Bangladesh." In response, an unnamed parliamentary member said, "Sir, with great respect I want to say that the hon. Minister has betrayed the people of West Bengal and the West Bengal people will never accept it" (Bhasin 1996: No. 449, p. 935-936).

Tension continued to build around the opening of the Corridor up until its implementation. The BJP announced its intention to train a "suicide squad" to prevent the opening of the Corridor and made a number of public pronouncements that members were willing to lay down their lives to protect the motherland.[151] The Corridor continued to cause rifts in West Bengal politics as well. Kamal Guha, after repeated frustrations with Jyoti Basu's CPM(I) government's unwillingness to take a

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[151] *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "The Tin Bigha Link: A New Lease of Friendship," by Kalyan Chaudhuri

firmer stand on Tin Bigha split the Forward Bloc party from the coalition Left Front government. "Alleging that Basu and the Center were surrendering India's sovereignty to Bangladesh, he rallied the people of Tin Bigha to lead a determined movement against the Left Front government of West Bengal. This embarrassed Basu greatly, especially since the Forward Bloc was a constituent of the ruling left coalition" (*Sunday* (28 June-4 July) 1992, "Acres of Contention").[152] In the days leading up to the opening of the Corridor, Guha was preemptively arrested to prevent him leading any protests that would further deepen this embarrassment.[153] Meanwhile, the KSS and TBSS continued to step up their efforts to block the Corridor opening through a series of protests and renewed blockades of Dahagram.[154] In the days leading up to the opening, the BJP and the KSS began to circulate claims that a number of residents of Kuchlibari had been beaten by police and that supplies to the area had been cut off to force residents to flee.[155] Whether or not this claim is true, it does appear that a number of residents of Kuchlibari fled the area for the opening of the Corridor in the 26th, expecting violence and trouble.[156]

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[152] See also: *Ittefaq,* 1991 (September 28), "*Tin Bigha Corridor Hostantore Forward Blocker Tibro Apotti* [Strong Objection by Forward Block in Handing over the Tin Bigha Corridor];" and *Ittefaq,* 1991 (October 10), "*Tin Bigha Hostantor Protihoto Korar Oshubho Tot Porota* [Ominous Adroitness To Protest Tin Bigha Handover];" and *Dainik Bangla,* 1992 (June 26), "*Ora Kaeno Emon Korlen?* [Why did they do so?]."

[153] *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "The Tin Bigha Link: A New Lease of Friendship," by Kalyan Chaudhuri.

[154] *Ittefaq,* 1991 (October 27), "*Shoshostro Bharotioder Kora Nojordarite Dahagram Angorpota Bashira Oboruddho* [The People of Dahagram Angorpota Are Imprisoned by the Strong Observation of Armed Force in India]."

[155] Indeed, the BJP began to allege that members of the CPM(I) were disguising themselves as police and terrorizing residents of Kuchlibari. See, *Sunday,* 1992 (June 28-July 4), "Acres of Contention."

[156] *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "The Tin Bigha Link: A New Lease of Friendship," by Kalyan Chaudhuri.

Figure 11: Opening the Tin Bigha Corridor[157]

Despite such fears, the transfer was carried out in comparative calm (see Figure 11). Police blocked a large-scale BJP protest from marching from Mekhliganj to the Tin Bigha, using tear gas to disperse the crowd and arresting a number of protesters. Conflicting reports of these protests exist. The *Hindustan Times* reported that several protesters were killed by the police and a number of serious injuries were sustained (Whyte 2002).[158] Other media sources in Bangladesh and India did not report any deaths.[159] In the Corridor, the brief transfer ceremony was carried out with residents of Panbari crossing the Corridor to joyously greet residents of Dahagram.

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[157] Photo from *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "The Tin Bigha Link: A New Lease of Friendship," by Kalyan Chaudhuri.

[158] These stories were picked up by *The New York Times* (June 26) 1992, "2 Slain as Indian Troops Fire on Bangladeshi Protesters."

[159] Indeed, in contrast to the *Hindustan Times*, *Frontline* positioned the transfer as a peaceful exchange. See *Frontline,* 1992 (July 17), "The Tin Bigha Link: A New Lease of Friendship," by Kalyan Chaudhuri. See also *Weekly Robibar,* 1992 (July 5), "*Shesh Parjanta Tin Bigha Corridor Unmukto* [Tin Bigha Corridor Opens At Last]."

The transfer marked an end to the issue's prominence in national politics, though debates over the Corridor, notably over its hours of operation and the allowance of electric lines through the Corridor, continue.[160] As with the Nehru-Noon Accords, however, though action was finally taken to resolve the central concerns, no concrete steps were taken to actually transfer the remaining enclaves.

The Grammar of Sensitivity and the Calculus of Exchange

If the debate over the *chhits* was a prominent part of the discourse over the border before 1992, their presence in such debates in the post-1992 period is much more intermittent. This is not to say that they have disappeared from public discussion. There continue to be ongoing negotiations over their full exchange and periodic alarms over their presence. Perhaps most significantly, the enclaves re-emerged as critical sites of concern in connection with a large-scale border clash between India and Bangladesh in 2001, in which an Indian enclave held in adverse possession in Bangladesh became the site of a battle in which fifteen BSF *jawans* were killed.[161]

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[160] The BSF did not agree to allow power through the Corridor until 2009.

[161] During this incident, the BDR occupied a section of the border known as Pyrdiwah on the Sylhet/Meghalaya border. Pyrdiwah had, disputably, originally been part of East Pakistan following Partition, but had become an Indian military outpost during the Liberation War in 1971. Since the Liberation War, Pyrdiwah continued to be held in adverse possession by India. On April 15th, for reasons that remain unclear, the BDR "reclaimed" Pyrdiwah, occupying it with, reportedly, 1000 *jawans* and surrounding the BSF camp. In retaliation, on April 18th the BSF mounted an offensive to capture a BDR outpost in Roumari (the area is known as Boraibari in India), an Indian enclave held in adverse possession by Bangladesh in Kurigram district. The BDR outpost was notified by local residents who saw the BSF force transgressing the border and was prepared for their attack. Though there remain conflicting reports of what actually happened, 16 BSF *jawans* were killed in the subsequent attack. Their bodies were returned, mutilated, to Indian officials several days later. The incident proved to be the most significant border violence between the two countries since before the Liberation War, sparking troop build-up along the border, accusations and bellicose threats in the popular press, and a breakdown in India-Bangladesh relations. See *India Today*, 2001 (May 7), "Bordering Truth." See also Van Schendel (2005) and Banerjee (2001).Though the majority of the debate over the Roumari incident was framed as a discussion of the politics of BDR/BSF exchanges in the borderland, the incident did raise the question of the enclaves to brief public prominence once again (C.f., *Frontline,* 2001 (April 28-May 11), "Disturbed Border."). One of the outcomes of this incident was the creation of a Joint Border Working Group that would meet regularly to begin to address outstanding issues, the enclaves among them, between the two countries *(BBC,* 2006 (June 13), "Progress in Bangladesh Border Talks"). This working group has proved singularly ineffective in addressing issues related to enclave exchange.

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Yet, by-and-large, these spaces have been characterized less by being a central focus of concern, than by being opportunistically deployed as signifiers within broader conflicts and negotiations over a range of tensions between the two countries. It is to this discursive deployment, what might be called a "grammar" of sensitivity, that I would like to briefly turn to in the concluding part of this chapter. What is key to note about such deployments is that they emerge specifically out of the enclaves' historical constructions as particular kinds of problematic space.

This periodic emergence of the enclaves in contemporary debates draws on the same themes and arguments that became linked to the enclaves in their pre-1992 history. The enclaves are cited as reminders of such tensions—as signifiers of both danger and belonging. In other words, if the debate over exchange of the enclaves before the opening of the Corridor constructed them as sensitive—spaces that contain and signify a broader range of concerns over national survival and territory—the ways that the enclaves are often deployed in the post-Corridor moment are as shorthand connections to these broader issues. My argument here is not that only once the enclaves were made into sensitive space that they were available to be deployed as such. Rather such deployments are part of the ongoing construction of the enclaves' sensitivity. The central trope of this grammar of sensitivity remains the tension between visions of the enclaves as spaces of concern, crime, and danger and as spaces where beleaguered citizens continue to suffer for territory and belonging within the nation.

The politics of the border since the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh in 1991 have been overdetermined by several key and linked issues—illegal migration; crime, terrorism, and violence at the border; and the border fence constructed by India to block illicit movement from Bangladesh.[162] The rhetoric over illegal migration from

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[162] This is not to say that these are the only issues structuring India-Bangladesh relations, but rather to say that they dominate discussions and debates involving territorial boundaries.

Bangladesh has led to a series of recent conflicts and tensions over belonging between the two countries. Most notably, in September of 1992—not coincidentally, shortly after the opening of the Corridor[163]—Congress mounted a large-scale operation to deport illegal Bangladeshi migrants. In this initiative, known as "Operation Pushback," Muslim Bengalis from slums in Delhi and Calcutta were rounded up and taken to the border, where they were ceremonially tonsured by the BSF. When the BSF tried to force them across the border, the BDR halted the detainees movement at the Benapole border crossing, questioning whether they were, in fact, Bangladeshi (Ramachandran 2002).[164] The BDR's actions were consistent with a longstanding claim of the Bangladesh Government that there was no illegal migration from Bangladesh into India—a claim in seeming denial of overwhelming evidence to the contrary (Ramachandran 1999; Samaddar 1999). Since part of the roundup of these alleged migrants was predicated on their lack of documentation, there was no formal way to prove that they were Bangladeshis. While officials debated the migrants' fate, they were, effectively trapped in a veritable "no mans land" at the border. Despite its overwhelming failure both from the standpoint of deportation and public relations (Ramachandran 1999), the Government of India launched a series of similar operations throughout the 1990s and 2000s, often resulting in impromptu refugee camps set up on the border with deportees trapped between the BSF on one side and the BDR on the other.[165]

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[163] The Operation's timing suggests that it may have been a reasonable response to BJP rhetoric around the opening of the Corridor and ongoing (since the 1980s) criticism of the Congress Party for their weak stance on illegal immigration from Bangladesh. Suggestive though this timing appears, I have not found any concrete discussions linking the two events, nor have I seen them linked in other writing.

[164] Ramachandran writes: "Foreign Minister Mustafizur Rahman clarified: 'We will not accept [the deportees] unless the Indian authorities provide documents that they are our citizens.' Still, Khaleda Zia, then Bangladesh's Prime Minister, added to this controversial posture with the stark proclamation: "They are not our headache since they are not Bangladeshis"(2002: 323). For a critique of the notion of "Indian Citizenship" in light of Operation Pushback, see Sen (2003).

[165] For coverage of several instance of such "push-backs" see: *Shangbad,* 1998 (November 14), "*Bharat Ar Push In Korbe Na* [India will Stop Push-In];" *Bangla Bazar,* 1999 (September 6), "*Shimanter 12 ti Poin e Push In-er Procheshta* [Attempt of Push in at 12 Ponts of the Border];" *Drishtipat,* 2003,

Connected to such projects of stemming migration have been an ongoing series

of violent attempts at halting smuggling in the borderland resulting in regular killings

of border residents by the BSF. According to Odikhar, a human rights group based in

Bangladesh, between 2000 and 2005, more than four hundred Bangladeshis were

killed by the BSF (Jones 2009a).[166] As Jones observes, the frequency of the killings,

the lack of accountability for Border Security Forces in such deaths, and the banality

with which these incidents are reported in papers on both sides of the border has

served to normalize such incidents in the borderland. As this quotidian violence marks

the border as an unstable and violent space, it also reinforces rhetoric around questions

of cross-border smuggling, arms trading, and terrorism.

   Concerns of illegal migration and cross border crime coalesced in the

construction and completion of a barbed-wire fence around the Bangladesh border in

2007. The fence has served as a political irritant in the relationship between the two

countries since its was proposed by the BJP in the mid-1980s (Van Schendel 2005).[167]

Yet, not surprisingly, it has been singularly unsuccessful in stemming cross border

movement of people and goods. As Wendy Brown argues of such projects, "If walls

do not actually accomplish the interdiction fueling and legitimating them, if they

perversely institutionalize the contested and degraded status of the boundaries they

limn, they nevertheless stage both sovereign jurisdiction and an aura of sovereign

power and awe" (2010: 26). In Bangladesh, such a display reaffirms as it irritates a

history of viewing India as a colonial power, particularly in relation to the border.

However, the construction of the fence also raised a range of further questions, beyond

stagings of sovereignty, about the meaning of territory, borders, and the relationship

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"Stranded Beaings of No Man's Land;" *Prothom Alo,* 2003 (January 26), "*BSF er Abar Push In Procheshta: Khola Akasher Niche Shoto Shoto Banglabhashi* [Attempt to Push-In Again: Hundreds of Bengali Speaking People Under the Open Sky]."

[166] Which is not to say that the BDR is not also complicit in cross-border killings, though an overwhelming number of killings are attributed to the BSF.

[167] For a complete discussion, see Kabir (2005).

between the two countries. Among the issues emerging from the fence's construction was the stranding of a number of Indian villages on its "wrong side." Due to international law, the fence could not be constructed within 150 yards of the border. This left a series of Indian villages situated directly on the border cut off from the rest of India.[168] Though erected under a steady rhetoric of protection—the stemming of crime, cross-border terrorism, and the incursion of illegal migrants—the fence itself also appeared to sacrifice a number of Indian citizens in the name of vaguely defined threats emanating from Bangladesh. In other words, the wall emphasized the rhetorical nature of urgent claims to protect Indian citizenship at the border that were central to discussions over the Tin Bigha. As such, it underscored the claimed transformation of border residents from subjects to citizens in the postcolonial moment as little more than that—claims.

What is notable about the enclaves in relation to these issues is not their direct connection, but rather their resonances within these debates. The enclaves themselves summon a range of similar problematics—those of being stranded at the border; of being hemmed by communal violence; of crime, smuggling, and instability. In a number of discussions of issues such as the fence, the enclaves do emerge as additional "problems" and contradictions of border management.[169] Yet, more than their direct links, they are symbolically indexed to discussions over the formation and regulation of territory. They are easily recognizable problems within these broader frames—sensitive spaces that highlight and accentuate (make sensitive) a range of dimensions of the ongoing project of making the Bengal border. Within such frames, the enclaves seem able to contain a range of contradictory arguments and assertions— claims that are often in no way anchored to concrete realities within them.

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[168] See also *Time,* 2009 (February 5), "A Great Divide," by Thottam and Pandihar.
[169] C.f., Jamwal (2004), Kabir (2005), Ahmed(2007), Godbo (2001).

Perhaps most persistently, the enclaves emerge as reminders of partial, unfulfilled, and blocked claims to citizenship and belonging within their states. Even a survey of the titles of pieces covering the *chhits* in the popular press in both countries—for example, "Captivity of the People of Dahagram Angorpota is Still Prevailing," "Freedom Eludes Enclaves Along Bangla Border," "Annihilation [*Tandab*] Made by BSF in the Enclaves," and "The Nowhere People"—suggests the ways in which the enclaves' sensitivity is intimately tied to their representation as national spaces outside of the bounds of state protection.[170] Much of this discussion is cast as a question of human rights. For example, a *Purnima* article from 2004 states: "People living inside these 50 enclaves are all Bangladeshi citizens. But still they are dependent on another state. They are deprived of most basic human rights and almost all civil rights. Their human security is by no means comparable to that of the rest of the country."[171] If the question of enclave residents' rights is posed as a problem of citizenship, it is also often framed as a question of risk—a claim that because their home states have been unable to actualize residents' rights they are at risk of being lost to their bounding states. For example, *The Statesman*, in 2003, reported Mukulesh Sanyal, a leader of the Forward Bloc in West Bengal, pushing for enclave exchange as saying,

> Not once have these enclave residents known the charm of celebrating Independence Day. The fruits of our freedom have so far eluded them. . . . Many children of these enclaves attend schools in Bangladesh and follow the Bangladesh curriculum. They are not even aware of the importance of 15 August [India's Independence Day]."[172]

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[170] *Ittefaq,* 1999 (June 26)," *Dahagram Angorpota Bonditto Ghocheni* [Captivity of the People of Dahagram Angorpota is Still Prevailing];" *The Statesman,* 2003 (August 14), "Freedom Eludes Enclaves Along Bangla Border;" *The Daily Inquilab,* 2004 (December 17), "*Chhitmahal-e BSFer Tandab* [Annihilation Made by BSF in the Enclaves];" *Frontline,* 2002 (June 8-June 21), "The Nowhere People."

[171] *Purnima,* 2004 (August 12), "Fifteen Thousand Dwellers of Dahagram-Angorpota."

[172] *The Statesman,* 2003 (August 14), "Freedom Eludes Enclaves Along Bangla Border."

Interestingly, the question of citizenship here is one of choice and failed obligation. Because India has been unable to provide appropriate rights of citizenship, these residents have never known the joy of celebrating their country's independence day. Yet more importantly, these residents are in danger of exercising their "choice" to join Bangladesh, to effectively abandon the nation that has abandoned them.[173]

Such a position, of course, also frames the discussion of enclave residents' rights through a particular nationalist lens. The important issue is not whether residents of these spaces have or do not have rights as citizens, the question is which state will provide these to them. Claims of concerns over the rights of enclave residents, as such, should not be misunderstood as concern purely for residents themselves. Indeed, as an article in *The Statesman* published shortly after Sanyal's comments suggests, such concerns are also intimately grounded in claims to territory. As the article reports: "Over the past decades, more than 40 % of the land in these Indian enclaves have been purchased by Bangladeshis, who pass themselves off as Indians—becoming citizens of virtually both countries in the process."[174] In other words, the spaces of the enclaves are at once at risk of being possessed by Bangladesh and becoming sites within which people of undeserving citizenship acquire national privilege.

The tension of citizen and subject that is embodied in such discourse—the imagined deserving member of the nation and the dangerous other encroaching on national territory—is accentuated through equally potent narratives that continue to define the enclaves in terms of crime, terrorism and violence. Such discourses build on colonial imaginations of the enclaves as sites of crime and confusion and reinforce visions of the enclaves as problematic zones in nationalist imaginations of interiority

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[173] An interesting claim, given that if enclave exchange were to happen, than these Indian citizens would become official, as opposed to simply tacit, citizens of Bangladesh.
[174] *The Statesman,* 2003 (August 22), "Hope on Enclaves."

and exteriority. As throughout their colonial and postcolonial history, the enclaves are deployed as sites of smuggling and zones that are emblematic of the porous nature of the border.[175] For example, a story in *Calcutta Online* in 1998 reported that a BJP MP from West Bengal was preparing a briefing on the Tin Bigha that highlighted it as a site of illegal migration, smuggling, and arms trafficking:

> Unbelievable as it may seem, Tin Bigha Corridor is free for smugglers of Bangladesh for four hours a day. . . .[176] Tin Bigha Corridor is open for Bangladeshis for one hour for four times a day—a time "utilized to the hilt by smugglers across the border," [Tapan Sikdar, the lone BJP MP from West Bengal] stated in his communication to the PM. BSF officials, Mr. Sikdar informed, think that the Corridor "offers a very safe passage of illegal immigration from India. Second, this helps illegal arms trade across the Indo-Bangladesh border."[177]

Sikdar's claim imagines[178] the Tin Bigha Corridor as a particular kind of conduit, one that serves as an open gateway into India. Such claims reinforce the vision of the Tin Bigha Corridor as a national betrayal—a space within which the sovereignty of India is repeatedly violated through transgressions and penetrations of national space. It poses an image of the space of the Corridor itself as a sort of sieve through which illegal migrants leak from Bangladesh into India. In other words, it maps a particular vision of Bangladesh onto Dahagram itself.

Such claims are particularly marked within the history of struggle over the opening of the Corridor, yet they are not confined only to Indian discussions of

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[175] Again, this is not to claim that smuggling does not occur in the *chhits*. Rather, it is to highlight the ways that theses spaces play into broader discussions of concern along the border.

[176] In 1998, the amount of time during the day that the Corridor remained open had increased from its initial 1 hour per day to four hours per day. Currently, the Corridor is open for 12 hours a day.

[177] *Calcutta Online,* 1998 (April 14), "Where Smuggling is Not Illegal." See also *Bhorer Kagoj* 1996 (May 15), *Bangladesh o Bharate Chhitmahal Shomoshar Shomadhan Hochchhe Na* [No Settlement About Chhitmahal Issue of Bangladesh and India]."

[178] "Imagine" being the operative word here. In 1998, before the completion of the border fence, the Corridor and Dahagram would have presented a highly risky spot through which to illegally migrate to India—one that was highly militarized and under intense surveillance. This, again, is not to claim that such transgression never happen in Dahagram, but rather to point out that the borders of Dahagram, unlike those of other enclaves, are highly securitized.

Bangladeshi enclaves. Indeed, multiple narratives of the enclaves in Bangladesh express similar concerns and imaginations of the *chhits*—as spaces of refuge for criminals who commit various crimes in their bounding states and flee police by slipping across the enclaves' porous boundaries.[179] As an article in *The Daily Star* claims:

> Most of the 12 Indian Enclaves in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh district are safe havens for criminals. . . . Taking this advantage these enclaves have become transit points for smuggling of drugs, arms, and other goods. Hemp is now replacing crops and vegetables in many areas as this is much more profitable and has ready markets in Bangladesh, they say. . . ."We prefer hemp cultivation because the profit is assured, unlike in case of vegetables," a resident at Putimari said. When contacted a police official in Panchagarh said they know what goes on in Indian enclaves. "But we can not enter there or track down criminals or destroy hemp fields," he said seeking anonymity.[180]

Again, the suggestion that police and government officials are unable to cross enclave boundaries is one that should be treated with a certain circumspection. As the postcolonial histories of the *chhits* suggests, police and paramilitary officers have regularly violated their borders, blockaded their residents, and been complicit in a range of expropriations and exploitations of their residents. Which, again, is not to argue that enclave residents have not resorted to a range of violent activities to claim and opportunistically exploit space (see Chapter 3). Rather, it is to point out that this marking of the enclaves as spaces of crime and criminality reinforces a vision of them as holes in a pattern of sovereign control, spaces through which law and order appear to trickle out of border regions.

If the imagination of the enclaves as spaces of smuggling plays on longstanding concerns about law and regulation within the enclaves, a more alarming set of claims—one that bespeaks a different and more violent logic of response—

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[179] *The Daily Star,* 2005 (February 24), "Indian Enclaves in Dinajpur 'Safe Haven for Criminals.'"
[180] *The Daily Star,* 2005 (June 8), "Indian Enclaves in 2 Dists. 'Safe Haven for Criminals, Large Scale Hemp Cultivation in Enclaves in Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Kankan Karmaker, Dinajpur.'"

extends this vision to the enclaves as safe-havens for insurgents and terrorist training camps. Part of the emerging discourse around the India-Bangladesh border suggests that various different insurgent groups set up base across the Bangladesh border and make strikes at India from this safe vantage point. Such attacks are supposedly carried out with the tacit agreement of the Bangladesh government. Marking the *chhits* as training spaces for such groups extends the logic that citizenship is under threat within enclaves and overwrites it with a narrative that the spaces have already been erased as pieces of the nation and, instead, become grey spaces outside of sovereign control. In a 2003 article in *The Statesman*, for example, the *chhits* are claimed as operating bases for insurgent groups striking at India's Northeast:

> According to intelligence reports, there are some 130 such Chitmahals where militants are running their training camps. Indian police hardly have access to these enclaves, which are somewhat detached from the mainland, while Bangladeshi troops stay away from the Chitmahals as they legally come under Indian territory. A BSF Intelligence report says most of these Chitmahals have become hide-outs of KLO [Kamtapur Liberation Organization] militants.[181] Bangladeshi terrorist groups like Awal, Sanwara, Motaleb have been operating their training camps in association with the KLO inside some Indian enclaves like Dahala Khagrabari and Basuniapara under Devigunj district in Bangladesh.[182]

There are a series of interesting slippages in this argument. The first is a move from stating that there are a number of *chhitmahals* situated in Bangladesh to an argument that they are *all* training spaces for terrorist organizations. There is a further link between Indian terrorist organizations and Muslim ones. In other word, the article positions the enclaves as spaces within which multiple threats to Indian sovereignty abound. It is worth also noting that the voracity of such claims has little meaning here,

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[181] The KLO is an organization seeking an independent Kamtapur state as an ethnic homeland for Rajbangshi Adivasis in India's Northeast.
[182] *The Statesman,* 2003(September 30), "Chitmahals a safe haven." See also *The Tribune,* 2000 (March 24), "N-E Ultras Have 'Bases in B'desh.'"

given the paucity of information that appears to be available to either state. Rather, what is notable is the linking of the enclaves to danger, threat, and violence.

Conclusion

One of the things that appears remarkable in the enclaves post-1992 history are the ways in which they are deployed as sensitive spaces in similar ways across this border. The ways that these spaces are incorporated into nationalist discourses over territory, anxiety, and survival share a particular grammar and similarity of deployment. This is not to suggest that cartographic anxieties and nationalist histories in Bangladesh and India share a modular (Anderson 1991 [1983]) or derivative form (Chatterjee 1986). Rather, it is to suggest that the postcolonial histories of nationalism in India and Bangladesh, particularly nationalist discussions and appropriations of territory as shorthand for identity and survival at the border, emerged out of a shared, if oppositional, experience of the Long Partition of Bengal. More specifically, it is to argue that the construction of the enclaves as sensitive spaces played one, among many, important parts in the shaping of this history.

The tensions that have emerged in relation to the enclaves since Partition both reflect and refract a set of normative debates over the meaning of territory, over the changing dynamics of postcolonial citizenship and subjectivity, and over security and the porosity of the border. If these debates have shaped politics within the enclave, as I will discuss in the next chapter, they have also structured political possibilities in relation to them and strategic political and nationalist deployments of them. As I have argued in this chapter, the mappings of these broader projects of nation and statemaking onto the enclaves is not, solely or even primarily, about the enclaves as concrete empirical spaces. Indeed, these mappings effectively erase as they transform

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these spaces, making small areas with marginal populations into symbols of national struggle and threat.

The process through which this occurs—the production of sensitive space—as I have tried to show in this chapter is a historical one. The enclaves emerged as sensitive space out of a series of debates and discussions about their status and their futures. These debates themselves were framed within broader contexts of post-Partition politics in each state, the waxing and waning of competing secular and communal nationalist projects within them, and changing understandings of the relationship across them.

As the two vignettes that I shared at the outset of this chapter suggest, this mapping is a profoundly problematic one that emphasizes a series of contradictions and ongoing confusions about these tiny spaces and the disproportionate emotions that they continue to stir both locally *and* nationally. These confusions manifest in the production and ongoing tensions between failed projects to know the enclaves as empirical spaces—for example, in the almost always contentious projects of demarcating their boundaries—and a seemingly immediate identification of their symbolic meaning within public discourses around the failures to resolve their status. Whether such debates frame the enclaves as spaces of refuge for criminals or spaces of refugees without the protection of the nation-state, they all serve to substitute the often-quotidian realities of life within enclaves for vivid imaginations of struggle, threat, and national dissolution.

What then are the possibilities for enclave exchange or of an alternative imaginative solution to the territorial dilemma posed by the enclaves themselves? If the postcolonial histories of these spaces suggest anything, it is that the success of such initiatives, posed at a national level, is deeply doubtful. As repeated attempts at incorporation since Partition have demonstrated, such debates are premised on a series

of broader and seemingly intractable concerns. As Van Schendel observes, discussions over the enclaves' futures are locked in the pattern of a slow and repetitive political tango. "The tune is that of Partition, the orchestration that of foreign policies which constantly recreate national selves by distinguishing the other in terms of territory, boundaries, and security" (2002: 141).

Ongoing debates over exchange continue to be a regular feature of post-1992 discussions over the border.[183] Indeed, as I suggested in chapter 1, the hope that such initiatives will succeed and the fear that they will collapse or, potentially, further complicate life for residents, is a constant source of debate and discussion for enclave residents. While it would be problematic to see the enclaves as locked in a stasis of sensitivity, as historically formed objects that are subsequently suspended in an ahistorical relationship to their surroundings,[184] the framing of these debates seems to make the possibilities for a radical transformation of enclave status remote. While residents of areas such as Dahagram wait in the wings of nationalist debates, and, indeed, while other enclaves wait in the wings of debates about spaces like Dahagram, it seems likely that the nationalist symbolics of the enclaves will continue to overdetermine more grounded concerns for their residents.

That said, it would be equally problematic to assume that residents themselves might not and have not played a role in articulating their own strategies and narratives of belonging, or that the local politics of territory within spaces like Dahagram might

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[183] See, for example: *The Statesman,* 2003 (August 22), "Hope on Enclaves;" *The Statesman, 2004* (January 1), "Envoy Visit Lifts Enclave Spirits;" *Shangbad,* 2004 (January 15), "*Uttorancholer 5 Jelate Chhitmahal O Shimana Nirdharoner Kaaj Shuru* [Chhitmahal and Border Marking Processes Have Begun in 5 Districts of the North];" *The Daily Star,* 2005 (May 13), "BDR Boss Visits Tinbigha, Talks with BSF DIG;" *The Statesman,* 2005 (December 18), "India to Push for Swapping of Enclaves with Bangladesh;" *New Network,* 2006 (February 11), "India's Nod to Mujib-Indira Accord Could Resolve 90% of Border Problems: Babar;" *The Daily Star,* 2006 (March 25), "Legal Move for Enclave Rights;" and *The Statesman,* 2006 (August 8), "India, Bangla for Enclave Exchange."
[184] Indeed, as I discuss in the conclusion, progressive policies towards the enclaves, such as the allowance of electricity through the Tin Bigha Corridor or, indeed, the gradual, if slow, increase in the number of hours the Corridor remains open, or indeed, the opening of the Corridor itself, have indeed transformed life for residents.

not be constitutive of broader narratives about them. If broad framings of territory and space tend to erase the concrete realities of residents and their demands, these residents have equally played a role in shaping and re-appropriating such realities to articulate their own claims and shapings of space. Whether such demands might coalesce into a unified project of reclaiming the discourse around the enclaves is an open question, one that itself is shaped by internal factures, politics, and debates. Yet, as I suggested in my introduction, enclave residents have been and continue to be very much present at their own making. If this chapter bracketed such narratives to focus more on the discursive production of sensitive space, it is to these more local histories of belonging and struggle that I now turn.

CHAPTER 3:

HISTORIES OF BELONGING(S): NARRATING TERRITORY, POSSESSION,

AND DISPOSSESSION AT THE INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER

June 26th, 2007 marked the 15th anniversary of the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor. This anniversary is usually a day of celebration for Dahagram's 16,000 residents, commemorating the long political struggle over the opening of the Corridor. Friends had been telling me for months about the festivities that would accompany the "Corridor Open Day." *You must come. There will be music, sweets. Indians will parade in the Corridor to protest and we will also protest back, demanding a full opening of the Corridor.*[185] Traveling to the enclave from Patgram—a busy market town in Northern Lalmonirhat district in Bangladesh—in a light summer rain, I was looking forward to this spectacle of territorial belonging. As I arrived, there was a crowd of Indian protesters in the Corridor itself, yet there was no corresponding crowd from Dahagram. Curious, I proceeded directly to my friend Tariq's[186] tailoring shop to find out what had happened. As it turned out, the celebrations had fallen victim to the ban on political gatherings put in place by the Emergency Administration. "We spoke to the UNO [*Upazila Nirbahi* Officer],[187]" Tariq sourly told me after whisking me away for a cup of tea, "and decided that because of the Emergency, this year we wouldn't have any celebrations." And so, while activist groups from the surrounding Indian village of Mekhliganj protested the existence of the Corridor, and indeed, the enclave itself—shouting slogans of "United we stand, united we fight," and "Leave *Bharat* [India]!"—Dahagram residents gathered in tea stalls and grumbled.

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[185] I use the convention of italicizing quotations and discussions from my fieldnotes. Quotations from recorded interviews are not italicized.

[186] I have changed the names of my informants to protect their identity.

[187] *Upazilas* are Bangladesh's second smallest administrative unit in Bangladesh above the Union *Parishads* [councils] and below Districts. In this case, Patgram *Upazila* is a sub-district in Lalmonirhat District. The UNO is the *Upazila's* chief executive officer.

This discontent marked more than a lost holiday, or inability to counter the taunts and jeers of Indian protesters. The June 26th Anniversary, even with the paltry media coverage it usually draws, is an annual opportunity to reassert the enclave's claim of belonging to Bangladesh. This is critical to enclave residents because even after 60 years of struggle, such claims remain highly partial and, at moments, debated. The Corridor is only open during daylight hours and enclave residents are effectively "locked in" at night. The Corridor itself runs through sovereign Indian territory and is controlled by the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF), who many believe might close the Tin Bigha for good at any moment. What is more, Dahagram residents know that the enclave itself plays a largely symbolic role in concepts of state, nation, and territory within Bangladesh. The enclave is more important as an *idea* of territory "saved" from the clutches of a "spatially greedy" Indian state, than as a material geographic reality that is complicated, problematic, and economically and socially marginal from the perspective of the central government. Belonging is a question, as such, that is rarely taken for granted within the enclave.

The problem of understanding life in areas such as Dahagram is one that has recently reemerged as a central problematic in social science and historical research. The outpouring of literature on borders and frontiers has highlighted the importance and the possibilities of engaging borders as sites from which to begin unpacking state control. As many of these studies show, life for borderland residents is often one of tenuous negotiation.[188] At the same time, debates over rights and sovereignty set against the backdrop of the global war on terror have fore-grounded the contingency of membership within nations and states, thus reviving Arendtian (1968) concerns about the tenuous link between rights and statelessness.[189]

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[188] And not one that need necessarily always be cast in the negative. See Walker (1999).
[189] See, for example, essays in Hansen and Stepputat (2005).

Despite these critical interventions, the methodological and linguistic approaches to understanding and describing life in unstable and sensitive border areas such as Dahagram are often overdetermined by broad and abstract concepts such as citizenship, statelessness and, in the wake of Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1998), exception and 'bare life.' Though such concepts have been productive in thinking through the processes and practices of securing border areas (Basaran 2008; Jones 2009a), they do not necessarily clarify the ways residents of such spaces frame their own struggles, histories, and concerns. In a recent critique of the paucity of language for exploring such conditions, Butler argues: "I think we must describe destitution . . . but if the language by which we describe [it] presumes, time and again, that the key terms are sovereignty and bare life, we deprive ourselves of the lexicon we need to understand the other networks of power to which it belongs, or how power is recast in that place or even saturated in that place. (Butler and Spivak 2007: 42-43). As Butler suggests, the reliance on such tropes limits our ability to describe complex conditions of statelessness and the ways that people who live in such conditions forge their own claims to rights and resources and the way they frame their own conditions, histories, and political possibilities.

What then is the grammar through which we should begin to reconstruct such histories and claims for those who live in places such as Dahagram? My modest response to this question is that a critical starting point is to explore the ways that such issues are framed by those who live in such conditions themselves. If the last chapter engaged with the broad histories and constructions of the enclaves as sensitive, this one engages with at a more localized history of Dahagram. It explores the histories of belonging within the enclave. In doing so it sheds light on how people frame particular claims to membership—in communities, in nations, in states—and how they seek to actualize rights. The landscape of Dahagram is historically sedimented with histories

of belonging (Moore 2005). Citizenship, displacement, security (both national and personal), and rights are all subsumed within a range of notions of belonging and indeed belongings (material goods). Movement and the ability to hold and dispose of possessions—land, clothing, houses, crops, livestock—are central to my exploration. Yet belonging is more than purely a question of possession. It is also one of community and identity: who has the right to belong and why. I explore history from within the enclave, examining the intertwined political economies and cultural politics of belonging(s) in Dahagram largely as its residents told them to me. Rather than establishing the "facts" of Dahagram's history, I argue that these narrations are both the memories of possessions and dispossessions and the bases for ongoing claims to belonging. These claims, in turn, structure particular notions of nation and community that govern *who* is a legitimate member and what such membership means.

My opportunistic adoption of the homonym "belonging" is intended to draw attention to the ways that the politics of membership within the enclave are inseparable from debates over and claims of ownership. Enclave residents would occasionally use Bengali words and phrases such as *ami oi barir lok, gramer lok,* or more often *chhiter lok* [I belong to that household, village, or enclave] to denote belonging (membership) and *jinishta amar* [that is mine]*, dokhol kora niechi* [I (forcefully) took] to denote belonging (possession). The limited usage of these terms *per se* is not what interests me here. Rather, I am suggesting that broadly exploring ways that membership and property are linked in narrations of Dahagram's history is a more productive way to understand the dilemmas of life in unstable and sensitive spaces than more narrowly defined problematics such as "statelessness" or "citizenship." Belonging, conceived as such, is a plastic concept, one that holds many meanings, variations, and subtleties for those who negotiate it on a daily basis. By focusing on these meanings, I hope to show that belonging is a robust historical

analytic that can underscore the dilemmas of living in a sensitive space and illuminate what Partha Chatterjee has recently (2004) called "the politics of the governed" that undergirds ongoing struggles to establish even basic rights for and by those who are "only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the [Indian or, in this case, Bangladeshi] constitution" (38).

In attending to the ways questions of belonging, and indeed, belonging*s*, are articulated as a claim that is always already ethnicized, gendered, classed, and communal, I further seek to show how such claims are re-inscribed within Dahagram itself, as a set of normative notions of community identity and representation. Feldman writes, "Constructing a nationalist order framed by concepts of insiders and outsiders indicates both how notions of difference are constituted within particular social spaces and how they are symbolically reproduced to legitimate an already existing territorial boundary" (1999: 176). The ways that histories are remembered and narrated in Dahagram constitute a range of strategies for shaping this articulation between social spaces and national territory. Exploring such relationships shows how narratives of expropriation are reconstructed as arguments for rights and as silencings of other pasts and projects that reinscribe such claims in another set of exclusions within the enclave.

Tensions of Belonging

Though punctuated by moments of violence and open conflict, the history of Dahagram during the East Pakistan period is perhaps best described as a story of uncomfortable belonging to both India and Pakistan. The gradual formalization of the border ossified an asymmetrical relationship of rights and power inside the enclave drawn along communal lines. Van Schendel argues that notions of citizenship in the post-Partition period had a general character of *transterritoriality*. "Both states saw themselves as being in charge of the populations living in their own territory, but also

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of a [religious] category of people living in the territory of the other state." (2002:

127). Dahagram's population was roughly divided between Hindus and Muslims. As

movement across the border became more and more legally precarious, the ability of

Muslims living within Dahagram to freely and safely travel to market in surrounding

areas decreased. Such informal or unstated policies meant that Hindus in Dahagram

were residents of India in all but address. At the same time, Muslims were doubly

alienated from membership within Pakistan, legally residing within sovereign East

Pakistani territory, yet hemmed in by another state and residing side-by-side with

others who effectively held more rights than they. While Hindus in Dahagram were

able to live largely as though they were actually residing in India, Muslims had to

negotiate the vagaries of paramilitary forces, police, and often-hostile neighbors

simply to buy and sell goods.[190]

As with Indian enclaves in East Pakistan, daily navigation of such issues posed

intermittent problems. When disputes arose over ownership of livestock or crops,

Muslim residents had little recourse, as those who could legally represent and protect

their rights were situated across an international border. With the debate over the 1958

Nehru-Noon Accords these situations became more precarious. As tensions rose,

Dahagram became a zone of contention, and monitoring of and hostility towards its

residents grew. An Indian border security camp was established near what is now the

Tin Bigha Corridor,[191] and both residents of the surrounding Indian Thana of

Mekhliganj and border security *jawans* [soldiers] began to patrol its perimeter.

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[190] Though exact census figures for Dahagram are unavailable, residents recalled that the population of
Dahagram remained, roughly, evenly split between Hindus and Muslims until the opening of the
Corridor in 1992 (see below).
[191] Though I have not been able to verify the exact date that this camp was put in place, residents agree
that it was before 1965 and after 1958. This suggests that the camp was initially established by the West
Bengal Rifles, before they became incorporated into the new, national border security force (the BSF)
in 1965.

Dahagram residents characterize this period as one of suffering, where the act of going to market was fraught with risk and life within the enclave was one of extreme instability. As residents recall, it was common practice for the BSF to require a payment or bribes for passage to move into or out of the enclave. As Akkas Ali, a small-holder farmer living in the north of Dahagram, described it, "Whenever we crossed into Indian territory, we had to go through BSF scrutiny.[192] The BSF would note our name, put some mark on our shoulder, such as branding cows. They even compelled us to do work for them, doing such chores as cleaning their lavatories, cutting their lawns, sawing wood for them, etc." While residents in the South of the enclave, closest to Bangladesh, frequently dodged security forces to reach the East Pakistani mainland, others residing in the North would more frequently make the trip into India. This trip was more risky as it made one vulnerable for longer. Many were arrested in the *haat* in Mekhliganj.[193] Enclave residents frequently reminded me, *there is not a single family in the enclave who has not suffered* [koshto] *while a household member was detained in an Indian jail.* Beyond the problem of moving into and out of the enclave, Muslim residents faced vulnerability from looting by both Indians in Mekhliganj and Hindus living within the enclave.

There was an East Pakistan Police (EPP) posting in the enclave during this period. As Niranjana Majumdar noted in a concerned article in the Calcutta Paper *The Statesman*, "Despite many futile Indian protests, there had apparently been injected into Dahagram a police force. . . . This could have come only from the Pakistan mainland; and therefore could have entered Dahagram only through Indian territory— illegally" (originally in The Statesman, May 1, 1965. Reprinted in Whyte 2002:

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[192] No residents of Dahagram that I spoke with made any distinction between the BSF and the various paramilitary groups that preceeded their formation.
[193] As Whyte notes, residents of the enclave could frequently get a better price for agricultural products in East Pakistan as prices in India were fixed. As such, there was a double incentive to make the crossing to Patgram Thana.

Appendix 1-38).[194] The presence of the EPP post certainly suggests a level of commitment to administering and possessing Dahagram by the East Pakistan administration. Yet this effort, though symbolically important, was limited. The post was staffed with eight unarmed officers, and most residents remember it as largely ineffectual. Few Hindu residents of the enclave or the surrounding areas recognized their authority. The police themselves had little ability to enforce Pakistani law, as to defend their decisions, they would have to illegally cross the Tin Bigha, back into East Pakistan and, again, illegally return through the Tin Bigha with reinforcements and/or higher authorities.[195] The quasi legality of their presence, coupled by the elevated stakes of administrative officials crossing a frontier, meant that the EPP could do little to protect enclave residents. As such, those who remember this post, tend to comment on it derisively, as a weak gesture of administration in the face of inability to establish more substantive forms of protection and rule.

The Dahagram War

Such tensions of belonging characterized life for (Muslim) Dahagram residents both before and after the Liberation War in 1971. Indeed, this situation only substantively changed with the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor in 1992. However, this is neither to say that the difficulties of life within and movement out of the enclave were unchanging nor that they were purely reflections of local struggles over the status of the enclave and its residents. Certain moments in agricultural cycles— during rice harvests, for example—were more violent than others. Conflicts regularly arose over the exact location of the border and raids were carried out on both sides of the border to carry off the freshly harvested paddy. Moreover, the politics of belonging

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[194] Indeed, Majumdar goes so far as to suggest that the Dahagram War (see below) may have been a retaliation for the existence of this post.
[195] Such a breach would qualify as an international incident with broad ranging political implications, as opposed to a simple case of trespassing.

within the enclave were indexed to broader debates and struggles over territory, sovereignty, and space between the India and Pakistan. In moments of tension, for example during the debate over the Nehru-Noon Accords, daily practices of regulating movement periodically resolved themselves into moments of crisis and open violence. In such moments, residents of the enclaves, and indeed, residents of the border region more broadly, were more likely to experience expropriation, thefts, and various forms of organized communal attacks.

Perhaps the most vividly remembered of these incidents within Dahagram occurred in the spring of 1965 and resulted in the destruction of much of the enclave. This incident, which came to be known as the Dahagram War continues to resonate in enclave politics today. The War was set against the backdrop of increasing tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. As the dispute intensified, there was a marked build-up of Indian and Pakistani troops along border regions in both the East and West.[196] Beginning in January, the BSF began to mass troops and dig trenches in the area along the Tin Bigha, by far the closest point of the enclave to the mainland. This effectively cut off Dahagram residents from Patgram Thana in East Pakistan and forced them to make a more risky[197] crossing into Mekhliganj in India to buy and sell goods.[198] Tension in Dahagram reached a dangerous height following India's build up along the Rann of Kachchh—another space that had been contentious and sensitive in the relationship between India and Pakistan situated on India's West Coast—in early March[199] and a series of incursions along the East Pakistan border.[200] Violence seemed inevitable to residents of Dahagram.

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[196] For a detailed exploration of the 1965 war, see Gupta (1967).

[197] Risky because residents could be arrested at any point while at market as opposed to only during the border crossing.

[198] See *The Pakistan Observer*, 1965 (March 20), "India Deploys Dogras, Jats, Rajputs Along Ranpur [*sic*] Border."

[199] There is a marked link between the Rann of Kuchchh and the enclaves. Both were areas of political and geographical ambiguity that emerged out of the post-Partition reshuffling of the Princely States. Both are areas of continuing ambiguity and intrigue. The ambiguous space of both the enclaves and the

On the morning of March 13th, in the Dangbari neighborhood of Angarpota, a small herd of goats were rustled by a group of Indians from Mekhliganj. Such back and forth rustling was a common occurrence, particularly along Dahagram's northern border.[201] Yet in periods of tension, disputes could quickly escalate to overt violence. Bachao Miah, the goats' owner, crossed the border to demand their return and was shot in the leg by a man who was repeatedly described to me as a "BSF officer." Miah, assisted by his sons, retreated back into Dahagram. That night, Indians surrounded Dahagram on three sides. With the support of the BSF, they began moving from the border in towards the enclave's center, burning Muslim homes as they went.[202]

Sharif Udin Talakdar, who was as a boy at the time, remembers the expected violence leading up to the War.

> A few days prior to the actual trouble, we anticipated that Indians would loot our household [*loot kore nieche*]. . . . We had four guns, bows, arrows, and other weapons. We used to be on guard [*pahara diechi*] during the night. On that particular day, the Indian Colonel shot Bachao Miah and in the groves towards the North of my house, we noticed a few West Bengal Rifles[203] people looking. An elder and I proceeded to see what they were doing there. Getting nearer, we noticed that there were hundreds of them. Then, after the sun went down, they started shooting. From our side also, my uncles and cousins replied. I, with my two younger brothers ran to the Tin Bigha [10 km from his house], which is what everybody else was doing. All the villagers flocked

Rann have led to frequent violence both between border security forces and communities living on either side of the border. Indeed, on March 20th, six days after the outbreak of the Dahagram War, fighting broke out in the Rann between India and Pakistan. The two regions are further similar in that they have both been the focus of intense negotiations over the meaning of space, identity, and nation and are critical sites in the construction of contested borders. For more on the Kachchhi frontier, see Ibrahim (2009).

[200] See *The Pakistan Observer,* 1965 (March 18), "Pakistan Warns India Vacate Aggression in Dahagram."

[201] For a classic study of communal social conflict in Bangladesh around livestock, see Roy (1996).

[202] It is worth noting that there is some controversy over what exactly happened during the Dahagram War. Indian papers reported that Muslim residents burned Hindu residents' homes, forcing them to flee the enclave. These reports claimed that the BSF entered the enclave in defense of or retaliation for this attack (Whyte 2002).

[203] There is an elision between the West Bengal Rifles and the Indian Border Security forces in many remembrances of this occasion. This is, in part, because in 1965, the Indian government replace individual *state* border security forces, such as the West Bengal Refles, with a *national* security force. Despite this nominal transfer, the BSF was run by state governments until 1967. As such, in 1965, the West Bengal Rifles and the BSF were, effectively, the same organization (Van Schendel 2005).

there. There was an EPP camp in the enclave. A few police personnel already had deserted the village during the previous nights. But still, five of them were there. These police were also with us. They disguised themselves as women wearing saris [*Tara shari pore naribesh niese*]. They feared that they may be taken away by Indians if their identity was disclosed.

Talakdar's description recalls a bitterness with both the EPP and the Pakistani state for not actively asserting the belonging of the enclave by defending it as East Pakistani territory. The local representatives of the state, indeed the only officials with the authority to "administer" the enclave, are remembered as feminized, cowardly dressing in saris to conceal their identity rather than protecting Pakistani territory and citizens. This gendering of defense highlights a claim shared by many of the men involved in Dahagram's politics that they themselves had defended and claimed the enclave *for* Bangladesh. While representatives of the government behaved "like women," refusing to defend their territorial integrity, the Muslim men of the enclave asserted the inclusion of Dahagram in East Pakistan by defense of their own land.

For most, the memory of the outbreak of the war is not one of bold defense, but rather of confusion and chaos. One day, as we sat under a tree in Bongerbari Field, an open space in the center of Dahagram's largest village and the location of the *Union Parishad* Council Offices, Kolim Hyder, who was a boy of eight in 1965, tried to explain the confusion and rupture of that night. Kolim's resonant voice became agitated as he remembered the destruction of Dahagram.

> It was around eight in the evening. We saw people North of the village crossing the road. Everybody was carrying bundles, gripping their children, and walking fast. . . . People were carrying pillows, quilts. . . . I remember we hadn't taken our evening meal, though usually we ate earlier. My father took the rice pot [*bhater hari*]. A few days earlier, we had harvested *mashkalai dal*.[204] Our yard was filled with *kalais*. Do you know how to collect *kalais* from field? The roots comes out, not just the plant. *Kalai* bunches were lying scattered in the yard where during the day ten or twelve people labored to husk them.

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[204] A breed of lentils grown widely in North Bengal.

My father rushed to the cow-shed and untied all of the cows, so that they could save their lives and also eat the *dal*. In those days, we used to grow plenty of *kalai*. We had vast plots of land [*anek jomi*] near the *char*, which have now gone under the river. My father took hold of the rice pot. We kids were walking alongside my mother. We reached Tin Bigha.

When we arrived at the Tin Bigha, the BSF weren't allowing us to pass. . . . BSF was firing to prevent people from crossing Indian territory, but we were desperate and by 10 PM, we passed Tin Bigha and reached the mainland. Not everyone could pass. Others had to wait until the next night. . . . We went to Patgram. We took shelter in a school and we had no food that night. My father threw away the rice pot he carried in the rush across the Tin Bigha, as he had to grip us children. There was a huge crowd. My father threw the rice pot when the BSF fired in Tin Bigha. I walked all the way to Patgram [11 km away]. My mother took hold of my young sisters, while my father looked after the elder pair. During the crossing, my father held tight so that I would not be lost in the crowd [*Par howar shamoi, abba amar hat dhore rhakse, jano ami harai najai*].

The themes of chaos shared in Kolim's vivid remembrances were echoed by almost all who recall the War. Only a few were able to escape through the Tin Bigha on that first night. Most were held there for another twenty-four hours in terror of an attack from the front by the BSF or from behind by the same villagers who had burned their homes.

Perhaps what are most vivid in Kolim's narrative are the loss of means to eat and the trauma of separation from places and belongings. His description highlights the stark contrast between the bounty of the *dal* harvest and the sudden loss of even a pot to cook rice in. Indeed, the story of rescuing a rice pot from a burning house only to lose it in the panic of flight was repeated, in various ways, by multiple people. Some simply could not carry their cooking pots on the mad dash south. Some report saving their pots only to have lost the rice that was in them. Some remember a fortunate and generous few, mostly those with homes situated close to Tin Bigha, who were able to salvage some rice and share it with those huddled together in hunger and fear, waiting for more than a day for clearance to cross into safety. These collective memories seemed to symbolize and encapsulate the loss of homes and the physical

flight from the enclave. For Kolim, the forced discarding of the pot seems to mark a stripping away of belongings, reducing the residents of Dahagram to refugees dependent on the hospitality of others. The loss of the pot presaged the difficulties to come.

The large influx of refugees into Patgram dangerously stretched the town's resources. Refugees from Dahagram were billeted in impromptu camps set-up in Patgram's schools and railway stations. The day after residents fled, fighting began between the East Pakistan Rifles post in Panbari and the BSF post near the Tin Bigha in Mekhliganj. Heavy fire was almost continually exchanged for the next two weeks.[205] As demands for a withdrawal of aggression were swapped between India and East Pakistan,[206] troop build-ups continued in the border regions around Patgram, along the length of the Rangpur border, and around other border districts such as Kushtia and Sylhet.[207] Meanwhile, waves of Muslim refugees living in the Indian district of Cooch Behar began moving across the border amidst reports that they were being forcibly expelled by the BSF.[208]

On April 1, a cease-fire arrangement was reached and Dahagram residents began to return to their homes from Patgram.[209] As part of the arrangement, the Indian government agreed to provide basic compensation for victims of the attack. These included essentials such as a small amount of rice and cooking oil and a cow for every family that had lost their home so that they could re-till their fields. These meager

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[205] Though none of the newspaper coverage of the War that I was able to locate reported any casualties.

[206] See *The Pakistani Observer,* 1965 (March 28), "India Sternly Told: No Talks Without Restoration of Status Quo" and *The Pakistan Observer,* 1965 (March 18), "Pakistan Warns India Vacate Aggression in Dahagram."

[207] See *The Pakistan Observer*, 1965 (March 20), "India Deploys Dogras, Jats, Rajputs Along Rangpur Border;" *The Pakistani Observer,* 1965 (March 19), "Intruders at Kalirhat Driven Out;" *The Pakistani Observer*, 1965 (March 18), "Indian Forces Fire on Sylhet Border;" *The Pakistani Observer,* 1965 (March 25), "India Deploys More Troops Along East Pakistan Border;" *The Pakistani Observer*, 1965 (March 28), "Indian Troops Deployed Along Kushtia Border;" and *The Pakistani Observer*, 1965 (March 29), "In Patgram-Baura Sector: Indiscriminant Firing By Indian Troops."

[208] See *The Pakistani Observer,* 1965 (March 25), "Fresh Influx of Refugees: Evictions from Cooch Behar."

[209] See *The Pakistani Observer,* 1965 (April 1), "Cease Fire at Dahagram."

supplies were inadequate to carry most residents through the next harvest cycle. Many had lost not only their homes and possessions, but also the stores of rice and *dal* necessary for both income and household self-sufficiency. What is more, many of the fields planted with rice for the *boro* harvest in mid-summer had been burned or damaged.

Tensions along the border remained high. The declaration of war between India and Pakistan in June caused further military build up along all of East Pakistan's boundaries. Though there was no further direct military action against Dahagram, residents of the surrounding Mekhliganj Thana enacted a blockade of the enclave, preventing Muslim residents from traveling to either Mekhliganj or Patgram markets. As one resident bitterly recalled, "We used to wait for rain or darkness so that we could rush through [the Tin Bigha] to Patgram to buy essentials. Life was very hard in those days. There was nothing human in that vast India." Others remember sifting through the dirt and remains of their burned homes to recover even tiny amounts of rice. Many families were forced to slaughter the cows provided as compensation for food. Most supplemented insufficient diets by fishing the Tista river. As Kolim told me, "if it were not for the river, at that time we would have starved."

While returning Muslim refugees struggled to rebuild and survive through to the next harvest, many faced the added indignity of seeing their looted possessions in the hands of their Hindu neighbors and the difficulty of negotiating to recover their lost belongings. As Kolim recalled these complications:

> There was a Hindu man named Dhoroni Babu. My father was a friend of his. My father went to visit him when he noticed a cow in the member's yard staring at him. My father said to the member, "*Dada* [uncle], it is my cow." Then he said, "how can it belong to you?" Then my father said, "untie it and see if it comes to me when I call it. Would you return it then?" The man said, "okay, I will." My father won the challenges, and got the cow back.

Kolim's family was one of relative wealth, standing, land holdings, and power within the enclave. Most were less successful in their attempts to reclaim property.

The loss proved to be one that many families were unable to recover from. Jasmine Begum, now an elderly woman living in a run down home built on the site of her family's original property, bitterly recalls the war as the beginning of her family's long decent into poverty. Before the conflict they had been moderately wealthy, owning livestock and enough rice to run a self-sufficient home, and jute to sell in the Mekhliganj and Patgram markets. "During the fire, we were unable to take anything away with us. We survived on whatever relief we got. We have never recovered from the fire. We learned fear then. Fear has been part of our life since."

The Dahagram War marked a moment of trauma that laid bare the vagaries of life for enclave residents in the years before the Liberation War. In memories of this moment, the imagination of forms of belonging within nation and state as linked to possession are clarified. The inability of the East Pakistani state to protect residents in their own homes; the loss of the very means to cook food; and the meager recompense for loss of homes, crops, and livestock all speak to memories and experiences of instability, uncertainty, and anxiety that were part of daily life within the enclave. Yet, it also marked the way that questions of territorial belonging resonated both within and in relation to Dahagram. Not only were the stakes of national belonging high for enclave residents, but the space of the enclave itself was imbricated in broader questions of territory. While it may be an exaggeration to claim, as many enclave residents do, that the 1965 India-Pakistan War broke out first in Dahagram, it is certainly true that the fate of enclave residents and their ability to live within and move into and out of the space of Dahagram was intimately linked to broader conceptions of national space. Such conceptions were to form the basis of future claims for inclusion and membership. Indeed, the Dahagram War, and memories of it, resonated with other

articulations of territory and national belonging that were to emerge following the Liberation War.

Belonging to Bangladesh

If the 'East Pakistan Period' was characterized by periodic violence and territorial uncertainty, the period after Bangladesh's independence in 1971 leading up to the opening of the Corridor in 1992 was the most unstable and contentious period in Dahagram's postcolonial history. During this time, the lines of belonging and exclusion were starkly drawn and the complications that shaped the lives of residents during the East Pakistan period more frequently became open conflicts. Though not far from areas that saw intense fighting during the Liberation War, Dahagram escaped direct involvement. In any case, the Liberation War, at least initially, led to significantly relaxed conditions for Dahagram residents. Following India's military and humanitarian interventions in the Liberation War, a climate of cooperation emerged between India and Bangladesh. During this period, residents moved more freely both across the border to trade in Indian markets in Mekhliganj and to the Bangladeshi mainland to trade in Patgram.

This relaxing of tensions, effectively, began to end with the controversies surrounding the Indira-Mujib Pact in 1974. The Pact transformed Dahagram into a focal point and symbol of territorial tension and political dispute between Bangladesh and India. As legal disputes over the Corridor began to grow, movement again became complicated for Dahagram's Muslim residents. The BSF imposed a five kilogram (kg) ceiling on goods moving into and out of the enclave. This effectively meant that residents could not sell enough crops to purchase household essentials. As one woman living near the zero-point in Angorpota explained it, "we sold tobacco and bought rice,

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but how much rice can you buy selling only five kgs of tobacco? Yet you also need

oil, salt and all the other things."

Residents, moreover, describe being forced into positions of compromise as it

became harder to access markets without negotiating with border security forces. Yet,

for many residents, memories from this period are also framed as claims of stoic

resistance to territorial aggression. As Bashar, who grew up during this period as a

member of a politically influential, though comparatively less wealthy family in the

enclave, put it:

> BSF would come, demand mangos, wood, or timber, and take anything away
> they wanted. Anything. A goat, a hen. We had no way to say no. They would
> bring in their laborers with them. If we said no, the next day they would punish
> [*shasti*] us on our way to Mekhliganj. Believe me, we were just like prisoners
> [*ashami*]. Worse than prisoners. A prisoner is not in want of food or medicine.
> We had want of everything. Moreover, we had no freedom to move. The
> period from 1982-1992, we were in a condition that is not describable in any
> language [*bhashai bola jai na*]. For example, if you take Ethiopia, though they
> are in want of food or medicine, they at least have the freedom to roam around.
> We had nothing. No freedom, no essentials. Children died of diarrhea. They
> were buried without clothes [*kafoner kapor chara*]. . . . But brother, still
> Dahagram people did not give their allegiance to India [*India ke kono chhar
> die ni*]. They didn't surrender. Even after such severe torture and blockades.

The equation of life inside of Dahagram to a prison was a frequent analogy I heard

during my research. Here, this metaphor is extended to suggest that Dahagram was

worse off than a country beset by war and famine. Though hyperbolic—male residents

did regularly leave Dahagram to access both Mekhliganj and Patgram—the narrative's

ultimate claim to belonging is clear: despite deprivation and suffering, Muslim

residents persevered and refused to surrender their land and allegiance to India. The

communal claim to belonging repeatedly positioned residents as stoic sufferers

holding their land in the name of a Muslim Bengali state.

The challenges posed by these regulations of movement led to increased

"illegal" border crossings by often-desperate residents. Many tell stories of men

waiting for dark, rain, or fog to cross the Tin Bigha to reach Bangladesh. Others tried

their luck in the Mekhliganj markets. Both these activities had a risk of arrest, for

which the standard penalty was a fine and one month in jail, though many were

detained for longer. During this period, detainees had no way to communicate with

their families to inform them of the arrest, leaving their households in states of anxiety

until their release. Basharul, a local school teacher, described his experience with such

an arrest to me one day as we drank tea in his yard.

> I was an 8th grader when I was arrested. My family had ordered rice from an
> Indian trader and my brother asked me and several other laborers to go and get
> it. There were five other adults and me. Though we had ample lands in those
> days, our yields [*folon*] were not high, so we had to buy rice from outside when
> we fell short. In those days, Indians were making our life hard all the time. I
> was very young then and did not understand what was going to happen. On our
> way back from gathering the rice, a group who worked for a man who had a
> dispute with the trader blocked our way. There were 15 or 20 of them. They
> blocked the road and were saying that they would not let us bring the rice, that
> it was illegal. . . . Then the police came and took us to Mekhliganj, where a
> case was filed [*mamla korce*] and we were sent to custody [*hajote bhorse*]. I
> served one month and five days in Mekhliganj and two more months in Cooch
> Behar.

The belonging of Dahagram residents was layered and enmeshed in local disputes.

Residents' ability to move, sell goods, and avoid jail were contingent on a complex set

of interrelations, many of which were not just beyond their control, but outside of their

knowledge.

If the position for men was complicated, women were in an even more

vulnerable and compromised position. Movement into and out of the enclave was

markedly gendered. While men would periodically risk crossing to India or

Bangladesh—frequently returning with boastful tales about near misses and bold

evasive ploys—women rarely left Dahagram. Their movements were confined not

only by religious prohibitions on their leaving the home, but by the added belief, much

repeated by men, in their inability to flee from pursuers. During this period, many

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women died of complications related to childbirth, as access to medical facilities was impractical if not impossible. The threat of violence from hostile neighbors and security forces created further arguments for the cloistering of women within the enclave.

Yet there were more complications and dangers of living in the enclave than just the restriction of movement. Kidnapping and rape were common features of life in Dahagram during this period. Women from within the enclave were periodically taken by villagers from surrounding areas and "tortured" for days before being allowed to return. Men within the enclave also engaged in the kidnapping of women from Mekhliganj. Indeed, these kidnappings were occasionally remembered as celebrations of resistance by Muslim men who had been regularly humiliated by BSF tolls on movement, insults in Mekhliganj *haats*, and Hindu neighbors who accentuated such insults through the very freedom of their own movement. The gendered violence involved in territory making in the post-Independence and pre-Corridor years marked women's' bodies both as belongings (objects within the political and spatial economy of territory) and belonging (symbols of nation and community in need of protection, preservation, and purity).[210] Women in Dahagram were thus regularly caught-up within multiple and violent politics of possession and inclusion.

The Dahagram Movement Committee

If the Bangladesh period saw an increase in projects seeking to forcibly exclude Muslim residents of Dahagram by Hindus within and outside of the enclave, as well as border security forces, it also saw a renewed interest within Bangladesh in claiming Dahagram as part of the nation. This movement was intimately linked to the

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[210] On the violent and gendered politics of nation-making and territory, see Saikia (2004b), Mookherjee (2006), various other essays in Chatterjee and Jeganathan (2000), Menon and Bhasin (1998), and Butalia (1998).

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political shift away from secularism in the wake of the assassination of Mujib in 1975 and the assumption of the presidency by Ziaur Rahman in 1977. This period saw an extension of the communal politicization of territory signaled in the debate over the Indira-Mujib Pact in 1974. In 1977, the Zia Administration issued 16 "Civil Guns" to Dahagram. These guns, nominally for use in "defense," were given to the enclave's unofficial Union *Parishad* governing body and, in effect, seem to have been distributed to wealthy and politically influential Muslim families within the enclave. This endorsement of violent defense marked, for many, the first concrete step in Bangladesh securing the enclave as a part of its national territory. If, from the perspective of the administration, the distribution of these guns marked territorial sovereignty over Dahagram, for residents, they signified a political acknowledgement that Dahagram belonged to Bangladesh and could be defended as such. While it is not clear how, or if, the weapons were used (many residents told me stories where the guns played significant roles in intimidating Indians, though none shared stories of their being fired), the guns are spoken of almost reverentially as critical symbols of belonging. While representatives of the state could not directly "administer" the enclave, they could encourage residents to claim and defend their own territory.

Zia's awarding of the "civil guns" presaged a series of events in the early 1980s that would bring the questions of belonging and the issues around the Corridor to a head. In July of 1981, when the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics attempted to conduct a census in the enclave as a first step in negotiating the terms of the Tin Bigha Corridor's lease. The census brought many of the tensions of belonging in and around the enclave to a head.[211] For Bashar Hassan, this census was a catalyst for galvanizing political elites in the enclave into broader advocacy and protest for realization of the Indira-Mujib Pact. At the time, he was one of the privileged few within the enclave

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[211] See Chapter 2 for the public debate over this census.

whose families could afford to send them to school in Patgram. Bashar's memories

position the census as a focal moment, both of suffering and of resistance.

> Dahagram's first census happened in 1981. If you hear the stories, you will
> simply tremble. Bangladesh decided to conduct a census to show the world that
> "Dahagram is ours and we are controlling it [*Dahagram amader neontrone*]."
> We who were studying here [in Patgram], were trained as enumerators. . . .
> However, we were blocked on the way in. Indians came with bows and arrows.
> . . . Indians were saying that though the enclave belongs to Bangladesh on
> paper, they would not allow the possession of it. Then the two DCs [District
> Commissioners] of the neighboring districts sat again. Indian politicians
> suggested that "If you have to do a census, then go through Changrabhanda
> [far to the North of the Tin Bigha]."
> Three census officials entered Dahagram by that round-about way. We,
> however, were instructed by the Bangladesh authorities to do our fieldwork
> earlier, going through the Tin Bigha in the night as we used to when going to
> and coming from Patgram. However, after the census, Indians [who were
> maintaining the blockade] only allowed the officials to return. We fieldworkers
> had no way to come back. They were on guard on all corners of Dahagram
> with bows and arrows. They imposed a total blockade which lasted for a long
> 22 days. These days were the most sad and helpless days of my life. None was
> able to get out of Dahagram. During these 22 days, 26 of our people died from
> a scarcity of medicines and other essentials. We had to bury them without any
> cloth or with old clothes.

As Foucault (1991) has argued, modernity is characterized by a political paradigm

primarily concerned with the management of populations through technologies of

governance. The census is one strategy through which governments make populations

"legible" and "manageable" (Scott 1998). As such, it is both a technology of

governance and a tool of inclusion and incorporation (Markowitz 2007). In Dahagram,

the very process of conducting the census became a battleground of belonging. To

mark residents of Dahagram as members of Bangladesh through enumeration would

be to solidify their claims of national inclusion. Bashar's narrative emphasizes this.

The purpose of the census was to officially claim that, "Dahagram is *ours*, and we are

controlling it." In this same sense, the protests and attempts to block the census

offered a counter-narrative. As the *Bangladesh Observer* reported at the time, "What

happened on July 6 when Bangladesh officials in their third bid went to conduct census inside these enclaves was a naked attempt by India to foil the census and show the world that people of these enclaves no more want to remain with Bangladesh" (quoted in Whyte 2002: 134).

Following the census, the group of students who were trained as enumerators decided that direct political action was needed if the enclaves were to be claimed for Bangladesh. To this end, they formed what came to be known as the *Dahagram Shangram Shomiti* (Dahagram Movement Committee, or DSS). All of these students were from elite and powerful families within Dahagram—families that had been involved in the enclave's politics for a long time. The link between the census and the Movement Committee is striking. Cohn (1987) points out that the census in British India was perhaps most significant for politicizing its enumerators. Though the politics were different in Dahagram than they were in 19th century colonial India, the stakes in classification and inclusion and the political significance of the census were no less apparent to the enumerators who formed the DSS. Indeed, for this group of students, the census and the blockade following it offered a clear message that spurred them to find other ways to forcefully assert their inclusion in Bangladesh. As Bashar recalls it, "We proceeded with the demand that we should be given back our territory, the territory which belonged to us according to the '74 treaty. After the formation of the Committee, Bangladeshi administration began to evaluate us. Prior to that, we were just like dogs and foxes." In other words, through the actions of the Committee, residents of Dahagram would not only reclaim their territory, but also achieve the status of belonging within Bangladesh and its residents would be recognized as rights bearing citizens as opposed to marginal people beyond the bounds of the state.

The DSS began to raise public awareness of the situation in Dahagram. Mohammad Yusuf, another member of the DSS, described their activities to me as

claims not just for membership in Bangladesh, but also for the dignity of the residents of Dahagram. The DSS, as such, did not simply argue for implementing the Indira-Mujib Pact, but also that residents were deserving members of the nation. In Yusuf's words:

> We didn't take any subscription or monetary help from anybody outside the committee. We did it on our own [*ja korsi, nijera korci*]. One day, three of us were on our way to Ishwardi Junction to stick handbills over a train there that was headed to Chittagong. We only had three taka with us and no tickets. It was our decision that we wouldn't extend our hand, as no movement can be run with money earned by begging. What a movement needs is self-confidence. While returning, the ticket collector found me. I began showing our handbills and saying, "You see, we are from Dahagram, we are running our movement." He was convinced. He fed us *pao rutti* [toast]. I realized that whoever fights for his country gets respect. Those were good days. A kid like me, who was just in his 10th grade, would go before the DC [District Commissioner] and say, "Sir, I am from *Dahagram Shangram Shomitti*. We are fighting to realize the '74 Treaty." And the DC would pay attention to me, extend his hand to shake with me, and say, "Sit down my son."

Yusuf's description tells a story of both inclusion through struggle and the recognition by other Bangladeshis of the righteousness of their cause. Moreover, it narrates a decidedly local negotiation with institutions of government's interactions with the enclave. As this local history illustrates, renderings of populations and territory engendered dynamics within Dahagram that would prove integral to the shaping of belonging and life both within it and, more broadly, within the nation-state. As Chatterjee argues, a central strategy in the negotiation between marginal populations and the institutions that seek to govern them is to "*give to the empirical form of a population group the moral attributes of a community*" (2004: 57, emphasis in original). Yusuf's emphasis on the dignity of the movement's activities, made through earnest appeal as opposed to through begging, makes the claim of such a moral community for Dahagram. He emphasizes the enclave's residents not as downtrodden burdens on the state, but rather as active political citizens, ready to struggle for their

territory and their belonging. In other words, he asserts their belonging in the nation as a means of making a claim for administrative inclusion in the state.

The DSS began to draw the notice of authorities in both Bangladesh and India. In Mekhliganj, the police mounted an active effort to locate and arrest members of the Committee, while the already existing *Kuchlibari Shangram Shamiti* (KSS) in India, which opposed the opening of the Corridor, and its companion organization, the *Tin Bigha Shangram Shamiti* (TBSS), began to increase their own protests and activities. Tensions rose and blockades and arrests became more frequent. As the DSS's activities became more and more visible, their Indian counterparts in the KSS expanded their campaign by reaching out to the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Jananta Party (BJP) to help re-nationalize the question of the Corridor. In response, the DSS contacted the Jatiya Ganotantri Party [JAGPA] in Bangladesh, an ardently nationalist party led by Shaiful Alam Prodhan.[212]

In 1984, with JAGPA's support, the DSS organized its most dramatic and visible protest, which they called "The Long March." Riaz, another member of the Movement Committee, described the march to me.

> Twenty-two youths from Dahagram joined JAGPA members in a procession wearing funeral robes [*kafoner kapor*]. First, we performed a *Janozah* [funeral rights] prayer in Dhaka. Then we began the Long March. We said that by any means necessary we would march through the Tin Bigha, as it should have been Bangladeshi land according to the treaty. Our march got huge attention because of JAGPA's participation. At Lalmonirhat, more than 100,000 people[213] got out of their homes to join us. It was a huge procession, looking like it was just waiting to explode.
> India also maneuvered thousands of military forces. They even brought cannons. They thought we would really cross Tin Bigha. . . . In the end, it was the Bangladeshi forces who prevented us from crossing. There was no bridge over the river in Panbari [shortly before the Tin Bigha on the way from Patgram] then. It was the rainy season and we saw soldiers waiting to catch us.

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[212] JAGPA regularly participated in and organized protests in relation to a range of border controversies throughout the 1980s. See documentation in Bhasin (1996).

[213] Such numbers seem likely exaggerated.

> We jumped into the river and began swimming. There were BDR on the other bank of the river also. When we arrived there, they tied us and detained us.

Riaz's description highlights the symbolic import of the march. Cut off from the Bangladeshi mainland, Dahagram residents were slowly dying. By formally conducting funeral rights and marching with the intent to pass through the Tin Bigha, DSS members were intent to force both an international event that would highlight the debate over the Corridor and emphasize their willingness to confront death in defense of territory, rather than a slow starvation at the hands of the BSF and residents of Mekhliganj. In other words, the Long March drew attention to Dahagram not simply as a moral community in Chatterjee's sense of the term, but also as a moral obligation to the Bangladeshi state and nation.

Opening the Corridor

The DSS's activities coincided with Ershad's controversial tenure in Bangladesh and the BJP's reassertion of a range of Hindu nationalist debates in national politics within India (see Chapter 2). The communal, internal, and territorial politics that these national shifts further engendered heightened debate over the Corridor's opening and continued to uncomfortably raise the stakes of belonging within Dahagram itself. In 1982, in a conference to resolve border issues, technical experts and security forces from both India and Bangladesh reached an agreement on lease terms for the Tin Bigha. Contrary to the agreement reached in the Indira-Mujib Pact, this agreement stated that sovereignty over the Corridor would remain in the hands of Indian officials. Despite this clarification, no direct action to open the Corridor was taken, though an active debate reemerged in India over the legality of the creation of Tin Bigha.[214]

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[214] For details of this lease, see Whyte (2002: Appendix 1-42)

Ershad, originally from Rangpur himself and a notorious supporter of *Uttor Bongo* [North Bengal] championed the cause of Dahagram and the Tin Bigha Corridor as a nationalist issue around the securing of territory, using the 1982 lease as a basis to pressure the Indian administration over Dahagram. As the DSS's activities gained increased attention, Ershad began to bring the debate over the Corridor to a head. In 1986, and again in 1988, Ershad made personal visits to the enclave (see Chapter 2). These visits remain among the most celebrated and fondly remembered moments in Dahagram's history. Sharif Udin Talukdar, who was a member of the DSS, a prominent political player in the enclave, and future Union *Parishad* Chairman, remembers the visit as a moment of extreme emotions. "He was the first high-profile leader to step into Dahagram. He came here by helicopter. After Ershad's arrival, we were quite speechless. It was as though we helpless folks got our father. We began weeping before him."

Ershad's visit did indeed mark a turning point in enclave politics. During his visit, he distributed over 25,000tk worth of goods to needy households. He also made Angorpota and Dahagram into an official Union *Parishad* within Patgram Upazilla, giving it formal political standing within the Bangladesh administrative system, despite its territorial dislocation from the Bangladeshi mainland. He further allocated funds for the development of both schools and medical facilities in Dahagram. What is more, Ershad began actively advocating for a solution to the Corridor problem, proposing, among other things, the construction of a fly-over bridge for the Tin Bigha, so that residents could effectively pass from Dahagram to Panbari without ever having to touch Indian soil. Yet his visits also increased the tensions over belonging within the enclave. As Riaz explained it to me,

> Seeing the emotional outburst on our part at Ershad's visit, Indians understood our true desires and where our commitments lay. After realizing that we were truly Bangladeshi, Indians escalated their tortures. Earlier, they believed that

some day we may be India-minded. They hoped that there would be a new generation in Dahagram that was pro-India. After Ershad came, those hopes were gone.

As such, while Ershad's visit brought renewed hope to residents, it also marked an increase in tensions with Mekhliganj. Residents spoke of numerous blockades from the mid-1980s on. Indeed, many echoed Bashar's comment on the impossibility of even acquiring *kafan* cloth to shroud dead bodies in accordance with Islamic funerary rights. *We had nothing to bury our dead in and were forced to cover them in banana leaves.* Along with an increase in violence between Muslim residents and surrounding areas, Hindus living within the enclave began an active campaign to demonstrate that Dahagram residents "desired" to be part of India. Muslim residents recall that they were often forced or extorted to sign petitions and documents claiming allegiance to India by Hindus living within the enclave, themselves formulating their own claims of belonging to India.

Tensions between the DSS and the KSS, as well as the regular blockades and increases in arrests, continued throughout Ershad's presidency. Yet in 1991, the relationship between India and Bangladesh again briefly thawed with the collapse of the Ershad regime under joint pressure and activism from a coalition of parties and public protests within Bangladesh.[215] As the BNP assumed power and a series of court cases blocking the Corridor in India were resolved, the possibility of opening the Corridor became real. On June 26th, 1992, amidst protest by both the KSS and the BJP, the Corridor finally opened.[216] While seen, almost uniformly within the enclave, as a major and important victory, the Corridor has also created new and complicated

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[215] Though this did represent a return to democratic rule, it did not necessarily mean a move back towards a secular pan-Bengali political stance. For more on the opening of the Corridor, see Whyte (2002). For more on Bangladesh's emergence from Ershad's rule, see Van Schendel (2009).

[216] A report collected in Bhasin (1996) claims that more than 3,000 anto Corridor activists were arrested in Cooch Behar and adjoining districts and that at least one death resulted from skirmishes between Indian activists marching to stop the opening of the Corridor and members of the local police and the BSF.

configurations of sovereignty, sensitivity, and belonging within the enclave. Further, the opening of the Corridor has served to ossify the borders of Dahagram. Traveling to Mekhliganj in India is now unambiguously illegal and to get there one must negotiate frequent border patrols and the panoptic BSF watchtowers that now surround the enclave. Access to Bangladesh is now similarly restricted except through the Tin Bigha Corridor, which remains open only during daylight.

Many members of the DSS feel that the partial and contingent fulfillment of the Indira-Mujib Pact is a betrayal to those who fought and struggled for the Corridor. As Riaz told me,

> The government that was in power then, the Khalida Zia government, did it wrong to receive the Indian suggestion [that the BSF would control the Corridor]. What could we people of Dahagram do? We had no options. We were helpless. We have no political representation at the national level. We have no strong lobby. We have no strong voice to raise the issue at some international level. In 1982, President Ershad said to India, "Give me my territory." What Khalida Zia[217] did in 1992 was cheap politics [*shasta rajniti].*[218]

Riaz's claim marks both a frustration at the partial fulfillment of the Indira-Mujib Pact but also another statement of inclusion within Bangladesh. Riaz speaks of heads of state claiming "their" territory. A failure to defend the rights of enclave residents is a lack of commitment to "national" interest. At the same time, the "cheap politics" of the BNP administration highlight that despite long struggle, belonging in Dahagram remains partial, contingent, and contested.

Local Heroes

Though the history of belonging in Dahagram is remembered largely as a narrative of injustices and expropriations, it would be wrong to imagine that these

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[217] Then Prime Minister of Bangladesh and head of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).
[218] Then Bangladesh National Party (BNP) Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

were purely inflicted upon passive Muslim residents. Indeed, just as Hindus worked to establish their own claims of belonging to India, Muslim residents of Dahagram worked to shape their peculiar belonging to Bangladesh often through violent acts of possession. Residents remember those who dared to assert such belongings as folk heroes who resisted the oppressions of the BSF and Indians from Mekhliganj. Most residents who remember his deeds suggest some form of kinship with him, thereby actively linking themselves to the enclave's historic defense. On one of my first visits to the enclave, a frail old man named Abdul Manan who I met in Kuddus Ali's tea stall began to talk to me about his experiences being arrested in the Mekhliganj *haat*. His narrative wandered into a long list of abuses by the BSF. In the midst of this, he began to explain Jamal Shadhu to me.

> He was my *bhai* [brother, but also friend]. He was my maternal cousin [*mamato bhai*]. He was very brave. The Indian government wanted him to side with them. They asked him to shift his allegiance, and in return, they would give him anything, money, land. He refused, saying, "I can't leave my country for a better life elsewhere." He would continue to defend the enclave, attacking those who made our life difficult, stealing our crops and livestock back from Indians. Later, near the Tin Bigha, a flag meeting was being held. A BSF officer shouted to the crowd, "Who is that bloody Jamal Shadhu, who attacks our people?" Jamal Shadhu sprang up and snatched that BSF officer's revolver and pointed it at his head.

Shadhu represented a spirit of violent resistance to Indian oppression, an unruly and untamable force that demanded, and received, respect. His brazen (and likely embellished) defiance of the BSF's authority and his willingness to use violence in the defense of territory marked him not just as a hero, but as a symbol of repressed anger within the enclave. What others, and what the state, dared not do, Jamal Shadhu would. Where others suffered for territory, Shadhu seized it.

It is difficult to gauge the voracity of such stories. Indeed, residents suggest that the BSF regularly entered the enclave during the Pakistan period and it seems

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improbable that a larger than life character like Shadhu could have avoided capture for such a long period of time. Regardless, Shadhu fit into folk narratives of banditry as popular resistance to despotic authority. He was, at least in popular memory, ruthless, unpredictable, brave, loyal, and violent.[219] His acts did more than simply counter Indian aggression: they exceeded them. As Manan told me,

> Jamal Shadhu and Mota Izer [Shadhu's constant companion and co-conspirator] responded to this well. If Indians attacked one Muslim house, they would have replied by destroying four or five Indian houses. If they abducted [*churi*] one Muslim woman, they would have brought four or five Indian women. When the Indians noticed that here is some sort of competition, they stopped.

Shadhu personified the fantasy of escalating violence and retaliation, a fantasy that stood in stark relation to the victimhood of enclave residents.

Further, Shadhu embodied a dangerous masculinity that defied the emasculating insults inflicted on men as they traveled into and out of the enclave in the Pakistan period.[220] This masculinity was marked by a voracious sexuality that employed rape and kidnapping as a logical strategy of defending the community and making counterclaims of belonging. Men who described Shadhu to me almost always discussed him in the context of sexual violence. Shadhu simultaneously cast-off unjust rule and offered a liberation through sexual assault. Indeed, Shadhu's very presence seemed to sanction such actions. More than a mere perpetrator of such acts, he also provided license to others to articulate similar claims to belonging on the bodies of Indian Hindu women.

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[219] Though Shadhu appears not to have made a living through banditry, there are marked similarities between his story and those of other folk bandits in South Asia, such as Veerapan in Tamil Nadu. For the classic study of social banditry, see Hobsbawm (2000).

[220] Katharyne Mitchell (2006) argues that those living within spaces of exception are feminized by differentiation from the universal construction of the modern [male] individual. "Modern *homo sacer's* essentially feminized constitution is absolutely fundamental to realize in order to understand the contemporary practices and widespread acceptance of exceptionalism today" (103).

As Riaz once told me, "Some drunken Indians abducted Lothibor Munshi's wife, and released her after molesting and assaulting her. We also with the aid of Jamal Shadhu, kidnapped an Indian girl and took her here. She was released after a nightlong torture." Riaz's menacing account highlights not just Shadhu's defense of the enclave and his propensity to meet sexual assault with sexual assault, but also his aiding of others in transgressing both political and sexual boundaries. Through such acts, men who had been regularly humiliated by BSF tolls on movement, insults in Mekhliganj *haats* that could not be responded to, and neighbors who accentuated such insults through the very freedom of their own movement, violently reclaimed their right to belong. As such, the Shadhu narrative defined the gendered spatial politics of safety, belonging, and violence within the enclave. It also played a central role in locating women within a political economic calculus of belongings, where the capture of "possessions" by Indians was met by the capture and damage of even more "possessions" by enclave residents. The folklore of Shadhu formed a counterpoint to narratives of stoicism and suffering that characterized tellings of Dahagram's history. Without compromising these narratives, Shadhu's presence offers a counterpoint of gendered resistance and a claiming of the right to political violence, arguing that men within the enclave were capable of reversing the "tortures" they faced onto their torturers.

Belonging in Crazy Town

If Shadhu's violent sexual excess represented a mode of popular resistance to Indian rule, it was also seen as confined—outbursts of violence in response to direct injustices. Such acts did little to deeply contradict narratives of belonging that position residents as suffering for territory. More dangerous and threatening to these claims were stories of organized violence enacted by Dahagram's leaders and political elites.

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Sometimes, such acts directly opposed the BSF and Indians in surrounding areas, others were acts of complicity with them. More than simply acts of resistance to an oppressive regime of control, these acts were particular kinds of negotiations for power within the enclave and with those who sought to govern it. While hosting me at his house with several other village elders, Monir Patwari, a former enclave leader who had retired from village politics, told me one such story from the early days of his political life.

> It was maybe in '74 or '75. . . . There was a man who was an older member [of the local Union Parishad] named Manudin Mia who was very shrewd. . . . At that time, there was tremendous pressure from India. In retaliation, Manudin Mia began sheltering a band of robbers [dakat bahini] based here who used to loot Indian households. They would provide him with some share of their spoils. It was very natural that India and the neighboring Indian population would respond. Indian authorities pressed us, saying, "if you don't punish these robbers, we will not allow any Muslim to live in Dahagram." Then we held a meeting in Bongerbari field. Manudin Mia and Humer Ali Prodhan, two senior members, prepared the list of robbers. It was decided that no robber and their family member would be allowed to live anymore in Dahagram.
>
> By that time, some of the robbers had already fled, because they knew that something would happen. Even if we don't punish them, the BSF would come and take them away. One particular day, we surrounded the house of the ring-leader [dolo neta]. We took him out of the house and we sat in a place near Noyarhaat. I and another member, Mr. Lolit Babu, wanted to listen to him. Why did he loot other people's households? We knew him and this was not the kind of thing he was apt to do. But Manudin Mia, that shrewd man, anticipated that if this man was allowed to speak, his position would become complicated. Perhaps it would be Manudin Mia who would be punished by the villagers. So, he struck the ring-leader with a big stick on the head. The man died instantly. We dug a ditch and buried him. In those days, there was no administration here. So we managed it ourselves *[She shomoy ekhani kono proshashon chhilo na. Tai, oneke kichui amra nijera korsi]*.

There were a number of strains in Patwari's story that complicated the narrative of oppression often shared by those reflecting on Dahagram's past and making claims for its present and future belonging. First, there is a suggestion that not only Dahagram's residents but, indeed and perhaps especially, its political elite were

involved in criminal and retaliatory acts of claiming space through theft, looting, and other forms of violence. Such stories reframed the politics of belonging within Dahagram as not simply about being *taken from*, but also about *taking*. Moreover, these leaders were ready to administer their own forms of justice and self-preservation in the absence of more formal modes and institutions of rule from the Bangladeshi state. In Patwari's words, local leaders "managed it themselves." Such management was more linked to opportunity than to abstract formulations of law and order. These kinds of narratives complicated the past and ongoing constructions of Dahagram as a moral community worthy and deserving of inclusion in the Bangladeshi state articulated by members of the DSS. It further emphasized that the project of framing Dahagram as part of Bangladesh was exactly that—a project that involved elisions, framings, and selective narrations of suffering for territory in the absence of administrative protection.

The role played by men like Patwari in determining the fate of Dahagram should not be understated. Throughout my work, it was apparent that a small number of families, all of relative wealth and power within the enclave, played a central role in governing both those within the enclave and the enclave's relationship with both India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh. These families formed not just local political administrations, but also made up the DSS, served as envoys to various state officials, and became the enclave's elected leaders following Ershad's declaration of Dahagram as an official Union Parishad. As such, these men were central in, on the one hand, negotiating the narratives of belonging that would constitute the central claims of residents *vis-à-vis* the Bangladeshi political administration. Yet their own political machinations often constituted starkly different claims. If the public narrative of the enclaves spoke of exclusion and disenfranchisement, this private one spoke of a much more active and violent negotiation of the politics of belonging. These counter-

histories were also about establishing claims, yet they more often spoke of ethnic and class differentiation and the consolidation of power and privilege.[221] Through the narratives, enclave leaders articulated justifications for their continued rule of the enclave, for the marginalization and exclusion of those who could threaten their positions, and for a version of history that positioned them as central players in the long struggle for belonging in and to Bangladesh.

The divergence between these narratives was an ongoing source of discomfort for the political leaders within the enclave. As Patwari relayed his story, the other guests in his household shifted nervously and grumbled. One finally scolded Patwari, arguing that these kinds of stories should not be shared with an outsider. Patwari dismissed the objection, saying, "He has come to write our history, what danger is there in telling him these things." Yet there was indeed a perceived danger in sharing such stories that extended beyond a desire not to offend my sensibilities or a perception that sharing such tales would color my view of residents or even bring long-delayed justice home to perpetrators of violence. Rather, the danger of sharing these stories was itself linked to Dahagram's ongoing tenuous belonging within Bangladesh and the particular claims it hinged on. Residents, particularly long-time residents who had been involved in Dahagram's tumultuous political history were aware of the contingent nature of the BSF's control over the Corridor. Indeed, many are openly skeptical that the Corridor will remain open, both because they say that the BSF wants it closed and the Bangladeshi state will not fight to keep it open. As such, the darkest secrets in Dahagram were moments of organized political violence that contradicted the framings of Dahagram's moral community through the narrative of suffering for territory and belonging.

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[221] It is important to note that these were not necessarily contradictory positions. Enclave "leaders," in Tsing's sense of the word, stood to—and later did—gain enormously from both a financial and political perspective with the opening of the Corridor.

Perhaps the most ever-present, but also the most secret of these was an incident that may, or may not, have occurred in a small hamlet called Pagaltari on the banks of the Tista. I heard of this incident first from Riaz. Riaz was one of the first informants to volunteer their own detailed histories of Dahagram. Even so, Riaz was reluctant to meet within the enclave itself, and instead made a series of visits to the guest house where I stayed in Patgram over the course of a week, frequently telling his stories by candlelight as the region suffered under load-shedding schedules that made power intermittent at best. On Riaz's third visit, he first brought up Pagaltari.

Riaz was correcting a misconception that the residents of the enclave had all settled there before Partition. In fact, Riaz told us, there had long been a small, but growing, population of a group locally known as *Bhatiyas*[222] in the enclave. *Bhatiya,* as a term, meant "outsider," but in practice, it reduced to a particular kind of classed and ethnocized identification. *Bhatiyas* were impoverished Bengalis, who had migrated from river communities and *chars* along the banks of Bangladesh's major rivers. The term was used locally to refer to those who had moved following the loss of their ancestral homes to river erosion. But it also had derogatory overtones, intimating a background of poverty and criminality, tinged by the fact that most of the *bhatiyas* were darker in complexion. *Bhatiyas* were thus inferior to the *Bangals,* the original residents who had (supposedly) lived in Dahagram before their arrival. They were seen as both more "tough" and less "law-abiding" then *Bangal* residents. Riaz claimed that he and his family had originally encouraged several Muslim *bhatiya* families to move to Dahagram to aid in its defense.[223] It was in the context of explaining all of this to me that Riaz told me about Pagaltari.

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[222] For more on the role of *Bhatiyas* in the politics of North Bengal, see Ghosh, (1993) and Das Gupta (1992).
[223] A suspect claim, as there were *Bhatiya* families that had lived in the enclave area since at least, and possibly before, after Partition.

According to Riaz, in the late 1980s, when the tension over the opening of the Corridor was reaching its height, the BSF gathered a group of Hindu Bhatiyas from India and, during the night, moved them and their livestock across the Tista into an uninhabited area known as Pagaltari.[224] The Bhatiyas established a small settlement and began to till soil to plant crops. This, according to Riaz, was seen by many as the first move in a land-grab by the BSF to reclaim Dahagram as Indian territory and settle the issue of the Corridor themselves. Local leaders in Dahagram met and decided that the Hindu Bhatiyas needed to be removed. As Riaz told us, "We decided that this new settlement should be abolished. So we collected some of our own Bhatiyas, armed the with bows and sticks, and told them, you march forward, we are covering you, we will come." Muslim Bhatiyas were sent into the camp as a vanguard and began attacking the Hindus with these "primitive" weapons. Other residents followed wielding the "civil" guns provided by the Zia administration. "Within a few hours, we destroyed the settlement. A Hindu inhabitant who had been shot by an arrow died from his injury. We confiscated forty-one of their cows." After violently expelling the settlers and confiscating their livestock, Dahagram residents began a vigil awaiting retaliation from the BSF. After several days, a flag meeting was held between the BSF and the BDR stationed outside of the enclave in Panbari to discuss the situation. According to Riaz, the BSF was forced to concede the point because the settlement had clearly and deliberately been made on Bangladeshi territory. As Riaz proudly told me, "This Dahagram would not be here as a part of Bangladesh were it not for our patriotic feelings [Amader deshprem na thakle, ajke Dahagram Bangladesher ongsho thakto na]."

This story surprised me, and I asked Riaz to tell us more about the incident, but in contrast to his usual talkative self, Riaz was quiet on the subject and redirected our

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[224] There is a brief discussion in a 1986 *Lok Sabha* debate collected in Bhasin (1996) to a dispute over the occuption of several *chars* by the BSF in Dahagram which may be a reference to this event.

questions to talk more about the migration of *Bhatiyas* into the enclave. For several weeks after this interview, Riaz would avoid me when he saw me in Dahagram, or would make plans to meet later in Patgram and then repeatedly miss the meetings. This puzzled me, but noting a number of inconsistencies in the story, I began to suspect that it said more about Riaz's own prejudices than about Dahagram's history. I began to ask other informants about the Pagaltari incident. Most would stiffly deny that such a thing had ever happened, or become evasive and quite upon being asked about it. Some who were closest to me would say, *oh, yes something happened there in Pagaltari, but it was not such a big deal*. A leader of the Muslim *Bhatiya* community in the enclave said, *Yes, the BSF did settle Hindus in a place called Pagaltari. We responded by tilling our fields right next to theirs and after some time they left of their own accord.*

The silence of friends and informants made me wonder. The closest I ever got to a direct answer, came from two informants, both *Bangals* from families active in Dahagram's political history. One was Patwari, who was not averse to sharing more complicated versions of Dahagram's history. He told us:

> Yes, they moved some people on the bank of the Tista. They were Shantals. People of that tribe don't shave or cut hair. They were claiming that they were inside Indian territory, and one day, they abducted two villagers who were tilling their own land. Shantals claimed that those were their lands. So a fight broke out, which forced them to retreat. It happened in the late 1970s."

Another, Yahiya, told yet another version of the story:

> There was a neighborhood named Pagaltari on the other side of the river. This was a settlement of Hindu *Bhatiyas*. These were fierce looking people with long hair carrying knives and spades. There were regular disputes between these people and Dahagram *Bhatiyas*, as both shared the *char*. In most of the cases, our *Bhatiyas* would prepare land for tilling and then these men would come, claiming that the land belonged to them. So fist-fights were a regular affair. In most cases, our people had to suffer, because they never dared to hit back, as they had to go to Dhapra or Mekhliganj hats [in India]. In one

incident, a large group of Pagaltari men attacked a few villagers, our *Bhatiyas* rushed there to join the fight. Then the Pagletara *Bhatiyas* were forced to retreat, following a fight."

Pagaltari, which literally translates as "crazy neighborhood," sat uncomfortably within the narratives of belonging that long-time Dahagram residents had constructed for themselves. This "official" narrative was well rehearsed and easily communicated to the rare outsiders who visited the enclave, mostly state officials. When I first visited Dahagram, there was a marked uniformity not just in the description of experiences, but even in the specific phrases residents would use to describe their situation. The narratives had an almost practiced feel with a clear message: "We residents continue to suffer under the only partial freedom afforded by the Corridor. If Bangladesh is to secure Dahagram as part of its territory, more direct action is necessary." The message was conveyed not just by leaders and village elites, but also by almost all residents that I spoke to in the early days of my research. Pagaltari, though it could be interpreted as a moment of heroic, even patriotic, action, sat poorly with this narrative of victimhood.

Despite this contradiction and whether or not the routing at Pagaltari happened, there are several interesting points that stand out in the narratives. The first is the clear ethnic and class differentiation central to the story. Riaz's telling of the event was explicitly positioned to explain the cultural inferiority of *Bhatiyas*, who now are such a prominent part of Dahagram's demographic make-up, political-economy, and cultural politics (see below). In a sense, the Pagaltari story positions the original residents of Dahagram, who see themselves strongly as "proper" Bangladeshi Muslims, in hierarchical relation to another group. *Bhatiyas* are culturally inferior in this vision— wild and unruly, not without their uses in asserting territorial belonging, but clearly of a lower class. More important within the context of Dahagram's unstable claims to

belonging, they are positioned as itinerant,[225] homeless (as their ancestral homes have been washed away), less firmly rooted to the land that *Bangals* (apparently using *Bhatiyas* as proxies) have fought for.[226]

This hierarchy of belonging was reiterated in the other tellings of Pagaltari. Both Patwari and Yahiya characterize the Pagaltari residents as Adavasis. Patwari directly classifies them as Shantals, while Yahiya's description of them as "long-haired" and "fierce" seamlessly fits into hierarchies of colonial ethnotyping and notions of the primitive and the civilized. The argument plays against Bangladesh's identification as a Muslim Bengali state, where others' rights of citizenship are contingent at best.[227] While this expropriation certainly encompasses class differentiation, it is even more starkly drawn in the context of Adavasis who both socially and legally exist as outsiders, if not enemies, of the nation (Van Schendel 2001a). Riaz made this clear to me in his description of the *Bhatiyas*:

> An Indian security personnel told me, "Whether Hindu or Muslim, these people are very unruly [*abhadho*]. If you ask one, 'where is your house,' you will get an answer: 'Assam.' If you go to the address given to you, you will see that no person of that name or identity is there. If we enquire there, you will hear that, 'yes, he has shifted to *Char* 72.' If you unfold the map, you will see

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[225] To be clear, my argument here is that they are seen as such, not that *Bhatiyas* are lacking in attachments to territory, space, or nation.

[226] Indeed, *Bhatiyas* are particularly "homeless," lacking belonging, as they come from *char*-lands. *Chars* are silt islands or banks that build up in and along Bangladesh's riverine network. *Chars* are fertile, as they are entirely comprised of rich silt deposits, but are also temporary, often appearing and washing away over the course of several Monsoon cycles. Life for those living on *chars* is uncertain. Not only are char lands temporary and their residents marginal, they are often the focus of violent land disputes (Baqee 1998) and, indeed, inter-state conflicts (Chatterji 1999). The *chars* bear many similarities to the *chhits* in terms of ambiguity. Yet for *chhit* Bangals, whose belonging is clearly contingent, their land exists in at least a quasi-permanent fashion. If the ownership of the *chhit* is questionable, its physical existence is not. As land holding *Bangals*, they are "deserving" members of the Bangladesh nation.

[227] Indeed, the tension between the identification of citizens in Bangladesh as "Bangladeshi" versus "Bengali" frame this tension between national identification as a country born out of a Bengali language movement that acknowledged linguistic and cultural identification with a greater Bengal, and religious identification as a Muslim "Bangladeshi" state. This tension undergirds much politics in Bangladesh today. One of the primary, some would say few, differences between the Awami League and the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) is this disagreement, which grew alongside of increasing religious party participation in politics during both the Zia and Ershad regimes.

that no *Char* 72 is visible, that it has never been in demarcation. So these
people are everywhere.

Bhatiyas are positioned as itinerant, and untrustworthy in the very contingent nature of
their belongings. Dahagram's "original" residents, "*Bangalis*," belong more than they.
They have remained on their land and are patriots, deserving of a rightful place in
Bangladesh.

There is, further, a relegation of the kind of violent act committed, or not
committed, at Pagaltari to a "primitive" violence. Riaz characterizes the "civilized"
inhabitants of Dahagram as following behind their "own' *Bhatiyas* in the attack,
supporting the wild immigrants with "civil" guns, while Muslim *Bhatiyas* are confined
to using "bows and arrows." Such a characterization bespeaks a disdain for *Bhatiya*
life at the same time that it reasserts racial hierarchies and a violent possession of land.
This was not the only time that the curious reference to 'bows and arrows' cropped up
in my research. Residents frequently described Indian protesters opposing the opening
of the Corridor as brandishing 'bows and arrows.' The use of such "primitive"
weapons seems another indicator of Dahagram residents' belonging to Bangladesh. If
the Pagaltari incident sat uncomfortably within the public narrative articulated by and
through Dahagram's leaders, its various retellings also articulated and reasserted a
claim to inclusion through exclusion. Dahagram's *Bangal* residents were *more*
appropriately part of the Bangladeshi nation than those who they proposed to use for
their own defense.

Moving to Sensitive Places

The Corridor and the politics of movement into and out of the enclave appear
to be *the* focal points of political tensions inside of Dahagram. Yet, as the Pagaltari
incident suggests, the tensions between *Bangals*, who see themselves as the original

and rightful residents of the enclaves and the *Bhatiyas*, who *Bangals* see as outsiders are as central to the political workings of the enclave. Riaz and other political influentials shared numerous stories of "inviting" small groups of *Bhatiyas* to move to the enclave in the years before the Corridor opened as a means of providing additional "protection."[228] Such stories also simultaneously position *Bhatiyas* as "temporary guests" and as "objects" useful in the defense of the enclave. Before the opening of the Corridor, only a few families moved into the enclave. In contemporary Dahagram, *Bhatiyas* make up almost 50% of the population.

The majority of the *Bhatiya* families moved into Dahagram shortly after the opening of the Corridor in 1992. Throughout the late 1980s and in the period leading up to the Corridor there had been increasing pressure from Hindu residents for Muslims to side with them in pushing for India's absorption of Dahagram. With the opening of the Corridor, there was a mass exodus of Hindus from the enclave. This movement created a glut of land. However, few residents were able to capitalize on low prices after decades of economic marginalization. This opened the way for a large in-migration of *Bhatiya* families, who purchased the land at exceptionally low costs.[229] Elites in Dahagram often told me that, through intermarriage, there was no longer a divide between groups. Yet, stories such as Riaz's, the internal politics of the enclave, and the political economy of land continually served to ossify what otherwise might have emerged as a more fluid category of identity within Dahagram.

The divide ran deeper than the length of time each had suffered before the opening of the Corridor. There was an economic basis in the prejudice that emerged in Dahagram over these newer migrants. While there were *Bhatiya* families spread

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[228] No *Bhatiya* family that I spoke with ever indicated that they had been "invited." Rather, they usually spoke of the availability of cheap land as the reason for the migration into Dahagram.
[229] While it is difficult to assess the value of land before and after the opening of the Corridor (informants reported widely divergent prices), one *Bhatiya* told me that when he first moved to the Corridor in 1994, 2.5 decimal (a decimal is one hundreth of an acre), cost four to five thousand taka, while current prices had the cost at much closer to forty thousand taka.

throughout the enclave, the majority of *Bhatiyas* lived in the South, closer to the Corridor, clustered near an area known as Guchogram, while the majority of *Bangals* lived near the center of Dahagram, in Bangerbari and in the North in Angorpota. The soil in Dahagram become more and more alkaline towards the north, which meant that many *Bhatiyas* owned land that could grow and support a greater variety of crops. Tobacco and vegetable production (particularly the growth of *potol*, a squash-like vegetable which is a staple in much Bengali cooking) was higher in the South. Many *Bhatiya* families also were beginning to introduce peanuts and maize. The soil in the Northern parts of the enclave was far from "infertile." Most small-holders were multi-cropping as well as producing three harvests of rice. There was, however, a greater need for urea fertilizer. While this made farming in the North more expensive at the best of times, in both 2006 and 2007, Bangladesh encountered urea shortages, putting additional pressures on many *Bangal* farms.[230] As such, while I was conducting fieldwork, there was a dramatic difference in both crop kind and yield between the largely *Bhatiya* South and the more *Bangal* North.

This divide between North and South was further complicated by an intensification of border security *around* Dahagram with the opening of the Corridor. Since 1992, the BSF had erected ten panoptic watchtowers around the enclave and six troop camps. This made moving into and out of the enclave except through the Corridor, more difficult and dangerous. While extremely cautious about suggesting that there was anything negative about the opening of the Corridor, residents of Angarpota at the Northern tip of Dahagram now had to travel a long distance to get to market (22 km from Angorpota's "Zero-Point" at the Northern tip of Dahagram as opposed to 1 km to the Mekhliganj *haat* in India). This imposed additional costs, as

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[230] See *The Daily Star,* 2006 (September 6), "Farmers Bear the Brunt as Dealers Stop Lifting Urea;" *The Daily Star,* 2007 (March 4), "Fertiliser Crisis: Farmers Block Roads, Besiege Agri Offices;" and *The Daily Star,* 2007 (March 18), "Bogra Farmers Cry for Urea."

well as time, for many *Bangals*, while many *Bhatiyas* enjoyed greater prosperity associated with both better soil and relative proximity to the *haat* in Patgram. The split between increasingly prosperous *Bhatiyas* and *Bangals* was speeded by the consolidation of land amongst many *Bhatiya* farmers, who continued to purchase land as it became available.

The divergent histories of belonging between *Bhatiyas* and *Bangals* also led to a different relationship to the Corridor itself. While *Bhatiyas* lived within the same culture of sensitivity and uncertainty that the rest of Dahagram did, they tended to phrase their complaints with the Corridor in different terms than *Bangals.* Many view the enclave favorably, suggesting that in Dahagram they have found a stability and belonging that they had not had before. While the Corridor remains a looming issue, many of my *Bhatiya* informants highlighted economic development as an equally central concern of the enclave residents. As my friend Tariq, whose family had moved into the enclave in the late 1960s, but was still considered a *Bhatiya* by *Bangals*, told me, "As the Corridor problem is partially solved now, I believe that the major concern of the public representatives should be the development of the locality, the uplift of people's lot." Others assured me that the opening of the Corridor had made Dahagram an acceptably safe place to live. Salma, who had married into a *Bhatiya* family from the nearby district of Dimla observed, "when the marriage was first discussed, my family was concerned, but living here now, things are fine. People are much better off than the were ten or twelve years ago." If the concerns expressed by *Bhatiyas* about Dahagram can be characterized as practical issues with living within the sensitive space of the enclave, *Bangals'* relationship to the Corridor were haunted by the ghosts of the past. When asking newer residents to describe life in the enclave, they often begin by describing farming and agriculture, whereas most older residents immediately describe their relationship to the Corridor and their histories of

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dispossession. As Riaz told us when we first met him, *we live in terror that the BSF will close the Corridor for good. We know that they can do this. Bangladesh has reached an arrangement with India, but this is temporary.*

Yet more immediate than differing views of the Corridor were the political divides that the *Bhatiya* migration had caused within the enclave. This rift centered on discrimination against *Bhatiyas* in local politics. When I first spoke with Tariq he told us:

> Here there is a division among the villagers. Those who are the decedents of the early inhabitants of the village, they look at us in some different ways. They always try to discriminate against us [*tara shobshomoy amader shather obichar kore*], as we have come from other districts of Bangladesh, as I did from Sirajganj. There are people from Bogra, Nodia, Pabna, Nilphamaria. My family came here in '66. I grew up here, attended school here, and always I felt that this discrimination and rift [*bhagabhagi*] should not be allowed to exist anymore.

Despite observing this, Tariq, who runs a tailoring shop and had stood for Union Council Chairman in several previous elections, assured me first that this rift did not play a major factor in politics in Dahagram and that unity was essential in order to secure further support from the Bangladesh government. Yet as he got to know me better, Tariq shared more and more of his bitterness about the discrimination, which was both political and social. Once Tariq accompanied me on an interview to a former Union Council Chair's home. While there, we were all treated as honored guests, being served tea and *muri*, a puffed rice snack mixed with chillies and salt. But as we left, we noticed a scowl on Tariq's usually jovial face. When we asked him what was wrong, he told us. *When I first met you, I did not want to tell you such things, to show you rifts in our community.* He paused a moment, then heatedly continued, *but these people, these Bangals, still they face us differently. The scars on my heart from the last election will take quite a long time to go. Even this man, [whose house we were*

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leaving], stood against me. When I was a candidate for the chairman post, this man gave me a lot of trouble. I am quite sure that I won the election, though the result was hi-jacked.

Many *Bhatiyas* shared this sense that they were viewed as politically and socially inferiors within the community. But the central concern for most *Bhatiyas* was that *Bangals* dominated the political landscape of Dahagram. While many *Bhatiyas* were more successful farmers than their neighbors, most of the powerful families in Dahagram were still *Bangals*. These few families continued to dominate in Union Council elections. Most *Bhatiyas* charged that, subsequently, the Union Council meted out favors, programs, and initiatives to *Bangals*. In many ways, while *Bhatiyas* who migrated into the enclave after 1992 may have found more economic belonging, they are still marked as marginal outsiders within the social fabric of the enclaves themselves.

While political favoritism marginalizes *Bhatiyas* within Dahagram, stereotypes of *Bhatiyas* as inferior further marks them as outside of the community of "true" enclave residents. One day, while we were drinking tea in a tea-stall in Guchogram, a local farmer told us, *These Bhatiya folks who shifted here after 1992, they tend to be quarrelsome [*jhograitta*]. Before '92, most Dahagram folks didn't know what a court or a lawsuit was. Now there are plenty of cases in the Lalmonirhat court involving Bhatiya parties.* Another told me, *You will see such people in the* char *areas throughout Bangladesh. If there is a* char *on the bed of the Tista, they will be there, certainly. They don't do any constructive thinking [*bhalo chinta*]. They go to a* char, *settle there, plant and eat, and if someday, the* char *vanishes because of erosion, they will simply move elsewhere.* While there appeared to be little evidence for such claims, and much to the contrary, such stereotypes clearly articulated a politics of belonging

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that located *Bhatiyas* as inferior, not deserving of inclusion within the struggle for belonging to Bangladesh, and as temporal and impermanent residents of the enclave.

Yet *Bhatiyas* also appropriated and reconstructed their own narratives of belonging to both the enclave and to Bangladesh. One day, while at a tea-stall in Guchogram, we overheard an interesting debate about whether the *Bangal* residents were "true" Muslims. The debate party was arguing that the original residents, who had lived amongst Hindus within India for so long, were made better Muslims by the presence of *Bhatiyas*. One commented on the *Bangal* lack of modesty, saying, *I have seen people here wearing nothing but a sheet of a cloth over their genitals. I saw these guys taking baths as their wives, daughters, and sons were all around. How can you term these people Muslims.* Another, questioning the *Bangal* association with Hindus said, *I have even seen marriage ceremonies dominated by* sindur.[231] Another said, *No, we have seen nothing like that.* But yet another chimed in, saying, *no, he is correct. These things happened.* Then another began to relate a story from the midst of the Liberation War.

> *Once there was a raid by Khan [Pakistani] soldiers. They encountered some locals and asked about their religion. When the men said, 'I am a Muslim,' the soldier asked, 'then who are those people, living in those huts?' He said, 'those are* Bhatiyas.*' The Khan soldier took* Bhatiyas *to be people of some other religion,[232] and ordered all the villagers to stand in lines,* Bhatiyas *on one side and Muslims on the other. Then they charged one after one, 'what is your religion?' The answer was always Muslim. Then they were ordered to recite some verses from the Koran. Most of the* Bhatiya *elders did so. But when the* Bangals *were asked, they failed, though they had introduced themselves as Muslims. Then the Pakistani soldiers beat those* Bangal *folks mercilessly.*

Though the story was certainly apocryphal—Patgram was a "liberated" area during the war and saw no direct military activity—the point of the story was quite plain. As we

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[231] Sindur is the vermillion paste that is both central in Hindu wedding ceremonies and is worn on the forehead at the parting of the hair by many Hindu women to signify that they are married.
[232] During the Liberation War, the Pakistani army killed and tortured many Bengalis, but they frequently singled out non-Muslim (especially Hindu) villagers for "special" treatment.

listened, a bearded man that we had never met but had been quiet up to that point, turned and with a smile clarified the intent of discussion. *Whenever you come here*, he said, *we gather around and have the most interesting conversations.* The *Bhatiyas* in Guchogram had made an express counter-argument to what they saw as slanders from the *Bangal* neighbors. This argument was targeted at me as a researcher, undermining the stated and unstated claims of the *Bangals* within the enclave. The implicit argument was that the *Bhatiyas*, as good and faithful Muslims, rightfully belonged to Bangladesh, whereas the *Bangals'* claims to belonging were tainted by their exposure to India and Hindus. As such, they could not be "true" Bangladeshis. While the debate was held in jest, and there was little intent for us to take the discussion seriously, the point that *Bhatiyas* themselves stake particular claims to belonging, both within Dahagram and Bangladesh, was clear.

Conclusion: Understanding the Politics of Belonging

Both before and after 1992, residents' ability to make claims upon their "home" state to enforce their rights were, indeed, limited by local and national projects to mark Dahagram as belonging to India, by a partial and intermittent commitment to possessing Dahagram within the Bangladeshi nation and state, and by networks of power within and around the enclave seeking to articulate alternative claims to power and belonging. Against this backdrop it is no surprise that the enclaves' history is remembered and narrated as a series of claims to both membership and to the right possess belongings. The ways that Dahagram's pre-Corridor past is remembered and talked about constitute both stories of possession and dispossession and ongoing claims that the partial belonging afforded by the Corridor is inadequate and insufficient for those who have struggled, persevered, and suffered for Bangladeshi territory. At the same time, narratives such as Pagaltari suggest ways that this history

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is equally about shaping the contours of Dahagram as a community in and of itself. The history of Dahagram, as it is told by its residents, is thus an ongoing and unfinished project of transforming and redefining Dahagram's ambiguous and liminal position within Bengali state and nation—of asserting Dahagram as a moral community worthy and deserving of inclusion within Bangladesh. *Chhitmahal* residents are frequently referred to as "stateless."[233] Yet their history has also been an ongoing negotiation with what such a term might mean. If residents are "stateless," their lives are also overdetermined by the Indian and East Pakistani/Bangladeshi state and the tension between symbolic and more grounded forms of belonging within and to them. The histories that I have recounted in this chapter are both narrations of Dahagram's past and projects to claim a national belonging as a means to actualize political membership within the Bangladeshi state. These claims and negotiation go beyond, as they partially encompass, liberal normative notions of "rights" and "citizenship." At the same time, they cannot be understood solely from the perspective of statelessness or bare life.

In sensitive, unstable, and contentious zones such as border regions, upland areas, and enclaves, such histories of belonging(s) are more than simple narrations of the past. They also form the basis of ongoing struggles over how such spaces, and their residents, fit or do not fit into constructions of nation and state and the various claims that they make to governance and regulation (Chatterjee 2004). Attending to such histories, and taking seriously the ways that residents of these zones frame them, provides critical insights into the terrain of negotiation between states and groups and spaces who only imperfectly fit into categories of "citizen" and "national territory." These emic understandings of the past are thus critical in rethinking the politics of inclusion and exclusion and broad networks of power within which they are inscribed.

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[233] C.f. Van Schendel (2002), Sen (2002), and Jones (2009c).

Seen in this light, discontent over the inability to celebrate such anniversaries as "Corridor Open Day" in Dahagram acquires a different meaning. Residents rarely have the opportunity to publically articulate their histories of suffering for territory (Moore 2005) or their ongoing demands for full inclusion in Bangladesh. Belonging for residents of Dahagram determines their ability to move into and out of the enclave, the ability to go to market to sell and purchase goods, and the constant spectre of violence and fear that haunts those who lived through the long struggle to gain substantive, as well as formal, membership in the territory of Bangladesh. The stakes of articulating claims to belonging are thus more than symbolic. They are about the ongoing negotiation of life in a sensitive, contingent, and unstable space.

CHAPTER 4:

SPATIAL CORRUPTIONS: HAZY DEMARCATIONS, SYMBOLIC

DEVELOPMENTS, AND OVERLAPPING SOVEREIGNTIES IN DAHAGRAM

One day as Sayeed and I made our way to the northern end of Dahagram, we ran into a troubling sight. Members of the India-Bangladesh Joint Border Survey Team, in the process of re-demarcating the boundaries of Dahagram, were gathered in force in a small field of perhaps three or four decimals in size. They had determined that a border post on a mound at the very corner of this field was incorrectly placed. The post had to be moved into the center of the field, directly in the midst of the field owner's crops, effectively making it illegal for the farmer to access a significant portion of the field. The border post was a granite pillar approximately three feet in height, and dislodging it required a considerable effort. As we arrived, the laborers on the Survey Team, along with the plot's owner, were struggling with this task as the heads of the Survey Team, along with several members of the BSF, looked on.

The process, carried out under a hot winter sun, continued for some time. As we watched, more and more of the field, and the freshly planted potato crop in it, were trampled underfoot as the laborers wrestled the marker free. The farmer looked increasingly distressed as his crops were destroyed and his land cordoned off in the service of "correct" and "scientific" border definition. Yet under the eye of the Survey Team and the armed border security forces loitering about to watch, he continued to assist. As the laborers sweated, a supervisor from the Indian Survey Team stood to the side, coolly dressed in trousers, pants, scarf, hat, sunglasses, and a vaguely bored look. "Push," he advised. "Push."

It would, perhaps, be unfair to say that this event characterized the relationship between Dahagram residents and the surveyors that sought to define its borders.

However, it did raise a number of questions about the interaction between residents of this contentious space and projects seeking to regulate and define it. How do residents understand and experience different projects of control within the enclave? What are the terrains of negotiation upon which they struggle to carve out spaces and livelihoods for themselves? And how do the myriad projects that seek to control, define, and shape space and rule overlap with one another on sensitive terrain? This chapter explores these questions.

Sensitive space, I suggest, constitutes and emerges out of such encounters as much as it does out of the anxious ambiguities of rule discussed in Chapter 1. The enclaves, and Dahagram in particular, are nexuses of different interests, national symbolics, and claims to sovereign control. To understand the way rule is accomplished in sensitive space, it is necessary to attend not just to how these projects contend with, contribute to, elide, and are embedded within one another, but also to explore the ways that they are experienced, talked about, and reworked by people facing often enormously ambiguous, uncertain, and violent situations on a daily basis. Such an exploration allows us to simultaneously examine the mutual constitution of experiences, practices, and perceptions of various forms of expropriation. At the same time, it unsettles the relationships between security, spatial definition, criminality, and corruption that are often taken for granted in official, popular, and academic discussion of borders.[234]

This chapter, then, re-imagines the sensitive space of the enclaves as a contingent terrain, where multiple projects and experiences of defining rule overlap with each other to produce new realities that are at once surprising in shape and predictable in outcome. Dahagram is what Donald Moore (2005) calls an "entangled landscape," where "multiple spatialities [and one might add, multiple sovereignties]

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[234] See, for example, Rushd (2008) and Thottam-Panidhar (2009), and Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (2010).

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mingle. Neither serial nor successive, they are copresent, sometimes as hauntings, other times as invocations, shaping a plural terrain where no single space prevails" (22). Dahagram, in other words, is shot through with multiple histories; nationalist imaginings of territory; and state projects of control and regulation.

Critically, all of these competing spatialities emerge out of idealized imaginings of Dahagram, its history, and its "place" at the periphery of the Bangladeshi state. In essence, projects of rule, and, indeed, resistance to such projects, are attempts to map these idealized visions back onto space. As others have argued,[235] all such representations are imperfect, imprecise, and opportunistic. Plots of land do not always correspond to the neat and precisely defined lines of the survey. Yet these idealized visions—whether of history, territory, development, or moral economy—do not exist independent of reality "on the ground." Rather, as Timothy Mitchell (2002) argues, the gap between "reality" and its "representations" are negotiated spaces that produce new terrains of engagement, experience, expropriation, and rule. To understand the spatial forms of power in Dahagram, then, it is necessary to explore such negotiations—to examine what emerges from attempts to bring the potato field in line with the map.

I refer to the outcomes of such encounters as "spatial corruptions" for several reasons. First, the space between reality and representation, between plan and implementation, and between idealized vision and concrete practice create tremendous opportunities for personal and political gain within the enclave. Petty corruption, clientalism, and exploitation are as much a part of rule within Dahagram as the rigid control of movement through the Tin Bigha Corridor and around the enclave's borders. Second, the discourse around the notion of corruption is, itself, one central way through which residents make sense of and reorder these negotiated spaces. As

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[235] C.f., Edney, (1997), Bayly (1999), and Cons (2005).

Akhil Gupta (1995; 2005) argues, narratives of corruption in South Asia are a central means through which residents make sense of "the state." In Dahagram, these narratives are, further, an often-cynical commentary on projects that seek to remake the space of the enclave in various competing images. At the same time, they are re-articulations of moral orders and the limits of acceptable political practice. Third, what emerges out of negotiated space is a corruption of the idealized visions of nation and state that undergird projects of definition, rule, and development in Dahagram. It is not surprising, for example, that a small-holder farmer's crops are less important to border surveyors than establishing a well-defined and, ultimately, secure border. Yet in Dahagram, arguably, the implementation of projects like the Survey—which disregard and devalue the needs, claims, and wishes of residents in the service of concepts such as security—produce neither "security" for those living in Dahagram, in the sense of safety and protection, nor "security" for representatives of the state at the border, in the sense of reduced illicit cross-border movement. Which is not to say that the outcomes of such projects do not benefit particular groups and interests within the enclave, but rather that they rarely do so in the ways in which their planners intended.

I build my argument about spatial corruptions through an exploration of two broadly conceived phenomena in Dahagram. First, I dig further into the process of defining Dahagram's boundaries. By looking at the range of debates and negotiations involved in the Joint Survey of the enclave, I raise questions about what is at stake in demarcation and explore the uncomfortable tensions between the claimed "scientific" and inimically social facets of defining territory in the enclaves. The techniques of observation and control are central aspects in constructing the "everyday" in Dahagram, yet claims to precision mask a series of relations that emerge out of, as they undermine, such techniques. Second, I explore the vagaries of development in Dahagram. I outline a set of empirical riddles around what I call "symbolic

developments." I argue that the act of intervening in sensitive space is significantly

more important than the material outcomes of such an intervention. I develop the

paradoxical relationship between projects that are concerned with marking and

defining the enclave in particular ways and the realities of a range of corruptions that

emerge out of and go under the radar of, these projects. In both of these sections, I am

concerned with the ways observation and development map onto both local politics

and contentious histories within the enclave. Finally, I bring the concerns of these two

investigations together in a reading of an attempt by the BSF to stem cattle smuggling

in Dahagram in 2006. By examining the outcomes and intents of this project, I show

how the nexuses and disconnects of rule, territory, and idealized visions create the

possibilities for political corruptions, political practice, and expropriations within the

enclave.

Experiencing Demarcation

The Joint Border Survey Team was a regular feature and presence within

Dahagram for the first several months of my fieldwork.[236] On any given day, the Team

was composed of five to ten or sometimes more day labourers, two to three junior and

mid-level supervisors from each country, and, intermittently one senior surveyor each

from the Survey of India and the Survey of Bangladesh (see Figure 12). Such teams

have two primary jobs: determining the correct placement of the border through

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[236] The process for assembling and determining what parts of the border are to be surveyed in any given season (the season runs through the dry winter months) is a complicated one. As the director of the Bangladesh part of the team described it to me, the Survey of India and Bangladesh each bid on areas that they would like to prioritize in each annual survey. It is not clear how arrangements are reached or how the decisions on where to expend border-surveying resources articulate with broader political interests or areas of acute crisis along the border. Teams are always comprised of equal numbers of representatives from each country and all of the team members that I spoke with describe the relationships as amicable. Indeed, many told me that they regretted not being able to spend evenings together (the teams each break up at sundown to spend the night in their respective countries). I was also told that Indian Survey team member occasionally supplied Bangladeshi team members with brandy or other kinds of alcohol unavailable in Bangladesh.

trigonometric measurement (identifying the correspondence between points on a map and points on the ground) and placing permanent border posts made, most often, of concrete at regular intervals to mark its exact location in space. The Dahagram Team's job was implementing and rechecking a series of proposed demarcations from the 1991-1992 survey and a 2005 supplemental survey.[237] Many of the pillars marking these demarcations had never been placed, several had been placed but now needed "correcting," and several old pillars had fallen into disrepair and needed to be remade (see Figure 12). The quotidian process of marking territory was slow, laborious, and for the most part, undramatic. The team meticulously made their way around the edge of the enclave, checking the position of old border pillars and sub-pillars with various trigonometric tools and pouring new concrete markers to more clearly and visually mark the limits of Bangladeshi territory.

This Joint Survey Team was the third to work in Dahagram in the past twenty years. This comparatively high level of attention seemingly reflected Dahagram's tenuous and sensitive status, or perhaps a hope this could be rectified by simply clarifing the enclave's boundaries. Broadly, there was little disagreement as to the enclave's physical boundaries. Indeed, Dahagram is the only enclave to regularly appear on maps of the Indo-Bangla border. The very presence of the team reflected this political agreement on space. Before Joint Teams begin their work, there must be bilateral consensus over where the border lies. The Teams can then determine the border's exact location to the meter "on the ground." This technical demarcation might precede other kinds of border definition such as the fence that now surrounds much of Bangladesh.[238] A failure to come to an agreement on where the border falls, as is the

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[237] The 91-92 Survey was conducted in preparation of opening the Tin Bigha Corridor. There were also periodic surveys of the areas in the 1980s (Bhasin 1996).
[238] International law dictates that the fence be no closer than 150 yards from the border, a law that paradoxically prevents Dahagram from being fenced. The fence, which falls in Indian territory, and is a project of the Indian Government and the BSF, would have to enclose the entire Tin Bigha Corridor within Bangladesh, thus effectively ceding the territory to the Bangladesh state and enclaving

ongoing case in three areas elsewhere along the border, continues to prevent the surveying of 6.5 km of the shared boundary more than 60 years after it was drawn.[239] Since such agreements precede official demarcations processes, Border Survey Teams see, or regularly present, their jobs as exercises in technical expertise, rather than as profoundly political projects of spatial definition.

Figure 12: Border Pillar Construction on the Dahagram-Mekhliganj Border

The process of border demarcation appears to contain an inherent contradiction. In order for proper "scientific" demarcation to take place, a political consensus must first be achieved. Yet, despite the fact that "politics" always precedes

Kuschlibari, the site of popular resistance to the Corridor (See Chapter 2). It is worth noting the paradox between the Indian Government's willingness to effectively cede territory through the erection of the fence and ongoing claims that one of the barriers to resolving the enclave issue is that Bangladesh stands to gain a tiny amount more land than India in the exchange. On the fence, see Jones (2009b).
[239] These un-surveyed kilometers, lying in the Berubari (West Bengal), Mathari (Tripura), and Lathitilla/Dumabari (Assam) border regions, are also ongoing issues in discussions between the two countries over the border. For more on these disputes, see Jamwal (2004).

"science" in demarcation, the Survey Team, at least those who I spoke with, refused to acknowledge that the production of space was in any way a "social" process or even one that unfolded in inexorably social contexts. Whenever I asked a team member about demarcation and its impact on border communities, they would patiently begin describing triangulation and measurement procedures. One day, the Bangladesh team director spent a careful 45 minutes walking me through the technical process of border demarcation, its mathematical roots, and its precision. During this discussion, he drew numerous diagrams in my notebook explaining how triangulation, and the exacting tools that modern border survey teams use to measure it, worked. "So you see," he concluded at the end of the lecture, "there can be no mistake."

Many authors have argued that the colonial making and marking of territory both concealed and embodied a range of different violent relations of rule within a techno-rationale of measurement (c.f., Carter 1984; Edney 1997; Harley 2001). This was no less the case in the contemporary survey of Dahagram. The project was carried out under the watchful eye of the BSF and as they worked the main survey team almost always had an informal armed escort of BSF *jawans* and officers. The militarized presence was a constant reminder of both the force that backed up this quotidian marking of land and what was at stake in the placement of the border posts. It also served to mark the differences between enclave residents and those who worked with the Survey team. Though the Survey team appeared to have a number of day laborers employed in making and placing the pillars, they also regularly enlisted the unpaid assistance of enclave residents, many of whom, as in the vignette described at the beginning of this chapter, were directly effected by the new placement of posts.[240] Residents were not compensated for this work, but under the watchful and armed eye

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[240] The outcomes of these demarcations did not always involve the loss of territory, as in the potato field discussed above, but could also simply involve the ossification of boundaries that may previously have been treated as plastic (particularly in relation to livestock grazing).

of the BSF, they seemed unwilling to refuse. The team moved back and forth across the border, at least during working hours, with ease. Indeed, team members frequently encouraged me to go with them, boasting that as long as I was in their presence, there would be no problem. This was in stark contrast to many residents of Dahagram, who carefully avoided the border area and repeatedly warned me to avoid even approaching it.[241] Many told me that that whenever we were in full view of a BSF watchtower, we were being watched through a rifle-scope.[242]

Not surprisingly, there was a mutual, though unstated, antipathy between the survey teams and Dahagram residents. The teams were perpetually followed by groups of residents who seemingly monitored their actions. Every time I sat down to talk with surveyors, this group gathered around to listen, vet, and often hotly contest what the surveyors had to say, contradicting perceived imbalances or slights in the Team's discussions. Within Dahagram, rumours abounded about the Survey teams' corrupt sensibilities. Many insisted that the Survey team was in direct collusion with the BSF to subtly and gradually erode the enclave borders. "These teams are just corrupt," my friend Tariq Anam told me, echoing a common sentiment in Dahagram's tea-stalls and gathering areas. "You know the road that runs in India near the Zero-Point [at the North-Eastern side of the enclave]? That road was in Dahagram before the 1992 survey. Indians wanted it because it connects two BSF camps, so they could more easily move back and forth."

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[241] Indeed, several residents told me that they had abandoned land on the corner because they were too afraid of BSF violence and intimidation to farm it. This was far from a universal concern, and many landholders at the boundary continue to use, and occasionally transgress the boundaries of, their fields.
[242] In his ethnography of political violence in Northern Ireland, Alan Feldman reflects on political meaning of Foucault's panopticon in contexts in which observation is as likely to take place through the scope of a rifle as it is through binoculars or a camera. As he argues, "compulsory visibility is the rationality of state counterinsurgency, and of neostatist paramilitary violence—this is evident in the visual staging and technological penetration of the body by cameras, high-velocity bullets, or digitized bombs, which unite both seeing and killing, surveillance and violence in a unified scopic regime" (Feldman 2000: 47). While Feldman is primarily concerned with questions of vision in his analysis, it might be pointed out that in Dahagram, the technologies of triangulation and measurement were equally bound up in regimes of scopic control.

I asked Hassan, the head of the Bangladesh Survey team, about Anam's claim. He told me, "He knows very well that that is not the case. . . . I always feel bad for these people living here. They frequently come when we are working and say, 'no you are placing it wrong, the pillar is not here it should be over there.' I am always very careful in such cases, checking the measurement at least three times to be sure." Hassan then told me a story related to his survey in the north of the enclave to illustrate his point. The gist of the story was that a farmer had claimed that the border pillar was in the wrong place, but when checked, Hassan found that it was not.

Yet, that was not the whole of the story. He went on to say that at the same time, the farmer asked him to kick another pillar. When he did, the pillar, which should have been firmly lodged in the ground, fell over. "The farmer claimed that the BSF had moved the pillar into Bangladeshi land, uprooting it from its concrete base so it could be easily shifted. We consulted and demolished the pillar altogether." This story embodied a number of different suggestions about the experiences of demarcation: that the Survey Team was fair, unbiased, and just; that local residents make claims to national territory in the same ways that they make claims to their own land, that is, in ways that best suit their interests; and that border residents did, in fact, have something to fear from the spatial encroachments of border security forces. Indeed, the implication that border security forces might move a border pillar—at no immediately apparent benefit to themselves—seems to fall somewhere between overt antagonism and a not so subtle threat about the contingency of landholding in sensitive areas. However, it also suggests ways in which spatial regulation is experienced as spatial corruption at the border. The claims to accuracy and "fairness" embodied in the moves between the border on the map and border on the ground appear especially unstable when border security forces can simply move these posts, creating *de facto* border reconfigurations grounded more in the threat of force than in scientific

authority of trigonometric measurement. Such actions, stories, and rumours both emphasize and critique the notion of technical expertise, highlighting that what is significant in border demarcations is not the technical skill involved in completing them, but the force that makes border lines into lived realities. While I never saw any evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the Surveyors—indeed, they appeared to be exceptionally conscientious and exacting about their work—the bitterness and distrust towards them was directly linked to the unavoidable conclusion that in more rigidly defining the borders of the enclave, the Survey team was complicit in supporting what most saw as a territorial tyranny by the BSF, and by extension, the Indian state.

Hassan told me one day, "I know what these people are saying about us, and they have an interest in the outcome of our work. But I try to make them understand that we are simply here to do a job, that we have no bias and no choice in these matters." Despite this gesture of understanding, there also remained a reciprocal feeling of distrust and suspicion towards residents of Dahagram amongst the surveyors. Several whispered to me that there had been incidences within Dahagram of disgruntled land-owners on the border digging-up inconveniently placed border pillars and moving them during the night. Many of these stories, which paralleled the ones that enclave residents were telling about the BSF, dwelt on the cunningness of Dahagram residents in their manipulation of spatial boundaries. One junior surveyor from the Indian part of the team told me a story from the 1992 Survey that involved a disgruntled farmer digging around the base of a concrete pillar, carefully sawing through it, and "replanting" it in the ground in a more favourable position. "They would have missed this," said the Surveyor, "if it wasn't noticed that the new pillar appeared to be in a strange place. They went and investigated and found the old concrete base of the pillar carefully covered with fresh soil." If such stories highlighted the contingency of the demarcation project and the high-stakes in its

completion, they also emphasized the conditions of mutual distrust in which this "exacting" process was carried out. Far from clarifying the location of the border, the presence of the Survey Team and their work seemed to create a space for calling its very materiality into question.[243]

Interestingly, when the Surveyors shared these stories of local corruptions of their work with me, they were always positioned as rumours, stories, and tales from previous Survey projects. At times, transgressions were even blamed on non-human agents. One day as I walked the enclave's new perimeter, I noticed that several of the freshly poured border posts appeared to have been vandalized, with chips knocked out of their still freshly poured and moulded concrete bases and the text on the posts disfigured and defaced. I pointed this out to one of the Survey team, interested in his response. He glanced at the damage and blandly said, "Cows" (see Figure 13). The bovine explanation spoke to the Surveyors' steadfast denial that their current meticulous measurements were being undermined in any way. Such claims may have bolstered the pretentions towards accuracy and permanence of the Survey Work. But they seemingly belied quite visible evidence of frustration and anger at the codification of the enclave's boundaries. At issue was the inexorably *human* affront to the ostensibly "scientific" work of demarcating territory.

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[243] Similar resistances to surveying during attempts to demarcate the Tin Bigha area were debated in the *Lok Sabha* in 1986. In response to a question about a press report of survey tampering, the Minister of State in the Ministry of External Affairs responded: "Boundary demarcation work along the Indo-Bangladesh border near Tin Bigha, but excluding it, started on January 28, 1986. On that day, the joint survey team demarcated part of the boundary between India and Bangladesh at Dahagram-Angarpota. The next morning when the joint survey team arrived at the work site, they found that the marker fixed on the ground after measurement the previous day, had been uprooted during the night and a large number of agitators had gathered inside the Bangladesh enclave of Angarpota, who were shouting slogans against the demarcation. Our security personnel on duty could not provide protection for the Bangladesh survey team within their enclave and so at their request the work had to be suspended" (quoted in Bhasin 1996: 910).

Figure 13: Damage to Border Pillar, Dahagram

In his account of the emergence of cadastral surveying techniques in Colonial Egypt, Timothy Mitchell (2002) observes that one should not be seduced by cartographic claims to scientific accuracy. The process of demarcation is at once a social and a technical process that is as much about reformatting knowledge as it is about marking space. As he writes:

> The map presents itself as a mere representation, an idea or abstraction, set apart from the real, fixed, physical reality it depicts. It erases and hides the contested, political, representational nature of the world it portrays, in the same action with which it denies its own (shrinking) physicality. The mechanical organization of labor, the movement from the field to the office, the repeated accounts of the precision and accuracy of the work, all operate together to produce the effect of a bifurcated world (2002: 117).

Erased, or at least concealed, by this bifurcation between "reality" and "representation" are a range of relations of power and control, as well as a series of debates over and contestations of such power. The demarcation of Dahagram, a remapping of technical and representational measurements back onto territory, appeared to be a project of bringing reality in line with the map, rather than the other way around. The process denied the sociality of border demarcation and the long and contingent processes through which the enclaves and the border itself came into existence.[244] It further operated independently even of the geographical realities on the ground, such as the non-correspondence of plots of land to border posts claiming to be accurate to within feet of the "real" border. The technical claims of the Survey Team also tended to obviate recognition that the team's decisions had dire consequences for people living in border regions, whether this meant the carving of a field into two pieces or the destruction of newly planted cash-crops during the "proper" placement of pillars. In Mitchell's terms, the move between representation and reality displaced the accountability in such actions by reframing the social and political process of demarcation as a technical one.

Yet, border measurements were always taken in dialogue with local understandings of both what was "right" and what was "advantageous." These processes were constantly imbued with the spectre of violence and expropriation both implicit in boundary-making projects and central to Dahagram's post-Partition history. Such interactions unquestionably shape both the interpretation of corruption by residents of sensitive border zones and the ways representatives of state bureaucracy interact with them. The mutual discourse of distrust had the effect of producing relations and conditions that lent themselves to tensions, resentments, rumour, instability, and insecurity. These tensions are further fraught in Dahagram because of

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[244] For more on the articulation between the technical and social aspects of mapping territory, see Edney (1997), Craib (2000), Harley (2001), Orlove (1991), and Scott (1998).

the general restriction of information in sensitive border zones and the complications such restrictions places on daily life and "legal" practice, particularly the lack of access to official documents such as maps, the limitations on land registration within the enclaves, and the vagaries of settling land disputes through local arbitration (see chapter 1). The bitter irony of having teams of surveyors working within the enclave to make maps that were officially unavailable to residents into "reality" was not lost on those living in Dahagram. Indeed, such asymmetrical access to information contributed to perceptions that residents had little to gain and much to lose in official projects of measuring land, marking space, and designating ownership and authority.

These various different forms of spatial expropriation are not experienced singly by enclave residents, but rather as a set of intertwined processes that gradually or rapidly erode rights and access to land. These experiences are situated within the broader history of the Communal politics that have characterized the relationship between India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh since before Partition (Chatterji 1995; 2007); the slow and uneven definition of the border since the drawing of the Radcliffe line in 1947 (Van Schendel 2005); the particular histories of Dahagram's emergence as a sensitive space; and the complicated politics of belonging that continue to structure daily life for its residents. The various legacies of violence from Dahagram's pre-Corridor past, fears around the contingency of the Corridor, the still unstable politics of belonging within Bangladesh, and the various uncertainties of access to goods and representation within the enclave all resonate with projects of "objective" demarcation. If the relationship between "reality" and "the map" is, as Mitchell suggests, an unstable one, the instabilities and bleeds across this bifurcation are as bound up in the histories of particular places as they are in the technical practices of marking and dividing space. The map is indeed an instrument of the sovereign state

(or states) (Scott 1998). Yet it is also, as Elyachar suggests, "another ground on which competing visions of reality, and contests for power are played out" (2003: 594).

Symbolic Developments

Boundary definition is only one arena within which spatial corruption is produced through the uneven resonation between Dahagram's histories and projects seeking to mark it in particular ways. If border marking is a project of negotiating the concrete location of Dahagram between India and Bangladesh, various kinds of development projects negotiate Dahagram's space within national symbolics of territory and belonging. Such projects are grounded in and rely on various imaginations of what Dahagram "is," who its residents "are," and what they "need." At the same time, Dahagram's ambiguous status means that such projects are exceptionally susceptible to transformation and opportunistic cooption within the enclave's boundaries.

While I was conducting my fieldwork, a local BT Maize company called Doyel was in the process of launching a seed/microcredit scheme in partnership with National Credit and Commerce (NCC) Bank (see Figure 14). To facilitate adoption, Doyel guaranteed loans issued by NCC Bank to farmers for the purchase of Doyel's seeds. The project served farmers throughout Patgram Thana, but there was a special attention to Dahagram where, over the course of my fieldwork, much of the farmland in the south, nearer to the Corridor, was transformed into maize fields. The partnership with NCC was pioneered by Doyel's co-founder, a local political leader named Sijule Islam. Sijule, like many political players in *Uttor Bongo* [North Bengal], had begun his career as a supporter of Mohommad Ershad's Jatiyo Party, but more recently, had become an important candidate for the Islamist Jamaat Party. Sijule's face adorned posters throughout the Patgram region, and he planned to stand as a Member of

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Parliament in the next elections. He prided himself as a populist politician with a simple vision of Parliamentary reform. As he told me, "Each week, politicians should spend four days in the office and three in the field."

Figure 14: Maize in Dahagram

His focus on Dahagram seemed somewhat surprising. Though the enclave certainly contained much fertile land, there were many other less "sensitive" spaces in the region that might have been equally logical places to launch the program. Further, the launch of a credit-scheme in Dahagram ran against the perception of many local NGOs, who expressed reservations about working in the enclave. As one of these organizations explained to me, the enclave itself was a dangerous place to provide aid both because of the vagaries of the Corridor, which might be closed at any time, and

the "likelihood" that enclave residents would not repay their loans.[245] If these NGO views echoed popular understandings of the enclaves as lawless zones, Sijule had a different take.

Sijule saw his role in bringing BT maize to the enclave as a humanitarian act. As he explained to me, "These people in the enclave get nothing. No bank will give them loans. No one extends a hand. Until we came they had no support." This statement was neither accurate from the perspective of loans—at least two national level microcredit providers, Asa and Podokkhep, were active in the enclave—nor from the perspective of services, as discussed below. However, Sijule's explanation, coupled with his own political ambition, highlighted the ways that the politics of aid within Dahagram hinge as much on its peculiar location within national debates as on need. While Sijule may have seen Dahagram residents as potential constituents, there was no Jamaat Party infrastructure within the enclave. Sijule himself felt that enclave residents were likely to vote for the Awami League in every instance, since the Party had a more amicable relationship with India.[246] This, it was said, translated to less tension along the border when they were in power.[247] Rather, it seemed that the political capital of *being* involved with Dahagram was more important than the *outcomes* of such involvement. As Ferguson (1994) has famously argued, the framing of a space as a zone in which particular kinds of development interventions are needed

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[245] On the overwhelming centrality of repayment to microcredit, see Fernando (1997) and Cons and Paprocki (2010).

[246] A relationship stemming back to the Liberation War when the Congress Party of Indira Gandhi entered the Liberation War led by the Awami League. This relationship has a political, as well as historical, dimension linked to the Awami League's secular platform and the BNP's more anti-secular stance. It might be argued that in contemporary Bangladeshi politics, both of these positions fluctuate between nominal and substantive based on the political climate at any given moment. For more on this history, see Van Schendel (2009).

[247] This was an often-repeated belief of residents of Patgram Thana. Many people told me that enclave residents all just "vote for the boat" (the Awami League's symbol). This was largely untrue within the enclave where local politics had much more to do with ethnicity and belonging. Within Dahagram, the Bhatiya/Bangal divide was significantly more important than national party affiliation. Indeed, the current administration was, at least nominally, part of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) (see Chapter 3).

and likely to succeed—the production of an "object" of development—precedes development interventions of various kinds.[248] Sijule's framing of the enclave was as a space of both national historical import and as a neglected zone within which residents received no support of any kind. If the enclave was an object of development, this object had as much to do with national import as it did with intervention.

Sijule was not the only player in the Doyel scheme to recognize the symbolic import of working in Dahagram. The program was formally launched in the winter of 2007 with a celebration at Dahagram's Union Council Office. This celebration was attended by an official from NCC who had traveled all the way from Dhaka for the event. The official distributed a number of educational materials to the local government school and gave a short speech. *In the rest of Bangladesh,* he began, *we have heard of the plight of people here in Dahagram. I myself have read of the Tin Bigha Corridor in books, and learned of your long struggle to keep this land as part of Bangladesh. I often imagined Dahagram as a land far away. But only in coming here and seeing with my own eyes your plight was I able to understand how truly this place is part of Bangladesh.* Having laid the ground with these heartfelt statements, the official went on to explain how proud NCC was to be able to support farmers in Dahagram through loans for agricultural development. Such platitudes are, of course, common-fare in such events. However, the NCC official's emphasis on national inclusion and struggle underscored the political stakes in Dahagram's development and the links between symbolic territory and concrete plans on the ground.

The outcomes of Doyel's project were unclear during my fieldwork. However, it certainly stood to significantly alter Dahagram's political economy in ways that may not have been intended by the nationalist gestures of its makers. The early adopters of the maize scheme were largely Bhatiya farmers living in the south of the enclave who

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[248] On objects of development, see also Mitchell (1991a; 2002).

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had purchased or consolidated large plots of land for cultivation since moving into Dahagram after the opening of the Corridor. Bhatiya farmers, with their larger holdings and superior soil conditions (see Chapter 3), were better poised to take advantage of such support, nominally provided in recognition of residents' long-struggles for belonging in Bangladesh. That such realities are often of little consequence in the implementation of development projects is of little surprise. However, what I wish to emphasize here is that the stakes of development in Dahagram had little to do with establishing voting-blocks or establishing profitable market relations.[249] These were *symbolic* developments, focused on the import of Dahagram as a sensitive and tenuous space in an ambiguous border zone.[250] Such initiatives made two simultaneous claims. One the one hand, they were gestures of inclusion that sought to bring Dahagram into the nation through development assistance. On the other, they were also nationalist gestures that proclaimed support of the fraught space of Dahagram as a form of compassionate patriotism, a form of care for the nation. This is not to deny that such projects had political economic ends or were not, effectively, strategies of reconfiguring power within and in relation to Dahagram. The Doyel project was certainly a mechanism through which Dahagram was further integrated into the broader agricultural economy of North Bengal. Yet it was also one of a number of projects that responded to Dahagram's symbolic location within broader national narratives of territory, regional politics, and border-disputes.

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[249] Literature on corruption in South Asia and the exchange of development assistance for votes (and other clientelist arrangements) is, of course, huge. See, for example and overview, Bardhan (1997).

[250] For another account of development in a frontier zone, see Tsing (2005). Tsing's account of Kalimantan is much more directly concerned with the political economy of resource extraction. However, she too points out the ironies and reversals of development projects that seek to frame marginal space in particular ways. As she writes, "Such twists are more than irony: They predict and perform their own reversals, forming productive confusions and becoming models for other frontiers. In Kalimantan, related paradoxes produce frontier degradation and salvage. The frontier is made in the shifting terrain between legality and illegality, public and private ownershp, brutal rape and passionate charisma, ethnic collaboration and hostility, violence and law, restoration and extermination" (33).

Such symbolic acts account for a seemingly disproportionate level of development assistance in Dahagram, discussed in more detail below. Yet, Dahagram's simultaneous and linked status as a sensitive place—with attendant overtones of danger and criminality—make it a space that also receives a disproportionately small amount of monitoring of such development projects. Visits by state officials, NGOs, and others who might evaluate the impact of development programming are rare. If development programs are thus means to inclusion—given as both celebrations and markings of Dahagram's import to the nation—they also highlight the material insignificance and difficult status of Dahagram as a marginal space and assumptions about the danger of the space and of its inhabitants.[251] Indeed, there is a precarious linkage in the question of monitoring between the overlapping schemas of control, development, sovereignty, and nationalism at work within the enclave. On the one hand, Dahagram is a space that is under an exceptional amount of surveillance— as often, as residents have it, through the scope of a rifle as not. The contentiousness of the space, its uncomfortable history within broader national debates over the border and over territory, and its ongoing "unresolvable" status as sensitive space (see chapter 2) heightens the symbolic import of Dahagram as a space in need of both "securing" and development. Indeed, from competing perspectives, both are viewed as critical to the rationalization of Dahagram's ambiguous space. Yet, in practice development projects themselves operate under the cover of such "obvious surveillances" by border security forces and others.[252] The act of intervention itself, as

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[251] The literature on development as a nationalist project is expansive. Of particular relevance to the politics of national development in Bangladesh is Gupta's (1998) discussion of agrarian populism in India. "'Development,'" he writes, "has served as the chief legitimating function of ruling regimes and as the most important 'reason of state' in independent India. This is quite ironic, for developmentalism, in its evolutionary assumptions, in its essentialization of difference, in its presumption of homogeneity *within* areas considered essentially different, and in its narratives of progress, shares a great deal with colonial and specifically Orientalist, discourses" (33, emphasis in original). See also Li (2007).
[252] My thanks to Townsend Middleton for helping me to understand this paradox.

a gesture of national inclusion, presumes, and effectively dismisses, the outcomes that it nominally seek to achieve.

This paradoxical relationship has numerous consequences within the enclave, many of which are inscribed in Dahagram's very landscape. Paved roads run the length and circumference of the enclave, providing smooth transportation for motorized vehicles despite the fact that, while I was conducting fieldwork, only two families within the enclave owned any motorized transport (a motorcycle). Indeed, even rickshaws are a rarity in the enclave, and most local transportation is by foot or bicycle, with rickshaw vans (flatbed bicycle wagons) used for transporting agricultural goods to market on *haat* days. Beyond roads, Dahagram also receives a significant amount of Vulnerable Group Development/Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGD-VGF) support from the central government.[253] The Dutch-Bangla Bank, in the late-1990s underwrote the development of a number of tube-wells in Dahagram. Numerous food for work (FFW) projects building bridges and new roads have been implemented in Dahagram with the support of organizations such as CARE and USAID. Indeed, while I was conducting fieldwork a USAID supported FFW project was underway to construct a wide road in the north of the enclave. Though I visited the project numerous times, I never met anyone from outside of the enclave involved in supervising, directing, or planning the project. This is not to say that such projects were not conceived of with or by outside organizations, rather that their day-to-day operation was managed locally.

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[253] VGD-VGF programs are one of the largest central government sponsored support programs in Bangladesh. The programs target those living in extreme poverty and are central and critical tools to combat seasonal shortfalls associated with the *Monga* season—a period between the *boro* and *aman* rice harvests when there is a scarcity of agricultural related employment. I was unable to obtain any exact figures on the amount of VGD/VGF funding available in Dahagram.

Figure 15: Operatories in Dahagram's Hospital

Many of these projects do more to signify than to serve Dahagram's population. The hospital announced during Ershad's regime is a case in point (see Figure 15). It is the most "modern" and certainly the largest building within Dahagram, complete with two operatories. Yet, due in part to a lack of government funding to staff the hospital and in part due to the refusal of the BSF to allow electricity through the Corridor, it has never seen patients. Most of the rooms remain unused and the large building now houses only a small government family planning service.[254] The hospital is a suggestive reminder of the complicated politics that have historically structured various forms of interventions within and projects of defining belonging at the border. It is also a marker of the gap between gestures of inclusion and concrete services. If the construction of buildings such as hospitals is one way of declaring Dahagram as part of the nation, the failure of such projects to serve practical needs is a reminder of the gap between Dahagram's value as a political symbol and more grounded concern over its residents' welfare. The use of hospitals, schools, and other municipal projects as political rewards or as markers of a political party's social

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[254] See *The Daily Star,* 2003 (June 8), "A Hospital Only in Name!"

commitment to a particular area is common throughout Bangladesh. Such projects for the "public good" are often abandoned or transformed when political power shifts within the country.[255] The use of development assistance as a political, rather than "public" good, is thus unsurprising in the context of Dahagram. Yet the irony of having excellent access to unusable services is acutely felt in a space where the regulation of movement makes accessing health-care difficult, if not impossible, at night.

Ambiguous Significations

Projects such as the hospital, which boldly claimed Dahagram's inclusion into the modern Bangladeshi nation and state while seemingly denying residents the concrete benefits of such inclusion, were all the more puzzling because they seemed to be projects with no audience. They neither existed as services for residents, nor as markers for visitors. Yet, there were numerous examples of projects throughout the enclave that seemed largely to serve the purpose of declaring their own existence and success to an imagined or anticipated audience. For example, in the center of Bongerbari field near the Union Council office, at the administrative and social center of the enclave, there was a sign that proclaimed Dahagram's numerous development achievements (see Figure 16). The sign nominally listed the accomplishments of the Swanirvar Dahagram Angarpota Development Project, a program supported with funds from the Rotary Club of Dhaka and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). However, the sign was also a broader demographic statement of

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[255] Many of these projects are sites where struggles over Bangladesh's contested history are waged. Such works are regularly named after Sheik Mujib, if begun under the auspices of the Awami League, or Zia Rahman if begun under the auspices of the BNP. The Awami League claims that the BNP uses such renaming as an attempt to "disgrace the father of the nation" (Awami League 2004), though the party also regularly engages in the politics of renaming. After coming to power in 2009, the Party quickly renamed "Zia International Airport" in Dhaka to "Hazrat Jalal International Airport." See *The Daily Star,* 2010 (February 15), "Zia International Airport Renamed."

Dahagram's overall success in achieving a range of normative development goals. Many of the statistics that had been painted on the sign—for example, that the literacy rate in the enclave was 95%—bore little resemblance to the conditions that I observed while doing fieldwork. Yet what was more striking than the claims of the sign was that it was written in English, a language that no one that I met within the enclave could speak, let alone read.

Figure 16: Swanivar Dahagram Angarpota Development Program Sign

If the sign, celebrating the apparent success of a range of different development programs in the enclave, was not meant for its residents, who was it for? For reasons outlined above, very few representatives of NGOs visited the enclave, even when they were underwriting projects carried out within it. Occasionally, people like the NCC official came to Dahagram. Yet when they did, they were generally there

for a short period of time to launch projects of their own, many of which were premised on the enclave as a space within which, as Sijule put it, "no one would extend a hand." Representatives of the border security forces, district commissioners, and other government officials also periodically visited the enclave. Yet, these visits were largely focused on resolving questions related to the enclave's borders and the Tin Bigha Corridor. Rarely were such visits more than nominally concerned with the "social welfare" of enclave residents. Further, such security-minded visitors rarely ventured into the interior of the enclave, focusing their concerns instead on its perimeters and, particularly, the Tin Bigha Corridor.

What are the implications of a sign with no audience? The sign itself seemed to serve as a kind of shorthand for anyone who might be looking. Its statement about Dahagram's development statistics—whether or not such numbers would bear close scrutiny—made a series of implicit claims. First, it presented Dahagram as a development success, reinforcing both the claim that residents were deserving members of Bangladesh—as they had, supposedly successfully utilized resources to accomplish a range of development goals such as reducing illiteracy—and that the state was invested in bringing them into the national fold. Second, it also marked Dahagram spatially, as a part of Bangladesh within which international development agencies, such as Rotary and CIDA, could legitimately intervene. Third, it claimed an ongoing investment in the region, announcing progress to those who might come to the enclave to continue the work. At the same time, the sign reinforced the gap between the symbolic and material import of the enclave. Its bold pronouncements were gestures for an absent, if potential, audience who might further be able to celebrate Dahagram and its residents' achievement of development milestones, rather than a celebration for the residents themselves.

If the sign did little more than proclaim a set of questionable figures in a language that no one in the enclave could read, there were more visible markers of the vagaries of symbolic development in the enclave. One of the most glaring of these was Dahagram's recent "model village" project. I first heard about the model village from a local journalist. We had been working in Dahagram for months and had never heard any suggestion that there was a model village in the enclave. Indeed, it seemed like an incongruous place to construct such an "example" of development, given the infrequency of visitors to the enclave. The next day, in Dahagram, I asked Mohammed Yousuf, a former member of the DSS and a visible figure in Dahagram's political landscape, about the village. Yousuf, on hearing my question, gave a cynical laugh and gestured towards the north. "It's over there, on the bank of the Tista. Go see for yourself."

Intrigued, I made my way to the model village following the vague directions that I had been given. I was surprised to find that this "model" village was not on one of Dahagram's paved roads. To get there, I turned off of the main track that ran past Notunhaat along the west side of the enclave and made my way along a slow dusty and very sandy track in the direction of the Tista river. Soon, the rickshaw I was on could go no further and I got out and walked. As I went, the land quickly became arid *char* land that characterized much of the north side of the enclave. After some time, I arrived at the banks of the Tista, where I had been told the village lay. There was, indeed, a small cluster of huts, more dilapidated than many dwellings elsewhere in Dahagram, on the bank. There were no adults around, but a group of children were there who assured me that I was in the right place. I began to explore. The only evidence of any "development" project seemed to be a single water pump (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: Dahagram's Model Village

The project was likely part of the Adarsha Gram Project II, a project co-
financed by the government and by the EU, which nominally develops common (*khas*)
land for landless laborers. The project claims a highly structured intervention in the
lives of the rural poor, complete with both "infrastructural" and "human development"
programs.[256] Such model villages have both a normative and a performative
dimension. On the one hand, they "model" proper forms of development to both their
residents and to those in surrounding areas by providing a range of services such as
latrines, pumps for clean drinking water, and houses with tin roofing and concrete
floors.[257] On the other, they also display "state of the art" development technology in

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[256] See http://www.eudelbangladesh.org/en/projects/projectdetails/13.htm
[257] In this sense, they deploy classic modernization theory logics of development in a neoliberal package
intimately focused on behavior and socialization as key elements of economic integration (Li 2000;
2007).

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the service of demonstrating the technology's and/or the planners' success. Yet, the model village in Dahagram seemed to be doing neither of these things. The existence of the village seemed, if not an open secret, at least something that few people were willing to bring up. It was positioned in a place within Dahagram that seemed to guarantee that it would be seen by almost no visitors to the enclave (possibly, even if they came looking for it). What is more, the village appeared to feature none of the services for improving the lives and livelihoods of the landless laborers who were supposed to live there. Like the sign in Bongerbari field, the model village seemed to signify for no one.

More so than the sign, the model village helped to illustrate both the implications and the frustrations of symbolic developments for residents of the enclave. Later that day, I ran into Mohammed Yousuf again in a tea stall. "Did you see the model village," he asked. I told him about my experience there and probed him for more information. Yousuf was reluctant to say more about it. "It certainly doesn't look like much is going on there," I prompted. Yousuf raised his eyebrows and sipped his tea. Others also had little to say about the model village when I asked them, and I was never able to identify and interview any of its residents. However, when I did ask, many people would change the topic by raising of a number of complaints against Arif Ul Rahaman, the current Union Council Chairman.[258]

It was certainly hard not to notice the contrast between the state of the model village and the Chairman's own home. Rahaman's *bari* was already one of the best maintained in Dahagram. One day I ran into him in Bongerbari and asked if I could set-up an interview. He told me to come to his home the next day, as he would not be out and about because he was having some work done. The work turned out to be a

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[258] Union Parishads (councils) are the basic unit of local political organization in Bangladesh. Similar in form to Panchayats in India, they are comprised of a series of twelve elected representatives from a village unit (or sometimes several villages) within a particular Thana or Upazilla.

new brick and mortar house that he was building behind his current *bari*. As Rahaman explained to us, the house itself was inexorably linked to his own commitment to the social welfare of the enclave. According to him, this charity work, and more specifically, the *ability* to provide assistance to enclave residents, thanks to his successful business interests, were what allowed him to win the last election and become chairman. "Thank God that, regarding social welfare, none can match my record," he said. The house, itself, was a necessary symbol of both his commitment and his ability to continue providing for the downcast enclave residents. "I was never occupied with the thought of building my own house. The problem is that it brings a sort of shame [*laja*], living in *kachcha* [traditional, with implications of inferior and impoverished] houses. That is why lately, I began to build my own house. You see, for my own need, I do not think that a new house is necessary. The problem is, as this brother [referring to a representative of the BNP from Patgram who had come to visit Rahaman and was observing our conversation] has come, but I don't have a well-furnished house to offer him to sit in. I don't have a set of sofas. That is why." Rahaman's old house was far from what others in the enclave would have called *kachcha*. Indeed, it had a concrete floor, plaster walls, and a tin roof. But his new house would truly set him apart as both one of the enclave's wealthiest residents, and more importantly, in his analysis, as their protector. Such a display of wealth also raised questions about Rahaman's own ability to exploit the various symbolic developments within Dahagram. When I mentioned the house to Mohammad Yussuf, he snorted, and quipped with sarcasm, "There is the model village."

Corrupting Narratives

Rahaman's commentary on his new house highlighted the opportunities that emerge in the gaps between the symbolic intent of development projects in Dahagram

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and their concrete implementation (or lack thereof). But it also highlighted the uneven and overlapping idealized visions of Dahagram that contribute to the production of spatial corruptions. Whether the funds for Rahaman's new *bari* did or did not come from funding for Dahagram's model village, he almost certainly was able to use his position to take advantage of others' idealized visions of Dahagram to reconstruct and produce his own, albeit somewhat altered, vision of the enclave. This vision may have run counter to the symbolic intents of development in the enclave. It also, clearly, ran counter to many enclave residents' own visions of just political practice. Akhil Gupta, in his ethnography of corruption in rural India, argues that "the phenomena of corruption cannot be grasped apart from, or in isolation from, narratives of corruption" (2005: 6). The ways people narrate corruption, Gupta suggests, offer critical views on the ways through which individuals understand the experience and workings of the state. Yet, such narratives are also commentary on local politics and its interface with broader political practices—from demarcations to developments. In Dahagram, then, they are ways that people interpret, articulate, and critique the links between "the state" and the micropolitcs of daily life.

The broad array of development projects in Dahagram, unsurprisingly, did little to improve the social welfare of Dahagram's residents. Indeed, the distribution of various forms of government aid was funneled largely through the Union Parishad and was accompanied by a marked lack of accounting and monitoring. Residents repeatedly told me that to become a member of a VGD-VGF program, one had to pay a large bribe to a Union Parishad council member. This practice had been common for quite some time, but most believed that the size of these bribes had sharply increased with Rahaman's administration. Many of Dahagram's more politically influential residents complained assiduously about the corruption of the current enclave administration. The irony of this complaint was that these political figures, most of

them Bangals and many of them former members of the DSS, had worked collectively to place Rahaman in office over Tariq Anam, a Bhatiya candidate with a reputation for honesty and hard work. Indeed, many of these elites that I spoke with made it quite clear that even at the time of the election it was known that Rahaman, the Bangal candidate, had been involved in smuggling through his ambiguously defined "stone trade." As such, Dahagram's political elites had made a conscious choice to vote— and, as many members of the Bhatiya community had it, to rig the election—along ethnic lines.

Mohammad Yusuf, himself a former DSS member, was particularly bitter about Rahaman, who he had helped to elect. Yusuf was one of the wealthiest residents of the enclave with a large house with concrete floors and a high, tin-roof. His wife, Nasrine, had been elected to one of the two seats reserved on the Union Parishad for women.[259] He and his wife, who unlike Yusuf was extremely reluctant to discuss the Chairman with us, had been in a bitter feud with Rahaman over what they saw as his abusive nature, his refusal to distribute development projects to members of the council for administration in their *paras,* and his corruption. One day, in an extended critique of the chairman, he explained to me, "A chairman is like a messenger. As the head of the Council, he makes contacts and brings letters and instructions from the administration. He is supposed to bring these before the whole Council in the Council meetings. But here, if there is something in these plans and instructions which can benefit him, he would keep that in his pocket so that it never comes out."

I took Yusuf's complaints about the Chairman with a grain of salt, as they were almost always peppered with moralizing statements that positioned him and his family as wealthy enough to not need to engage in corrupt activities. Such wealth and position, Yusuf seemed to believe, meant that he and his family could truly attend to

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[259] Reservations are held for two women members in Union Parishads throughout Bangladesh.

the welfare of enclave residents. Such proclamations bore a marked similarity to Rahaman's own justification of himself as an ideal UP Chair because of his financial *ability* to help Dahagram's downtrodden and poor. In other words, both sought to deploy their own visions of a downtrodden population within the enclave who were in dire need of paternal guidance from a political figure of means.

Still, it certainly seemed as though much of the development money that had been flowing into Dahagram failed to make its way into livelihood improving projects. There seemed little concern to even conceal this fact by Rahaman. One day, as I was meeting with him in his offices, I asked if I could see the UP records. He shrugged and handed me several ledger books within which detailed minutes from Dahagram's UP meetings were noted. These comprised a record that could be shown to any government official wishing to inquire into the doings of local government within the enclave. Many of the decisions taken by the Council concerned the allocation of various funds for either relief or development projects within Dahagram. A quick survey of the ledger showed that the actual amounts of money discussed by the Council and duly recorded in the minutes by the Council's scribe had been erased and rewritten by a different hand and with a different pen. Such actions might or might not conceal discrepancies between the amount of development money flowing into the enclave for distribution through the Parishad and the amount of that money reported to the council by the Chairman.

My point here is not to express shock or moral outrage at practices of misappropriation in Dahagram. Such corruptions were different in Dahagram from many other places more in degree than in kind. What is more, most residents, when asked, agreed that corruption, expropriation, and clientelism had been common features of all of the enclave's various local governments since before Ershad designated Dahagram as an independent Union Parishad in 1990. Much of the

frustration with the current administration had more to do with the fact that, on the one hand, expropriation had reached a level that was "overly" exploitative for Dahagram's residents and, on the other, that the Chairman was failing to spread the rewards of such expropriations around. Another woman who was a member of Dahagram's Union Parishad expressed this frustration to me in a bitter tirade against the Chairman and his corruption one day as I took tea in her house. The house was large by Dahagram standards but had a packed dirt floor and a thatched roof, as opposed to the poured concrete floors and tin roofing of *"pukka"* or proper [modern] homes. "Look at me," she said. "I have been a council member for three years and still I live in a *kachcha* home." Her complaint was framed as an accusation of corruption, but more directly carried the suggestion that the Chairman had violated the moral economy of appropriation by not allowing his fellow Council members to *also* benefit from development kick-backs.

Gupta argues that narratives about corruption provide a lens onto local understandings of the workings of complex bureaucratic practices. As he writes, "When considering modern bureaucracies, thus, even when an unambiguous legal mechanism exists to determine corruption, if there is no widespread social agreement about which scale is to be used to judge 'correct' ethical behavior, the social judgment of corruption can often be contentious and fractured" (8). In Dahagram, however, it might be more correct to say that narratives of corruption, and practices of corruption themselves, constitute navigations of the discontinuities inherent in overlapping processes of politically organized subjection. An analog to Gupta's point, then, might be that narratives of corruption also attempt to codify a moral order that separates "acceptable" navigations of these discontinuities from unacceptable ones. They are also narratives through which particular grievances and expectations are expressed and articulated. They are thus projects of, on the one hand, (re)constructing a vision of

space and rule in Dahagram and, on the other, expressing often cynical frustration with the failures and corruptions of competing visions of the enclave.

Overlapping Sovereignties

Spatial corruptions in Dahagram emerge out of various projects seeking to regulate, control, and appropriate the enclave's landscape, history, and inhabitants. This is no less true with formal projects seeking to secure and assert various forms of sovereign control over the contentious space of the enclave than it is with projects that seek to define its boundaries or incorporate it into the nation through development aid. Indeed, projects of surveillance and control are often particularly susceptible to re-appropriation and reconfiguration within Dahagram and assertions of sovereignty are as likely to expose gaps and overlaps and corruptions of control as to accomplish rule "as planned." Such projects and their breakdowns expose how various dimensions of control, rule, and observation create a space for corruption and politics within the enclave, which are in turn constitutive of everyday life and struggle for enclave residents.

Security and surveillance are omnipresent features of life in the enclave. The sense of surveillance is palpable even from the centre of the enclave, and the patrolling and regulation of space is a constant topic of discussion, rumour, and complaint. Rather than routinising and normalizing life for Dahagram residents, this surveillance produces new sets of ambiguities at the same time that it allows various forms of spatial exploitation and corruption. This paradox was particularly apparent in an attempt by the BSF to stem cattle smuggling in Dahagram that was ongoing throughout the period that I conducted fieldwork.

During the summer of 2006, the BSF announced that they were placing a ten-cow ceiling on the number of cattle that could be taken out of the enclave on *haat*

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days.[260] In a Union Parishad of approximately 16,000 people, many of whom possess few assets beyond their cattle, this placed a severe imposition on enclave residents' ability to raise cash to cover land purchases, dowries, production shortfalls, or various other forms of asset shocks. The ceiling continued through the summer and in the *monga* season, a period of seasonal food insecurity and anxiety throughout the North. During this period, the sale of cattle is often a necessary strategy for households struggling to get by.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Smuggling is a constant topic of tension along the India-Bangladesh border and is a central trope on debates over and concern about the "porousness" of the border in general. Much border smuggling is of petty goods, such as paddy, jute, fertilizer, and livestock. However, concerns over crime at the border are equally central to discussions of security as are terrorism and the movement of militant groups.[261] Tension around cattle smuggling, in particular, is high because of social and legal prohibitions on the slaughter of cattle inside India.[262] As such, smuggling cattle across the border into Bangladeshi markets is a profitable and common practice. The BSF maintains that Dahagram, in part because of its peculiar territorial situation in India, is an epicentre of such smuggling and the ceiling was their latest attempt to stem it.[263] By drastically limiting the passage of cattle through the enclave, the BSF was thus both stemming the slaughter of sacred cows by Muslim Bangladeshis and also asserting control over a criminal and unruly space where smugglers regularly violated the territorial integrity of India.

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[260] See *The Daily Star,* 2006 (September 3), "BSF Closes Tin Bigha Corridor;" *The New Age,* 2006, (September 4), "BSF Restriction on Cattle Movement Thru' Tin Bigha: Dahagram Angorpota Enclave Dwellers Stage Demo;" *The New Nation,* 2006 (September 7), "BSF Troops Intrude into Angorpota;" *The New Age,* 2006 (December 12), "Farmers Face Ruin as BSF Restricts Cattle Movement."
[261] See, for example, Datta (2010), Jamwal (2004), and Nandy (2005).
[262] On cattle smuggling in particular, see Hussain (2009).
[263] The completion of the border fence, which does not go around Dahagram, stands to focus more attention on the enclave as a site of smuggling activity.

There is some truth to the claim that Dahagram served as a conduit for cattle. Many residents told me that it was (or had been) common practice for Indians from surrounding areas to enter Dahagram with their cattle, strike an arrangement with a local broker, and wait for the broker to return from market with proceeds from sales. Such petty smuggling was a common and critical livelihood strategy for enclave residents. This profitable cattle trade also became a key method for local elites to acquire wealth and raise money for political campaigns. One of the more egregious cases of this was Rahaman, the current Union Parishad Chairman whose family was rumoured to run a smuggling operation that transported cattle, drugs, and other goods across the border and through the Tin Bigha Corridor, thereby avoiding the dangerous negotiation of border fences and official border crossings.

The BSF's ten-cow ceiling was in direct response to a sharp increase in observed cattle passages. During the previous Union Parishad Administration, from 1997-2002, I was told, BSF records showed between seven and eight thousand cows passing through the Corridor, a rate that would suggest at least a modest cross-border trade in illegally sold cattle. During the first three years of the new administration, however, as many as 18,000 cattle were recorded passing through the Corridor, an average of more than 60 cattle per *haat*. If the BSF's strategy was to cut down on smuggling, their ceiling also served to consolidate Rahaman's power within the enclave. Indeed, this particular exercise of sovereignty served not only to prevent residents from accessing markets to sell critical goods, it also placed the responsibility for deciding *who* could take cattle to market in the hands of Rahaman himself, who most accused of causing the ceiling in the first place.

The Chairman was charged with issuing chits to enclave residents that they could then present to the BSF as they passed through the Corridor. Without a chit, the BSF would block passage of cattle. Indeed, the BSF had instituted a policy of

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searching goods that passed through the Corridor to make sure that enclave residents had not slaughtered the cattle inside of the enclave in order to transport just the meat to market. I heard numerous stories throughout my fieldwork of demands and pleas for the Chairman to issue one of these chits for reasons as various as acquiring land, medical emergencies, and purchasing food and goods. Yet the system of distributing such chits appeared to have little to do with need. Rather, they were awarded based on political favouritism, bribes, and commissions on the sale price of cattle in the market. As one resident described it, "the ceiling has been a great misery for us. We've had to survive it in any way we can." For this and other residents unable to gain a cattle chit, those strategies ranged from selling other durable goods to going without. The cattle ceiling, nominally a project of regulation, had created another layer of corruption, nepotism and favouritism, and afforded new powers to individuals who both create and exploit Dahagram's 'exceptional' status.

If the cattle ceiling provided a means for Rahaman to consolidate power and privilage within the enclave, it also provided a platform for him to further his claim to benefit Dahagram's voiceless. Shortly after the ceiling was put in place, and shortly before I began my fieldwork, Rahaman had reformed the DSS to advocate for the rights of Dahagram residents. Rahaman gathered a group of political elites from within the enclave, including former members of the original DSS and several previous Chairmen, and organized a trip to Dhaka, where the group formed a human chain in front of the Parliament building and sat with the Lalmonirhat District Commissioner to voice the enclave's needs and concerns.[264] Among these were 24-hour opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor, the routing of electric lines through the Corridor to provide power to the enclave, and the lifting of the cattle ceiling. The revived DSS, to my knowledge, never engaged in any other activities beyond the trip to Dhaka and no direct action or

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[264] See *The Daily Star,* 2006 (September 14), "Keep Tin Bigha Open Round the Clock."

change emerged from their protest. Yet, by using the cattle ceiling as a way to resurrect the DSS, Rahaman, in effect, tied himself to histories of struggle over Dahagram and, in doing so, strengthened his own claims to rule, power, and sovereign control. Moreover, he strengthened his own position to speak for enclave residents' interests against other voices within the enclave who might have presented a different picture of Dahagram's politics than Rahaman. The revival of the DSS pointed to ways that various exercises of control were open to both exploitation by those with political power in the enclave and to multiple interpretations and appropriations within Dahagram's histories of belonging.

This is not to say that Rahaman's claim was always effective or that the enclave residents were passive victims of his scheme. The ceiling was a point on which many attempted to press their own claims against the Chairman for corruption. While I was conducting fieldwork, there were several cases of Rahaman being accosted in tea stalls by angry residents attempting to force him issue a chit or to account for his inequitable distribution.[265] Further, several residents, organized by Mohommad Yusuf, lodged formal complaints against the Chairman with authorities in Patgram. Yusuf, on several occasions, spoke with me at length about evidence he was amassing to support his case. Such complaints were particularly threatening in 2007. In January, the Emergency Administration had come into power in Bangladesh in the wake of the collapse of general elections (see Introduction). One of the Administration's projects of restoring "democratic order" was a massive corruption crackdown against government officials both in Dhaka and elsewhere. Many in the enclave began to assure me that the Chairman was due to be arrested at any moment. Indeed, by the summer of 2007, Rahaman was regularly sleeping outside of the enclave in Patgram, as I was told, to more easily evade the authorities. Whether or not

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[265] I never witnessed one of these confrontations, but I was told that they happened on at least three different occasions.

this was true, Rahaman did appear to spend less time within the enclave and began to always travel from place to place by motor-bike. He was never, at least while I was conducting fieldwork, picked up by the anti-corruption authorities.

The corruptions, appropriations, and shortcomings of schemes such as the cattle ceiling were apparent even to those responsible for putting them in place. Shortly after we began work in Dahagram, Sayeed and I stopped to take tea with two *jawans* in the BSF. One, a Sikh from Delhi, we had met before. The other, a tall, muscular and moustached man from Kerala, clearly disliked and distrusted us. Masking his suspicion with a thin veneer of goodwill, he formally offered us first water and then tea. Sensing the tension, I suggested to Sayeed that we proceed through the Corridor and begin our day's work. As we rose, Sayeed casually said, "We have heard that there is a cattle-ceiling in effect now in Dahagram." The Keralan sprang to his feet, furious, and began shouting. "So that's it! That is the reason you are here. Is this what you have come to know about?" The tension around the cattle-ceiling issue might have suggested an acknowledgement on the part of the BSF that their own projects of policing, securing, and enforcing sovereignty in a sensitive space were complicit in reinforcing conflicting modes of sovereign power and corruption within the enclave. More than that, our interest in cattle-smuggling itself raised challenges to the legitimacy and completeness of BSF authority in the Corridor, thus undermining particular imaginaries of sovereignty, control, and regulation at the border. In raising questions about this particular spatial corruption, we had stumbled on a "sensitive" topic.

The politics of the cattle ceiling were unsettling, in some sense, for all involved. The realities of implementing a project that had the straightforward goal of reducing cattle smuggling in Dahagram exposed the instabilities of attempts to establish observation and control—to define and subsequently regulate the space of

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the enclave. It also suggested ways that simplistic visions of the enclave's political space—as a zone of criminality, nationalist import, or administrative ambiguity—were open to reappropriations within different registers of the enclave's history and opportunities for those in a position to exploit Dahagram's precarious location at the margins of state and nation. The cattle ceiling, as it brought together many of the questions raised in other spatial corruptions within Dahagram, also highlighted what was at stake in such attempts to map visions of space back onto the enclave itself. While the overlaps and elisions of such projects certainly created opportunity for some, for most residents they contributed to insecurity, instability, and exposure to a range of threats to their livelihoods.

Conclusion

Sensitivity, as I argue elsewhere in this dissertation, produces spaces in particular ways. This process is as much about ambiguity and uncertainty as it is about the conditioning of responses to places and topics that are considered "sensitive." Reflecting on the various spatial corruptions in Dahagram, one might push this definition one step further. Sensitive spaces appear to be areas that are open to a number of different interpolations—into idealized understandings of security, crime, nation, state, development, and territory. Yet, such interpolations are uncomfortable, incomplete, and, if not dialogic, at least open to negotiation and transformation.[266] These interpolations are not as simple as the hailing of an individual on the street by a police officer. They are imperfect visions, clear, perhaps (though not always), in intent, but hazy at the edges. The imperfections of these idealized visions are of critical consequence for residents of Dahagram. Indeed, the various imaginings of

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[266] Unlike, for example, Althusser's (1971) description of the interpolation of the subject into ideology.

Dahagram as a space *open for* and *in need of* a range of interventions have as much consequence for residents of the enclave as the interventions themselves.

My suggestion here is more than the oft-repeated maxim that there is a gap between theory and practice. Rather, I am arguing that there is an inexorable link between the two, that Dahagram emerges out of idealized imaginings as much as it does out of concrete practice. As Mitchell writes, "Saussure . . . describes the difference between an idea or representation and the material that represents it as no more than the difference between two sides of the same sheet of paper. For the mapmaker, the difference is even less. . . . He cannot keep reality out of his representation" (2002: 116). For Dahagram residents, this process is reversed. They cannot keep representation out of their lived realities. Spatial corruptions, as such, are best understood as both the unsatisfactory outcomes and negotiated terrains of "representation" and "reality" in Dahagram.

Yet, equally as formative of life in Dahagram, are the ways that such spatial corruptions are negotiations of experiences and practices of politically organized subjection at and in specific historical conjunctures (Abrams 1988). In this sense, an attention to spatial corruptions offers windows onto the micro-politics of rule within Dahagram and how such practices articulate and are mutually constituted with broader histories, understandings of, and concerns over history, territory, and nation. From this vantage point, Dahagram appears as one particularly complex node in the mutual constitution of local and broader patterns of rule. The relationship in Dahagram between national and local politics, development, and official projects of defining and controlling space are always already formed in dynamic tension with Dahagram's ambiguous and marginal status and its simultaneous importance in national symbolics of territory.

As such, projects that seek to bring potato fields in line with the map, signs that signify to no one, and attempts to halt the passage of cows through Dahagram share particular sets of resonances. They are all moments in and through which spatial forms of power are worked out, transformed, and interpreted against the backdrop of Dahagram's multiple and contentious pasts. Indeed, they are all projects that seek to bring Dahagram "in line," even if they share little agreement on what that line is. What is more, they are all bound up in particular kinds of corruptions and failures to realize their own visions. Which is not to say that we should understand these projects as "failures." To do so would be to misunderstand both the experiences of spatial corruptions for residents of spaces such as Dahagram and to ignore the specific new kinds of opportunities and relations of rule such projects create. The relations between the different visions of history, rule, knowledge, technical expertise, and nation in Dahagram interact with, undermine, enable, and compound one another. For residents, the lived space of the enclave is categorically shot-through with contending modes of control, intervention, and power. If these outcomes are "unintended consequences," in the Foucauldian (2003 [1997]) sense of the term, they also produce the uncomfortable and contested terrain on which residents continue to work out their own relations to overlapping forms of expropriation, exploitation, and regulation.

CONCLUSION

On January 15th, 2010, Indian Home Secretary GK Pillai announced that India had, "in principle" agreed to address its outstanding border issues with Bangladesh. Central among these outstanding issues were the exchange of the enclaves. The announcement, made in advance of Awami League chief and current Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheik Hassina's visit to Delhi to discuss regional cooperation between India and Bangladesh, noted that the agreement had been reached *even though,* through such an exchange, there would be a net territorial gain in Bangladesh's favor of almost 10,000 acres. The agreement, as reported in the *Business Standard*, was thus imagined as a new resolution to the enclave issue—"in keeping with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's view that small disagreements cannot be allowed to come in the way of a dynamic relationship with Delhi's eastern neighbour"—as opposed to the latest iteration of a series of resolutions first officially agreed upon in 1958.[267] As such, this announcement, echoed many of the similar "in principle" agreements that preceded it. It claimed a new historical juncture in the relationship between the two countries (this time the return to power of both the Awami League in Bangladesh and the Congress Party in India for the first time since the 1974 Indira-Mujib Pact) and subsequent "new bonhomie between the two nations which would allow all remaining issues to quickly be solved."[268] As with many of these previous agreements, the announcement resulted in a flurry of administrative visits to the enclaves, brief discussions about the practicalities of such exchanges, and an agreement to survey the remaining notoriously un-demarcated 6 kilometers of the border. The January agreement was not only reminiscent of previous agreements on exchange in language. It was also similar in outcome, resulting in no concrete transformations, movements,

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[267] *Business Standard*, 2010 (January 15), "India Agrees to Cede 17,000 Acres to Bangladesh."
[268] *Business Standard*, 2010 (January 15), "India Agrees to Cede 17,000 Acres to Bangladesh."

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or resolutions to address the enclaves' precarious status. In other words, it reaffirmed that the question of the enclaves could not be reduced to one of regional cooperation to address a set of "minor" problems with simple and straight forward administrative solutions.

If the agreements served as a reminder of the administrative holding pattern that has characterized bureaucratic debates over the enclaves since the opening of the Tin Bigha Corridor in 1992, a more recent event highlighted the stakes involved in such an exchange and the violence and instability of life within the *chhits.* On October 15th, 2010, a Bangladeshi man was killed by residents of the Indian enclave of Garati in the Bangladeshi district of Panchagarh. The killing was, reportedly, the result of a property dispute between an enclave resident, Shah Alam, and his neighbor in Bangladesh, Javed Ali. Javed had hired a number of men to invade the enclave and attack Alam. Yet, when the attack was carried out, enclave residents were prepared. They fought off the attackers and beat one of them, Ramjan Ali, to death.[269] The enclave residents refused to return the body. Over the next 24 hours, a number of Garati residents fled the enclave, anticipating a reprisal attack from their surrounding neighbors. On the morning of the October 17th, as many as 2000 Bangladeshi residents of surrounding districts entered the enclave and burned between 200 and 300 homes.[270] The Bangladesh Police arrested three Indian residents of the enclave for the killing of Ramjan Ali, and 11 Bangladeshis for the arson. The following day, residents began to return to their homes, surveying the damage and fearing additional attacks (see Figure 18).[271]

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[269] *The Independent BD,* 2010 (October 16), "Cross Border Murder, Arson Over Property."
[270] Most reports quoted the figure of 200 houses, the *Independent BD* quoted 300. See *The Independent BD,* 2010 (October 16), "Cross Border Murder, Arson Over Property;" *BDnews24.com,* 2010 (October 16), "Angry Enclave Residents Set Ablaze 200 Houses;" *UNBconnect,* 2010 (October 16), "200 Houses in Garati Enclave Looted, Torched."
[271] See *BDnews24.com*, 2010 (October 17), "Uneasy Calm Returns to Enclave;" and *BBC*, 2010 (October 18), "Arrests in Bangladesh After Village Arson Attack."

Figure 18: Arson in Garati Enclave, October 16, 2010[272]

If the January agreement represented the latest in a series of hollow pronoucements on exchange, the violence in Garati called to mind a number of the contradictions and complications of the *chhits*. First, the conflict was over a property dispute, highlighting that despite administrative agreement on the territorial boundaries of the enclaves, much dispute over ownership persists. Indeed, uneven access to legal means of adjudicating disputes, and law enforcement agencies for enforcing them, for enclave residents puts them in a position of disadvantage and danger in such disputes. Second, it highlighted that, despite nationalist discourses that frame the enclaves through a religious lens, tension over the enclaves cannot be understood purely in communal terms, as the conflict apparently emerged between a Muslim enclave resident and his Muslim Bangladeshi neighbor. As I have argued elsewhere in this thesis, many of the Indian enclaves in Bangladesh are, today, largely occupied by Muslims.[273] Except in moments of crisis, such as the Garati incident,

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[272] Photo from *BBC*, 2010 (October 18), "Arrests in Bangladesh After Village Arson Attack."
[273] Though this says little about whether Muslims living within these spaces were, or were not, occupants of these enclaves before Partition. The evidence for broad-scale demographic shifts in the

many live their lives as though they were residents of Bangladesh. In other words, violent conflicts emerge out of the territorial ambiguity of the enclaves themselves. While contestation over land is not uncommon in rural Bangladesh, the evacuation of the enclave followed by the burning of an entire village speaks to a different kind of instability and insecurity that sees such violence as immanent in questions related to land, space, and ownership.

These events—the January agreement and the October conflict in Garati— appear to occupy different ends of a spectrum of possibilities for the enclaves and their futures. On the one hand, the *chhits* remain as set of complications, waiting to be resolved by bureaucrats and diplomats who are perpetually in agreement about what *should* happen though repeatedly unable or unwilling to effect exchange. On the other hand, they persist as spaces of territorial ambiguity and tension, zones within which contested meanings of territory, property, and belonging periodically transform into open conflict, violence, and expropriation. Yet, as I have argued in this dissertation, there is an intimate link between the symbolic appropriations of the enclaves within debates over the meanings of nation and state and more local articulations and assertions of the enclaves' "place" within them. These mutual imbrications are part and parcel of what constitutes the enclaves' sensitivity. The ways that the enclaves are marked as sites of ambiguity, anxiety, and national struggle articulate with and through the *chhits*, their internal politics, and the range of relations between then and the areas that bound them. In other words, my suggestion has been that the failures of bureaucratic attempts to remedy the enclaves' precarious status and the periodic violence in spaces such as Garati should not be understood as cause and effect, but rather as similar outcomes of the production of the enclaves *as* sensitive space.

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enclaves appears to be mixed. While there are numerous references to Indian enclaves that had been abandoned by Hindu residents at Partition and subsequently occupied by Muslims from East Pakistan, I also met a number of Muslim landholders within the enclaves who had original titles to their land bearing their family name and the Raja of Cooch Behar's seal dating to the late 19th century.

The enclaves have been marked similarly through such processes. Yet, they do not share a uniform history and politics of sensitivity. As the recent events in Garati show, the anxieties and uncertainties of territory are both similar and different to those in Dahagram. If both spaces share a violent instability of territory and space, Garati appear marked by an exclusion from services in both states, whereas Dahagram's predicament is shaped through a constant engagement with the politics of exclusion and regulation in India and the vagaries of belonging to Bangladesh. As such, the politics of sensitivity in the enclaves are at once structured through a range of similar ambiguities and anxieties of territory and through deeply contextual negotiations and experiences of particular spaces. Moreover, while the histories, politics, and debates over the Tin Bigha Corridor resonate and structure discourses around and in relation to other enclaves in both India and Bangladesh, they do not determine them. The production of sensitive space is at once a deeply particular *and* mutually constitutive process. It maps the politics of place onto national (and nationalist) debates over territory and, conversely, maps nationalist notions of territory onto place.

In this dissertation, I have endeavored to understand the ongoing making of the enclaves, and especially Dahagram, as sensitive spaces. My argument neither seeks to posit a formal model of sensitive space, nor to articulate a general theory of sensitivity that can easily cut across time or space. Rather, I have attempted to engage with a particular set of productions of sensitivity in an extremely particular place. I chart a narrative of sensitivity that emerges out of a specific historical and spatial context and articulates with the nationalist politics of state formation in postcolonial India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh. This specificity is central to my story. I do not, then, claim to offer a general account of either the making of sensitive space or of complexity and tenuousness of the India-Bangladesh border. My account, though useful in understanding these broader questions, is more limited in scope. To quote Corrigan

and Sayer (1985), in their own qualifications of the generalizability of their study of state formation in England, "What [I] offer here is not, then, claimed as definitive: this is an essay—an attempt—in historical sociology, rather than a history [or sociology] in the conventional sense" (11).

So what might we learn from the enclaves' sensitivity? The point in engaging sensitive space is to explore the relational ways in which spaces come to embody a range of contradictory anxieties that emerge out of historical tensions around them. It is to understand the ways in which these anxieties occlude and preclude clear visions of these spaces, subsuming them in a range of broader symbolics of nation and state. And it is to take seriously the range of complications of belonging and rule that these symbolic appropriations are complicit in producing for residents of such zones. If sensitivity might serve as an analytic for understanding and exploring spaces like Dahagram, I would argue that it must attend to such problematics while avoiding narrowly defined indicators and/or empirical referents. Thinking through gray areas of state and nation such as the enclaves as "sensitive space,"[274] opens ways to understand, think through, and expose manifestations of cartographic and other anxieties of state formation, not to presume what those anxieties are.

As such, the themes that I have examined in this dissertation in relation to the enclaves, generally, and Dahagram specifically, may provide useful starting points in thinking through other sensitive spaces, imagining them comparatively with or in

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[274] My argument here resonates with Yiftachel's (2009a; 2009b) articulations of "gray spaces" as elements of contemporary urban zones. Yiftachel, particularly concerned with urban areas in Israel/Palestine argues that, "The concept of 'gray space' refers to developments, enclaves, populations and transactions positioned between the 'lightness' of legality/approval/safety and the 'darkness' of eviction/destruction/death. Gray spaces are neither integrated nor eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today's urban regions, which exist partially outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans" (2009a: 250). However, where Yiftachel primarily sees gray spacing as a form of spatial control with shifting boundaries that might accommodate a range of interests of opportunities, I would argue that engaging with the anxiety and ambiguity of sensitive spaces (many of which might also be termed "gray spaces" in Yiftachel's sense) are critical to understanding the unstable terrains of rule and opportunity that emerge from and through them.

relation to the *chhits,* or examining the ways they are mutually historically constituted with state and nation. As I hope I have shown in this dissertation, what is important about sensitive space is engaging methodologically with the ambiguity and anxiety as a set of clues towards reconstructing both broader points of tension and the complexities of rule within such zones.[275]

In summary then, this dissertation has examined four linked processes that are central to the construction of the enclaves, and Dahagram in particular, as sensitive space. First, it explored articulations between a range of ambiguous concerns over the enclaves and life within them. By examining the regulation and policing of the space of enclaves and, as importantly, of information within and related to them, I argued that sensitivity emerges as a form of moral regulation (Corrigan and Sayer 1985)—a set of vaguely defined fears and discourses around citizenship, security, and secrecy that structures actions and possibilities for those who seek to regulate spaces like the enclaves and those who live within them. Such moral regulations shape behaviors and possibilities differently in different contexts. They necessitate particular kinds of performances of power and particular strategies of decision and protection. Yet, they are also complicit in shaping the instabilities of life and livelihood of enclave residents. The lack of access to official information such as maps, the regulation of movement through the Tin Bigha Corridor, and the constant administrative association of the enclaves' residents as suspect populations in need of particular forms of policing, creates enormous uncertainties for enclave residents. In essence, the treatment of spaces as sensitive, in and of itself, is central to the production of sensitive space.

Second, if sensitivity is remade on a daily basis and through both periodic and quotidian performances, it is also historically constructed. It emerges out of and

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[275] I use the word "clues" in Ginzburg's (1989) sense of the term, as fragmentary pieces of evidence that offer critical insights into the construction of the whole.

through broader debates within and around the concepts of national survival and national belonging. The enclaves' sensitivity was constructed through, as it in turn partially constructed, the long Partition of Bengal (Zamindar 2007), an ongoing process of defining territory and space through which the enclaves and their residents were gradually transformed from one of a set of complications and issues to be worked out in the period immediately following Partition to a series of more complicated problems that embodied and reflected at once the dilemmas of belonging in discourses around postcolonial citizenship and the threat of various forms of territorial incursion. Through this history of sensitivity, I argue, the enclaves "as such" were subsumed within broader discourses over the border, emerging not as a concrete set of problems associated with a given set of spaces and people, but rather as symbols of a set of intractable issues between India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh. This produced the enclaves as symbolic spaces that are often redeployed in broader narratives over the changing relations of postcolonial citizenship, belonging, and rights in relation to the border, and narratives of fear and incursion across it.

Third, I explored the ways in which residents of Dahagram shape their own histories of belonging in sensitive space. In particular, I examined how the question of belonging in Dahagram was often indexed to belongings. Through this exploration, I argued that the question of national and community belonging was always linked to an ongoing set of questions about residents' ability to acquire, hold, and dispose of belongings. I explored the ways that these claims were framed against Dahagram's tenuous postcolonial history and the way arguments about its history were translated into claims for membership with the Bangladeshi nation. Residents of Dahagram often frame their history as a narrative of suffering for territory (Moore 2005), of resolutely holding on to tenuous Bangladeshi land in the face of near constant oppression and expropriation from Hindu residents of both the enclave and of surrounding areas.

Residents have, historically, deployed this suffering as a means of claiming a moral community (Chatterjee 2004) deserving of inclusion within Bangladeshi nation and state. Yet, such particular claims towards belonging in Bangladesh often occluded or erased more violent and contestatory pasts. Picking up on these tensions between visions of Dahagram as a community united in its suffering and one deeply divided over who does and does not belong, I explored Dahagam's post-1992 politics, examining the ways in which the question of belonging was reshaped in the context of an ethnicized and classed demographic shift in the enclave's population.

Finally, I explored the experience of living in sensitive space through an examination of spatial corruptions in Dahagram. I argued that it is critical to examine the often-similar outcomes of nominally contradictory processes within Dahagram that shape the political landscape and lead to reconfigurations of power and opportunity within it. Namely, I argued that processes of defining space, processes of incorporation through symbolic development, and processes of regulation all rely on particular kinds of representations or enframings of Dahagram (Mitchell 2002). I further argued that the tensions between "reality" and these "representations" in Dahagram should not be understood as gaps between theory and practice, but rather as dynamic tensions between the imaginations of Dahagram and its lived realities. As such, many projects that seek to bring Dahagram in line with particular visions of space produce new, though often unsurprising, configurations of power and opportunity within the enclave. I explore these as spatial corruptions not to conjure an ethical and normative understanding of the notion of corruption, but rather to highlight that all of these practices of defining the enclave often tend to be experienced by residents similarly, as a set of corruptions of space and expropriations of land and belongings. My point in this chapter was not that sensitive spaces are *the* zones within which such forms of corruption take place, but rather that they are spaces within which

a particularly large number of such projects and visions of space overlap and complicate one another. As such, they are spaces within which the contradictory experiences of "reality" and "representation" are at once particularly visible and complex.

In conclusion, the enclaves are sites within which a range of projects that constitute the "challenging interface of democracy and security," with which I began this dissertation, combine, conflict, and come apart. They are places where the contradictions and limits of rule are particularly stark. As such, they are useful places to begin to unpack the claims of territorial control that are central to the construction of the modern state system *and* places within which changing modes of control and regulation that many have argued are part of the contemporary conjuncture might be historicized and rethought—their "newness" reexamined as part of unfolding and longstanding patterns of rule. These sensitive spaces along the India-Bangladesh border are at once places that have been shaped by and problematize nationalist histories and projects of spatial control. Seen as such, they rest upon both the front-lines and fault-lines of state and nation, spaces that are at once marginal and central to conceptions of territory, danger, and belonging. They are also, as I hope I have shown, productive sites for rethinking the anxieties and ambiguities of statemaking and reimagining broader projects of security, sovereignty, and national belonging.

If the enclaves offer opportunities for re-examining territory in contemporary Bengal, they are also lived spaces—zones within which residents negotiate complicated and conflicted lives. The experience of being at once central and marginal to nation and state produces opportunities for some, but insecurity and instability for most. The politics of sensitivity are thus intimately bound to imaginations of the possibilities for and ongoing vagaries of struggles for belonging and belongings within them. If my analysis of spatial corruptions in Dahagram in chapter 4 suggests a

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somewhat pessimistic view of the outcomes of various symbolic appropriations of the enclave, it is worth remembering that movements such as the DSS were also effective at re-mobilizing these symbolic appropriations to assert different claims to membership within Bangladesh. Whether such movements are possible in the post-1992 moment remains an open question, yet one that remains an important and ongoing point of discussion within Dahagram. Sensitive spaces, as I have argued, are mutually constituted with broader understandings and productions of space. As such, it is a mistake to imagine life within these spaces as purely a top-down imposition of anxiety and ambiguity. Thus, while the ability of enclave residents to negotiate and resist framings of sensitivity space should neither be over emphasized nor romanticized, there remain possibilities for reimagining and reframing the relationships between these fragments and their nations.

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