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The Tragedy of Bangladesh

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The Tragedy of Bangladesh

by

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PREFACE

The deeply felt desire of the author for all those who read this account of the tragedy of Bangladesh is that this lesson may prove a blessing for those that have yet to experience tribulation on the earth. The Bible teaches all people will experience tribulation and the way to eternal life is through tribulation (Acts 14:22). The prayer of the author is the non-Christian reader will be moved to consider the hope of salvation in Jesus Christ as the only hope of lost and needy people throughout the world. The tragedy of Bangladesh painfully demonstrates the truth of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and for the Bengali people there is no other hope. Let us remember that each one of us is precious in the sight of God. It is the will of God that not one of us perish, but everyone come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). The Bengali know of their desperate need to be delivered from their oppression. Perhaps the real message of Bangladesh is meant for those of the affluent world who have yet to realize their desperate need for forgiveness of sin and hope of eternal life after death. Bangladesh is a warning to the rest of the world. Sometimes we need to be confronted face to face with the reality of tribulation before we will turn from our ~~pell-mell, merry-go-round life style.~~ The Bengali have learned a wonderful lesson, how to cope in the midst of tribulation. The Bible warns tribulation is coming to the entire world yet how many people are prepared to endure even minimal discomforts and trials? I pray God will speak to the hearts of the readers through the pages of this story. Those seeking truth will learn about a Savior sent into the world to redeem a people lost in the bondage of sin. May God affirm His blessing to all who read and receive His message in this paper.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This paper is a testimonial to the grace of God that sustained me through 30 years of rejection from His love and purpose in my life. This paper is an act of worship to a loving Father who sacrificed His only Son that all men might have eternal life and be reunited with Him in heaven. A personal suffering over the tragedy of the Bengali people has taught me a depth of God's love for his children that exceeds the boundaries of normal human love. I praise God that He has allowed me to witness the miracle of His grace and share the story of the Bengali.

I could never personally acknowledge all of my colleagues, friends, and family that have helped make this study possible. I am most grateful for the encouragement and expertise of Dr. Don Hohensee of Western Evangelical Seminary. He consistently discerned blind spots that required revision greatly enhancing the text. My mother and father have patiently supported my research and they have proved a quiet blessing to this work. To my friend William Brickey a thank you is hardly adequate to express my gratitude for his support. William and his wife Margaret interceded on three occasions in my life when prison, death, and financial crisis posed apparent insurmountable road blocks. May God richly bless you William and Margaret according to His riches in heaven. This work is a testimony to the faith, integrity, and convictions demonstrated by men and women like William and Margaret Brickey on behalf of the oppressed and needy throughout the world.

To my co-laborer in life, my source of inspiration, I gratefully acknowledge this paper has a second author, my wife. Julie has paid a price for every word in this manuscript. She has shouldered the burden

when I was about to faint. She has interceded when I was ready to quit.
She may not have written the words but her authorship is found in love
for God on every page.

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THE TRAGEDY OF BANGLADESH

I INTRODUCTION

In December of 1971 the nation of India, swollen on its eastern borders with over 10 million Bengali refugees, intervened in a violent and bloody civil war that had raged for nearly nine months in the border state of East Pakistan. Over three million citizens of the Indian sub-continent, mostly Bengalis of East Pakistan, lost their lives in a civil war between East and West Pakistan. The military intervention of India brought a merciful end to the bloodshed and the nation of Bangladesh was born. For the Bengali people of the new nation of Bangladesh, independence was the latest act of an ongoing tragedy few ethnic peoples within the annals of recorded history have experienced.

This research paper presents a case study of the Bengali people beginning with their earliest recorded origins and culminating with their ethnic struggle to realize the birth of Bangladesh. The purpose of this research project is to document what caused the tragedy of Bangladesh as evidenced by the starvation, cultural disintegration, and chaos readily visible in Bangladesh today. The goal of this research project is to establish the root principles that caused this tragedy. The historical development of the Bengali people will be documented from a religious perspective with the objective of demonstrating God's purpose of bringing all mankind to Himself through trial and tribulation.

The primary method of research for this paper will be a systematic study of historical texts, documents, maps, and charts. Contemporary research will include microfilm and microfiche as well as personal interviews and contemporary periodicals. The sources will be documented

according to the anthropological method of footnoting. This paper is written to be understood by the general public. Whenever appropriate the historical facts will be condensed, but not as to destroy continuity and important elements.

Throughout the paper the term "Bengali" will be used to refer to the people of Bangladesh. Since ninety nine percent of the Bangladesh's 84 million people speak the Bengali language, the people can be homogeneously linked according to language. The reader should understand this term does not imply religious unity. Within this blanket term we find Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and Animists. Within each of these religious headings are cultural and social divisions based on castes and tribal affiliations. The roots of these religious, castes, and tribal divisions go deep into Bengali historical origins.

The significance of this paper can be of unlimited benefit if we establish God's plan of redemption through tribulation and suffering. The first step in establishing God's plan is to determine the problem. To determine the problem this research paper will examine the roots of Bengali culture. The religious-historical development is a vital link connecting the past with the present. This paper will examine the historical and religious heritage of the Bengali culture to attempt to determine the source of the demise and disintegration clearly evident in Bangladesh today.

The thesis of this paper is the Bengali people have never received the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ throughout their history. The result has been tribulation and suffering few peoples have known. God's plan in Bengali has been tribulation to break the peoples will and bring repentance. Through religious, social, and political failures that

have caused uncalculated suffering and despair within the ranks of the Bengali people many hearts have been tested and many have been purified as by fire. These Bengali have been able to receive the truth of the revelation of God through their suffering.

This research paper will present a solution in the concluding chapter for the tribulation of the Bengali people. This paper will argue that the only solution and hope for the Bengali people is the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world.

At this point a personal note needs to be interjected. My personal emotional involvement with the Bengali people needs to be identified. The incentive for this research paper was born in the moment of a personal face to face confrontation with the reality of starvation and human suffering present in Bangladesh in March of 1975. An actual visit I made to Bangladesh in 1975 will be documented in the appendix (see Appendix A). It should also be noted that the tragedy of Bangladesh led to a personal spiritual crisis in the life of the author. This crisis over the seemingly hopeless condition of the Bengali people, along with the recognition of my own personal sin, led to the conversion of the author to faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of the world. Consistent with this faith, this paper will present a plan of action to reach the lost in Bangladesh with the redeeming hope of salvation through Jesus Christ in a manner and method culturally understandable to the Bengali. The solution is not to merely change the culture, politics, or religion of the Bengali people. The solution is to bring the message of hope and eternal life in Christ Jesus to the Bengali in terms understandable within their own cultural and religious context and perspective. Donald McGavran has established the fact that people like to become Christians

without crossing racial, linguistic, and class barriers. It would be unfair and oppressive to expect Bengali Muslims and Hindus to cross class, racial, or linguistic barriers to become Bengali Christians. The Bengali Muslims are a significant homogeneous unit bound together by racial and linguistic characteristics. It is paramount to recognize this unit and adapt the message of redemption through Christ (the Gospel) in a context it can be understood and received. It is the contention of this paper that the Gospel not only redeems lost souls into eternal life, but also brings light, order, hope, truth, and love into the present life.

At this point I feel it is important to differentiate between Christianity as a religion and true discipleship in Christ. The latter demands a personal heart commitment and relationship with Christ as Lord and Savior whereas the former is more a mental and social accent to the teachings of Christ found in the Bible. The significance of the dichotomy will become significant as the drama of Bangladesh unfolds. With this brief introduction in mind let us proceed with the story of the Bengali.

Bengali Time Line

<u>Period</u>	<u>Religion*</u>	<u>Description</u>
Prehistoric Period		
B.C. c. 2700-1700	Animist	Harappan culture, source--earliest Bengali
c. 1500-500	Brahmanism	Aryan invasion of Indian subcontinent
c. 1200-600	Brahmanism	Vedic period--composite of Rg Veda
c. 900-500	Brahmanism	Later Vedas, Brahmana, early Upanishads
c. 800	Brahmanism	Aryans reach Bengal
c. 600	Brahmanism	End of Brahmana period
c. 500-500 A.D.	Hinduism	Development of Orthodox Hindu
c. 563-483	Buddhism	Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha
c. 480	Buddhism	First Buddhist council at Rajagriha
Ancient Empires		
c. 327-325	Hellenism	Invasion by Alexander of Macedon
c. 322-298	Syncretism**	Chandragupta--First Mauryan Emperor
c. 322-180	Syncretism	Mauryan Empire
c. 300	Syncretism	Megathenes, Greek Ambassador visits Chandragupta
c. 273-237	Buddhism	Asoka--Golden age of India and Bengal
c. 200-200 A.D.	Buddhism	Greatest age of Buddhism in India and Bengal
c. 100-100 A.D.	Hinduism	Composition of Bhagavad Gita
c. 78-200 A.D.	Buddhism	Kushan Empire
A.D. c. 300-500	Hinduism	Gupta Empire--classical age of Northern India
c. 330-380	Hinduism	Samdragupta Gupta Empire annexed Bengal
c. 380-415	Hinduism	Chandragupta II--height of Gupta Empire
c. 401-410	Hinduism	Fa-hsieh Chinese pilgrim in India
c. 500-700	Barbarian	Hun invasion
Coming of Islam to Bengal		
c. 570-632	Islam	Life and mission of Mohammed
c. 711	Islam	Arab Muslim invade and conquer Sind
c. 760-1142	Buddhism	Pala dynasty in Bengal--classical age in Bengal
c. 780-850	Buddhism	Pharmapala--Bengal premiere state in Northern India

*Religion - The prevailing religion at any point in time in Bengali history is difficult to document. The observations noted in this time line reflect general impressions of the author and are not meant to be authoritative in application in this paper.

**Syncretism - The union or attempted union of conflicting religions through reconciliation and/or compromise.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Description</u>
c. 815-855	Buddhism	Devapala--Bengal extended to Orissa and Assam
c. 1050-1197	Hinduism	Sena dynasty in Bengal
c. 1197	Islam	Turkish Mohammadan invade Bengal
c. 1200-1400	Islam	Large scale Muslim immigration into Bengal
c. 1338-1573	Syncretism	Era of independent kings in Bengal
c. 1524-1757	Islam	Mughal Empire in India
c. 1524-1530	Islam	Mughal Empire of Babur
c. 1556-1605	Islam/Syncretism*	Akbar Empire--height of Mughal reign
c. 1574	Islam/Syncretism	Bengal annexed by Akbar
c. 1658-1707	Islam/Syncretism	Aurangzeb Empire--last great Mughal ruler
Coming of the British to Bengal		
c. 1757	Syncretism-Animism/ Hinduism/Islam	Battle of Plassey--victory of British East India Company over Mughals in Bengal--beginning of British rule
c. 1793	Syncretism/pro-Hinduism	Permanent settlement law--new landlord system
c. 1813	Syncretism/Christian	British missionaries allowed into Bengal
c. 1829	Syncretism/Christian	Widow burning prohibited
c. 1835	Syncretism/Christian	Institution of English education of reform
c. 1857-1858	Syncretism/Christian	Great mutiny of Sepay Rebellion
c. 1858-1947	Syncretism/Christian	British India Empire
c. 1905	Syncretism	Partition of Bengal
c. 1906	Syncretism/Islam	Muslim league founded
c. 1911	Syncretism	Partition revoked
c. 1913	Syncretism/Samaj Church	Tagore receives noble prize for literature
c. 1920-1940	Syncretism-Hindu/Islam	Hostilities between Hindu and Muslims
c. 1947	Islam	Partition of India new state of Pakistan
c. 1948	Islam/Syncretism	Sheikh Mujib Rahman arrested for language demonstration
c. 1952	Islam/Syncretism	Riots in Bengal over language issue
c. 1958	Islam/Syncretism	Military overthrow of government by General Ayab Khan
c. 1966	Islam/Syncretism	Sheikh Mujib arrested for advocating regional autonomy
c. 1969	Islam/Syncretism	General Yahya Kahn usurped Ayab Kahn
c. 1970	Islam/Syncretism	Cyclone in East Pakistan killed 500,000
c. 1971	Islam/Syncretism	Sheikh Mujib wins position of Prime Minister National Assembly

*First religion predominant when more than one religion indicated.

<u>Period</u>	<u>Religion</u>	<u>Description</u>
c. March 1971 Bangladesh	Islam/Syncretism	Civil War--East versus West Pakistan
c. December 1971	Secular Islamic State	Independence--new state of Bangladesh
c. 1975	Islam/Syncretism	Sheikh Mujib assassinated
c. 1978	Islam/Syncretism	General Ziaar Rahman elected President of Bangladesh

II BENGALI ROOTS

The Bengali people sprang from one of the oldest subcultures known to archaeology, the Harappa culture of the Indus Valley. The name Bengal itself was derived from the ancient kingdom of Banga, first mentioned in sanskrit literature thousands of years ago (Newsweek, Dec. 27, 1971:24). The earliest history of Bengal was first revealed in the Mahabharata, a Hindu religious epic probably written over 2500 years ago by the Indo-Aryan speaking people. It was from the literature of the Indo-Aryans that we first learn of ancient Bengal (See map page 10).

The Indo-Aryans entered Northern India from Southern Russia. These Aryans were the common forefathers of the Greeks, Romans, English, as well as the Hindu (Hunter, 1928:37). The Aryans documented their march into India in their sanskrit literature of vedic hymns. They found a culture in India that was prominently animistic. The aboriginal Indians worshipped a mother goddess, horned fertility gods, sacred trees, and animals and ritual ablutions apparently played a significant part in their religious life (Basham, 1954:232). Archaeological excavations of Northern India have revealed the Indo-Aryans discovered the elaborate and sophisticated civilization of the Harappa culture. During the fourth and third millennium B.C. the Harappa culture was at least equal to Sumer and superior to that of contemporary Babylonia and Egypt (Durant, 1954:395).

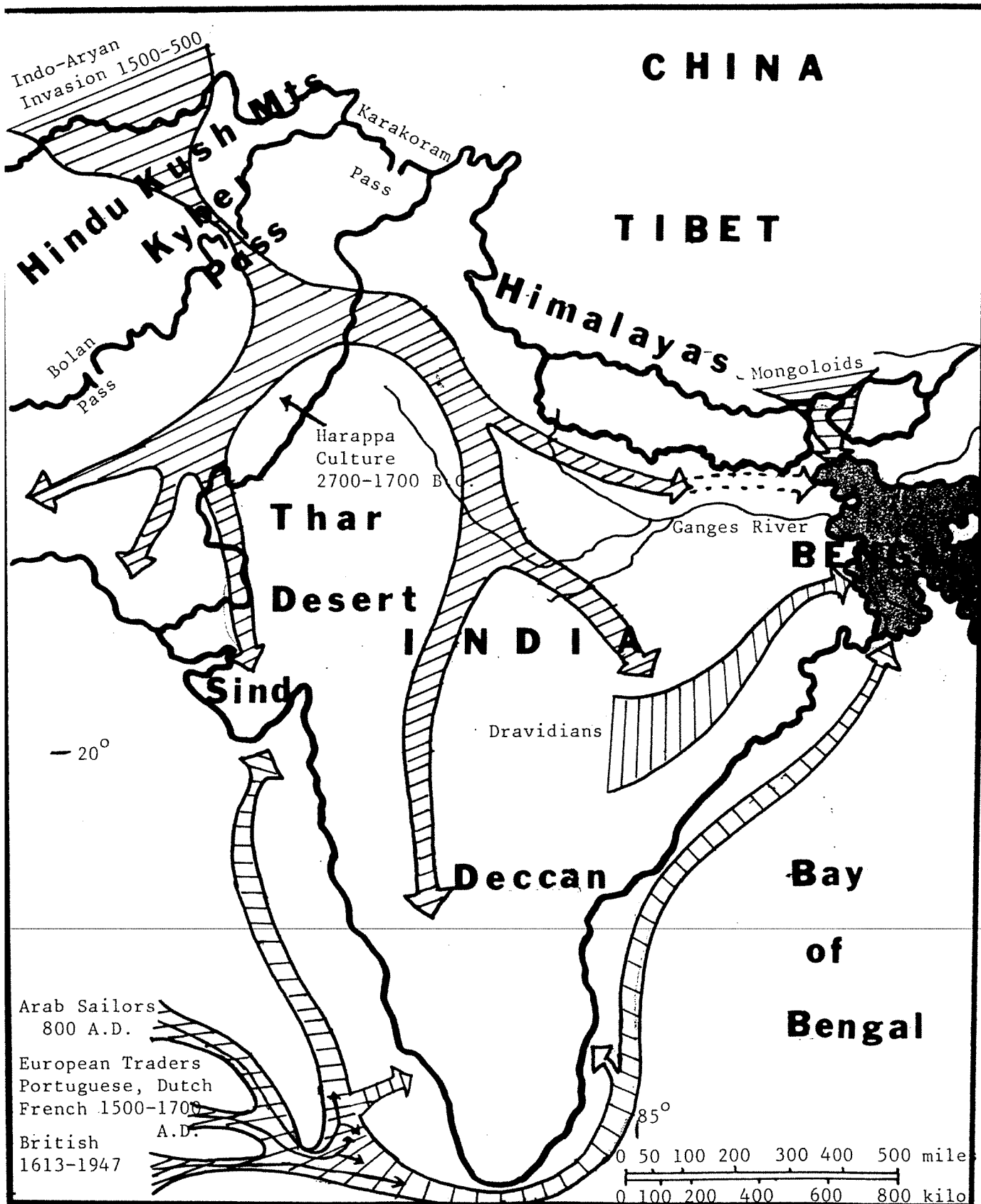
The Aryan literature did not speak prominently about the land of Bengal except to mention the peoples of the Ganges delta as the kingdom of "Banga." The earlier history of the kingdom of Banga was obscure until the Golden Age of Asoka the Great in the third century B.C. The Aryan conquest of India included the whole subcontinent except the land

of Banga. The land of Banga became a haven for people fleeing expanding kingdoms. Dravidian speaking Indians arrived from the South. Mongoloids immigrated from the Himilayas (Ellis, 1972:312). Even some dissatisfied Aryans arrived from the Northwest (See map page 10).

The geography of the land of Banga, a flat alluvial plain punctuated with a profusion of rivers all flowing south, did not establish natural barriers to protect the fleeing immigrants. The rich delta soil, ample rainfall and semi-tropical weather must have produced vegetation which enhanced the inaccessibility of Banga. These immigrants to Banga had to be a hearty and resilient people to withstand the natural confrontations with the weather. Traditionally the delta land was beset with floods, prone to cyclones, and marked with monsoons and violent weather. The regions vast water system produced marshes, jungles and endemic tropical diseases that provided an invisible boundary that endured countless attempts at foreign invasions until the sixteenth century. The land of Banga maintained an extremely independent position through these centuries of Indian history. The natural environment of the land of Banga produced a unique people known for their independence. Although these people developed a tradition of speaking and acting independently, they also developed a reputation of being humanistic, gentle and lyrical. There developed a saying that represented this ancient heritage. "At heart all Bengalis are poets" (Nyrop, 1975:147).

The peoples of Banga were certainly most significantly influenced with the social, artistic and religious movements of the Indian subcontinent throughout their history. Perhaps the most important influence on ancient Bengali roots was the religious culture prevalent in India prior to the reign of Asoka the Great.

HISTORIC ROUTES OF INVASION TO BENGAL



The Aryan sanskrit literature revealed that primitive Indian religion was animistic. The aboriginal Indian civilization believed that all life was produced by a spiritual force. They believed that natural objects such as rocks and trees had spiritual power (Basham, 1954:232).

The Indo-Aryans established their own religion in India, an aristocratic culture of sacrificial worship. Their religious expressions were highly ritualistic with a rich mythology that included many deities and elaborate and awesome fire sacrifices (Brown, 1972:21). The religion of the Aryans was based on the Brahmins, the priestly and learned class. These Brahmins were a most powerful and influential personality. The vedic poetry of the Aryans, found in their earliest writing, the Rg Veda, spoke of the worship ceremonies of the Brahmin priest.

The worshippers became inebriated with soma. Thereafter they saw wondrous visions of the Gods and experienced strange sensations of power and immortality. Only the Brahmins knew the rituals whereby the Gods were brought to the sacrifice. The Brahmin priests became the most influential and powerful religious and social personalities within ancient India (Basham, 1954:239).

The influence of Brahmanism penetrated into the land of Banga (or its modern name of Bengal) beginning in the eighth century B.C. (estimate) introducing religious, cultural, social, and class mores and values (Schulberg, 1968:180). The earliest written record of the spread of Aryan Brahmanism into Banga was an inscription found in the Bogra district of North Bengal dating back to the second century B.C. (McNee, 1976:165). The ancient religious traditions of Brahmanism eventually merged into the great Indian religion of Hinduism. The most significant manifestation of Hinduism in Bengal was the color caste system that designated the higher Aryan as the

high caste and the darker aboriginal inhabitants taking their place as the lower caste. The caste system was the essential social and religious adhesive of the Brahmanistic system of Hinduism. The separation of classes based on color was established deep within the roots of ancient Bengal.

Toward the close of the sixth century B.C. the vedic period of Aryan prominence was superseded by the rise of new religions and ideologies that transformed the cultural direction of the whole Indian subcontinent. The new ideologies were a protest against the Hindu caste system. The most important of these was the indigenous Indian religion of Buddhism. Guatama Buddha (born in 563 B.C., died in 483 B.C.) introduced the ethical teachings of obtaining salvation through enlightenment. He believed that salvation consisted of freeing oneself from the cycle of the life of evil, pain and sorrow. To achieve this, man must renounce society and live a simple life of self-discipline (Nyrop, 1975:129). Buddha denied the existence of a divine authority or Godhead affirming "there is no immortal soul, the universe is soulless" (Basham, 1954:270).

The key to the phenomenal success of Buddhism was that it gave no heed to class distinctions. Buddha taught that salvation was equally open to all men, and that it must be earned, not by propitiating imaginary deities, but by ones conduct (Hunter, 1928:58). Buddha also taught the state of men in this life, as well as all previous and future lives, was the result of his own acts (karma). When any creature died he was born again in either a higher or lower state depending on his karma. Buddhism was a religious system that depended on man and was not accountable to a creator God. The tenets of Buddhism, like Hinduism, would play a most prominent part in the cultural heritage of the Bengali people.

In the fourth century B.C., Alexander the Great conquered most of India and brought political unity to the subcontinent for the first time. Still Bengal remained outside of Greek influence. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. a political vacuum was created. Chandragupta, a powerful Indian (Magadha) king, arose and defeated the Greeks and united the whole of Northern India including Bengal (McNee, 1976:165). The effect of the Greek influence appeared slight. A most significant observation from a Greek historian revealed the sophistication of Indian civilization at this time. Megasthenes, the Ambassador from Selencus, king of Syria (predecessor of Alexander) was commissioned to Patalipatra, India. He described the Indian culture to the incredulous Greeks--still near their zenith "as entirely equal to their own" (Kohn, 1929:350).

The effect of the annexation of the land of Banga into the Mauryan Empire was devastating. Chandragupta ruled his vast empire ruthlessly establishing a vast and elaborate spy system. He instituted wide ranging repressive government controls including frightful tortures. To Chandragupta "government is the science of punishment" (Schulberg, 1968: 76). In 272 B.C. Asoka, the grandson of Chandragupta ascended the throne. He inherited a vast empire including modern day Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan and all of India except the extreme south--Tamil land (Wilbur, 1964:11). He was recorded to have governed in the spirit of his grandfather "cruelly but well" (Durant, 1954:146). The historical edicts indicated Asoka underwent a profound conversion after he ascended the throne. Official edicts of Asoka were engraved on rocks and pillars throughout the land (See map page 16 - Asokan Empire).

The Beloved of Gods is not only compassionate he is also powerful, and he tells the forest tribes to repent lest they be slain. For the

Beloved of Gods desires safety, self-control, justice and happiness for all beings. The Beloved of Gods considers that the greatest of all victories is the victory of Righteousness and that (victory) the Beloved of Gods has already won, here and on all his borders (Basham, 1954:53-54).

This edict revealed deep insights into the religious essence of Asoka's empire. The doctrines of righteousness, of forgiveness to those who do wrong, of conversion of forest tribes, and of repentance, were not Buddhist, Brahmanist or paganist. Still history has recorded Asoka as a Buddhist. A. L. Basham deals with this paradox. "For Asoka, Buddhism seems to have been a system of morals which led to peace and fellowship in this world and heaven in the next" (Basham, 1954:55).

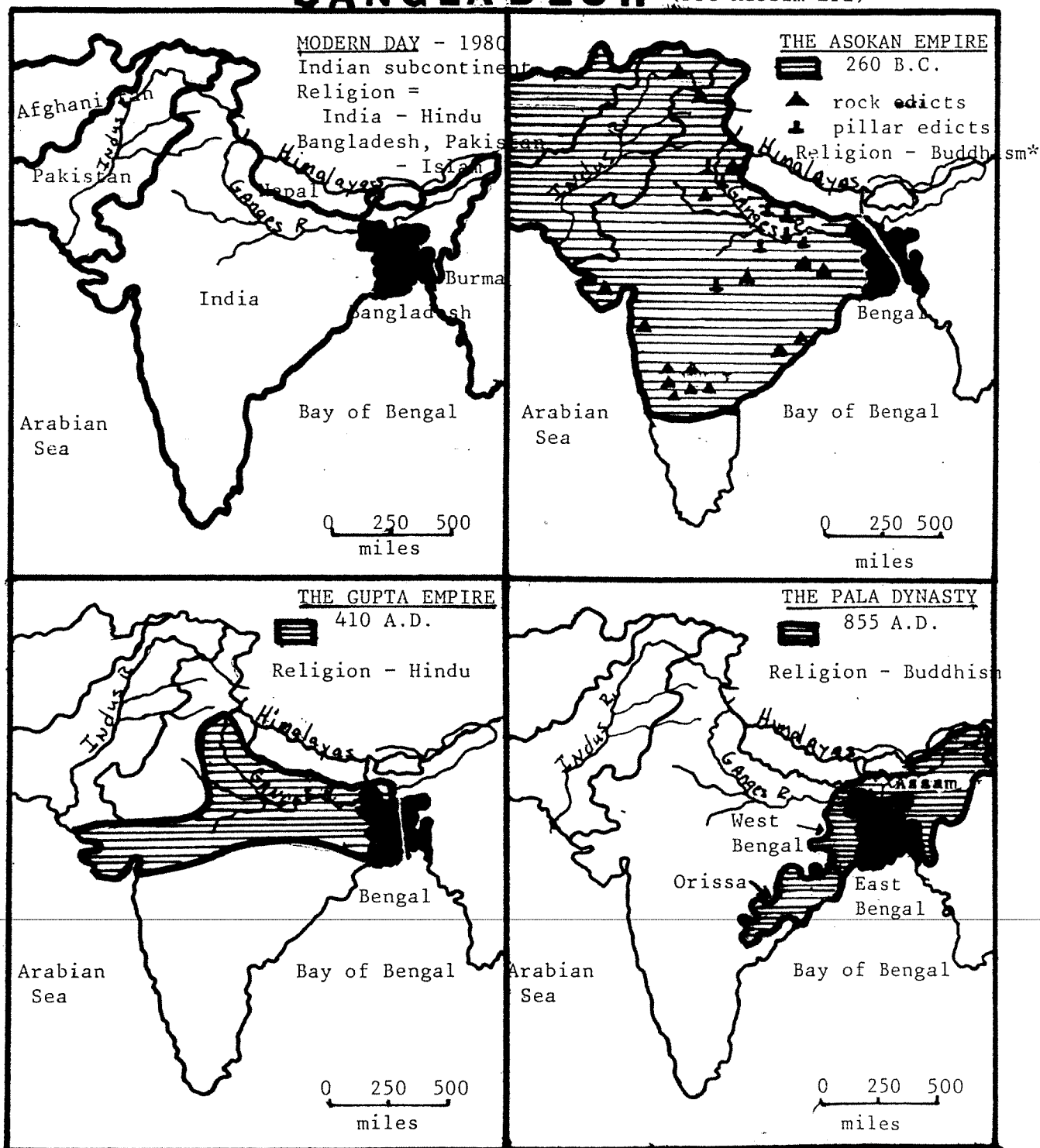
Asoka therefore must have been at least influenced by the teachings of Guatama Buddha who lived some three centuries earlier. Basham concluded these metaphysical presuppositions were not distinctively Buddhist and therefore must have been traditional in India at the time. Indian history has not documented where these moral principles originated. The significance of Asoka's edicts on Bengali and Indian culture cannot be overstated. Asoka not only united Bengal with the whole of the subcontinent in the most glorious period of India's history, he also established a heritage of self-control, forgiveness, and righteousness. His edicts stressed the moral ethics of compassion, forgiveness and love. The Indian and Bengali cultures had been endued with a rich heritage of liberty, justice and freedom for all men. The rigid class distinctions of Aryanism and the sacrificial cult worship of Brahmanism had been replaced by Asoka's edicts of righteousness and love. The culture of Bengal certainly was blessed with the benevolent reign of Asoka. The center of Asoka's empire was based at Bihar, just to the west of Bengal (Wilbur, 1964:11). Whether Asoka was a Buddhist or not he initiated a

movement that transformed Buddhism from a local sect to a world religion by sending missionaries to the known world. The importance of Asoka's edicts and initiatives became manifest in Bengal. "Centuries later when Buddhism had declined in India, Bengal and Bihar became its stronghold patronized by the Bengali Pala Dynasty" (McNee, 1976:166). The land of Bengal had been richly blessed. In the words of the historian A. L. Basham, Asoka was "the greatest and noblest ruler India has known, and indeed one of the great kings of the world" (Schulberg, 1968:78).

After the reign of Asoka, the Mauryan Empire began to crumble and disunity and division was the rule. For over five hundred years India and, hence, Bengal drifted aimlessly without cohesion or significant creative activity. This political vacuum was filled with a dynasty of kings called the Guptas between 320 and 467 A.D. For the Hindus of India this was their greatest moment and peace, prosperity and material well-being prevailed (Schulberg, 1968:91). Again Bengal was blessed with a civilization at least one historian called "possibly the happiest and most civilized region in the world" (Schulberg, 1968:91) (See map page 16 - Gupta Empire).

A Chinese Buddhist monk named Fa-t sien traveling as a pilgrim through the Gupta Empire of Chandragupta II between 401 and 410 A.D. wrote "the inhabitants are rich and prosperous, and vie with each other in the practice of benevolence and righteousness" (Schulberg, 1968:94). Although India was a Hindu empire, this Chinese Buddhist monk was able to travel from one end of the country to the other without hostility or interference. During Chandragupta's reign Bengal enjoyed its greatest era of peace. During his reign developments in sculpture, painting, literature, and science and technology culminated in great achievements that made India the most advanced country of its time (Schulberg, 1968:94).

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ERAS OF BANGLADESH (Pre-Muslim Era)



*Buddhism under Asoka was based on a unique set of moral precepts not always common to Buddhism.

During this period of Gupta patronage Hinduism emerged in its fullness. The Brahman priests once more reasserted their power, animal sacrifices were revived, and Brahmanical philosophies established practical tenets for living in answer to the practices of Jainism and Buddhism (Rawlinson, 1952:123). Gupta Hinduism stressed tolerance, not caste oppression.

After the Gupta Empire, Buddhist and/or Hindu influence intermittently prospered in Bengal until the Muslim intrusion in 1197 A.D. In the latter part of this era Buddhist influence "converted nearly the whole population of Bengal to their new creeds and Brahmanic influence was for centuries at a very low ebb" (Basham, 1910:202).

Buddhism and Brahmanism were as opposite as night and day. These two religions struggled for the allegiance of the people until the advent of the Muslims in the twelfth century. In the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries the Pala dynasty, patronizing Buddhism, rose to prominence. Although Buddhism flourished in Bengal the roots of Brahmanism were deep and hearty. The three centuries of Buddhist Pala dynasty in Bengal and Bihar were a period of unusual prosperity--the classical period of Bengali history. Two Pala rulers, Pharmapala and Devapala, skillfully and positively guided Bengali culture into its classical period. Pharmapala, 780-850 A.D., reigned for at least thirty two years and raised Bengali influence to the premiere state in North India. His successor, Devapala, 815-855 A.D., extended Bengali control to Orissa and Assam during his thirty nine year rule (McNee, 1976:166). Bengali culture flourished during these centuries of progressive and benevolent Pala Buddhist government. Bengal prospered to the extent "diplomatic relations were established with other countries of the know world and the area known today as Malaysia and Indonesia derived inspiration from the Buddhists of

Bengal" (McNee, 1976:166). In historical objectivity it must be noted that the expansion of Buddhism and also Hinduism was connected with the expansion of political power often in corrupt form (McNee, 1976:167). Even at Bengal's golden moment political corruption was not under control. Still Bengali culture flourished in its greatest hour. The age-old Bengali desire for freedom and independence was fostered and nurtured by the Buddhist Pala Dynasty (See map page 16 - Pala Dynasty).

The Pala dynasty eventually eroded, perhaps due to internal corruption, and the Buddhist rule was driven from Bengal by a Hindu king named Vijaya Sen in the eleventh century. Once again the Hindu caste system was actively enforced. Tragically the aboriginals of Eastern Bengal were condemned to Sudrahood, untouchability, and servitude. The flourishing spirit of Bengal which blossomed under the Palas was suffocated under the caste system of Hinduism. The Bengals rebelled against the Hindu rule and its caste system and opted for the relatively unknown alternative of Islām.

III ISLAMIC INTRUSION

The consistent pattern of Indian history before the advent of Islam was the repeated subjugation of Indians by foreign forces. India was invaded via the northwest (Scythians, Sassanians, Huns and many others), after the Empire of Asoka and all in the end accepted the predominant Hindu religious attitude and caste system in the place of their original life (Schulberg, 1968:155). None could resist the all encompassing flexibility of Hinduism or the endurance of Buddhism. None that is until the Islamic intrusion beginning in the eighth century.

The followers of Mohammed came to India in three separate intrusions: Arabian in the eighth century, Turkish in the twelfth century and Turkish-Afghan in the sixteenth century (Schulberg, 1968:155) (See map page 21).

Islam began in the Arabian Peninsula with the prophet Mohammed, born in 570 A.D. The essence of Islam was the reverential fear and confident self-surrender to one God. Islam taught that the creator and renumerator, the true God, had spoken to man through the prophet Mohammed in the Quran (Koran) (Williams, 1962:15).

To the Muslim God was almighty, creator and merciful; yet inaccessible and uncompromising in His judgment. The Muslims believed God promised paradise for believers affirming a long line of prophets, especially those in the Bible (Gardet, 1961:21).

Islam abhorred polytheism and idolatry and advocated a strict, rigid and codified religious system that encouraged slavery, polygamy and propagation by the sword. The central tenant of Islam was that the will of God was inevitable and every Muslim must be resigned to his fate and

obedience to the will of God. A well known idiom expressed the reverential Muslim belief in God, "not a leaf moves without the will of God" (Zaidi, 1970:8).

The earliest Muslim contacts in the land of Bengal dated back to the eighth century, A.D. Arab sailors and traders frequented the coast of Bengal in the course of merchant activities. Bengal was ruled by the Hindu Sena kings when the Muslims first penetrated into Bengal in the twelfth century.

The spread of Islam in Bengal did not begin until the Turkish conquest at the beginnings of the twelfth century. It took the Muslims more than two hundred years to bring the whole of Bengal under their control (Zaidi, 1970:3). The Turkish conquest of Bengal initiated large scale Muslim immigration and greatly altered the Hindu/Buddhist socio-religious life of the people. During a most turbulent period, from 1338 A.D. until 1573 A.D., there were at least thirty two rulers of Bengal (McNee, 1975:168). This was termed the era of independent kings.

The Islamic intrusion into Bengal encouraged Hinduism but dealt a severe blow to Buddhism. During this period Buddhist teachers and priests were persecuted and the higher castes found their way back to Hinduism. The common people were attracted and (or pressured) into the creed of Mohammed (Gait, 1901:171; cited in McNee, 1976:169).

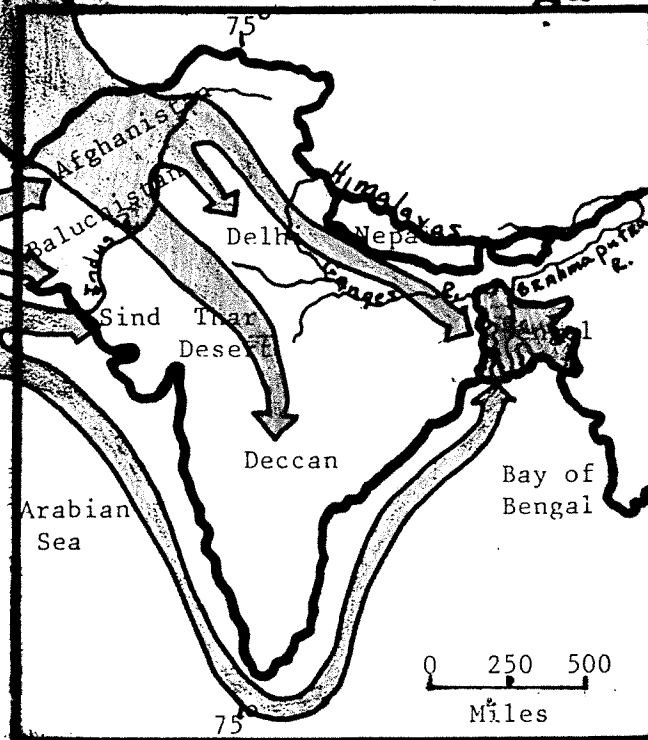
The third Muslim wave originally came from a little kingdom in Russia now known as Turkistan. The people were Turkish although the leader, Babur, traced his ancestry back to the infamous Mongol Genghis Khan "and as a result was called Mongal, which, corrupted became Mughal" (Schulberg, 1968:159).

ISLAMIC intrusion of Bengal

Turkish Islamic
Invasion from
Afghanistan
12th century

Arabian Muslim
Intrusion
8th century

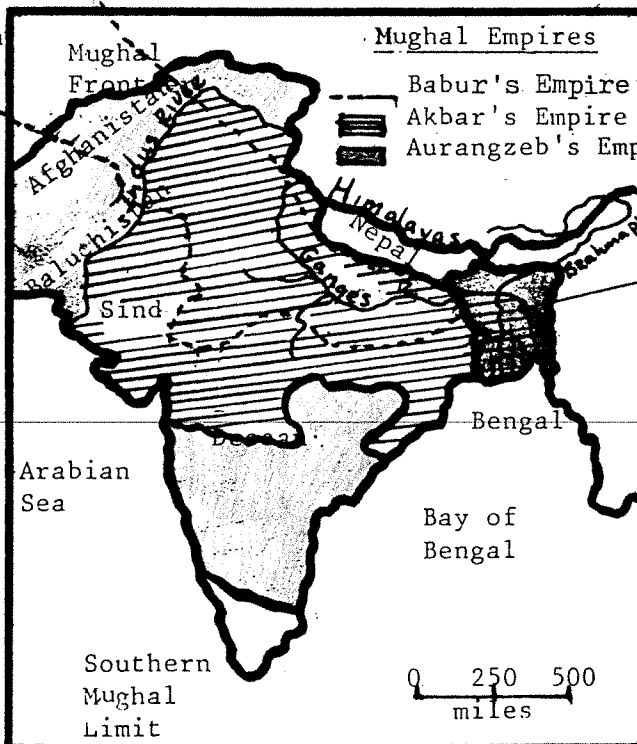
Arabian Sailors



Bengal
remained
outside
Muslim
control

Turkish Afghan
Invasion from
Russian Turkistan
16th century A.D.

Islamic Annexation of Bengal



Bengal
Annexed
by Akbar
1574 A.D.

A brilliant Mughal Empire was the result of Babur's intrusion into India. The Mughal Empire reached its apex under the astute reign of Akbar the Great (1556-1605). Akbar expanded the Mughal Empire by annexing the land of Bengal in 1574 (Rawlinson, 1952:305). Under the prevalent rule of Akbar, Bengal enjoyed the fruit of a rich and progressive Turkish-Afghan culture. Akbar instituted land reforms that were fair and effective and he stabilized a multinational, multireligious empire with equitable, just and nondiscriminatory policies (Schulberg, 1968:162).

Perhaps the most significant contribution of Akbar to India was his progressive and forthright dealings with the watershed tenet of Indian civilization--religion. He summoned religious scholars and theologians--Brahmans, Jains, Zorastrians, Buddhists, Jesuits, as well as Muslims for regular weekly discussions (Schulberg, 1968:162). His mind was filled with a ceaseless desire to find the truth, which haunted him throughout his life (Rawlinson, 1952:299). A most revealing insight into his character was found on the famous inscription after his conquest of the Deccan in 1601. "The world is a bridge; pass over it, and build no house upon it. Who hopes for an hour, hopes for eternity. The world is an hour; spend it in prayer, for what follows is unseen" (Rawlinson, 1952:305) (See map page 21 - Islamic Annexation of Bengal).

Akbar was deeply influenced by the tenets of Christianity. He invited Jesuit Fathers to his court, but despite the fact the Jesuits excelled in religious debates Akbar rejected the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. The Fathers reluctantly came to the conclusion, "the Emperor is not a Muhammedan, but is doubtful as to all forms of faith, because he finds in all something to offend his reason and intelligence, for he thinks everything can be grasped by reason" (Rawlinson,

1952:313). Unorthodox and heretical religious views Akbar developed aroused widespread alarm in the Muhammadan circles in Bengal and in 1581 a dangerous rebellion broke out (Rawlinson, 1952:313). Akbar suppressed the rebellion but Bengal suffered severely for conspiring against Akbar.

Akbar was a most formidable opponent. Once when a distant province attempted rebellion Akbar stunned the rebels. He crossed the Rajputana Desert, the 'Abode of Death,' some six hundred miles, at the height of the hot season in a phenomenal eleven days. It was said the enemy was so panic stricken that the Mughals "plucked the arrows out of their quivers on their backs as they fled, and used them against their owners" (Rawlinson, 1952:305).

Despite Akbar's progressive reign, the hold of the Imperial power was never strong in Bengal (McNee, 1975:172). Internal rebellion and attacks from the outside created serious problems for Mughal authority and shattered peace in Bengal (McNee, 1975:172). The Mughal dynasty lasted until 1757 when Bahadar Shar II was disposed by the British. Effective Mughal rule ended in the middle part of the eighteenth century.

The Muslim rule in Bengal antagonized the roots of political and religious disharmony already present between Buddhism, Animism and Brahmanism/Hinduism. The once glowing flame of Buddhism was nearly snuffed out by Islam. Hindu polytheistic belief remained a viable force probably due to the deep structural roots of the caste system. Muslim reformist movements were unable to prevent the amalgamation of local animist beliefs with the Muslim religious practice.

Muslim society attracted not only Muslims but also Hindus, Buddhists, and other religions as well. The mass conversion of the local Bengalis

to Islam diffused its traditional doctrine with the local practices and even beliefs not allowed by orthodox Koran teachings. Many present day rites and rituals of Bengali Muslims may be traced back to the fusion of religions of this period. Particularly strong in Bengal at this time was the Hindu belief in numerous supernatural forces and the influence of the sorcerers (Ojhas).

Historically the people of East Bengal had struggled with the polytheism and caste system of Hinduism. They had always sought an alternative to the oppression of the Hindu caste (McNee, 1975:167). When Islam came to Bengal the religion found receptive religious soil.

The Muslim rule was a disheartening choice for the Bengali people. Wherever Muslim rule existed in Bengal, slavery developed. During this period of misrule and oppression, through which Bengal passed, "slavery was accepted by the Bengalis as a refuge for their troubles" (Wise, 1894: 28). During this turbulent period of Muslim control; war, famine, and natural calamity drove the people to despair and many sold their children to the Muslims to become Muslim slaves (McNee, 1976:170). The era of Muslim intrusion and exploitation in Bengal was not a positive or progressive period for the Bengali people. The Mughal Empire of Akbar the Great may have produced some of the most impressive structures still present in modern day Bangladesh. Still for the most part, Muslim and

Mughal Islamic rule in Bengal was a disheartening period for the proud and independent peoples that for centuries looked for freedom and independence in the fertile delta water ways of Bengal. In the middle of the eighteenth century a new power from the west completely changed the direction of Bengali culture.

IV BRITISH SUBJUGATION

In the early portion of the sixteenth century the Mughal emperors decided to open the area of agricultural wealth to foreign trade. Mughal Bengal experienced a decline of political control that worked in favor of the British East India Company stationed in Calcutta. Many European trading companies attempted to exploit the decline of Mughal authority in Bengal. The British outlasted their European competitors, and were free to move from the status of merchant at Calcutta to administer of Bengal (Nyrop, 1975:12) (See map page 27).

The Western system of capitalism, as demonstrated in the successful strategy of the British, revealed a crucial weakness of Bengal's allegiance to both Islam and Hinduism. The narrow base of Islam in Bengal was graphically illustrated in 1757, when Robert Clive in the strange battle of Plassey, following skillful intrigue and with the aid of betrayal on the other side, won the great province of Bengal (Brown, 1972:42). The successful strategy of the British also revealed the shallow support for Hindu social structure. The British ultimately achieved military superiority because both their Indian and European-raised troops were "loyal to their units and their calling as military men rather than to the particularistic values of kin, caste, and locality" (Cohn, 1971:72). The

British were successful because they were well organized, had good leadership, paid regular wages and had no devotion to religion. The Bengali were not loyal to their Mughal rulers. They looked to the British as a positive alternative to the oppressive foreign rule of the Mughals. The Battle of Plassey underscored the thesis the Bengalis were seeking

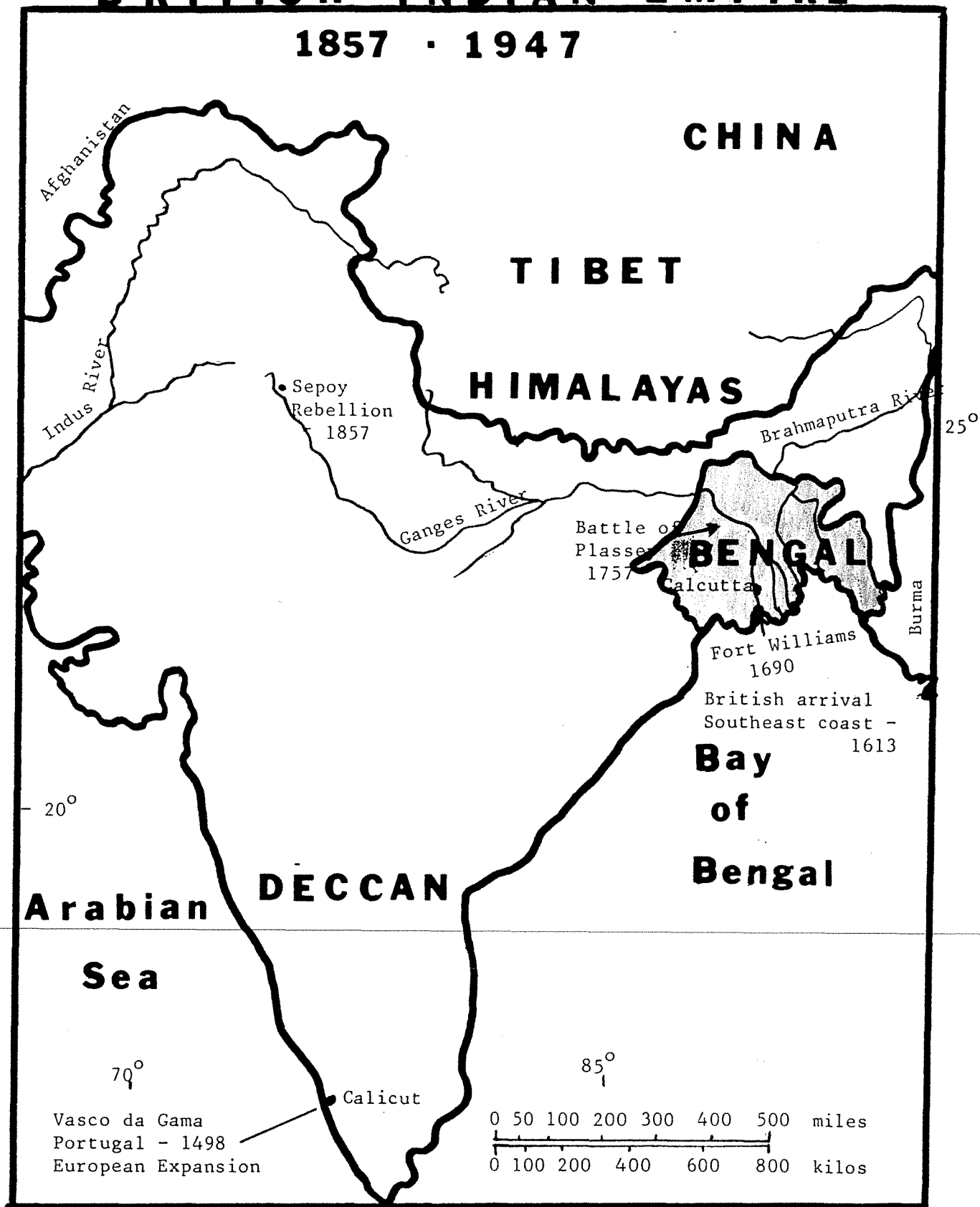
freedom and equality and when a choice was presented they invariably sought the alternative to kin and caste values of Hinduism and Islam.

After the Battle of Plassey, the entire land of India gradually came under British subjugation. The effect of British subjugation in Bengal was dramatic. Although Britain was an external power with its source thousands of miles away, its influence paradoxically proved more extensive and effective than most of the early large-scale invasions into Bengal. The reason was elementary. Throughout the history of India the constantly recurring and decisive element was the intrusion of new forces from the outside, which have almost always entered through the passes of the northwest (Brown, 1972:19) (See map page 10). Bengal developed a proud history of being the last to be subjugated and the first to rebel. In this case the tables were turned. Bengal became the first victim of the British, and consequently became the center for all socio-political, socio-religious and economic activities. Calcutta prospered and became the socio-political and cultural heartbeat of the British-Indian Empire (See map page 27).

The lifestyle of the Bengali changed dramatically. European modernization and scholasticism was introduced. The study of Bengali and English was promoted. Eighteenth and nineteenth century British culture, still near its apex as a world power was imported to Bengal. The establishment of English rule meant the separation of church and state which alarmed and alienated the Islamic community in Bengal (Rawlinson, 1952: 403). The Muslims were further embittered when the vernaculars including English were substituted for Persian, the classical language of their community.

BRITISH INDIAN EMPIRE

1857 · 1947



The socio-religious Islamic heritage was deeply embedded in Bengal through three waves of Muslim invasion over a thousand years. Although the British politically and socially oppressed the Muslim community they made negligible attempts to win the people or change their values and customs. With the notable exception of some missionaries, the British remained aloof from the Bengali populous and maintained a position of aristocratic authority.

It was not until the nineteenth century that Britain softened its position of aristocratic superiority toward the Bengali people. In 1813 Britain passed clauses on Christianity in India allowing missionaries to enter British Bengal freely. The Bengalis did not accept this alternative of Christianity. To accept Christianity would have further alienated both Hindus and Muslims from an already fragmented and shattered cultural heritage.

From the diary of the first British missionary to Bengal, William Carey, the cultural and religious traditions of Bengal at the turn of the nineteenth century were revealed. In Carey's journal he recorded a great Hindu festival held at Gunga Sangor where the Ganges emptied itself into the sea. The festival was held every year at the full moon in January. Thousands of Hindu pilgrims from all parts of Bengal came to worship the great river goddess. The worship tradition at this festival, usually in fulfillment of a vow, was for some enthusiastic and frenzied pilgrims to cry "Bunga mai kai jai (to mother Ganges be victory) and throw infant children into the sacred river, to be drowned or devoured by the crocodiles or sharks" (Walker, 1951:197).

The religious traditions and customs of the Bengali, especially Hindu, revealed deep insights into the fundamental principles in which Bengali society was rooted. Ancient animist and spirit worship practices were fundamental in Bengali culture at this time.

It was not an uncommon practice for sick infants that refused their mother's milk to be exposed to the elements because the child was believed bewitched. "In this case, the babe is put in a basket and hung up in a tree for three days" (Walker, 1951:198). If the elements or insects, usually ants, did not devour the child then it was taken home and means were used to preserve its life.

Perhaps the most gruesome religious custom of the Bengali Hindus was the practice of Sati, the burning of Hindu widows upon the funeral pyre of her dead husband. William Carey personally witnessed the deep rooted custom of widow-burning in 1799. Carey personally recounted watching this religious ceremony. In his own words he recalled the ritual of Sati:

The widow having mounted the pile and danced. . . . she lay down by the corpse, and put one arm under its neck and the other over it, when a quantity of dry cocoa leaves and other substances were heaped over them to a considerable height, and then Ghee, or melted preserved butter, poured on the top. Two bamboos were then put over them and held fast down, and the fire put to the pile (Walker, 1951:200).

Carey noted that the widow was held by the bamboo like levers of a press. The British missionary was deeply grieved over this ceremony and zealously researched the roots of this practice. He learned the Bengali were taught the ancient Hindu sacred books enjoined them to human sacrifice. Carey investigated the extent of Sati and personally documented

over four hundred cases in one year and estimated that in all of Bengal over ten thousand widows were consigned to death each year (Walker, 1951:201). Carey's research into Hindu sacred law with the invaluable assistance of learned pundits convinced him Sati was a rite countenanced rather than definitely enjoined to the sacred law. For twenty five years Carey labored for prohibition of Sati until finally in 1829 the British

governor general banned the widow burning practice in all British dominions in India (Walker, 1951:252).

The British colonial rule in Bengal encountered the resilient influence of the traditional religious customs and mores of the land. In Bengal the British discovered a degree of interpretation of Hindu and Muslim cultures. By the eighteenth century "a synthetic Indo-Islamic culture had developed" (Cohn, 1971:68). The British encountered a resilient Hindu system that could adapt and even incorporate the most austere Islamic ritual. The Hindus had adopted Muslim dress, music, art and literature. The strict discipline of Islamic monotheism was diffused by a time seasoned "systematic indifference and reasoned disregard" of the Hindu (Jones, 1939:21).

The effect of the British colonial rule in Bengal was a polarization of the religious heritages of the Hindu and Muslim. The result was a schism of the synthetic and fragile Indo-Islamic cultures. The Hindus were able to adapt and assimilate the new culture and socio-religion of the British. The Muslims rejected British subjugation despite the loss of political power.

The British manipulated the balance of power in Bengal against the Muslims in favor of the Hindus to discourage a Muslim comeback. In 1793, Lord Charles Cornwallis, governor general of India introduced in Bengal the Permanent Settlement Act, through which Muslims not only lost their lands but also came under the influence of the Hindu Zaminduris (landlords) (Zaidi, 1970:5). The British and Hindu Zaminduris exploited the masses in Bengal, both Muslim and non-Muslim (McNee, 1975:174).

Islam was further disseminated when the religious and educational institutions lost their land grants and the scholars were deprived of

their stipends. The British supported the influence of Hindu Zamindars and encouraged non-Islamic practices to permeate Muslim society. Paradoxically, the British who had received open support from the Bengalis in the beginning lost that trust because of unequal exploitation of the masses. The Muslims may have lost their political power and suffered humiliation at the hands of the British rulers and the Hindu Zamindars, yet their influence among the local Bengali remained as ever.

In the twentieth century British influence waned. The seeds of division between the Muslim and Hindu factions in Bengal sown centuries ago and brought to schism by the British, finally expressed their maturity in the twentieth century phenomenon of nationalism.

In 1905 the British ruler, Lord Curzon, decided to partition Bengal into Hindu West and Muslim East (McNee, 1975:174). The Hindus who had gained tremendous power under the British protested so violently that the decision was revoked in 1911. The country was demonstrably divided against itself. The growing nationalism of Hindus and Muslims continued to isolate them from their common heritage. The Muslims, seeking identity, attempted to see themselves as part of Arabia. The result was devastating for the Muslims of East Bengal. For centuries the Muslims had governed in Bengal. In the twentieth century the Muslims were ruled by the Hindus whom they considered idolators. The Muslims became alienated in feeling and even in loyalty to their own cultural roots in Bengal. The Muslims began to lose their identity and creativity. The Muslim poets began to speak of Arabia and Persia and not of the soil of Bengal of which they were born (McNee, 1976:176). Their literature and poetry lost its flavor and appeal. The themes were foreign and their poetry had no heart or life. The twentieth century was a period of intense ill will

and political dissention between these two factions. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar described the twenty years between 1920-1940 as "Civil War between Hindu and Muslim interrupted by brief intervals of armed peace" (Nyrop, 1975: 25).

The effect of British subjugation in Bengal was both positive and negative for the Bengali people. For one hundred years the British East India Company controlled Bengal until in 1857 an Indian uprising forced the transfer of governmental control to the Crown in England. The British Raj governed in India until 1947.

On the negative side the British rule of Bengal was another dark chapter in the Bengali age old quest for freedom and liberty. Horace Wellpole, the eighteenth century English author wrote about British control in India.

We have outdone the Spaniards in Peru. We have murdered; deposed, plundered, usurped. Nay, what think you of the famine in East Bengal, in which three million perished, being caused by the monopoly of provisions by the servants of the East India Company? (Ellis, 1922:312).

Two hundred years of British oppression and exploitation had opened deep and chronic wounds buried within the Bengali culture.

In defense of the British administration it must be noted that the English established order and unity in India and Bengal at a time when widespread misery and disorder were the most residual remains of the

Mughal Empire. The British abolished widow burning, killing female babies at birth, and thuggee, the ritual strangling of travellers by assassins who were devotees of the goddess Kali (Rawlinson, 1952:411).

Under the benevolent patronage of the British, traditional arts and crafts were revived, Indian music was rescued and the various Indian vernaculars were developed into extensive prose literatures. Bengal enjoyed

an enforced tranquility under the British Raj (British Indian Empire) which she had not experienced for centuries and perhaps not since the days of Emperor Akbar. The British established a uniform system of government, which provided security of tenure, regular taxation, protection of life and property and equal justice (Rawlinson, 1952:405). Lord Curzon, perhaps England's most able administrator, proclaimed the loftiest ideal of British rule in India: ". . . our work is righteous and it shall endure" (Rawlinson, 1952:405).

Perhaps the most remarkable factor in the British rule of India was the willingness of the Bengali and Indian people to be governed by a foreign power. The thesis they were seeking an alternative to both Islam and Hindu religious and social values was underscored by the lack of British officers in the East India Company's service in India. In 1842, the total number of British in the East India Company in India was 776 (Galbraith, Mehta, 1971:114). Even after the British Crown assumed governorship of the entire Indian subcontinent in 1857 British numerical strength remained insignificant. In 1879 there were only 907 Europeans and seven Indians in the Indian Civil Service. Even at its peak in 1939 the number of British in the governing body in India, the ICS, was only 759 although 540 Indians had been recruited to administer to the great province of India (Galbraith, Mehta, 1971:114). The population of India at this time was about 350 million.

Undeniably the Hindu community prospered under British control while the Muslim community deteriorated and this unequal treatment proved the downfall of the British in Bengal. The revival of the ancient language (Sanskrit), literature, and legal system of the Brahmanism further encouraged a creative renaissance among the Hindu community. In the

nineteenth century the Hindu community under the influence of the humane teachings of Christianity began to see the need for change and reform (Galbraith, Mehta, 1971:111). The leader of this reform was a Bengali of an orthodox Hindu family, Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833). Roy labored, as the missionary Carey, to ban such heathen Hindu practices as Sati, caste prejudice, and idol worship. The fruit of this new environment was the establishment of the Brahma Samaj, a church open to all sorts and conditions of men for "the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable and Immortal Being Who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe" (Rawlinson, 1952:410). The Samaj movement provided a rich environment for spiritual, theosophical, cultural, and educational growth in Bengal. Nearly all the leading writers and thinkers of Bengal were from the Samaj movement. The best known was Rabindranath Tagore whose Gitanjali, or Handful of Songs, published in 1913 achieved for him and Bengal the Nobel Prize for Literature. His poems breathe a zealous and fervent love of God which was characteristic of Bengali culture through the ages. In Tagore's Gitanjali there were no Buddhist doctrines of karma or transmigration of souls. There were no Islamic doctrines of an unreachable or inactive God. There were no Hindu doctrines of polytheism. There was no pessimism of past oppression. Instead there was a joy in a personal relationship with a loving God. Tagore's poems reflect the hope of the

Bengali people as illustrated in the words of the Gitanjali:

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full.
 Thus it is that thou hast come down to me.
 O thou Lord of all heavens,
 Where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth.
 In my heart is the endless play of thy delight.
 In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who are King of Kings hast decked thyself in
beauty to captivate my heart.
And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover,
And there art thou seen in the perfect union of the two. (Rawlinson,
1952:412), (Gitanjali, p. 32).

Dr. J. N. Farquhar eloquently elaborated the message of Tagore to
his people ". . . deliverance won by going down where God is, among the
poorest, lowliest, and lost, the duty of service, the core of religion
found in righteousness, life won by dying to self, sin recognized as
shame and thralldom, and death as God's messenger and man's friend!"
(Rawlinson, 1952:412).

Tagore's poetry breathed precious life and hope. Tagore was a
breath of fresh air to the Bengali nation. Despite the growing schism of
Bengali culture between Hindu and Muslim there was a message of hope and
joy in a personal relationship with a loving God.

V THE NEW HOPE - PARTITION

The Hindu and Muslim quest for their religious expression developed a new solution--religious nationalism. Centuries of friction between two opposing religious ideologies finally reached a crisis. In 1947 the Indian subcontinent was divided between Muslims and Hindus. India gained independence from Britain only through a concession to the Muslims to create an Islamic state of Pakistan--East and West. To the Indian the partition was something that never should have divided mother India. To the Muslims of West Pakistan the birth of a new state came as the inspiring realization of a dream (Neill, 1970:156). The Bengalis decided by vote on August 14, 1947 for an Islamic Republic of Pakistan. To the Bengali of East Bengal, a Pakistan for Muslims was the best alternative for a free expression of their independent heritage. They allied themselves along religious lines with Muslims one thousand miles away instead of allying themselves with Bengali Hindus who shared common territory, culture, language and ethnic relationship with them (McNee, 1975:176). The seeds of division sown centuries before had reached maturity. The bitterness between Bengali brothers had waxed so deep that they rejected their common heritage and identity.

The schism that split the common heritage, territory, culture, language and ethnic relationships of the Bengali people had been sown deep within the ancient roots of Bengal for centuries. The deep roots of division; caste distinctions, racial prejudices, slavery, polygamy and animistic sacrifice, had been sown in the ancient heritage of Bengal. These seeds finally manifested themselves in a schism that divided the Bengali heritage and forced the Brahmanistic Hindus out of Bengal in the

partition of 1947. Bengal paid a dear price for this questionable independence. They had no viable arrangement with the Hindus of the continent for partition. Bengal had exchanged political control from the British to a new political rule across the Indian subcontinent in West Pakistan. They had no mutual access with West Pakistan except by air or sea and nothing in common to weld them together except the existence in both states of a large Muslim majority (Neill, 1970:155) (See map page 39).

Bengal was now in a most compromised position, wed to West Pakistan in a pre-arranged marriage with a mate they did not know. To make matters worse the Muslim Bengalis of East Pakistan were alienated from the Hindu Bengalis of West Bengal, India from which they shared common ethnic and cultural heritage. In their age old attempt for political independence, the Bengalis had thrown off the yoke of British subjugation and finally cast off most adherents of Hinduism from the land. Paradoxically they were now welded to their Muslim brothers one thousand miles to the west. On the surface the partition of India into two Islamic Pakistans and an Indian Hindu Republic appeared positive to the Muslims of Bengal. Unfortunately the Bengalis did not understand and had little common cultural heritage with their Muslim brothers across India. To establish the background for the events to follow, the Islamic culture of West Pakistan must be developed.

The land of West Pakistan was converted to Islam by the sword. The invasion route to India was through the Kyber pass and the Hindu Kush mountains in the north (See map page 10). The invading Islamic peoples from Afghanistan and Central Asia had a social structure highly adapted to a raiding and military way of life (Cohn, 1971:66). Hasan Nizami,

Chronicler of the activities of Muhammad of Ghuri in the thirteenth century who invaded the ancient land of Baluchistan (West Pakistan) wrote:

He purged, by the sword, the land of Hind from the filth of infidelity and vice, and freed the whole of that country from the thorn of God-plurality and the impurity of idol worship and by his royal vigor and intrepidity left not one temple standing (Titus, 1959:12).

The culture of West Pakistan was endowed with a heritage of conquering by the sword. They had no patience with compromise between idol worship and God-plurality. Therefore West Pakistan developed a Muslim social system based on military rigidity and most of the people were embedded with the tenets of religious chauvinism (Islam, 1974:18).

The history of the conversion of the Bengali to Islam was a social and organizational effort that worked gradually through peaceful means. In the land of Bengal, Islam developed a tradition of tolerance and peaceful co-existence with other religions. The Bengali accepted Islam to maintain their ethnic heritage of independence from oppression. The Bengali developed an Islamic cultural syncretism based on religious toleration and peaceful co-existence with different religions in the same country until the British upset the balance between Hindu and Muslim.

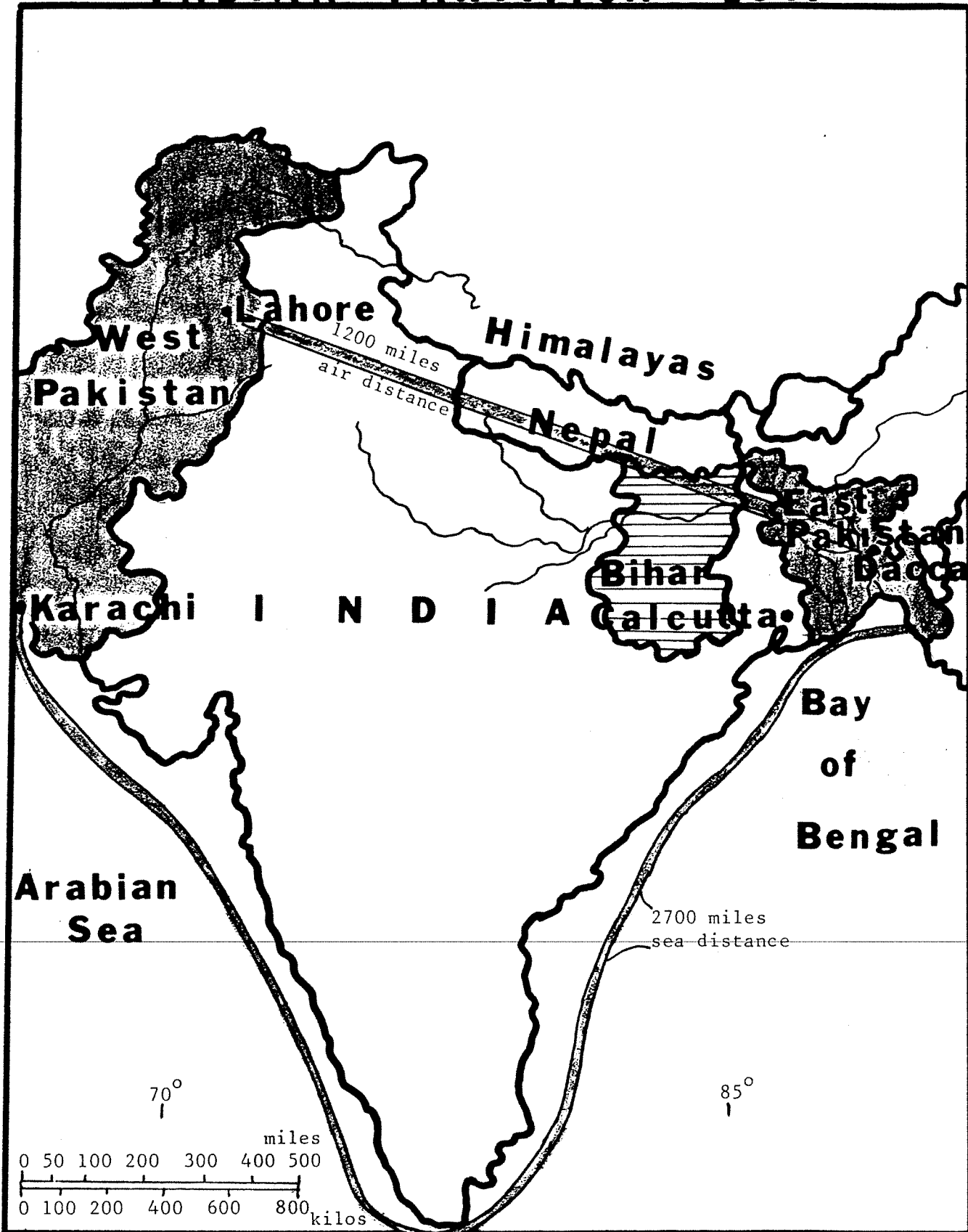
From the onset of the dual Islamic state of Pakistan the different religious origins of religion manifested themselves in political and social problems of co-existence. The extent of political, social, and population differences between the two Pakistan states could be highlighted by the following population and land area figures.

Population and Land Area of Pakistan 1951 - 61 - 72 (Wilbur, 1964:423).

<u>Region</u>	<u>Area--Sq. Miles</u>	<u>Population - Thousands</u>			<u>Population Density</u>		
		1951	1961	1972*	1951	1961	1972
East Pakistan	55,126	42,062	50,853	75,000	763	922	1364
West Pakistan	310,403	33,780	42,978	60,000	108	138	197

*Encyclopedia Britannica Book of Year 1975

INDIAN PARTITION 1947



West Pakistan was nearly six times larger than East Pakistan yet East Pakistan contained the clear majority of Pakistani citizens. The differences in population density indicated the two nations were worlds apart in living conditions. Despite the fact that East Pakistan constituted the clear majority of Pakistani citizens, their share of the revenue of the government was consistently half of the revenue budgeted for West Pakistan. The figures of the following charts indicated the expenditures for education, health, and agriculture were woefully unequal between the two states. For example, in 1958-59 99.9 million rupees was expended for agriculture in West Pakistan while in the same year 10.8 million rupees was expended for agriculture in East Pakistan. In the same year 136.6 million rupees was expended for education in West Pakistan while East Pakistan was allotted 34.4 million rupees. These charts demonstrated the economic and social oppression of the Bengali people (See charts on pages 41-44 Revenue and Expenditures, West and East Pakistan).

Once again Bengal struggled against the oppression and exploitation of a foreign ruler. East Pakistan earned the foreign exchange, "yet more jobs, factories and industries were developed in West Pakistan. East Pakistan constituted the majority both in population and literacy yet West Pakistan controlled the government" (Islam, 1974:27).

Interwing statistics indicated the disparity of imports and exports between East and West Pakistan (See Interwing Trade chare on page 45). West Pakistan used their superior military position to dominate economic trade between the two wings. West Pakistan used East Pakistan for a market for their products yet bought imports from East Pakistan only at a disproportionate and lesser rate.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE: WEST PAKISTAN, 1950-51 TO 1963-64

(in million rupees)

Item	1950-51	1954-55	1956-57	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64 (budget)
Revenue									
Customs	.6	....	....	....	....	....	....	40.9	40.9
Central excise	....	14.5	20.3	31.2	23.1	31.0	25.4	43.9	44.0
Corporation tax	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	24.9	26.1
Taxes on income other than corporation tax	.1	20.4	26.6	36.4	29.4	34.6	42.9	84.6	89.4
Sales tax	59.2	60.7	101.0	127.5	111.1	168.5	175.3	164.9	175.6
Land revenue	32.8	44.0	117.5	178.5	138.6	133.6	116.0	68.0	74.5
Stamps	6.4	10.3	15.4	21.7	20.7	26.0	27.6	33.7	34.3
Other heads	47.9	55.6	63.3	127.4	102.2	108.6	114.0	148.5	171.5
Irrigation works, etc.	78.1	72.0	48.4	50.7	85.6	108.0	100.4	169.0	144.0
Debt services	5.6	12.3	6.4	14.0	33.5	19.5	47.2	130.9	158.6
Civil administration	6.4	8.0	10.2	25.9	24.8	15.5	13.8	14.2	29.7
Civil works	9.1	13.9	10.5	21.7	29.5	16.5	9.0	9.0	10.3
Beneficient departments	19.0	27.5	33.7	88.8	77.3	46.2	45.2	37.8	46.0
Receipts from electricity schemes	3.6	16.7	26.6	18.2	....	....	.2	.4	.1
Miscellaneous	42.6	63.3	21.1	37.2	33.7	38.7	28.4	26.9	26.8
Grants-in-aid from central government	10.1	13.3	67.2	49.0	31.2	23.7	131.2	219.5	147.7
Extraordinary items	38.3	42.7	44.9	52.7	64.2	52.8	56.6	70.6	125.8
Total	359.9	475.2	613.1	880.9	804.9	823.2	933.2	1287.8	1345.3
Expenditures									
Direct demands on revenue	48.1	53.7	38.6	56.2	48.5	45.7	50.7	55.8	56.6
Irrigation	6.6	9.3	28.0	41.0	27.9	16.5	22.2	8.0	7.7
Debt services	20.8	44.5	70.2	84.2	22.8	29.3	30.3	151.6	192.2
General administration	21.6	28.6	34.3	43.6	34.6	41.0	46.8	56.5	59.3

42	Police	54.1	60.1	70.9	93.6	72.0	85.3	90.9	102.7	108.0
	Frontier regions	....	....	8.0	45.6	39.9	10.3	11.2	12.0	17.4
	Other heads	16.6	20.5	23.5	35.6	27.6	30.7	32.3	35.9	39.8
	Education	42.9	74.8	100.6	136.6	115.7	121.9	144.1	206.4	233.9
	Health services	11.6	14.7	30.5	47.5	42.4	43.4	48.3	66.0	70.6
	Agriculture	8.3	9.6	14.4	99.9	80.0	47.1	33.3	30.8	30.3
	Veterinary	2.6	3.4	6.4	8.6	8.0	10.5	10.6	9.0	10.7
	Industries	4.6	7.8	11.0	12.2	9.9	9.1	8.9	9.0	9.4
	Development expenditure	....	....	....	....	....	82.2	110.3	194.1	256.4
	Civil works	36.3	51.7	47.9	93.8	49.2	44.8	61.3	46.9	58.4
	Other heads	8.6	10.0	6.8	7.2	6.4	9.3	8.2	9.2	12.1
	Miscellaneous	46.3	37.4	56.9	72.6	69.1	59.5	72.5	68.7	64.1
	Extraordinary items	.7	9.2	.1	.1	.3	....	....	....	....
	Total	329.7	435.3	548.1	878.3	654.3	686.6	781.9	1062.1	1226.9
	Surplus/Deficit	30.1	39.9	65.0	2.6	150.6	136.6	151.3	225.1	118.4

Source: Adapted from Economic Survey of Pakistan 1963-64, Statistical Section, table 76 (Wilbur, 1964:442-443).

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE: EAST PAKISTAN, 1950-51 TO 1963-64

(in million rupees)

Item	1950-51	1954-55	1956-57	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62	1962-63	1963-64 (budget)
Revenue									
Customs	42.5	39.7	45.1	51.7	47.5	33.0	61.9	50.0	46.7
Central excise	....	....	17.5	26.2	18.0	27.7	26.5	50.9	52.9
Corporation tax	....	....	....	....	....	....	....	29.3	29.8
Taxes on income other than corporation tax	7.8	25.0	29.8	57.6	36.9	39.1	44.0	108.2	112.9
Sales tax	16.5	20.3	25.2	36.2	33.7	52.1	62.2	136.6	149.4
Land revenue	22.4	50.2	51.5	130.5	93.5	108.3	145.5	80.0	145.0
Stamps	20.3	21.5	27.5	40.2	43.5	46.0	45.8	42.5	43.4
Rehabilitation taxes	....	....	.2	2.0	1.9	3.2	2.5	3.7	3.7
Other heads	46.0	41.8	37.1	65.4	55.3	58.1	69.6	65.4	66.5
Irrigation works, etc.	-.5	-2.1	.6	.9	-.1	....	....	....	....
Debt services	1.7	2.0	1.5	5.9	4.1	6.2	28.7	55.0	101.4
Civil administration	11.8	24.7	20.1	53.8	29.8	26.1	25.8	18.4	27.2
Civil works	3.6	8.3	8.5	21.9	14.7	10.5	12.2	7.7	6.4
Miscellaneous	9.9	10.7	34.6	19.4	5.9	33.0	21.2	15.4	14.0
Grants-in-aid from central government	....	.6	4.6	11.1	13.2	4.4	2.0	25.7	45.3
Foreign aid grants from central government	....	....	....	....	....	....	158.2	....	158.9
Extraordinary items	....	1.5	....	....	....	....	.1	....	....
Total (a)	182.0	244.2	303.8	522.7	397.9	447.7	706.1	688.8	1003.5
Expenditures									
Direct demands on revenue	12.8	25.4	44.7	62.9	57.0	60.0	60.7	78.6	100.9
Revenue and capital ac- count of irrigation works, etc.	2.5	4.2	6.6	18.1	2.1	....	....	....	....

₹ Debt services	1.0	30.0	22.0	108.1	23.6	4.6	7.6	114.2	188.1
General administration	21.8	22.1	23.5	30.9	25.1	27.9	29.9	24.5	34.9
Police	38.1	47.0	52.5	74.5	58.5	53.0	60.5	64.9	65.9
Education	20.9	23.1	22.5	34.4	25.2	62.5	67.2	77.1	93.2
Medical and public health	8.3	8.9	11.9	19.6	20.0	28.1	30.5	37.2	38.0
Agriculture	9.0	9.5	8.2	10.8	9.6	10.5	11.1	12.2	12.5
Industries	1.7	1.8	2.3	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.8	3.3	3.3
Other departments	20.9	21.0	21.4	36.2	29.2	31.0	31.9	37.1	36.2
Civil works	2.1	31.2	-.2	12.8	14.4	29.9	50.1	21.1	30.5
Miscellaneous	26.5	25.6	85.1	40.4	36.7	50.0	37.2	49.2	42.6
Extraordinary charges	6.1	.5	.5	.5	.5	.6	.6	.7	.3
Development expenditure	18.6	34.4	37.5	68.3	74.1	109.8	169.4	114.3	280.7
Total	190.3	284.7	338.5	521.0	378.9	470.9	559.5	644.4	917.1
Surplus/Deficit	-8.3	-40.5	-34.7	1.8	19.0	-23.2	146.6	44.4	86.4

(a) Totals here and below have been rounded separately and so may appear at variance.

Source: Adapted from Economic Survey of Pakistan 1963-64, Statistical Section, table 74 (Wilbur, 1964:440-41).

INTERWING TRADE(a)

(in million rupees)

Year(b)	Imports into East Pakistan from West Pakistan	Imports into West Pakistan from East Pakistan
1948-49	137.6	18.8
1949-50	229.2	32.3
1950-51	210.8	46.0
1951-52	161.2	36.4
1952-53	177.0	101.1
1953-54	370.0	130.7
1954-55	293.0	180.7
1955-56	318.9	220.7
1956-57	510.1	235.1
1957-58	690.2	264.0
1958-59	660.7	277.6
1959-60	542.6	361.0
1960-61	798.7	361.0
1961-62	829.7	392.5
1962-63	917.6	466.9

(a) These data do not include airborne trade between the two wings and are derived on the basis of imports into Karachi, Chittagong, and Chalna ports confined to Pakistan merchandise; the movement of foreign merchandise has been excluded because it is not possible to identify it properly from the point of view of origin and destination. Hence this information should be regarded as indicating the trend of interwing trade only.

(b) Figures up to 1956 relate to private accounts only, thereafter to both private and government accounts.

Source: Central Statistical Office, Bulletin No. 12, 10 (December 1962), 2288; Economic Survey of Pakistan 1963-64, Statistical Section, Table 34 (Wilbur, 1964:445).

The question of state language further divided East and West

Pakistan. East Pakistan spoke Bengali and West Pakistan spoke Urdu.

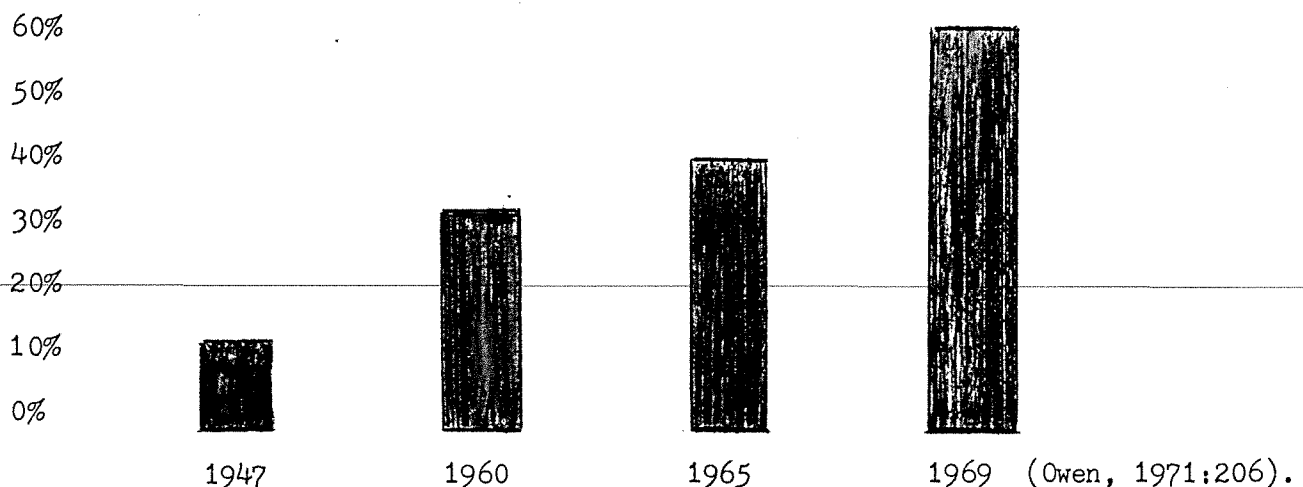
When West Pakistan advocated one state language of Urdu in 1952 riots broke out in Bengal. West Pakistan was historically organized via military precept and thus controlled the outbreak. Understandably disorder and unrest marked the inception of Pakistan until in October 1958 Field Marshall Muhammed Ayub Khan took over the government with the help of the Army (Islam, 1974:27).

Grievances simmered in East Bengal although President Ayub Khan governed with patience and equality. Despite Khan's sincere efforts of reconciliation this incompatible and ill conceived union of Urdu and Bengali speaking Muslims continued to split apart.

The injustice and oppression of the Bengali people by yet another foreign ruler was basically economic inequality. In the first twenty years of Pakistan, Bengal (East Pakistan) produced 50 to 70 percent of the exports, but received only 25 to 30 percent of the imports (Ahmad, 1971:816). The per-capita income in 1959-1960 in West Pakistan was 32 per cent higher than Bengal; and ten years later this inequality had increased to 61 percent (Ahmad, 1971:816).

The economic oppression of the Bengali people by their Islamic countrymen to the west increased each year.

The following chart indicated the increasing percentage that per capita income in West Pakistan exceeded per capita income in East Pakistan.



The oppression of Bengal by West Pakistan began gradually. Between 1947 and 1958 Bengal maintained a parity in a succession of civilian coalitionary governments. In 1958 the army took over directly in

Pakistan because of the fear of Hindu India. Indian Hinduism became a national paranoic in West Pakistan. The availability of weapons in West Pakistan led quickly to a thorough militarization of all facets of national life. The military government used the fear and distrust of India to justify its vast arms build-up and virtual dictatorship. Also during this period the introduction of American arms threw the entire political culture of Pakistan off balance (Ahmad, 1971:816). The injection of American arms into the volatile and fragmented political balance between East and West Pakistan was more than the fragile marriage could endure. V. G. Keirnan observed in the magazine Nation "It was American patronage and arms that allowed this backward, unstable, really insignificant country to swell itself up like the bullfrog in the fable" (Kiernan, 1971:685). The development of American military armaments in West Pakistan completely changed the course of the political government in the dual states of Pakistan. The economy of West Pakistan assumed a monopolistic structure. By 1968 twenty West Pakistani families controlled 97 percent of the countries insurance, 80 percent of the banking, and 66 percent of the industry (Ahmad, 1971:816). Not only was Bengal subject to exploitation but the citizens of West Pakistan were also exploited by a handful of wealthy families.

Public dissatisfaction of the military regime became so intense that Ayub Khan was overthrown in March of 1969 in a popular upsurge unpresidented in the country. General Yahya was named President under a popular mandate to provide general elections (LeShana, 1972:7). President Yahya Kahn's words to the nation on March 26, 1969 were,

Fellow countrymen I wish to make it absolutely clear to you that I have no ambition other than the creation of conditions conducive to the establishment of a constitutional government. . . . (Mascarenhas, 1971:34).

In 1969 there were 36 political parties and "groups" waiting for the election. It soon became apparent that Yahya Khan only provided a smokescreen of a "facade of democracy" to serve as a buffer against public protest and give his regime the appearance of legitimacy (Mascarenhas, 1971:44). The illwill and tension between the two Islamic states added fuel to political dissent in both countries. The unpopular governmental control of West Pakistan served as a common cause to unite the Bengalis as never before in modern history under the banner of the Awami league and the popular leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. General Yahya unwisely did not discern the depth of the grievances of the Bengali people or the unity and strength of the Awami league of Sheikh Mujib. Perhaps the ultimate indignity of President Khan was his "callous disregard" for Bengali suffering after the devastating cyclone of 1970 that claimed over 500,000 lives (Chandler, 1974:38). Yahya Khan underestimated the determinism and resilience of the Bengali people. He did not understand their culture or the centuries of exploitation and oppression they had experienced. He vastly underestimated the Bengalis deep desire for freedom, liberty and unity. He demonstrated his naive political understanding of Bengal in a political move for free elections to establish democratic rule in all of Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib contested the elections for the National Assembly on the single issue of regional autonomy and captured all but two seats reserved for Bengal. The Awami league won 167 of 169 seats on the National Assembly reserved for East Pakistan. Since the total number of seats for the entire country was only 313, Sheikh Mujib was assured of the ruling position of Prime Minister of all Pakistan once the assembly convened (Nanda, 1971:690). Dramatically, as in a Hollywood movie script, Sheikh Mujib was democratically elected Prime Minister of all of Pakistan. For the first time

since 1947 and perhaps ever, the Bengalis were in a position to assert themselves through the authority of state institution (LeShana, 1972:7).

The dramatic Bengali victory forced Yahya Khan to reveal his real intentions of never granting East Pakistan national sovereignty and democratic freedom. He refused to grant Sheikh Mujib his elected position of Prime Minister of all Pakistan. Khan cancelled the National Assembly on March 1, 1971 and re-established martial law in both Pakistans.

Sheikh Mujib hesitated against cries of independence in Bengal. Instead he called for a general strike in Dacca and launched massive civil disobedience campaigns that allowed the Pakistani Army time to fortify its position.

Sheikh Mujib boycotted the National Assembly until four major demands were met in East Pakistan: "1) Lift martial law, 2) take the soldiers back to the barracks, 3) investigate the mass killings, 4) transfer power to the elected officials" (Olson, 1973:251). The Pakistani Army began to strengthen its position in East Pakistan with troops, weapons and tanks. Sheikh Mujib refused to yield to the military buildups, yet he unaccountably did not prepare the Bengali people for the imminent conflict. On March 15, 1971, President Yahya Khan began ten days of negotiations with Sheikh Mujib attempting to convince him to drop his six-point declaration for regional autonomy (LeShana, 1972:7).

At the conclusion of these tense days of negotiation, Sheikh Mujib released this statement: "Our talks with the President are over. We have reached agreement on the transfer of power and I hope the President will now make the announcement" (Mascarenhas, 1971:97). President Yahya Khan also issued a statement immediately upon arrival in Karachi, West Pakistan. A coded message was sent to Eastern Command Headquarters in

Dacca. "Sort them out" (LeShana, 1972:7). On March 26, 1971 the tanks began to roll and the machine guns began to rumble. The slaughter had begun.

This time General Khan left no margin for error. He used the pretext of negotiations to buy time for the Army to wipe out all Bengali resistance. Had Sheikh Mujib allowed the Bengali nation to fight for their independence when the National Assembly was cancelled the genocide could perhaps have been averted. On the first of March the Pakistani Army in Dacca could have been easily overwhelmed and Bangladesh would have been a reality with a minimum of bloodshed (Mascarenhas, 1971:97). In a script reminiscent of a Greek tragedy Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League failed to heed obvious warnings and signs of impending warfare and entered into negotiations of reconciliation with General Yahya. A West Pakistan journalist described these negotiations that Yahya Khan gulled Sheikh Mujib and his associates into as a "mad hatters dance of negotiations on constitutional formulas" (Mascarenhas, 1971:97).

The Bengali people watched helplessly as their Muslim countrymen from the West made preparation to annihilate them. The die was set. As sheep were without defense depending entirely upon their shepherd, so were the Bengali people. Their shepherd, Sheikh Mujib and the Awami League, were leading them to slaughter.

For the next nine months the tragedy of Bangladesh became a nightmare of anguish, brutality, and inhumanity few nations have ever endured in the history of man's civilization on earth. The Pakistani Army was culturally predisposed to warfare. They were armed with the most advanced weapons for conventional warfare. The target of the sophisticated and modern Pakistani military was the virtually defenseless Bengali

nation. The Pakistani had no walls to scale or mountains to cross. They were already within the encampment of the enemy. The legacy of Mohammed, to conquer by the sword, gave impetus for an Islamic holy war on the infidels. In the once gentle land of poets there were no restraints; physical, moral, or spiritual to protect the Bengali populace from the ravage, rape, and pillage that would blight the land.

VI THE BIRTH OF BANGLADESH

The details of the warfare in the land of Bengal were not a pleasant account to present. These facts must be presented so that justice can be served and the historical truth of what really happened revealed. The historical record revealed both Pakistan nations were placed in an untenable situation to begin with. Ancient and resilient seeds of different political and religious heritages had developed separately for centuries and now were ready to bloom.

The extent of the holocaust in Bengal was impossible to document. Few reporters were allowed to witness the attack of the Pakistani Army into the cities and towns of Bengal. Although some reports did survive during the nine months of warfare, the full extent of the bloodshed will never be documented. Many missionaries chose to remain and help the Bengali during this period of tribulation. Some West Pakistan journalists were so appalled at what their country was doing they sacrificed their citizenship to tell the truth. Still other reports came from the Bengalis themselves. From these sources the truth of the holocaust can be pieced together. One such source, Daktar (Olson, 1973), exposed the seige.

The Pakistani Army simultaneously attacked across Bengal with the same plan; kill, loot and burn. They disarmed and killed hundreds of unsuspecting military men and policemen. Overnight the Pakistani Army controlled the airfields, telephone exchanges, telegraph stations, radio transmitting stations, and all strategic points. The Bengalis awoke to the terror of enslavement to a foreign ruler of common Muslim heritage. The Bengalis were unarmed and their leaders had not warned them or prepared them for the savage oppression that fell upon them. After centuries

upon centuries of oppression and exploitation the gentle poetic Bengali peasants had had enough. One missionary that stayed, Viggo Olson, watched in awe:

Overcome by rage, the Bengalis bravery and foolhardiness was fantastic. Arming themselves with staves, spears, dieos, and a few ancient firearms they launched human wave attacks at the pockets of soldiers holding strategic positions. Thousands of Bengalis died in hails of machine gun and rifle bullets--but when the Pakistani ammunition was exhausted the remaining Bengalis hacked the soldiers to death (Olson, 1973:252).

The Pakistani Army clearly hoped to smash the country and its leadership in a few short days. The Pakistanis had demonstrated little love for this smaller, darker and more poetic minded Bengali. They questioned the loyalty of Bengalis to Islam and often accused them of being "half Muslim" (Mascarenhas, 1971:18). The Pakistani Army had inherited a religious tradition of conquering by the sword. The Pakistani President Yahya Khan voiced the intent of Pakistan for the people of Bengal. "We are determined to cleanse East Pakistan once and for all of the threat of succession, even if it means killing of two million people and ruling the province as a colony for thirty years" (LeShana, 1972:7).

The whole world watched as the Pakistani Army was turned loose on a pathetically defenseless and unprepared Bengali nation. The whole world watched almost indifferently as the bloodshed in East Pakistan reached the front pages of newspapers throughout the world. In Britain the Sunday Times interviewed several Pakistanis concerning East Pakistan. The intent of West Pakistan to crush and annihilate Bengali resistance was exposed to the world. Private individuals and groups attempted to prod the conscience of the world to stop this genocide. In April, Gunnar Myrdal led a group of Swedish writers and scientists to five Nordic states appealing to them to bring the matter before the United Nations

(Kiernan, 1971:682). The Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, appealed to the world for international action on May 26, 1970 (Kiernan, 1971:683). India was particularly critical of the United States for what the Indian Ambassador Swaron Singh called: "the callous continuance of American arms shipments to Pakistan" (Kiernan, 1971:684). On August 5, 1970, Alvin Toffler wrote in the New York Times of United States "morally repulsive" aid to the aggressor, while "a planetary catastrophe is taking place in Asia" (Kiernan, 1971:684). In the latter portion of 1971 Mrs. Indira Gandhi made a tour of most western capitals urging support for the Bengalis and freedom for Sheikh Mujib to negotiate on behalf of Bangladesh (D'Souza, 1972:140).

On the global scale Russia as early as April 31, 1970 urged Yahya Khan's government to end the "repressive measures and bloodshed in East Pakistan" (Kiernan, 1971:685). China on the contrary assured the West Pakistanis of their support "if the Indian expansionists interfered in what was purely internal affairs of Pakistan" (Kiernan, 1971:685).

Despite the urgent pleas for an end to the bloodshed the whole world watched indifferently, and even worse, some countries acted to gain political advantage from the warfare. The United States failed to listen to the cries of anguish coming from Bengal and supplied the weapons used to destroy the Bengalis. When India finally stepped in to stop the massacre the United States turned nuclear warships against her. Even the United Nations turned a deaf ear to the warfare in East Bengal. Despite repeated calls from many sectors of the world urging the United Nations to deal with the war the question never came to debate.

Finally in December 1971, India, with her borders swollen with over 10,000,000 starving refugees, was literally forced to intercede on behalf

of Bengal. The Pakistani Air Force launched a surprise attack on all the important airports in Northern India on December 3, 1971 without a declaration of war (D'Souza, 1972:140). In retaliation to the Pakistani aggression India was forced to intercede in the conflict. India forced the Pakistani Army to surrender in Bangladesh in less than three weeks. To India's credit Indira Gandhi exercised great restraint and humanity by not retaliating against Pakistan, except to end the bloody warfare in East Pakistan (See map page 39).

What happened to the Bengali people during those nine months was a tragedy difficult to portray. Haunting accounts of Pakistani brutality survived to a naive if not indifferent world. War has historically brought out the very worst in the human personality and this war was no different. The Pakistanis were driven to cripple the incredible resistance of the Bengali through a program of humiliation and degradation. As in most wars it was usually the poor, the women and the children that suffered the most. Bangladesh was no exception. Although thousands of women were killed, the most attractive were captured to become sex slaves in the military cantonments. Olson recounted the horrible suffering and despair these Bengali women were driven to. "When the girls tried to hang themselves with their clothing, their garments were taken from them. Then when they tried to strangle themselves with their black hair they were shaved bald" (Olson, 1973:258). When these Bengali women became pregnant to the West Pakistani soldiers, many strangled their children at birth.

The Pakistani strategy of crippling Bengal was diabolical and methodical. The cream of the youth, the students, were rounded up and executed. When the war was over mass graves inundated the land. Pakistan

assassination teams sought out the elite of Bengali culture and liquidated them. When the victorious Indian Army arrived in Dacca they found open graves that included more than 125 of Bengal's most influential physicians, professors, journalists and lawyers, all of whom had been tied up and bayoneted, garroted or shot (Newsweek, January 3, 1972:20).

The sheer figures of the holocaust in Bengal were impossible to comprehend. The documentation of human tragedy cannot be applied or transferred, effectively in print. The sheer numbers of the holocaust were beyond human comprehension. In nine months over three million people lost their lives. In a war of machine guns versus pitch forks a community of citizens of the earth greater than the entire population of Oregon, United States of America, was eradicated from living existence. The loss was beyond understanding or reason. In seven years of battle in Vietnam; the human loss in South Vietnam, the United States and other nations, reached the terrible toll of one million (LeShana, 1972:7). One million lives lost in seven years was a devastating tragedy for the world, but pales when compared with three million, predominantly Bengali, killed in nine months.

Equally devastating to Bengal was the complete upheaval of traditional society. The country was literally picked up and shaken silly. Over ten million refugees crossed the border into India. Imagine if the United States or any country was asked to accept ten million refugees. These people had no homes, no income, no friends, few belongings and no future. India, despite a brave attempt, could not feed this colossal invasion of destitute Bengalis. Indira Gandhi appealed to the world for assistance to no avail. Perhaps as many as twenty million were displaced within the borders of the country (LeShana, 1972:8). As a blazing fire

out of control, the war raged for nine months. A guerrilla warfare between Bengali insurgent forces, most prominently the Mukti Bahini, and the Pakistani Army, grew in intensity until India was forced to intercede.

The damage to the Bengali was irrevocable. The Bengalis had been tortured, pillaged, raped, humiliated, scorned and finally murdered. The picture of Bengal on that day, December 5, 1971, was heartbreaking. No observer could comprehend or identify with the suffering and loss of these people. Two hundred thousand women had been raped making them unfit for a life of marriage, the only accepted role for a Muslim Bengali woman (Nyrop, 1975:3). Most of these women, left unprotected from the ravages of the Pakistani aggressor, were cast out of their families to somehow survive on public charity. Muslim religious heritage forbade their reacceptance into these families. The Muslim women were sexually attacked by their Muslim brothers and then excommunicated from their own Muslim families because of traditional Muslim social codes. The cream of the teachers, students, doctors, and artists, the intellectual heart of the Bengali people, was forever lost. Four hundred thousand children were orphaned (Nyrop, 1975:3). The survivors were left to somehow endure on their own in the midst of poverty and destruction. The landscape of Bengal was ugly and defiled. Four of every ten buildings had been leveled to the ground (LeShana, 1972:7). An estimated 6,000,000 homes were destroyed and nearly 1,400,000 farm families were left without tools or animals to work their fields (Time, January 17, 1972:22, 24). In the last days of the war, Pakistan businesses which included virtually every business in the country, remitted all their funds to the West (Time, January 17, 1972:24). Scores of villages disappeared--literally levelled to the ground. Virtually all major bridges, railroads and automobiles were

destroyed. With the tub wells destroyed and the fields burned agriculture production was ground to a wisp. Less than 25 percent of Bengali industry was workable due to wreckage, looted machinery and lack of raw materials, capital, credit and personnel (Time, February 28, 1972:30). Perhaps the cruelest and most sinister reality of the atrocity perpetuated on the Bengali people was that it was religiously justified as a holy war (jihad). The foreign aggressors were their own Muslim brothers.

How were the Bengali people to respond to this personal tragedy? Virtually no family escaped personal bereavement. More than a fourth of the population was believed destitute--without food, work, home or hope (Time, February 28, 1972:30).

Centuries of oppression and injustice at the hand of foreign rulers had perhaps undermined the will of the Bengali but their spirit still refused to be broken. The ruthless attempt to break the Bengalis unified and consolidated their will against the Pakistani Muslims. The Bengalis danced in the streets when the victorious Indian Army triumphantly reached Dacca. The jubilation of the Bengalis reached euphoric heights when Pakistan relented and freed the national hero, Sheikh Mujib. When the news the national hero, Sheikh Mujib, was about to return reached Dacca the Bengalis "poured into the streets of Dacca, shouting, dancing, singing, and firing rifles into the air and roaring the now familiar cry of liberation 'Jol Bangla'" (Time, January 17, 1972:23).

The euphoria inevitably could not last. The wounds were deep and the country was devastated. The joy hardly lasted past sundown. Sadly the emotional Bengalis turned their years of frustration into revenge. The young Mukti Bahini guerrillas waged a campaign of revenge upon suspected Pakistani quislings. In one instance a frenzied shouting mob of

five thousand Bengalis screamed encouragement as four Pakistani collaborators were publically tortured to death (Newsweek, December 27, 1971:20). Perhaps the most disturbing campaign of revenge was conducted against the Biharis. The Bihari were Urdu speaking Muslims that originally came to East Pakistan (Bangladesh) from the Indian state of Bihar when the sub-continent was partitioned in 1947 (See map page 39). Some were contemptuous of the Bengali way of life (Ellis, 1972:331). Many were accused of collaborating with the Pakistan Army during the bitter nine-month liberation struggle. An unknown number of Biharis were killed by vengeful Bengalis after the war. These Biharis were rounded up and placed in refugee camps outside of Dacca. They desperately sought to leave these barbed wire enclosed camps but no country extended refuge (Isenberg, 1974:161). "Now we are no longer being killed physically," said a young Bihari man in the stinking, filthy, jampacked refugee camp at Mohammadpur, a Dacca suburb. "Now we are being killed off economically, socially, and culturally" (Isenberg, 1974:161).

Still the Bengali capacity for forgiveness was moving. Sentiment towards the United States, a country that helped West Pakistan develop its military dictatorship over East Pakistan, provided arms and financial support for the warfare and opposed India's intervention in Bengal, was generous, not antagonistic and bitter. Despite the fact the United

States issued no apology, the Bengalis were forgiving. When a Bengali official was asked about their sentiment toward the United States he responded:

We are very sorry that some administrations of friendly countries are giving support to the killers of the Bengali nation. For the people of Bangladesh any aid from Nixon would be disliked. It would be difficult but we do not bear any lasting enmity (Stewart, 1972:25).

VII BANGLADESH - LAND OF THE BENGALIS

On March 25, 1971 the centuries old dream of the Bengali people for independence was realized. The disposition of the people was jubilant despite the devastation of the once gentle alluvial delta land. The economic, agricultural, and religious institutions were broken and fragmented. The sorrow was not yet over in the land of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh was revealed to the world as its seventh largest nation, with over 75 million inhabitants. Sheikh Mujib Rahman returned triumphantly from prison in West Pakistan--hailed as the savior of the Bengali people. At last the Bengali people had a shepherd and hope returned to the land of poets. The euphoria of independence continued for two years despite widespread destitution and starvation. The poverty of Bangladesh was unveiled to the world after independence. Photographs of starving Bengalis became standard illustrations for articles on world hunger. The new nation was termed an "international basket case" by the United States Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger (Boyce, 1978:239). Despite a massive influx of foreign aid resources, the plight of the nations' poorest people actually became worse. After three years of independence the percentage of families "functionally landless" and chronically unemployed had nearly doubled to 48 percent (Boyce, 1978:239). By mid 1974, of 65,000 villages in Bangladesh, only 300 had electricity (Sharma, 1974:11).

The effect of the warfare in Bengal could be most descriptively illustrated in a visit to the Bengali village. Bangladesh, like most of the subcontinent, was made up of thousands of villages, instead of towns and cities. The villages ranged in population from a few hundred to a few thousand. Most of the Bengali villages had no electricity, plumbing,

sanitation, schools, bus stops, or railway stations and were poor beyond imagination (Isenberg, 1974:49). News of the outside world rarely filtered into these remote villages before the war and life apart from holidays and ceremonies was the same day in and day out. Traveling entertainers were quite a momentous occasion in these villages and even a passing stranger would be an exciting event. In all but the larger villages the roads were simple and very dirty, dusty in the dry season, and muddy in the wet season. During the monsoon season the villages of lowland Bangladesh became a swamp with the water often ankle deep (Isenberg, 1974:50). Although the villages were dirty, mud brown in color, the people tried hard to keep their homes clean. Floors were washed down and swept every day and frequently the entire house was gone over with a fresh coat of mud to fill cracks where they had begun to crumble. Despite the poverty of most villages a visitor was always offered a wooden chair, a sign of welcome and respect (Isenberg, 1974:53). Despite the poverty and lack of contact the village was a lively place. At daybreak the villagers could be seen scurrying about their morning chores. Pigs, goats, cows, buffaloes, dogs, and chickens dotted the landscape. Men, women, and children transported everything balanced on their head. The village well served as a social center where friends met and gossiped. Such was life in a typical Bengali village before the War of Independence.

After the war many of these villages were reduced to dependence on foreign aid. The wells had been destroyed. The widespread famine reduced the number of animals to a bare minimum. Much of the crop land had been reduced to fallow ground. Many of the supplies donated to these villages were thoroughly worthless. "Costly air charters from West Germany flew in 250,000 sets of long woolen underwear, worthless in Bengal's

sweltering heat" (Isenberg, 1974:150). In another instance over six million was spent on blankets the Bengalis could never use. The problem was not the intent of foreign aid contributors to Bangladesh. The problem was a lack of understanding of the climate of Bengal, that never dropped below 50° F. and daytime temperatures even in the cool season averaged 75° to 85° degrees F. maximum (See map page 67).

In the first three years of independence Bangladesh received 2.5 billion in aid commitments, more than the country had received in its entire history as East Pakistan (Boyce, 1978:239). The aid never reached the poor and in fact enabled the rich, less than ten percent, to obtain over fifty percent of Bengalis' agricultural land (Boyce, 1978:239). The government used the aid to booster its political position establishing a spoils system favoring the rich and powerful. The rich land owners then readily bought out the smaller farmers when the inevitable hard times fell. Except for grabbing up more land the rich of Bangladesh did not invest in agricultural productivity. Instead they preferred imported luxuries (Boyce, 1978:240). The result for the vast majority of Bengalis was poverty and starvation. The aid from overseas made the rich richer and rendered the poor helpless.

The disillusionment the people of Bengal felt in Sheikh Mujib their national hero and father of Bangladesh, must have been devastating.

After a grace period of overwhelming popularity, Mujib faced widespread criticism of his poor management of the economy, his maladministration and his inability or unwillingness to check blatant corruption (Rashiduzzaman, 1979:184). The result was, once again, oppression. This time the oppression most cruelly came from the father of Bengal, Sheikh Mujib. In early 1975 he abrogated the constitution, made himself

a virtual dictator and in the name of the "second revolution" banned all political parties except his new political party BAKSAL (Rashiduazzaman, 1979:164). "Mujib was a superman to us," Dacca's leading poet recently confessed, "but this superman had led us from poverty to ruin" (Jenkins, 1975:41). The Bengalis were once again terrorized. Mujib developed the Bahini, 10,000 policemen who specialized in shaking down businessmen and brutalizing villages (Jenkins, 1975:41).

The people of Bengal had tasted the fruit of freedom. They would not be oppressed even by their national hero. In a tragedy of tragedies in August 1975, Mujib and his family were assassinated in a bloody coup by a young group of officers. General Ziaar Rahman emerged as the strongman in the military regime. In 1978 Rahman was elected President and he promised restoration of civilian government.

The political situation remained volatile. Communist dissatisfaction on the left and Muslim opposition on the right led to measures of repression again. Expenditures for defense, justice and police grew from Mujib's twenty percent of the revenue budget to thirty percent in 1978 (Boyce, 1978:241). Zia initiated his own 12,500 man Special Task Force to carry out special drives, "mopping-up operations" and other repressive activities (Boyce, 1978:241). Amnesty International estimated there were 10,000 to 15,000 political prisoners in the country in jails that were not only overcrowded and with inadequate food but were reportedly terrorized by criminal gangs (Boyce, 1978:241).

Government oppression was not only the problem in Bangladesh. The administration classes were stripped twice in a generation. Incompetence and corruption were prevalent in business, in government, and even in the courts (Beckmann, 1976:1080). The peasants were at the mercy of criminal

gangs and well armed underground political organizations. The people feared the government "Task Force" and had little chance for justice unless they bonded themselves to richer neighbors or could afford to pay the necessary bribes.

Foreign aid continued to pour into Bangladesh at a rate of one billion dollars a year. The biggest contributor continued to be the United States of America. They provided massive aid to diminish Soviet influence in Bangladesh. The educated elite, with their western orientation, gravitated toward United States influence (Rashiduazzaman, 1978:164). Although food aid did little to aid the Bengali poor it was of great value to the government. Ninety percent of the food aid was given to the government to sell through its ration system with nineteen percent marked for relief (Boyce, 1978:240). One-third of the rationed food grains was allotted to members of the military, police and social service. Another third went to predominantly middle class ration card holders in political sensitive areas. The final third went to dealerships in the countryside that frequently were used for political power and the food was sold on the black market (Boyce, 1978:241).

Sales through the ration system became a major source of government income. Foreign food aid to Bangladesh served to finance the government. In 1976-77 one fifth of the revenue budget accounting for eighty percent of the country's development budget was supplied by foreign aid (Boyce, 1978:241). The government became a welfare client to the foreign aid programs of the world's wealthy governments.

The heart breaking misery of the Bengali people was not entirely due to political oppression and prejudice. The sheer number of citizens, 84 million Bengalis in 1980 in a land area roughly half the size of

England, made Bangladesh one of the world's most overpopulated states. At the current rate of growth this nation, already unable to feed its citizens, would double in number by the turn of the century. The population continued to explode despite the harsh reality that the Bengali government had no viable program or plan to feed its citizens.

Foreign aid programs in Bangladesh focused their attention on family planning. The United States AID program provided millions of dollars worth of birth control pills to the government to be distributed free of charge. The government officers who administered the program often were "educated, middle class women," separated from the peasant women by a gulf of "arrogance and indifference" (Boyce, 1978:239). Upper class government servants demonstrated negligible compassion for the plight of the poor and needy. Village women who sought the pills were invariably charged more than the average daily wage--for a months cycle (Boyce, 1978:240). The concept of love thy neighbor was completely alien to these officials. Deep social and religious prejudices continued to prevail. The ancient caste system of Brahmanism was deeply embedded in the value system of the Bengali officers. The concept of public service was unknown to them.

Bengali/Muslim Society - Womanhood in Crisis

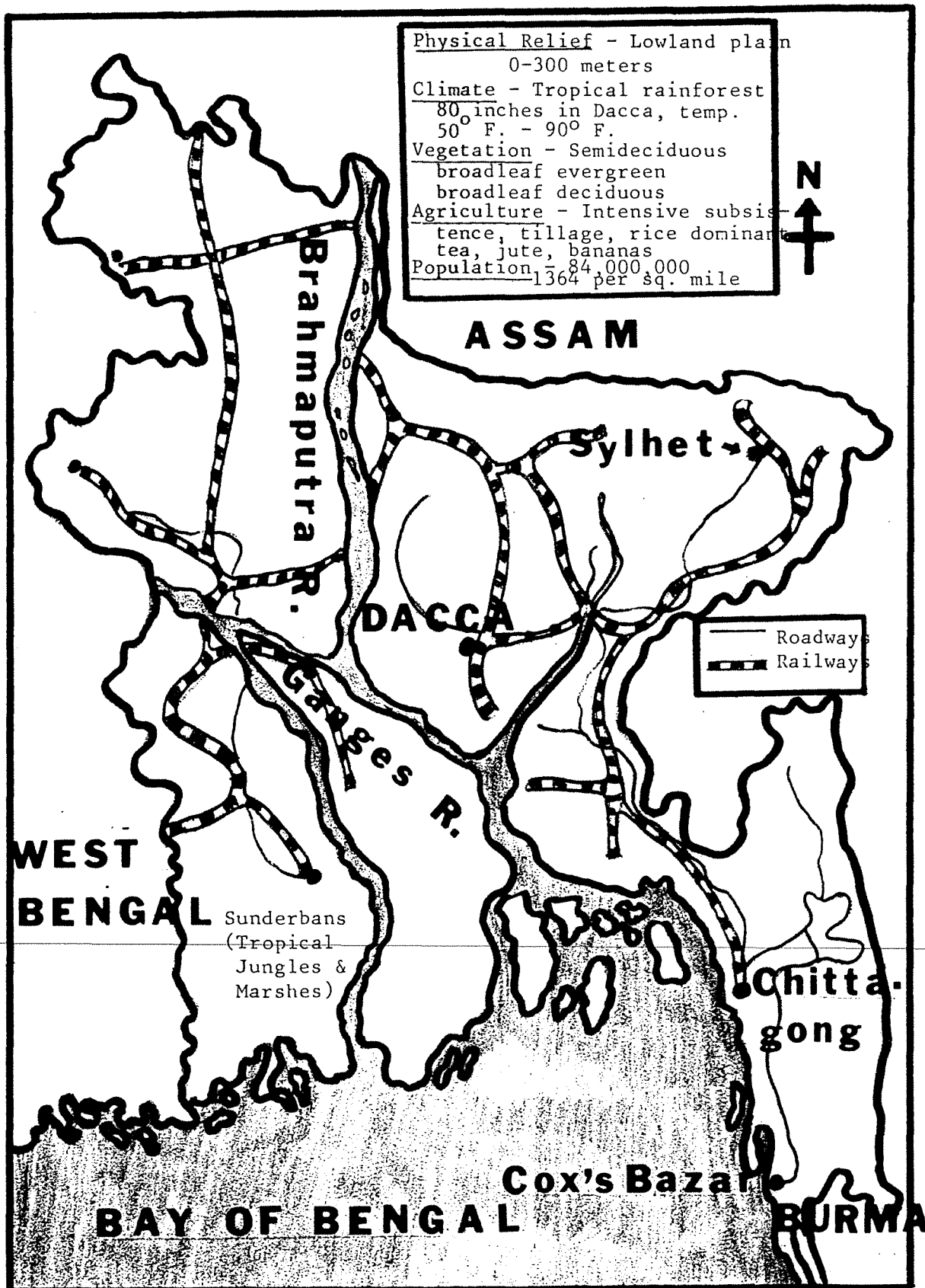
The lack of social sense, or fellow feeling, concerned Indian writers long before the emergence of Bangladesh. Their findings suggested the roots of insensitivity were buried deep within the nation's cultural history. The history of Bengal had been an inhabitation by conqueror and conquered, exploiter and exploited. "The former have maintained order in part by creating a multilayered social structure with racist undertones"

(Isenberg, 1974:78). In Bengal the Mughals and the British both left a legacy of superior and inferior. The basic democracies structure of local government introduced by Ayub Khan in 1960 replaced the caste system as a political organization (McNee, 1976:1). Still the Hindu heritage of racial inequality persisted and encompassed Muslim society.

The basis of Muslim society in Bangladesh was a complicated system of relationships based on jobs (Isenberg, 1974:66). Muslim society claimed to be casteless and to the outsider Bengali culture appeared to be free of the caste (McNee, 1976:1). Although Islam recognized no caste, Muslim society in practice may be divided into three groups; the Ashraf or better class Muslim, the Ajlaf or lower class Muslim, and the Arzal or degraded class (McNee, 1976:2, 3, 4). The Muslim Bengali caste determined the occupation and position of each person in the village. The Muslim caste system produced social immobility and any nonconformity was perceived as a threat to the establishment. The secret to understanding Muslim society was unlocked by seeing a person according to their caste instead of as an individual.

To further complicate society in Bengali villages the tribe had to be distinguished from the caste. The tribe was usually concentrated in one area and most smaller villages were composed of one tribe. A caste on the other hand, formed only one section of a village while members of a caste were scattered over a wide area (McNee, 1976:2). Tribal authority was predominantly along religious lines. Most of the larger tribes were animist spirit worshippers. The remainder were Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists. Not only did the Bengali have responsibility according to his caste, religious code, and family but he was also responsible to the head of his tribal organization.

B A N G L A D E S H



Class, caste, and color distinctions were not the only sources of division in Bengal. The Bengali villagers, as most villagers of the sub-continent, lived in joint families--all the people living in one house or courtyard (Isenberg, 1974:67). The problem with the joint family was the rigid code of interpersonal family relationships that also bred hostility and indifference to any larger group. The head of the joint family was almost always the man in the household whose authority and respect was unchallenged (Isenberg, 1974:69). The role of the women in the joint family depended upon their religion, caste, and class. In Hindu families the oldest woman in the courtyard had a similar position of authority over the women. In the orthodox Muslim families of Bangladesh the women were separated from all men except members of her own household. The seclusion of women, purdah, required the use of white and black tent-like veils anytime they appeared in public. Among purdah observing families, women could not have jobs, go to college, or have any social contact except with purdah observing families (Isenberg, 1974:71). Among the poor Muslim families the women had to work in the fields and appear in the streets and consequently could not observe purdah.

There were complimentary sources of division as well. Family planning according to Islamic teaching was a violation of the Koran. Both the Hindu social system and Islamic tradition had placed women at the bottom of the social order. The egalitarianism of Islam had consecrated women in a bonded role of subjugation. One striking example of Islamic subjugation of women was found in an humanitarian attempt to help the destitute and sick villagers. Women paramedics trained to help the needy villagers that had never seen a doctor, were spat at, insulted and humiliated by Muslim men (Warner, 1978:12).

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of Bangladesh had been carried by these Bengali women. They were forced to bear children they could not care for. They suffered to care for families they could not feed or clothe. They endured the trauma of the agonizing loss of their own offspring through malnutrition and starvation. Countless mothers watched their children go blind because of insufficient vitamin A in their diet. One out of every seven babies would not live to celebrate its first birthday (Warner, 1978:9). One child of every four children under five years of age would die an agonizing death of starvation (Oriental Missionary Society, 1978:2). Two of every three children had intestinal infection. The fact that any children did survive was a marvelous testimony of the role of Bengali women.

The Islamic attitude toward women encouraged little compassion for the impossible position of Bengali women that were raped by the Pakistani Army. They would never again be accepted by their Muslim families in their role as mother to the family. They were in bond to a life of shame and humiliation. Over 200,000 victims still living after the war faced this kind of life (LeShana, 1972:8).

The Bengali women were the victims of the disintegration of the Bengali culture. As a Greek drama ended in tragedy through fate, moral weakness in a character, or social pressure so it was for the women of Bangladesh. They suffered a disastrous ending because of religious chauvinism and a moral weakness that permeated the land and left the women and children without defense. The women could not appear in public during their pregnancy or during their period. Dr. Zafrullah Chowdhury rightly asserted that Bengali Muslim women were "chained by culture, ignorance, fear and poverty. She is not a wife or a woman but a slave"

(Warner, 1978:12). Chowdhury identified the single greatest cause of the tragedy of Bangladesh, "the place that has been allotted in history, society, and life itself to women in the nation" (Warner, 1978:12).

The women of Bangladesh are a tragedy to behold. Womanhood has never suffered such anguish and despair in modern history. There appeared to be little hope on the horizon of reversing the age old religious values of prejudice and degradation against the position of women in Bengali society.

As Bangladesh approached its first decade as a nation the prognosis at best was not promising. At least twenty percent of the budget came from foreign aid. About 60 million of the nation's 84 million inhabitants had a per capita income of less than twenty five cents a day (Warner, 1978:8). That figure alone revealed the stark reality of despair in Bangladesh. Clothing, food, rent and essential commodities were hardly cheaper in Bangladesh than in the United States.

Bangladesh after one decade was gravely ill. Fifty percent of the country was suffering serious malnutrition and productivity was declining. The people were degenerating physically with the average height of a mature adult only reaching four foot six inches (Oriental Missionary Society, 1978:7).

Bangladesh was desperate for any ray of hope. It had been betrayed by its leaders, by its institutions, by its religion, and by the world. Independence had merely changed the oppressor from foreigner to fellow citizen. Bangladesh, less than ten years old, was an orphan no one or any nation wanted. Centuries upon centuries of struggle for freedom and justice had once more ended in bitter defeat. This time the enemy of the Bengali was most cruelly their own Bengali brethren.

The Hope of Bangladesh

Is there a message of hope for Bangladesh? Is there a remedy for the tragedy of Bangladesh? The first step in developing the solution is determining the problem. The historical record of the Bengali people clearly indicates that nearly every religious, social, economic, and political solution has been attempted in the land of Bengal to no avail. The answer has never been successful because the problem has never been properly defined. The problem in the land of Bengal is a problem common to mankind throughout the world. The problem is sin in the heart of all men. "The Scripture declares the whole world is a prisoner of sin" (Galatians 3:22) and further exhorts that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The message of God's Word, the Bible, reveals sin entered the world through the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men" (Romans 5:12). The hope of the Bengali people is the hope for all men--the Gospel (Good News) of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of the world. Scripture affirms "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The Bible affirms God sent His only Son to rescue all men from the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13) by presenting Jesus as a "sacrifice of atonement" (Romans 3:25) through His death so man could be forgiven of his sin and be reconciled to God (Colossians 1:22). The condition of forgiveness of sin and for gaining eternal life is accepting Jesus Christ's offer of reconciliation "by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:20). God's

promise to mankind is that all who believe on the name of Jesus Christ will be saved (John 3:17, 18) provided they continue in their faith, established and firm (Colossians 1:22), enduring to the end (Matthew 10:22).

The solution and only remedy for the tragedy that grips the Bengali people is the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. The Bible is unequivocal that the message of salvation is intended for all men and all nations (Romans 10:11, 12, 13; Matthew 28:19, 20).

Once the problem has been determined and the solution established, the next step is application of the remedy. The Scripture reveals the answer to this dilemma.

'How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' (Romans 10:14, 15).

The answer is the Gospel but unless it is administered through the voice and life of one sent to share the message of redemption the good news will never reach the Bengali people. The sending body is the church of Jesus Christ. The first missionaries were sent from the church at Antioch, in Syria. They were sent according to the sovereign design of the Holy Spirit of God. The church at Antioch commissioned the first missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, after fasting and prayer to preach the Gospel of salvation to all men through Jesus Christ.

The Biblical Plan of Bringing the Gospel to the Lost

The first step in reaching the lost in Bangladesh (or any nation) is recognition that the Holy Spirit has a sovereign plan and design to reach the Bengali with the truth of salvation through Jesus Christ. The will of God and design of the Holy Spirit for Bangladesh can only be realized through earnest, sincere prayer and study. God reveals His truth to those that seek Him in spirit and truth. The key to revelation from God in prayer is having the mind and attitude of Jesus Christ toward those we are praying for. Persistent and diligent prayer in the spirit will enlist the power of God necessary for the task at hand. Prayer will bring solutions to problems insurmountable to man. Prayer allows man to develop priorities according to the divine will of God and ensure success for the mission. Finally Scripture teaches that God will not intervene in the affairs of man without prayer and God invariably works through the person praying.

The second step in reaching the lost in Bangladesh is recognition that the essential vessel of the Holy Spirit is man, yielded and obedient to the will of God. The Acts of the Apostles teach that God does not depend on the money, the buildings, or the plans of man to spread the message of salvation. The necessary ingredient to fulfill the sovereign design of God to reach and save the Bengali people is obedient and committed preachers filled with the Holy Spirit bringing the Gospel of peace.

The third step in reaching the lost in Bangladesh is recognition that the church is commissioned to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The work of the church is to reach the lost throughout the world. The Holy Spirit separates from the church those called to the

work of bringing the Gospel to the lost (Acts 13:2). The responsibility of the church through prayer and fasting is to commission and send preachers to the work the Holy Spirit has called them to. The church continues in the ministry of those sent through prayer and financial support.

The fourth step in reaching the lost in Bangladesh is the recognition that it is the Gospel of Christ as personal Lord and Savior that saves fallen man separated from God. It is the simple message of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for the sins of all mankind that brings forgiveness and remission of sin for all who truly repent (Acts 2:38). The message of salvation cannot be preached save through the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). It is the Father that draws all men to Himself (John 6:44), it is the Holy Spirit that convicts man of sin (John 16:8) and it is the Word of God that separates truth from deception in the human heart (Hebrews 4:12). The responsibility of the man of God is to preach the word of God boldly and unashamedly allowing the triune God to work in the heart of the lost (Acts 2). The message of the Gospel must never be changed or compromised although it needs to be adapted to the people in a cultural mode and manner they can receive and understand (Acts 17:16-34).

The fifth and last step in reaching the lost in Bangladesh is recognition that the new converts must be discipled. The great commission that Jesus left with His disciples before He ascended to heaven was to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). The imperative command was to make disciples of all nations. The practical aspect of discipleship is baptizing and teaching the doctrines of Christ (Matthew 28:19) but the real price of discipleship is being broken bread and poured out wine for

the new believer that none will fall away (Mark 14:22-25, 8:34, 35). The motivation to follow the Lord and be His disciple must be born of a heart of love for the Savior (Matthew 22:37). The price of being a disciple is death to self (Romans 6:6) obedience to the will of God in all aspects of life (Matthew 6:10) and willingness to not love our lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelations 12:11). The result of discipleship of the new believers is the planting of the church. The process of church planting includes discipling the believers in the doctrines of the faith and appointing elders to oversee God's work (Titus 1:5, 6, 7). This is the Biblical pattern of church growth as illustrated by the Apostle Paul.

A Proposal to Evangelize the Bengali Muslims
of Bangladesh

To complete this research paper a plan to reach the Muslims of Bangladesh will be presented according to the Biblical pattern established in this paper.

Project statement: Bangladesh is a nation with over 90,000,000 (1982) inhabitants. It has the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. The Christian population is 0.25%. Therefore 99.75% are without the hope and assurance of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The purpose of this project is to develop a strategy according to the leading of the Holy Spirit and consistent with the Word of God to reach the Bengali Muslims' of Bangladesh. The goal of this project is to provide a plan to present the truth of the Gospel to bring light in the midst of darkness, hope in the midst of despair, and conversion to belief in Jesus Christ from the grip of deception and false teaching. The

strategy of the Apostle Paul was to go to major cultural and population areas with the message and allow the Gospel to ripple to the outer areas. Therefore the project will need to center in Dacca, Bangladesh, the capital and most populated city in the country. The strategy will be developed according to the problems unique to the Muslims of Dacca cognizant that they are the major homogeneous unit within the nation of Bangladesh. The key to successful evangelizing of Bengali Muslims will be found in adapting the Gospel message to the culture and ethnic values found there.

Cultural adaptation of the Gospel: The Apostle Paul established the model of identifying the social, political, and spiritual climate of a culture and adapting the message in a context the people could understand and relate to. Paul traveled personally to the cultures with the message of the Gospel. He most certainly studied and analyzed the needs of a culture before he arrived there personally. He probably developed a picture from conversation with travelers from areas he was intending to visit. When he arrived in a new location he knew what to expect, the customs and traditions he should observe, and the spiritual climate--both Jewish and Gentile. When Paul arrived in Athens he noted numerous idols and altars, one with the inscription: "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). He studied the local literature and noted some of the local poets had written about God. Paul therefore communicated the Gospel in terms the Athenians could understand. They had some knowledge of God and Paul used this understanding in his appeal to them: "As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'" (Acts 17:28). Paul then swiftly took the audience from their cultural perceptions of God to a personal accountability to the true and living God who "commands all people everywhere to

repent" (Acts 17:30).

The first principle in applying the Gospel to the Bengali Muslims is to study their history, culture, traditions, values, literature, and religion. This research paper has endeavored to develop an understanding of the Bengali people to understand their needs, to discern their expectations, and know the customs and traditions that must be observed to avoid offending the people.

The second principle in applying the Gospel to the Bengali Muslims is a thorough understanding of Islam, particularly as the religion is observed in Bangladesh. Over 80% of the nation is Muslim. The Hindu account for 19% of the population with tribal religions, Buddhism, and Christianity accounting for the remainder. Perhaps 80% of Bangladesh have never heard or read the Gospel (Oriental Missionary Society, 1978:1). The purpose of this research project is not to document Islamic theology and history. Still the minister of the Gospel must understand the basic beliefs and cultural precepts of Muslim heritage in Bengal to wisely apply the truth of the Gospel. Study into the life of Mohammed, the Koran, the advent of Islam into Bengal, and the relationship between Christianity and Islam are essential areas of inquiry for successful adaptation of the Gospel to the Bengali Muslims.¹ The crucial question revolves around the Muslim understanding of Jesus Christ. The Koran

¹For further information concerning the Islamic understanding of the Bible and Jesus Christ see:

- 1) John Williams, Islam, George Braziller Pub., New York, 1962, pp. 31-35.
- 2) Kenneth Cragg, The Call of the Minaret, Oxford Uni. Press, New York, 1964, pp. 271-333.
- 3) George Sale, The Koran, A. L. Burt Pub., New York, n.d.
- 4) Samuel Zweimer, Islam, A Challenge to Faith, Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, New York, 1907, pp. 185-219.

affirms Jesus was the promised Messiah, born of a virgin, and was indeed the Word of God (Koran, Sura 4:177). The preaching of Jesus Christ crucified on the cross for the atonement of the world's sins can bear fruit unto eternal life if it is presented in a cultural context the Muslim Bengali can understand and relate to.

The last principle in applying the Gospel to the Bengali Muslims is a thorough understanding of the Christian church, its history and mission in Bangladesh. It has been written that the blood of the saints is the seed of the church. The seeds of the Gospel have been deeply planted in the heritage of the Bengali people.²

Effective propagation of the Gospel must be coordinated with the organizations and channels already functioning in Bangladesh. According to a survey conducted by Oriental Missionary Society International in 1978 the church is growing in Bangladesh even though its size is negligible at present. In 1972 there were 87 Protestant missionaries. In 1978 there were 162. Most of the missionaries are Baptist (62%). There are 258 Roman Catholic missionaries in Bangladesh. Most of the missionaries are concentrated in the rural areas. There are about 200,000 nominal Christians in Bangladesh. Dacca is the center of missionary activity. The actual number of Protestant church members is 50,000 or 6/100 of 1% of the total population. Most churches are comparatively lifeless, spiritually cold, and with little witness, evangelism, or church

²For further information concerning the historical origins of the Christian church in India see:

- 1) P. Thomas, Christians and Christianity in India and Pakistan, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1954.
- 2) M. Varughese Thankachen, The Present Crisis of the Church in India, Dallas Theological Seminary Thesis, 1972, pp. 19-27.
- 3) James M. Thoburn, The Christian Conquest of India, Young Peoples Missionary Movement, New York, Toronto, 1966, pp. 131-167.

planted according to the Oriental Missionary Society International survey. The breakdown of Christians is 125,000 Roman Catholics and 75,000 Protestants. In Dacca, Theological Education by Extension has been established at the Bangladesh College of Christian Theology. Since 1964 there has been no residential theological institution. The Baptist ministries have developed an extensive correspondence outreach. There are three Protestant Bible correspondence course endeavors (ICF, Brethren, AG) which have enrolled a total of 69,000 since 1960. A crucial problem is illiteracy. The established school system or madrasah is a school for Islamic instruction. The Bengali Muslims have learned the orthodox principles of Islam through the religious institutions of mosques, madrasah, and the khankar (place where holy men live and pray).

To conclude this discussion of cultural adaptation of the Gospel it must be stressed the opportunity is now. The genocide that ravaged the Bengali people was perpetuated in the name of Mohammed. The War of aggression by West Pakistan was declared as a Holy War and the grip of Islam has therefore been weakened in the hearts of the Bengali people. Militant Muslim groups massacred large numbers of the nation's leaders, all in the name of Mohammed. The opportunity has never been greater for the Christian church. One missionary has said, "If we fail to take advantage of this hour and opportunity it will stand as one of the great mistakes of missionary history" (Oriental Missionary Society, 1978:1). A spiritual void has been created in the hearts and minds of the Bengali and they are asking questions and reading Christian literature as never before (Oriental Missionary Society, 1978:3). Oriental Missionary Society International reports there is no aggressive evangelizing or church planting scheme in evidence. Most missions are involved in

institutional work or in social welfare and relief. The need is now for effective evangelism and church planting to take place. The existing church needs revival and new vision for the work in Bangladesh. The Word of the Lord is appropriate here, "I have placed before you an open door no man can shut" (Revelation, 3:8).

The Method of Evangelizing the Bengali People

Bangladesh has ample relief, medical, and humanitarian programs to help the people. Certainly all the important needs of the Bengali are not being met, but the source of the physical problems is a spiritual emptiness permeating the entire land. The need in Bangladesh is for a bold new approach and thrust of preaching the Gospel. The lost must be evangelized, new churches must be planted and the new national converts must be disciplined to lead the new churches.

The strategy of preaching the Gospel must be adapted to the culture of the Bengali. The Word of God, the Bible, is permitted throughout Bangladesh. The Word must be skillfully applied in religio-cultural forms consistent with the Bengali lifestyle. Therefore successful evangelistic strategy would include:

Principles of effective strategy in Bangladesh.

1. Begin in major area of population density and culture interchange to reach the largest number of people.
2. Recognize that Muslim society is corporate not individual so stress family, ethnic, and tribal affiliations.
3. Dress in the native style.
4. Live with the people and identify with their needs and hurts.
5. A Muslim is a firm believer in the supernatural and in miracles. The leaders must have convictions and courage to expect God to confirm messages with miracles. Jesus promised even greater³ than He demonstrated while on earth to those that believed.*³

³The principles with asterisks were suggested to me in "Obstacles in the Way of Winning Muslims," Evangelical Missions Quarterly, July 1978, pp. 178-183.

6. Heads of homes should be appealed to. They are the authority in the family.*
7. Heads of villages, tribes, organizations, and any cultural, social or political structure should be appealed to. Muslim society is corporate and whole villages and communities can be won by reaching those in authority. We must remember whole villages and communities were converted in the New Testament church in Acts and throughout church history.

Principles of effective preaching to the Bengali people.

1. Appeal to the Bengali Muslim through their heart with much singing, open expression, and excitement.*
2. Present Jesus Christ in terms they are familiar with from their cultural heritage.
3. Stress love for one another and liberty for all people under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
4. Speak in the native tongue.
5. Trust God to verify the message presented in truth and spirit with divine power.
6. Use poetry, illustrations, and examples familiar to the Bengali people.
7. Appeal to Bengali women with the Christian precepts of liberty, justice, and equality under Christ.
8. Preach Old Testament prophets revered by Islamic teachings.
 - a) Adam, the chosen of God.
 - b) Noah, the preacher of Allah.
 - c) Abraham, the friend of Allah.
 - d) Moses, the speaker of Allah (Wilson, 1954:24).
9. Strong, dynamic and lengthy preaching appeals to a Muslim.*
10. Repetition and repeating in unison appeals to the Muslim.*

The strategy for church planting needs to be adapted to the Muslim heritage of the mosque. The congregation must be developed along the religio-socio-cultural forms familiar to the Muslim which include:

1. Time is unhurried and free.*
2. Loudspeakers should blare the message with the windows wide open.*
3. A sense of excitement is essential for a worship service.*
4. The meetings should be informal. Their must be a strong sense of belonging, not just spectators.*
5. The platform should be filled with leaders of the worship service.*
6. The code of reverence should be informal and warm.*
7. Families should be dealt with as units. Baptism should be performed in family units. Communion should be observed as a community.*
8. Thursday probably is the most appropriate day for a worship service because Friday is strictly observed as the holy day and will not offend Muslim culture.
9. The congregation should be segregated to separate men and women.*

10. The dress of the minister should be a turban and long robe making Muslims feel right at home and commanding respect as a man of God.*
11. The congregation hall should not be adorned with pictures. Islam strictly forbids all idol worship.*
12. The outward and inner form of the church should be in the style of the Muslim mosque.
13. Prayer must never be sitting down. To the Muslim this is repulsive. Prayer before the Almighty God can only be made while standing or kneeling. Prayers can and should be long and fervent.*
14. Audible expressions during prayer should be encouraged. This helps the Muslim feel part of the congregation.*
15. Formal group recitation of creeds and prayers are natural to the Muslim.
16. Praise, thanksgiving, and adoration to God are an essential element of Muslim worship and must be facilitated in the Christian Muslim worship service.
17. Fasting, giving of alms and pilgrimages (for the cause of Christ, i.e., missions) are essential tenets of Islamic heritage and can be readily adapted into Christian worship.

It must be noted Islam is not only a religion but also a "political, social, economic, educational and judicial system" (North African Mission, 1976:10). To expect a Muslim to divorce his cultural heritage in order to become a Christian is unfair and unreasonable. Islamic society demands strict conformity. We have Jews for Jesus and we certainly do not expect them to renounce their Jewish heritage as a condition of their Christian conversion. One of the major stumbling blocks to reaching Muslims is the family and community ostracism they experience after confessing Christ as their Lord and Savior. Therefore Muslim cultural identity must be retained. Also the leaders of the home and community must be reached first to affect change for Christ in the entire community.

The strategy for discipling new converts and developing national leaders is crucial for success of the church and the spiritual life of the new believer. The command of the Lord before His ascension was most direct "make disciples." Jesus knew unless the new believers were disciplined in the love and truth of the teachings of the Word they would fall

away (the parable of the sower, Matthew 13). Paul recognized the need to appoint leaders (elders) to oversee the ministry of the church after his departure. The book of Acts (New Testament) clearly reveals it is the Holy Spirit that plants the new church. Using yielded servants, the Holy Spirit sovereignly controls the administration and leadership of that new church. Wise missionaries recognize this principle of God's sovereignty and do not attempt to undertake only that which the Holy Spirit has been given authority as the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. The strategy of discipling new converts and training national leaders in Bangladesh should include the following guidelines:

Discipling new converts:

1. Solid Bible teaching is essential.
2. The foundations of Christian doctrine must be taught to insure unity and protect against deception and false teaching.
3. Testimonies and sharing in the church must be encouraged.
4. Immediate responsibility in the church should be assigned commensurate with the confidence, abilities and gifts of the new convert.
5. New converts must be taught how to read the Bible and study the Word.
6. The new converts must be taught the identity of the triune God for effective prayer.
7. The new converts must be taught how to witness, not so much in word but in love and concern for their fellow man and members of their family.
8. Home Bible studies similar to the religious training the Muslims receive in the mosque is paramount for discipleship. Leaders of the home Bible study should be strong in the Word and doctrine and demonstrate spiritual maturity. They should meet together consistently to coordinate their activities and identify the spiritual needs of the group.
9. The mission of the church must be stressed in the discipleship of new converts.
10. Heart holiness must be demonstrated and taught through complete commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (sanctification).
11. New converts must be trained in methods of adapting Christ's teachings to Muslim cultural heritage.

Training National Leaders:

1. National leaders must be appointed according to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

2. National leaders must demonstrate gifts necessary for the ministry before they are chosen to lead in the church.
3. The national leader must be blameless as a husband, father, and spiritual leader in the community (Titus 1:6).
4. The national leader must be firm in the doctrine so he can encourage and refute as the occasion demands (Titus 1:9).
5. The national leader must be taught the elements of the Christian faith so he can lead others.
6. The national leaders should be men, usually men that have held positions of leadership in the community already.
7. The leadership of women must be encouraged in areas acceptable in Muslim society, i.e., home, children, and with women.
8. The national leaders must be given freedom to lead, with authority commensurate with the task and with accountability for the results.
9. National leaders must be filled with the Holy Spirit and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ as a broken and yielded vessel of God.

The key to the growth of the church and successful completion of the mission of Jesus Christ to the world has always been discipleship. Jesus established the necessity, the method, and the power to make disciples of all nations. Indigenous leaders in Bangladesh must be raised up and commissioned by the native church to plant new churches. These new churches under the power and authority of the Holy Spirit can grow and spread, as the New Testament example, reaching the entire nation with the "good news" of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. But it only happens when a Paul or someone else deliberately does it. Little happens that is not done on purpose. We must pray God will raise up more Pauls for His church in Bangladesh.

The principles, goals, and methods (suggested here) of reaching the
 Bengali Muslims with the Gospel are not intended as final. God's ways and plans are not necessarily through man's strategy but through man's willingness and obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless the Holy Spirit needs men and women who know where they are going and have a vision of how they are going to get there. God can always change our game plan as He did for Paul in the vision of the Macedonian

(Acts 16:9) if our vision is limited or misguided. God needs men and women who are ready to act and trust God for the results. William Carey, the first missionary to the Bengali in modern times, said, "Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God!" Modern missionaries need to re-appropriate the faith and vision of William Carey for the people he loved so much.

The family of God worldwide can be a blessing to the Bengali people if they but realize the tragedy these people have gone through. The church in the West must be made aware of the tremendous needs and desperate straits that exist in Bangladesh. As Paul wrote to the church in Corinth "your plenty will supply what they need" (2 Corinthians 8:14).

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:10, 11).

Blessing can come to the people in Bangladesh and to the church in the West if there is this sharing during this time of great need. May the West not close its doors of compassion at this most critical time.

To conclude this research paper let us go to the streets of Bangladesh. It is the early morning hour. The undernourished, frightfully infected Bengali children patiently wait for their sores to be administered to. The children often bring their more acutely infected brothers and sisters to receive the first share of medicine. The mothers desperately reach for a last ray of hope to save their dying babies. Finally the one small tube of ointment was exhausted. The children vainly squeezed the tube for one final dab of hope to relieve their suffering.

There is a tube of ointment, a balm of Gilead, that will never run out. This ointment can be administered by every believer in Jesus Christ.

It will soothe and minister to every need of the human body, mind and heart. It has been bought and paid for every person by the blood of Christ on the cross.

The Message of Hope

Their emancipated bodies were ravaged
by years of starvation,
Their limbs were inflamed and infected
with many a painful abrasion.

Still their eyes told another tale
of patience, peace and gentleness,
Their countenance bore a banner of love,
their eyes were full of forgiveness.

Meekly they came
tenderly pleading,
Quietly seeking a glimmer of hope
my eyes they were reading.

In a land that had demonstrated only hate
their faces were full of hope,
In a nation ravaged by so much war
these beggars had peace only God could develop.

In my living I had nothing to give
to my dying friends,
Yet in dying these precious little people
revealed God and the love He sends.

Their faces revealed a precious truth
their ravaged bodies had gained,
Their lives had been stripped of all possessions
still a loving Father remained.

God loved His children
when they could not possibly win,
God gave His very own son
to die on the cross for every man's sin.

I learned the lesson of Bangladesh
in those beggars eyes that day,
Man can turn away from a starving brother
but a loving God will always stay.

It was God who cared for those starving beggars
and gave them a peace to cope,
Through the tragedy and trial of tribulation
their hearts had been filled with the message of hope.

- Stuart Dick

The Bengali can be a message of hope to the Western world if we apply the lessons of tribulation to our own life. The Apostle Paul exhorted the believer "though many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." The result of the tribulation upon the Bengali was love, peace, patience, truth, and hope. We must not fear tribulation but recognize it is God's plan to bring repentance and reconciliation to bring His worldwide family to Himself. God's ways are not man's ways. Only God knows the condition of man's heart and the method to bring conversion and holiness. We would be wise to learn from the tragedy of Bangladesh. Tribulation will indeed come to all peoples of the earth. God has no favorites. We can be prepared and forewarned. The Bengali did not heed the signs of imminent danger despite the obvious warnings of West Pakistani military build up. If we do not learn from the record of man's mistakes we are doomed to repeat Bangladesh's tragedy. Only this time it will be our wives and children. Jesus warned the world of the great tribulation that would come before His second coming (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17). "He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 3:22).

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APPENDIX

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Appendix A

THE SHOCK OF BANGLADESH

I left the International Airport in Calcutta, India to board the Biman four propeller airliner bound for Dacca, Bangladesh. Throughout my travels in Southeast Asia I had often inquired with travellers from the West concerning conditions in Bangladesh. No one I spoke to had ever been there and many, quite frankly, questioned my intent for asking. Why would anybody want to go to Bangladesh? Most of the newspaper and magazine reports from Bangladesh were devastating. All that I knew about Bangladesh was it was the most despairing place on the surface of the world. I was pursuing advanced studies in Anthropology through Oregon State University and I somehow intuitively knew something very significant was happening to the human race in Bangladesh. Still I would never have journeyed into Bangladesh had not an unusual set of circumstances circumvented my plans to travel directly to the Himilayas from Calcutta, India.

I had arrived in Calcutta without any film for my 8 mm movie camera I was using to document my travels. I learned that each fifty foot roll of film would cost \$20.00 in Calcutta. Fortunately the regular price was less than \$4.00 per roll at the duty free shop at the airport. The only requirement was a ticket to leave the country.

Since Bangladesh was next to India it was a logical step. I resolved to arrange special visas for overland travel from Bangladesh to the Himilayas through two restricted areas of Northeastern India, Meghalaya and Assam.

I intuitively felt impelled to visit Bangladesh. What was happening to the Bengali people could be happening in any country in the world.

I wondered what was causing the starvation in a country that agriculturally was a land of plenty. The land of Bengal, a fertile delta soil, could support three crops a year. The climate was semi-tropical. Rainfall was plentiful, over eighty inches per year. All these questions puzzled me as I gazed down upon the gentle alluvial delta land from my window seat.

March 13, 1975

The Biman airliner touched ground in Dacca, Bangladesh. Outside of the International Airport was another world, the infantile nation of Bangladesh, scarcely four years old.

Suspicious officilas hurried me through customs. Curious Bengalis eyed my every move. I summoned a taxi driver who understood a little English. "Hotel," I said. He seemed to understand and I cautiously entered a very beat up English taxi.

The ten minute trip to Dacca was memorial. Bengalis were aimlessly milling about in small groups along the side of the road. Many were gathered about fires warming their scantily clad bodies. The landscape was scarred and barren of noticeable vegetation. The environment reminded me of a scene out of "Gone With the Wind," of the desecration of the South during the Civil War in the United States. Buildings were broken and in many cases shattered. I sensed a tense pressure that permeated the environment. The air was heavy and foul. Smoke irritated my eyes.

The taxi driver took me to a number of hotels. Each time the Bengali proprietor looked at me intently and suspiciously, then spoke in Bengali to the taxi driver. Each time the answer was the same, "no rooms

available." I began to sense a growing isolation. I saw no others of European background. I felt like an alien in the midst of a foreign culture that I did not understand or fit into. Finally, nearing the midnight hour, in desperation I pleaded with the owner of the government rest house for a night's accommodation. He understood some English. He grudgingly yielded and showed me a room. I gratefully accepted despite its apparent uncleanness. After wearily retiring for an evening's rest I was awakened by a moving crowd of large black cockroaches. I spent the rest of the night upright with both lights on to refrain the movement of the cockroaches. At five p.m. I was jarred with an aggressive knock on my door. "You must go," I was told sternly.

I began walking the streets of Dacca seeking accommodation. The only two hotels that would accept foreign visitors were the Dacca Intercontinental and the Purbani Intercontinental. Both charged over \$20.00, United States dollars, for their cheapest room. I was low on funds with less than \$50.00. I had wired earlier in Calcutta for additional funds and asked them to be forwarded by check to Dacca. My search for accommodation took me throughout the streets of Dacca.

My first day on the streets of Dacca, Bangladesh was a day I shall never forget. Parentless children, some merely infants, approached me from all sides begging for food. They literally lined the streets of the city. Their bodies were little more than skin and bones ravaged by malnutrition. Disease had left most of them with little mobility and strength. Horrible infections and limbs swollen and inflamed with gangrene chilled my soul and tore at my heart. Mothers with babies they could not nurse, looking like lifeless rag dolls, approached me and literally attempted to give me their children. One feature was clear and consistent in all of

these Bengalis--their eyes. They were clear, uncritical, and without bitterness. I could not understand this contradiction. The years of suffering had ravaged these people's bodies but not their hearts. Their countenance revealed peace, tranquility and composure. I was devastated to realize I had infamously little to give these people.

After a visit with the officers at the National Bank that day I learned communication with the outside world was limited at best in Dacca and my funds might arrive in a week or they might not arrive at all. The reality of starvation became a chilling personal prospect.

The second day in Dacca I had the blessing of meeting an educated Bengali gentleman from the northern province of Sylhet. He had been educated in England and spoke beautiful English. He seemed to arrive out of nowhere. He interceded on my behalf and convinced a local hotel proprietor to allow me lodging at a nominal fee. I was greatly relieved to at last have a roof over my head.

For one week I waited for my check to arrive from Calcutta. I had a restricted visa and had no choice but to leave by the 23rd of March. I spent my days riding behind rickshaw drivers and walking throughout the streets of Dacca. The population of Dacca was swollen with refugees from the country seeking food and work. The government patrolled the streets with large army trucks seeking what appeared to be the sick, destitute and unemployed. I watched as the refugees fled in fear from these government soldiers. Most were too feeble to flee from the army officers. They were rounded up, men and women and children, cast into the trucks and I never saw them again.

The longer I stayed in Dacca the weaker I became. The water was undrinkable even with purification tablets. My lungs became congested

with the pollution of the air. My first objective each day was seeking healthy food. I found a few restaurants that offered decent food although the price was comparable to a restaurant in the United States. The average Bengali could not afford this food. I was deeply concerned since my funds were nearly exhausted and soon I would be out of money. I drank much coconut juice to replace the polluted water although each coconut cost nearly one dollar, United States. The Bengalis children would follow me eagerly waiting to receive the coconut meat. I shared some meals with these starving children. I felt very close to their plight. In many ways I was too a refugee and I too was nearly destitute. I watched these children as they attempted to eat banana peels and coconut husks and asked myself why wasn't something being done to help them. I knew there were relief organizations in Bangladesh and many countries were sending food. I literally travelled on most streets of the city and found no evidence of any effort or program to feed the people. In despair I obtained some medicine from a local dispensary and began applying it to one of the Bengali children that consistently came to me for help for his infections. As I administered this medicine to his wounds I looked up in amazement and beheld a crowd of Bengalis merging toward me to receive medicine for their wounds. Little children were bringing their tiny sick brothers and sisters for medical aid. The tiny tube of ointment was soon exhausted. They stood around me, quiet, patient, and confident I would help them. None cried and no one complained. I had nothing else to give them. With my heart crushed I left them there, waiting.

I found my way to the office of the United States AID. I spent an afternoon with an official of the department of some twenty employees. I

asked this man what United States AID was doing to alleviate the problem of starvation in Dacca. He informed me 750,000 tons of grain was sent to Bangladesh from the United States of America in 1975 under the government program PL-480 (United States AID Official, 1975; tape recording). This included 450,000 tons of wheat and 200,000 tons of rice. I asked the official why the food did not reach the people. He explained the food was a concessional loan not a grant. Therefore the government had to sell the food to pay back the loan. The government had established ration shops where Bengalis were allowed to buy food at a discount-- usually government prices. Even at a discount, few Bengalis could afford to buy the food. He shared with me how most of the food was black marketed into India where the Indian Rupee had much greater value than the Bangladesh Taka. Government policy specified 10% of the food would go to the most needy through free handouts in gruel kitchens. I asked him where these gruel kitchens were. He informed me they were found in the city but he did not know where any were. Finally I asked the official what had happened to Bangladesh. What caused this disaster? He shared with me a cyclone killed 500,000 and left countless homeless and destitute in 1970. He related that in 1971 3,000,000 citizens of the subcontinent lost their lives in the War of Independence. In 1974 he told of a flood that wiped out the countryside and brought waves of refugees to the cities. The economy of the country was in turmoil because the farmers had been displaced and left homeless. I asked about the government trucks. Where were the soldiers taking the refugees? He explained there were camps outside the city where the refugees were taken. I asked whether they received food, shelter and water. He did not answer.

I shared with the official my observations of the Bengali people. I related how they appeared to be defeated, to be resigned to their fate. Those in the positions of authority or privilege appeared unconcerned for the plight of the needy, destitute and hungry. A spirit of resignation appeared to permeate the fiber of the Bengali people.

He shared a final observation. He indicated the Bengali people had responded to the years of disasters with a relief mentality.

You don't see the people any more. They are not out there after a disaster strikes cleaning up and rebuilding. They are sitting and waiting for the government helicopters to bring the relief supplies and praying to Allah that it won't happen again. The only communities that try to rebuild after disaster are the Hindu and Christian communities. Maybe it is religiously related. The Moslem community does not have the characteristic of rebuilding anymore (United States AID Official, 1975; tape recording).

Outside of the United States AID building I stepped over and walked around the small groups of begging children next to the door. Over and over in my mind I struggled to understand what had happened to these people. Was the cause of the physical and social disintegration of the Bengali culture religiously related as the AID official suggested? I pondered this question as I ventured back into the city. In the midst of the squalid slums of the inner city a most magnificent structure, Fort Lalbagh, stood out like a diamond in the rubble. Fort Lalbagh was constructed in 1684 under the grand Mughal dynasty of Akbar the Great. It was one of the most impressive structures to be found in the entire city. Fort Lalbagh represented the glory of a civilization long since past.

How could a culture that had built such a magnificent temple have degenerated into such chaos? The people were not lazy. The young men that earned their living transporting passengers to and fro on their rickshaws worked hard and long. Men bore the yoke of animals carrying tremendous loads of cargo up and down the streets of Dacca. Fishing and

cargo galleys propelled with human oarsmen plied their way up and down the Ganges River. These long single decked ships propelled with oars and dirty grey sails looked more like a page out of the ancient history, than real life. I watched the Bengalis living alongside of the river scratch out the meekest living in their shanty cloth dwellings. Their kitchen was a crude fire. There was hardly room for a young man to recline for rest in the crude cloth tent. I wondered what these people ate and how they managed to survive. I watched the little children searching for food through piles of garbage scattered along side the road. The children never played. I never saw children laugh or do the mischievous things that children do. I rarely ever saw the sick or hungry children cry. I never saw the parents scold their children. I did not fear these Bengalis. I lived in their midst. I experienced their humiliation and degradation. I did not discern evil intent in their spirit towards me. Once I purchased some candy from a vendor deep in the heart of Dacca. A young man came out of nowhere and grabbed me by the arm and looked me in the eye and said "Cholera." Then he disappeared. Everywhere I went the people looked to me searchingly. They too were looking for answers. They were lost--sheep without a shepherd.

The most encouraging thing I experienced was three blind beggars I chanced to meet one afternoon and never met again. One played a flute, another a hand organ and the tiniest played a shallow hand drum with jingling metal discs. The music told a tale of a culture long since past. I marvelled as the little blind flute player began to dance and play a most harmonious progression of musical chords. The oldest sang a song, the words I could not understand. A deep sadness permeated the tone and depth of his words. They were incongruent with the rest of the

environment around them. They were a page out of ancient Bengali history. Although I could not understand the words, the message was unmistakable. A people were crying out in despair for hope and salvation. Their will appeared broken but not their spirit. These blind beggars had spirit. I longed to understand the words of their music. Perhaps their music would unlock the secret of what happened to this culture.

When I returned to my hotel room a young Bengali man was waiting for me. He spoke some English, enough to communicate with me. His motive was clear. He wanted to leave Bangladesh. He informed me many of his friends and family also sought to leave their country. He required a sponsor, someone to assume responsibility for a visa to leave the country. I told him that I would assist him but in my heart I feared I was impotent to help him.

In many ways the desperate plight of these countrymen kept my eyes off myself. I had been in this nation of Bangladesh for over a week. I was down to my last few dollars. My health had suffered considerably in my short stay in Dacca. I knew my thinking was not clear. I was making dangerous little mistakes. I had fallen and ruined my camera. I knew that any scratch or accident would have dangerous consequences. Disease and virulent infection lurked around every corner. I was grateful for the coconut juice. Experience in many countries had taught me many methods of nature's purification. Still I was fighting a losing battle. I had to leave soon. My visa was only valid for a few more days and the specific requirements of the restricted areas to the north necessitated rigid adherence to required dates.

The next day I boarded an old rusted English style bus destined for Syhlet, the northern most province in Bangladesh. For the first time in

my stay in Dacca I knew I was in trouble. As I boarded the bus and walked to the rear I was keenly aware of danger. The eyes of the passengers were not like the beggars in the streets. My experience in other cultures that spoke foreign languages forced me to develop a non-verbal form of communication based on eye contact. I learned to communicate with my eyes and with a smile and thus overcome the language barrier. I also learned to study a stranger's eyes and facial countenance to determine their feelings toward me. On a number of occasions in my travels outside of the United States I had discerned ill will and/or anger toward me in the eyes of strangers. In each case danger was imminent. Once in the Northern Territory of Australia I nearly lost my life to bandits on the Stewart Highway. I had received a warning from their eyes previously that I did not heed. I saw the same look in the eyes of these Bengali villagers headed for the north. The driver began the engine and something inside me compelled me to hastily get off the bus. I left as the bus began its ascent into the north grateful that I had escaped a most certain snare.

That was only my first encounter with peril. I was attacked in the street of Syhlet one afternoon on my last day in Bangladesh. A flying blindsided tackle stunned me in the market place. Fortunately I was healthier and quicker than my assailant and was able to elude his aggression. That evening a number, I would guess four, of assailants attempted to break through the door into my room. Fortunately the door held on their first attempt. Instantly I was wide awake. In my fright I broke a chair across the door letting them know I was up and prepared for their attack. From the deepest recesses of my lungs I bellowed an outcry of challenge. To my great relief they relented and disappeared into the

night. I bore no ill will toward my assailants. I was a witness to their humiliation and degradation and I did not belong in Bangladesh. To attack me and rob me of my possessions was one way for a man to survive. For the most part the people had submitted to their fate.

The last day I was permitted to stay in Dacca my funds miraculously arrived. I knew I had been granted a providential blessing. As I boarded the Biman airplane my thoughts once more returned to my Bengali brothers. I recorded my impressions on a tape recorder.

There is death in the streets. Bengalis dying with the sheer agony of gangrene. Mothers carrying children more dead than alive. It is a terrible thing to see how starvation kills a child. Their hair falls out, their skin turns to scales. Open sores throughout the body. They become lifeless. Oblivious. Children eating banana peels and coconut husks. You would be attacked if you walked the streets and passed out food. They clutch at you. So innocent; so smiling; so helpless.
