THE
BENGALI MUSLIMS
OF BRADFORD

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A Study of their Observance of Islam with
Special Reference to the Function of the Mosque
and the Work of the Imam

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My thanks are due first of all to the people with whom this work is concerned. I am acutely aware of the impertinence of such research, and am very grateful to friends in Bradford, Sylhet and Dhaka for the welcome, assistance and encouragement they gave, but above all for their trust. I hope that the thesis justifies their confidence and serves to increase understanding between the communities and cultures we represent.

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Finally I thank my father, who first spoke to me of India, my mother, who let me go there, and Mukti for our life together in her world and mine.
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Aims and Methods

(i) Definition of the Title

This study is a contribution to the Community Religions Project of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Leeds. The purposes of the Project are to carry out and publish research into the religious communities of Leeds and neighbouring cities, and to relate such research to associated matters such as community relations, inter-religious understanding, religious education, and teaching programmes within the university. The particular aim of this thesis is to give a preliminary, descriptive account of the observance of Islam within the Bengali community in Bradford. Research was conducted, discontinuously, over a period of three years from 1977 to 1980.

The Bengali Muslims constitute a distinct group among the various migrants to the United Kingdom from the Indian sub-continent. Criteria of ethnicity and language distinguish them from fellow Muslims, while their religion marks them out among Bengalis. They are also, as Bangladeshis, distinguished by nationality from the Bengalis of India and the Muslims of Pakistan and India. Indeed the term Bangladeshi could be substituted for Bengali in much of the thesis, but there are several reasons for preferring the latter designation. Firstly, the people refer to themselves as Bengalis, except in contexts where thenational identity is specially significant. Secondly, their broad cultural heritage appears to be of greater significance in relation to the observance of Islam than does their nationality, which, for the older members of the community, has changed twice within forty years. Thirdly, the use of the term Bangladeshi may obscure
the fact that many of these migrants are British Citizens.

Almost all of the Bengali Muslims in the United Kingdom have emigrated from the District of Sylhet. **This lies** in the north-east of Bangladesh, bordered to the west by the districts of Mymensingh and Comilla, and to the north and east by the Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura. The earliest migrants from Sylhet were merchant seamen, but their kin and others who followed them to Britain were mostly peasant cultivators.

The number of Bengali Muslims in Bradford cannot be accurately stated, for there are no statistics available, and their compilation would itself constitute a major piece of research. The 1971 census, conducted before the declaration of the independence of Bangladesh, numbers Bengalis among Pakistanis. Estimates, however, can be made by Bengalis who have resided in Bradford for several years and whose employment or involvement in the community enables them to be fairly accurate. These state that in the City of Bradford (as opposed to the Metropolitan District, which covers a wider area) in 1980 there were approximately one thousand Bengalis, including some six hundred men and three to four hundred women and children.

(ii) **The Aim of the Research**

The account given in this thesis of Bengali observance of Islam is of a preliminary character. Very little research of any kind has been undertaken into the Bengali community in Bradford and very little study has been made of the way in which Islam is observed in any Muslim group in Britain. The thesis, therefore, includes a brief sketch of the origins of Islam in Bengal and an account of the development of this particular community in Bradford. However, it is a fundamental assumption of the Community Religions Project and of this thesis that an account of the religious beliefs and practices of a community cannot simply be deduced from its history. The focus of the research is the point at which Bengali observance of Islam now stands, where past and present meet or diverge.
This focal point is well illustrated by an incident aboard an Aeroflot flight between London and Moscow. I watched a Bengali passenger turn in his seat to sit awkwardly on its edge. He bowed his head and raised his hands in prayer. He had turned to face Mecca and although prevented by the confines of the aircraft from standing or prostrating, he now prayed as was his custom five times each day, wherever he found himself, in Sylhet, his destination, in London, or between the two.

The traditions of the Bengali Muslim migrant live or die in Bangladesh, in Britain, and in the continuing traffic between these lands. Research, therefore, needs to take into account not only the history of the community, but the interplay between the two milieux of contemporary experience. Moreover, as most of the Bengalis in Bradford migrated recently and cannot yet be said to have settled, research into their religious observance can only be introductory and its findings provisional.

The thesis is also largely descriptive. It attempts to record as objectively as possible what can be learned of the observance of Islam in the Bengali community. It is not intended to make comparisons with the conceptions or practice of Islam by other people at other times or in other places. The analysis and comparison that is essayed arises, for the most part, out of differences of view and behaviour perceived within the community. The predominantly descriptive main body of the thesis is itself limited in its scope, for not every aspect of Bengali Muslim life, particularly in the home, is open to the observation of one man from an entirely unrelated community. The direction of the research was greatly influenced by factors such as the availability of data, which was in turn determined by the character of relationships developed between the researcher and his informants. One result of the process, described in detail below, of making and sustaining contact with the community was a concentration upon the relatively public aspects of Bengali religious observance. Thus events within the mosque and the people chiefly involved in them provided most of the data for the research.
(iii) Literary Data

The literary sources that pertain directly to this research are few. The literature that has been consulted has served mainly to provide information as to the origins of the Bengali community and to indicate areas of research that have proved significant in the study of other ethnic minority groups in Britain. All the works consulted are included in the Bibliography, but the various fields of study may briefly be reviewed here.

Works on Islam multiply daily and there is no lack of literature on the history of India and the development of Islam there; however, remarkably little has been published on the Muslim communities of eastern Bengal, past or present. Historians of Bengal have been mainly Hindu (or British), writing from Calcutta, and only recently have major studies emerged of the history of sufism in Bengal and of Muslim society there.¹ The influx of foreign aid and development workers into East Pakistan and then in even greater quantity into Bangladesh has brought in its train a number of sociologists and anthropologists whose research has added to the small number of studies available in the universities of Bangladesh. One example of this trend is the thesis of Jean Ellickson, 'A Believer among Believers: the Religious Beliefs, Practices and Meanings in a Village in Bangladesh'.² Ellickson first went to East Pakistan as a Peace Corps volunteer. Yet of such material, very little has been written on the District of Sylhet. The present writer was fortunate to be given access to dissertations submitted to the sociology department of the University of Dhaka, which included a study by a Sylheti student of the religious practices of his own village.³

Literature related to ethnic minorities in Britain is also growing, although major works in this field have been concerned with race relations and the controversy over immigration. Raj Madan's comprehensive bibliography of publications from 1970 to 1977, Coloured Minorities in Great Britain, has 1866 entries on subjects such as race relations, immigration, history and politics, law, employment, housing, health, and education, including one section comprising 138 entries on 'General Culture, Family and Community Life'. Of these very few have to do with religion
and none is specifically concerned with the observance of Islam. Again very little has been written on the Bengalis in Britain and even less on their religion. The few publications dealing specifically with Bengalis tend to be of a journalistic or polemical nature. Perhaps the most valuable of these is Amrit Wilson's Finding a Voice, many of whose subjects are Bengali women. Such works earnestly attempt to present an authentically Bengali view of a situation, but it is unfortunate (for the purposes of this research) that their interest in religion is inclined to be restricted to those aspects of belief or practice which are seen as contributory to problems either within the Bengali community or in its relationship with the host society.

The one sociological account of early Bengali settlement in Bradford occurs within a discussion of Pakistani communities in Bradford and Birmingham. However, there is a number of studies of other ethnic groups in Britain, the most useful of which for this research has been Verity Saifullah Khan's thesis on the Mirpuris in Bradford. Muhammad Anwar's account of a Pakistani community in Rochdale provides further comparative material, as do articles in periodicals covering aspects of community relations. Such studies tend only incidentally to be concerned with religious observance (which Anwar treats purely as a unifying force within the community), but they could be the foundation for further research.

Educationists form another group with an interest in the issues raised through the interrelation between Muslims and secular British society, although studies have naturally concentrated more on the welfare of children than on the broader implications of, for example, the attempt to obey or implement Islamic law in the United Kingdom. A more surprising lack is that of any detailed work on the theory and practice of Islamic education in this country, although there are signs of growing interest, or rather response to the increasing number of Muslim educational institutions and to Muslim demands for adjustments in the British educational system. The most recent example of this interest is A Muslim Family in Britain by Harrison and Shepherd, directed primarily towards schoolchildren, which includes a brief account of the teaching given in classes for children in
mosques.7 But despite all the controversy in local newspapers over the 'mosque schools', no detailed report has yet been published on what is actually taught in them, on the methods employed, or on their value to the Muslim community.

However, it may be that the need to convey their own point of view will cause more institutions and individual representatives of Muslim communities to go into print. For several years the Islamic Foundation and Minaret House have published series of leaflets on the fundamentals of Islam, and various occasional pamphlets have been written on issues in Muslim education. In 1979 King Abdulaziz University of Jeddah published two collections of essays which represent modern attempts to formulate the principles and methodology of Islamic education in relation to contemporary western educational systems and theories.8 It is to be hoped that comprehensive, systematic studies of issues involved in applying not only Islamic educational values but the whole of Islamic law, particularly family law, will be produced, for these are the foundations of the day-to-day observance of Islam in Muslim countries, and their translation into western society is of crucial importance for the future of Muslim minority groups.

(iv) **Methodological Principles**

There is, then, a certain amount of relevant historical, sociological and anthropological data, but the primary source of information for research was the Bengali community itself. It was necessary, therefore, to develop techniques of research that were adequate to the complex and varied data presented to the researcher and that were conducive to a relationship of trust with his informants. First of all, however, it was essential to establish a basic approach that would, as far as possible, permit objectivity in a descriptive account of religious observance.

Objectivity, according to those who have pioneered the phenomenological approach to the study of religion, requires of the scholar, firstly, that he suspend judgment as to the truth or otherwise of the phenomena under investigation, and, secondly, that he attempt to understand and report the believer's own account of his religious experience. In the words of W.B. Kristensen,
Let us never forget that there exists no other religious reality than the faith of the believer. If we really want to understand religion, we must refer exclusively to the believer's testimony. What we believe, from our point of view, about the nature or value of other religions, is a reliable testimony to our own faith, or to our own understanding of religious faith; but if our opinion about another religion differs from the opinion and evaluation of the believers, then we are no longer talking about their religion. We have turned aside from historical reality, and are concerned only with ourselves.9

Kristensen was concerned with the interpretation of historical data, but the principles of approach or attitude outlined in this passage are equally valid in the study of contemporary religious observance. Their application in the latter field necessitates the use of methods other than those employed in historical research, for the process is no longer one of metaphorical dialogue with texts but of interaction between people. A most significant aspect of such work is that criticisms of its findings are made not only by other scholars but by the subjects of research themselves. In carrying out his work the researcher is himself subject to constant scrutiny. The dialogue with informants reinforces the researcher's awareness of his own presuppositions and facilitates the attempt to elucidate as fully as possible the meaning for the people involved of their religious experience.

The same dialogue, however, as it occurred in the process of this research, made it apparent that the basic approach of the researcher did not commend itself to all members of the community being studied. A major presupposition underlying this work is the conviction that the data for the study of religion are not confined to scriptures and historical formularies, but include the actual beliefs and practices of contemporary believers. To some Muslims, however, there is little or no value in the exposition of what Islam means to its adherents. The grounds of this view are stated by S.H. Nasr who defines religion as 'that which binds man to the truth'. He further draws a distinction between what is absolutely real
and what is relatively real.10 The phenomenological study of religion, conducted in the realm of the empirical, belongs to the latter category and therefore can have little to do with the 'Absolute' or the 'Real', which is the beginning and end of religion and which, in respect of Islam, is to be sought in and through the Quran. Far from agreeing with Kristensen that 'there exists no other religious reality than the faith of the believer', a Muslim may consider that faith can be termed a reality only in a narrow, relative sense.

A similar response to the objective and analytical study of religion, conducted by a non-adherent, is to be found among representatives of traditions other than Islam. Christians, for example, are liable to direct the inquirer away from the practice of the Church and towards Christ or the Bible; and if pressed to justify the behaviour of Christians, they quickly resort to an arbitrary scale of what is truly Christian. Very few attempts have been made to embrace what has been termed 'the contradiction of Christianity within Christian theology: 11 It is, therefore, not surprising that a similar lack is evident in Muslim writing and that people with slight acquaintance with western scholarship feel puzzled or threatened by interest in their religious observance.

The issue raised by those who questioned the purpose of the research could, at least partially, be resolved within the principles outlined above. Thus it was important to adhere to the aim of a description of Bengali observance of Islam and to refrain from making judgments as to the nature of Islam itself. Therefore no qualification is made in the thesis of the term Islam, for to speak of 'Bengali Islam' or of 'the corruption of Islam' is offensive to those for whom Islam is incorruptible and transcendent of ethnic boundaries. Moreover, as the aim of the research prohibited the evaluation of the religious observance of Bengali Muslims by reference to external standards of truth, so it excluded any judgment as to which of several ways of observing Islam most truly represented the religion revealed to the Prophet.

However, it did fall within the scope of the research to report such differences of view and practice as became apparent. It was this aspect of the research
that was least acceptable to some Muslims. There is within the Muslim world constant debate as to the nature of Islam and of its realization. The authority of the ulama is in dispute as others claim an equal right to define Islam. Of this situation Kenneth Cragg has observed that 'we have, then, to see the bona fide critic as still a Muslim and the dubiety as within Islam, even though the conservative apologists dispute this' \(^{12}\). Such a view, however, is perhaps tenable only by a non-Muslim. The Muslim is unlikely to rest content with a detached view of the various forms Islamic observance can take; rather, he must choose between them, if indeed he has a choice.

The non-Muslim researcher, then, cannot altogether escape the conflicts that arise as a result of his standing outside the household of Islam. It is essential that he remains aware of the subjective element within even the most plain description and that his intentions and interests be stated as clearly as possible to informants at the outset of fieldwork. The difficulties encountered in the course of this research were due not to any fault in its basic principles, but to the failure adequately to communicate its purpose to all the people who became involved in it. It is, therefore, necessary now to examine the particular problems that arose in the course of fieldwork, some of which were resolved, while the persistence of others entailed a limitation of the scope of the thesis.

B   FIELDWORK

(1) Problems of Access

Since there had been virtually no previous research into the Bengali Muslims in Bradford, there was no foundation available upon which to build the present study of their religious observance. The conduct of the kind of survey that would ideally precede such research would itself have constituted a separate thesis and would have involved a major exercise in public relations. It seemed that if any study was to be made of religious observance that was not merely a part of a larger whole, then desirable
prolegomena would have to be foregone. Moreover, as will be seen, there are reasons for doubting whether even such results as have been attained would have been possible if the period of research had been prolonged or its breadth extended.

There were furthermore four significant barriers to the conduct of fieldwork: the amorphous character of the Bengali community, the hours of work of the majority of its population, the language barrier, and the observance of purdah.

It is not meaningless to speak of 'the Bengali community', but it is a community defined by nothing more precise than very broad ethnic, religious and geographical factors. Most Bengalis in Bradford come from various parts of the Sylhet District of Bangladesh, while a few are from other districts. So the community in Bradford is new and quite different from the long-established village communities in which most of the migrants were born. Moreover, migration has been fostered through kinship networks, so that among Bengalis there are distinct groups of people whose allegiance is as much to the village and family in Bangladesh as to the accidental association of Bengalis in Bradford. Within the city many Bengalis live in a part of Manningham where the mosque has been founded, but as many others are scattered in various other areas, some in isolation from their compatriots. There is no occasion on which the whole community meets, although most Bengali men attend celebrations of the major Muslim festivals. In 1977, when the research began, the only organization that could claim the membership of all Bengali Muslims was the Twagulia Islamic Society, which founded and administers the mosque. This was to provide the main point of entry into the community.

The second difficulty, presented by the hours of work of most Bengalis, was virtually insuperable. Again, no statistics are available, but the majority work twelve-hour night shifts, leaving little time to be with their families or for wider social activities, let alone for talking with a research student! Muhammad Anwar's study of Pakistanis in Rochdale reveals a high incidence of night-shift work, and he writes: 'Pakistanis who worked on night shifts had different life-styles from other Pakistanis. Their
activities and social participation were restricted and this incapsulated them from the rest of the community'. A similar situation seems to obtain in Bradford among the Bengalis, and the consequence for fieldwork in the present research was limited contact with night-shift workers, the only opportunities being at the mosque on a Sunday, on holidays and when people were unemployed. This meant that it would be very difficult to know whether the informants whom it was possible to meet were sufficiently varied to be representative of the whole community.

The third barrier was that of language. I have lived in Bihar and West Bengal for two years and have some grasp of Bengali, without which the research would have been impossible, particularly the visit to Sylhet. However, the dialect spoken there and so among Syihetis in Bradford, differs so much from standard Bengali that it was often incomprehensible to my wife, who is from West Bengal, as well as to myself. This did not prevent communication altogether as most Syihetis could understand Bengali and many would adapt their speech for my sake, but it did mean that I was excluded from all informal conversation between Syihetis. Formal occasions presented less of a problem as only the standard form of the language is used for public lectures or addresses in the mosque. Of course, the prayers and the reading of the Quran are in Arabic, and there are numerous religious terms that are taken untranslated from Arabic, or Urdu, into Bengali speech. During the course of the research it was possible, with the help of the imam, to become familiar with the Arabic terms so used, but it took time.

When the imam has male visitors to his home in Bradford, a curtain is hung across the sitting room so that his wife can pass from the kitchen to the staircase unseen. The observance of purdah (parda, a curtain) was the fourth obstacle to fieldwork. The precise manner of observance of purdah varies greatly according to the status and occupation of a family, but even when a women is introduced by her husband to male guests, she is not expected to converse with them.

The restrictions imposed by purdah have to be faced by every male researcher in a Muslim society, and, as Anwar indicates, the problem is no less acute for
the Muslim researcher who is expected always to conform to Muslim custom. Dahya circumvented the problem with the aid of his sister, while Arens and van Beurden, living and working together in Bangladesh, 'made good contact with both sexes'. My wife was in no sense a co-researcher, but she did come to know some Bengali women, particularly the imam's wife (whose seclusion from men was total), and her observations have been helpful. Such limited contact, however, has meant that it has not been possible to make a study of the observance of Islam among the women and within the families of the Bengali community.

(ii) Entering the Community

At the outset of the research it was necessary to meet Bengalis who knew their community well and could provide further introductions. Approaches were made to shop-keepers and to representatives on the Community Relations Council, and, through them, to the imam of the mosque.

Anwar's account of the function of the shop within a Pakistani community as a meeting point, and source of information applies equally to the shops in the part of Manningham that is inhabited mainly by Bengalis. There are two corner shops at the end of the road facing the mosque. One shopkeeper provided an introduction to the imam, while the other, who speaks fluent English, occasionally found time to converse. In general, however, for a researcher who could not easily understand or speak Sylheti dialect, the shops were of only limited use as places for gathering information and making informal contacts.

The three Bengali members of the Community Relations Council had lived in Bradford for between fifteen and twenty-five years and knew the community well. As informants they could represent only themselves, for their way of life differed from that of the majority of Bengalis. They had emigrated to Britain partly in order to improve their education and had gained academic or professional qualifications that set them apart as a very small minority within the Bengali community. However, these men were sympathetic with the broad aims of the research and willing to supply information as to the development of the community. Further contacts were made through them, which proved both useful and
restrictive, for it was impossible to avoid being drawn into one or two groups of associates within the community and so be excluded from others. It was only towards the end of the fieldwork that many of the political issues, and the involvement of my contacts in them, became apparent.

During the period of research two men were successively employed as imam of the Bengali mosque, both of whom were willing to give assistance, although not without reservations. They questioned the value of a study of Bengali observance of Islam and were anxious that the researcher had a 'correct' view of Islam, based upon true teaching and not upon inferences drawn from the behaviour of their fellow Bengalis. They were, therefore, primarily interested in discussing Islam itself and reluctant to volunteer information concerning what they regarded as non-Islamic elements in Muslim Bengali culture. However, as confidence grew in relationship with the second imam, he came to believe that such research may contribute to understanding between people of different communities and cultures in Bradford. In time, therefore, he would not only explain the content of his teaching and the significance of events in the mosque, but would also discuss less orthodox aspects of Bengali Muslim life.

The chief advantage of association with the imam was that he could permit me to attend the mosque, to observe the prayers there and to hear his addresses, although, as will be seen, his was not the final word even in this respect. There were, however, certain disadvantages. The imam was not a member of the mosque committee and therefore liable either to be unaware of matters that would have been of interest to the researcher or unwilling to divulge any information he had. Furthermore, association with the imam gave the impression to others, not least the officials of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, who administered the mosque, that the prime concern of the research was Islam. They consequently regarded questions about the affairs of the Society and mosque committee as signs of undue curiosity. The imam himself fostered the idea that I was primarily a student of Islam, introducing me as such to others, for he was convinced that the actual purpose of the research would be incomprehensible to most people. The resultant misunderstanding was to cause considerable problems later in the course of
fieldwork, although without the assistance of both imams the research would hardly have been possible.

The most profitable point of entry to the Bengali community was therefore that made through the mosque and the imam, so that it seemed best to allow this to become the focus of the thesis. Some restriction of scope was inevitable in view of all the difficulties outlined and the decision was made to treat one aspect of the community's life in some depth rather than to give a superficial account of the whole. This then considerably influenced the course of the fieldwork both in Bradford and in Sylhet.

(iii) Fieldwork in Sylhet

A visit to Sylhet had been envisaged as an essential part of the research from the beginning, for this was the only way of gaining an understanding at first-hand of the origins of the Bengalis in Bradford and so of the other milieu of their lives. I therefore spent three weeks in Bangladesh in April and May 1979, including a few days in Dhaka, where literature was available that would be difficult or impossible to obtain in Britain. Two and a half weeks were spent in the town of Sylhet and in nearby villages. Here there were three main aspects to the fieldwork.

Firstly, there was the opportunity, unparalleled in Bradford, for the observation of daily life, as far more takes place in the open in Sylhet than in West Yorkshire. Then, from conversation and observation, there was much to be learned of the history of Islam and of the influence of sufism in Sylhet both past and present. Thirdly, having decided to concentrate on the mosque and imam, it was essential to visit mosques and religious schools in the town and villages and meet their teachers and imams, in order to be able to compare the results of research in Bradford with the situation in Sylhet.

Initial contacts in Sylhet town were made through letters of introduction supplied by the imam in Bradford. These established my bona fides, explaining, in the imam's terms, the reasons for my presence in Sylhet. The letters were indispensable as it would otherwise have been impossible to meet so many people and to win their confidence so quickly. However, the
same limitation arose as in Bradford of being associated with a particular group of people, in this case those who shared the outlook of the imam. The final week of the visit was therefore spent in visiting villages near the town in order to meet people whose names I had been given by their relatives in Bradford.

In a village the foreigner is even more conspicuous than in the town, so that the experience of welcome and suspicion was intensified. The friends of the imam, who escorted me throughout the first part of my stay in Sylhet, doubted whether it would be possible for a foreigner to be received in neighbouring villages, as they and other religious leaders in Sylhet had recommended to all mosque committees in the area that they should have no dealings with Christians. If the anthropologist follows in the wake of aid agencies, so does the missionary, and many Bengali Muslims were deeply resentful of what they saw as the exploitation of suffering by the Christian relief worker. In the event, however, less hostility was encountered on these grounds than through suspicion of my being sent from the British High Commission's Immigration Section.

Twice the suspicions of villagers made it impossible to stay somewhere, but in most places those whose names I had been given or others who had lived in Bradford or London were glad to receive me. They were more willing to talk about Islam than were their fellow Bengalis in Bradford. They evinced a confidence that was lacking in an alien environment and were pleased to find genuine interest in their way of life on the part of a foreigner. The data gathered in Sylhet have been incorporated into the thesis along-side the results of fieldwork in Bradford.

(iv) Perceptions of a Research Student

It is evident that the presence of a researcher within the community he seeks to study raises issues of great complexity. In order to be aware of the effect that he himself has upon his informants and therefore upon the data of research, it is necessary to consider the ways in which he may be perceived by others. The question, 'Who is that?', was frequently asked when I sat in the mosque in Bradford, as well as in Sylhet.
The answers or assumptions that others made were extremely varied: friend of the imam, journalist, Christian priest, student, police officer, new convert to Islam, Home Office or High Commission representative. There may have been yet others, but these alone show that both welcome and suspicion ran deep. Few people were indifferent to a stranger.

All the studies in related fields stress the need for confidence between the researcher and his informants, for the success of his work is almost entirely dependent upon their willingness to provide its data. Hence one of the most thorough pieces of research on Pakistanis in Britain has been conducted by a Pakistani-17 It is unquestionably more difficult for an outsider to win the confidence of a group, not least because people fail to perceive any reason for his presence. Arens and van Beurden went to great lengths to gain acceptance in Jhagrapur, living there for a year, but they still found it impossible to win the confidence of all. Significantly, they write, 'most villagers did not understand what we were actually doing. This made some of them suspicious.'18 In my fieldwork in Bradford I was not living in the area of concentrated Bengali habitation and therefore the opportunities for everyone to become acquainted with me and my aims were even fewer.

The perceptions of myself listed above may be placed in three categories - student, Christian and official - which will be considered in turn, but common to all three and immediately discernible was my being white and English. This in itself provoked reactions which varied according to people's experience of relations with the British, both in Bangladesh and in the United Kingdom. The research was conducted at a time when, whatever the state of race relations generally, many Bengalis were bitterly resentful of British people's changing attitude towards them and aware of increasing tension between themselves and the white population. There had been no 'blood on the streets' of Bradford, but no Bengali was ignorant of events in the East End of London and some were as a result inclined to withdraw from all but essential contact with whites.19

The perception of the researcher as a student was partly accurate and partly misleading. Those whom I came to know well understood the purpose of the
research and, in their concern to improve intercommunal understanding, were very helpful. They were at the same time wary of disclosing certain information, especially concerning 'village politics', which it would have been improper to give to a stranger. However, as relationships developed and opportunities for informal conversation grew, such reservations diminished. At the point where confidence is established, the status of an outsider is an advantage, for he is seen not to be partisan with regard to the various factions within the community. This development occurred, frustratingly, only towards the end of the period of research.

Many other people, however, assumed that the object of study was Islam and that I attended their mosque on account of my acquaintance with Bengal. This impression was fostered by the imam himself and by my association with him. It was, however, misleading, for, being quite unfamiliar with the notion of the objective study of religion, most people then took me to be an inquirer, one considering becoming a Muslim. Some, seeing me at the prayers (although always seated apart), assumed I was a recent convert.

It must be emphasized that the 'student of Islam' was warmly welcomed: misunderstanding arose only when expectations of conversion were not met. Several people, especially in Sylhet, asked, 'Why do you not become a Muslim?' The question and implicit invitation was expressed even more acutely in Bengali: 'Why do you not come?' It arose from the Muslim's realization that the researcher did have some understanding of Islam and yet remained outside the Muslim community. Similar questions may be addressed to any non-Muslim student of a Muslim community, whether or not he has a prior religious commitment, and are to be faced by the agnostic as much as by the Christian. The researcher who succeeds in coming close to his informants will inevitably be presented with an invitation to Islam. The western scholar may develop a resistance to such proposals, but unless the call is heard and its urgent sincerity felt, any claim to have entered another's world is void.

The fact that I did not respond to the invitation did not affect the course of fieldwork in Sylhet, where I stayed for only two and a half weeks. In Bradford, however, I attended the mosque at various times over a
period of two years. Eventually the imam stated that it was 'not necessary' for me to go to the mosque again. He explained that some Bengalis had objected to my presence there, but apart from deploiring their 'ignorance' he could neither say nor do any more. I learned later, from other informants, that this pressure on the imam had come from those who had thought that I was either a new convert or an inquirer. It seemed that once they had ascertained that I was not of the faith and showed no sign of becoming a Muslim, they had no category (or none that was acceptable) in which to place a non-Muslim with such persistent interest in them and their religious observance.

A second category in which I could be placed was that of Christian, and some Bengalis knew that I was a padri, a priest. Fortunately another priest in Bradford, who had also lived in Bengal, was known to several Bengalis and had often assisted them by interpreting or representing them in relation to official institutions and authorities. And the more devout members of the community were also aware of the special status accorded to 'the people of the Book' in Islam, and had respect for a minister of the Christian Church. This respect could also prove a hindrance for my purposes, as people regarded me as an expert in religion, the Christian equivalent of the alim and were therefore reluctant to discuss Islam, referring me to the imam.20 On the other hand, there were some Bengalis in Bradford and in Sylhet who were antipathetic to Christians on account of their proselytizing activities. It is possible that this attitude contributed to my exclusion from the mosque.

The third category brought no advantage at all, for perception of me as an officer of the police force or Home Office was totally inhibitive of communication and productive of hostility. During the period of the research there were several instances in West Yorkshire and elsewhere of the arrest and imprisonment of people suspected of being illegal immigrants, and there were reports of information about supposed illegal immigrants being given by various agencies to the Home Office. At the same time, in Sylhet people were familiar with the sight of representatives of the British High Commission investigation claims made by applicants for permission to enter the United Kingdom.
and much resentment was felt at the long delays in the granting of entry certificates. Within the same category was the conjecture that I was a journalist, for while some reporters (and one in particular in Bradford) have by their work furthered the interests of minority groups, far more journalism is at best ambivalent and at worst hostile to so-called 'immigrants'.

(v) Roles and Methods in Fieldwork

The need of relationships of confidence between the researcher and his informants had implications for the techniques employed in gathering information from people about themselves. The methods needed to be subtle and variable, adapted to different people and to particular kinds of data. They depended also upon the role assumed by the researcher, which was itself in part determined by the members of the community. The basic method adopted in this research was that of participant-observation, but this broad designation in fact covers a variety of roles. J.A. Hughes draws useful distinctions between four categories: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant and complete observer. Each of these describes the role adopted in a particular kind of research. For example, one who lives for a long period with a certain group, acting as a full member of the group and concealing his status as a researcher from the others, is a complete participant, while the person conducting a survey, visiting each informant once only, is an observer-as-participant. However, the roles I adopted in fieldwork cannot be included under a single heading. While it is evident that I was neither a complete participant nor a complete observer, my role in fact varied between the other two categories according to the situation.

As a result of repeated visits to the homes of some informants, who received me as a friend or acquaintance, I became more involved in the community than a person conducting a survey. Hughes states that the participant-as-observer is liable to lose perspective as a result of intimacy or of informants becoming identified with the researcher. It has already been noted that association with particular people such as representatives on the Community Relations Council or the imam could lead to a restricted range of contacts, but the danger of losing perspective altogether was mitigated.
by the fact that I did not live in continual association with the Bengali community. On the other hand, there were some people, especially in Sylhet, whom I visited once only and for a specific purpose. On such occasions the interviews were more like those conducted by an observer-as-participant. Hughes notes that the danger of this role is that it allows too little involvement and consequent lack of opportunity of understanding the perspective of the informant. It is, however, a role that is entirely appropriate when the data sought are of a factual kind, for example, when visiting the principal of a madrasa to learn about its curriculum and membership.

In the mosque my role again varied slightly. When the prayers were taking place, participation was minimal, as I sat at the back of the room and simply observed. However, during the sermon or lecture given by the imam I was often invited to sit among everyone else, and if any other ceremony was observed, such as anointing with perfume or the sharing of food, I was expected to participate. It is difficult to estimate the relative value of the varying degrees of participation. To observe the prayers certainly deepened the understanding and sympathy that could be gained by reading, but it could not be claimed that one shared the experience of the people at prayer; on the other hand, involvement in other ceremonies did make it possible to enter the experience of others to a limited extent, as well as serving to deepen friendships with some.

The third situation was the occasional large meeting, such as a conference or the Id prayers, in which my role was that of participant-as-observer and my presence quite unobtrusive. These occasions were particularly important for the research as here it was certain that my presence in no way modified the form or content of the proceeding, so that for once I was in a position to hear what Muslim leaders had to say to their brethren, as opposed to what they might have said to an outsider. This was probably also true of the addresses given by the imam in the mosque, but in a small gathering there could not be the same certainty that his speech was not at all adapted for my sake.
As roles varied, so did the precise methods of collecting data in conversation with people. It was planned at first to conduct a survey of the Bengali Muslims concerning their personal background and observance of basic Islamic duties, using questionnaires. These were duly devised, with the aid of sympathetic educated Bengalis, and copies made in English and Bengali. The aim was to gather a relatively large quantity of information in a manageable form that would serve as the basis for further investigation. The questionnaires were used, however, with only a few people, and the whole formal approach was quickly abandoned.

There were two fundamental reasons for their failure. The first is related to the character of the research, which largely consisted of a process of discovery rather than the testing of hypotheses made on the basis of existing knowledge. Questionnaires are better suited to the latter purpose than the former, and in this research basic information of the kind that is required for the compilation of an effective questionnaire had to be gained by other means. This may not be true of that part of the planned questionnaire that covered personal history, but here there was a second reason for failure, namely the arousal of suspicion. Bengali villagers are quite unfamiliar with this type of research: the only forms they are accustomed to completing are official ones, in which case there is no guarantee that the information supplied will benefit the informant. Had these questionnaires been widely used in the Bengali community in Bradford, considerable suspicion would have arisen as to the use that would be made of the information supplied, and many would have been reluctant to give details of their background. Particular suspicions apart, 'for illiterate people it is frightening to see that everything they say is recorded' .

Illiteracy also meant that it was necessary to use the questionnaire in interviews and so before an audience, as it was seldom possible in a Bengali household to interview someone alone, and therefore replies were bound to be conditioned by the presence of relatives or friends.

Other methods then had to be found that were less intimidating and more productive. There were many occasions when conversation was deliberately entirely unstructured: no attempt was made to elicit answers to particular questions or in any way to impose upon
people. For, as Arens and van Beurden note, it is wrong to assume 'that most relevant information can be obtained by questions only'.23 Much interesting data could in fact be obtained by answering other people's questions, so learning what interested them. This form of approach, though time-consuming, was very useful in the initial stages of research.

At other times, when information on a particular topic, for example a recent marriage, was sought, a list of questions was prepared beforehand to act as an 'interview-guide', although no memorandum was consulted or notes taken in front of people. The data were then written up afterwards. The disadvantages of this method are its dependence upon the memory of the researcher and upon the opportunity to make notes soon after the interview, but these are far outweighed by the gain of freedom and confidence in the conduct of the interview.24

Finally, use was occasionally made of more formal interviews when the informant was fully aware that his words were being recorded. These were most valuable when very detailed information was sought from someone already known, as, for example, in discussing the meaning of a passage of the Quran with the imam. Notes could then be written at the time, or a tape-recorder used.

C CONCLUSION

The observance of Islam within the Bengali community in Bradford constitutes a potentially broad field of study. It became apparent early in the course of research that it would not be feasible to attempt a comprehensive account of all variations in religious observance throughout the whole community; rather, the subject matter of research would have to be determined largely by the criterion of what was, or could become, open to observation and inquiry. The chosen methods of data collection also affected the direction of the research, for although it proved impracticable to conduct a general survey of the community, it was possible, by less formal and more time-consuming means, to develop relationships of
trust with some informants, especially among those who regularly attended the mosque.

Since the mosque was, at first, accessible and sufficient people, including the imam, were well disposed towards the researcher, the work came to concentrate upon those aspects of Muslim observance that could be studied in the mosque and through contacts made there. It cannot be claimed, therefore, that the people who provided most of the data were representative of the whole community, or that this study embraces the totality of Bengali Muslim life. Yet the main area of research is one of particular significance, for the mosque is always of central importance in a Muslim community. It is both the place where the Quran is taught and also a focal point of social activity. Moreover, to a group of migrants, it may be the source of new life for traditions that may otherwise appear to have no place in a non-Muslim society.
The Bengali Muslims

Bengalis in Bradford estimate that ninety-five per cent of their community come from the District of Sylhet, where Muslims constitute the majority of the population and Islam, in one way or another, pervades every aspect of individual and communal life. Yet for much of their history the Muslims of Sylhet have been a minority, greatly influenced by their mainly Hindu neighbours. The complex and controversial history of the Muslims of Bengal lies outside the scope of this thesis; however, it is necessary to depict, if only in outline, their variegated cultural background. The first section of the chapter, therefore, is a brief account of the origins of the Bengali people and their language. There follows a historical sketch of the coming of Islam to Bengal, particularly to Sylhet, and of the ways in which it was propagated there. This is important because those who brought Islam to Bengal have a prominent place in the folk-memory of its Muslim population and also because certain characteristics of contemporary Bengali Muslim life seem to have their origin in this early period.

The character of Muslim community in present-day Sylhet is the subject of the third and fourth sections of the chapter. It is intended here to trace some of the factors that first instilled in the migrant the knowledge of Islam and the awareness of being a believer among believers. Moreover, some account of Sylheti life is required not simply as recent historical background, but because of its continuing influence on migrants who still regard Sylhet as their home. This account is hardly comprehensive, for its form and content have been largely determined by the availability of data. There is a lack of detailed study of the observance of Islam in Sylhet and the fieldwork undertaken for this research
was limited to the more public aspects of Muslim life. Nonetheless, it is possible to describe certain elements of family and village life that appear particularly significant in engendering and sustaining the sense of belonging to a Muslim community. The fourth section of the chapter concentrates upon one element, the traditions of the pirs of Sylhet, that is important both in itself and because of the virtual impossibility of its replication in Bradford.

A THE BENGALI PEOPLE

The Bengalis are the second largest Muslim ethnic group in the world: 67 per cent of the 122.7 million Bengalis are Muslim. They comprise the majority (85 per cent) of the population of Bangladesh and 20 per cent of that of West Bengal in India. There is a small minority of Shiah Muslims, but most Bengali Muslims and all the subjects of this study) are Sunni. They inhabit an area that is geographically and culturally distinct from the rest of the sub-continent and share traditions established long before the British provinces which were the antecedents of the present division of Bengal between India and Bangladesh.1

Scholars agree that a distinct Bengali culture had formed by 1000 B.C., but there is much debate over the origins of the Bengali people and their precise ethnic composition. There are three main components: the aboriginal inhabitants, the Bang tribe, whose name still denotes the land;2 the Aryans who drove the tribal people towards the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra; and Arab and Turkish peoples, the Muslim traders, rulers, scholars and sufis who migrated to Bengal from the thirteenth century. The debate concerns the relative importance of each of these groups, particularly as regards their effect upon religious and cultural developments. Some writers stress the pre-Aryan ancestry of most Bengali Muslims, while others emphasize the influence of Turkish and Arab immigrants.3 It is noteworthy that both Hindu and Muslim have claimed that the majority of Muslim Bengalis came from abroad, the former in order to deny the right of Muslims to live on Indian soil, the latter to counter charges of inferiority made by
fellow Muslims dwelling closer to the heartlands of Islam. The attempt to distinguish a foreign-born elite among Muslims is also reflected in what remains of a caste-like system, in which the Sayyids (Syeds), the putative descendents of the Prophet, have pre-eminence. However, so extensive is the mixture of ethnic types in Bengal that there can be little empirical basis for claims to foreign descent or for neat distinctions between social or cultural groups on ethnic criteria. It is reasonable, therefore, to regard the Bengalis as an ethnic group in themselves.

Ethnic identity, however, does not entail cultural uniformity, and cultural divergences do not necessarily follow the lines of ethnic divisions. There are indeed traditions shared by all Bengalis, but considerable diversity is also apparent. A most obvious and important cultural distinction is that between Hindus and Muslims, but even this can be obscured by undue attention to broad ethnic and cultural similarities. Some writers engaged in the controversy surrounding the independence of Bangladesh have attacked the assumption, made by western anthropologists and Bengali nationalists, that there is such a thing as 'Bengali identity'. So strongly does one protagonist object to the identification of Muslim and Hindu in Bengal that he denies the right of a Muslim to call himself a Bengali.4 It is not necessary to adopt so extreme, and untenable, a view in order to do justice to the distinctive nature of Muslim society. It is sufficient to recognize that Islam is not merely parasitic upon its Hindu or pre-Aryan antecedents, but has taken root deep within Bengali soil. There are indeed those who assert that the advent of Islam was the crowning of Bengali culture.5 The Muslims of Bengal are Bengali and they are Muslim. Recent history indicates that neither element in their make-up is of itself sufficient basis for the formation of a nation-state, though it may be that Bangladesh has a future as an Islamic republic. If so, the need to face the tensions involved in being Bengali and Muslim will be no less urgent.

The diversity of the Bengali people is well illustrated by the development and use of their language. One of the Indo-Iranian group of languages, Bengali (bangla) is descended from Sanskrit through Gauriya
Prakrit and has drawn upon many other languages, including Arabic, Persian, Portuguese and English.6 Its modern form dates from approximately 1000 A.D. and its literary tradition from the fourteenth century, having been considerably developed in the nineteenth century by the work of a remarkable combination of scholars, Hindu, Muslim and Christian.7

Although Bengali is the language of almost all the inhabitants of Bengal, it has ever since the Mughal period had to contend for equal status with Urdu. This issue came to a head in 1948 when the Punjabi Pakistanis proposed to proclaim Urdu as the sole national language and to use Urdu script for Bengali. In 1952, as a result of the struggle of Mujib al-Rahman and other Bengalis, their language was recognised alongside Urdu, but the latter retained a status within Bengal that was disproportionate to its use. Thus the Bengali language became a symbol of national unity in the years before independence. However, there are differences between the Bengali spoken by a Hindu and that spoken by a Muslim. These occur mainly in specifically religious vocabulary. Thus Hindu terms for deity such as *ishwar* and *bhagavan* are unacceptable to the Muslim who always used the Arabic *allah* or the Persian *khoda*. However, differences are also found in more mundane speech. Referring to water, the Muslim speaks of *pani* and regards *jal*, the normal Bengali term, as a Hindu word, although both are derived from Sanskrit! The divergence even extends to the terminology of family relationship: the Hindu child addresses his parents as 'Baba' and 'Ma', while the Muslim says 'Abba' and 'Anima'.

Minor cultural differences are illustrated by the number of dialects within Bangladesh. The people of Sylhet speak a dialect that cannot readily be understood by a native of West Bengal, and if addressed in 'high' Bengali, a Sylheti is liable to reply in Urdu, for what he hears is a foreign tongue. Sylhet can also boast its own script and literary tradition. This has been little studied but appears to have been developed in the seventeenth century by the Muslims of Sylhet, possibly because Bengali was regarded as a Hindu language. The origins of the script are uncertain, although it is evidently partly dependent on the Devanagri script of Bengali. Extant literature includes love stories and poetry as well as Muslim
preaching and hagiography. It is claimed that Sylheti Nagri can be quickly learned - and quickly forgotten: Now moribund, for the last printing press was destroyed in the 1971 war, Sylheti Nagri is a fascinating example of the cultural variations that obtain among Muslims in Bengal as well as between Muslims and Hindus.8

B THE ADVENT OF ISLAM IN BENGAL

Variation within Bengali observance of Islam is partly a reflection of the cultural diversity of Bengal and partly a result of the ways in which Islam was first proclaimed there. It is not known exactly when Muslims came to Bengal. Traditional accounts claim that Arab Muslim traders arrived as early as the eighth century, but the only evidence of such contact may equally have arisen from the period of the Muslim conquest when Arab trade through Chittagong was well established. It is probable that the legends of sufis in Bengal prior to the conquest also originated in the later period.9 Historians tend to the view that Bengalis first heard the name of Allah when Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji ousted the Hindu court of Lakshman Sen from Nadia in 1201.

The spread of Muslim power in Bengal was gradual and haphazard. Karim notes that its course was largely determined by geographical factors combined with Turkish reluctance to abandon their cavalry and take to boats.10 Sylhet was not brought under Muslim control until early in the fourteenth century. The legends surrounding its conquest are highly colourful and bear not a little resemblance to stories of other struggles between Muslim and Hindu in this period.

They refer to the existence of a Muslim family in the midst of a large number of Hindus; the trouble generally arose over the sacrifice of a cow on the occasion of the birth of a son or his circumcision. A kite was invariably there to carry a bit of flesh and throw it in the vicinity of a Brahmin family and then war broke out.11

The story related in Sylhet tells of one Burhan al-Din who sacrificed a cow to celebrate his son's birth,
was punished by the Hindu ruler, Raja Gaur Govinda, but eventually enlisted the aid of Shah Jalal, a sufi shaykh, and his three hundred and sixty followers. A recent review of the evidence concludes that the defeat of Gaur Govinda was indeed in part inflicted by Shah Jalal Mujarrad Yamani, who had joined forces with Sultan Shams al-Din Firaz Shah.12

The stories of Shah Jalal are known to everyone in Sylhet, where his shrine is still the focus of daily devotion and of pilgrimage. Hindu and Muslim alike revere and honour him for a victory that was due not to military force alone but to spiritual power. The modern historian is inclined to discount the supernatural elements in popular narrative of the feats of Shah Jalal, but neither these nor the concept of the sufi warrior presented any problem to the traditional hagiographer:

It is said that one day he represented to his bright-souled pir that his ambition was that just as with the guidance of the master he had achieved a certain amount of success in the Higher (spiritual) Jihad, similarly . . . he should achieve the desires of his heart in the Lesser (material) Jihad.13

The traditional and popular assessment of the parts played by sword and by word in Muslim ascendancy is remarkably accurate.

The conquest of centres of Hindu power was a necessary element in the spread of Islam, but not sufficient of itself to achieve the conversion of Bengal. This came, and only ever in part, through the teaching and preaching, and by the example and inspiration, of numerous scholars and holy men who accompanied or followed the conquerors.

There is, ideally, no dichotomy in Islam between temporal and spiritual authority: the categories ruler, scholar, and holy man or sufi are imprecise. There were sufi rulers, scholarly sufis, and rulers who were scholars. Nonetheless, a brief examination of their work and that of the institutions they founded and developed in the early period of Muslim rule in Bengal reveals trends of lasting significance.
Historical assessments of the independent sultanate in Bengal vary, but it seems there was hardly a man among the early Muslim rulers who did not seek to consolidate his power by the propogation of Islam. The cooperation of sultan and sufi in battle has already been noted: they also had a common interest in the building of madrasas, khangas and mosques. Such construction was for the sultan 'to base his political structure on a solid foundation'. But the solidity of the structure of Muslim rule depended on more than the goodwill and influence of the immigrants and those whom they attracted into Muslim society; for none could rule without a degree of allegiance on the part of the non-Muslim majority of the indigenous population. In this respect government policy varied, in the early period as later. If Bakhtyar Khalji was the Aurangzeb of Bengal, devoting his energy to the promotion of Islam and conversion of the people, there was something of the Akbar in Ala al-Din Husayn Shah (1493-1519) and his successors under whose rule 'the various religious communities developed in perfect peace and harmony'. Some historians see Husayn Shahi policy as a realpolitik of patronage of Bengali literature and tolerance of indigenous culture, whereas others regard the admission of Hindus to court as the beginnings of a syncretism that has ever since bedevilled the Muslim community in Bengal. The policies of the sultans are subject to almost contradictory interpretations. The earliest extant work of Muslim scholarship in Bengal is an Arabic translation of a Sanskrit text on yoga, which some see as a sign of the strength and vitality of Islam, others as a manifestation of weakness. What is certain is that while they played an essential role in the spread of Islam, the sultans' prime concern was to govern, which at times led them towards policies less favourable to the development of a Muslim community untainted by the traditions of the Buddhist or Hindu.

A main function of the religious institutions established by the sultans was to meet the needs of the immigrant scholars and sufis themselves. They came from all over the ancient Muslim world, as the names on the tombs in Sylhet alone testify; yet they held Islam in common and brought with them the means by which their Islamic life was sustained. Nothing more than a mat was required for the continued observance of the five daily prayers, a major pillar of Islam,
and a sixteenth century poet wrote of the immigrants, 'they never give up fasting as long as they have life left in them'.

In the madrasas of Bengal as in their homelands scholars pursued the study of Quran, Hadith and Islamic law, and maintained contact with their masters in the Arabian centres of learning, not least through observance of the hajj. Much of their Arabic scholarship and of their practice would have been totally incomprehensible to the Bengalis, and were pursued in relative isolation, but there were other aspects of their teaching and behaviour that would have attracted people to the Muslim community.

The relative equality of Muslim society may in many instances have attracted the lower castes of Indian society, although it is doubtful whether hierarchical Brahmanism had dominated Bengal by the thirteenth century. The chief attraction of the religion of the immigrants lay in sufi traditions that were not so much opposed to Bengali customs as congenial with them. Some sufis were to be found at court and in the madrasas, but they are most renowned for work, often pursued independently of urban centres of power and scholarship, in their khangas. The khanqa was a powerful medium of Islamic dawa: here the Quranic stories were told in the vernacular and forms of meditation were practised that were not dissimilar to those of the yogic schools, but above all the very form of the khanqa, housing a group of disciples around their master, found a welcome in Bengal.

The sufi master was known to his disciple (murid) as a pir. Pir can hardly be translated into English: literally 'elder', it is a Persian word denoting a holy man who is a spiritual master and guide, endowed with divine power and blessing (baraka) which he can also confer upon others, both in his lifetime and after death. Bengal was well able to assimilate such people and concepts. Hindus were able to identify pirs with their gurus and Buddhist were familiar with the veneration of holy places. Indeed, many mosques, khangas and dargas were built on the site of Hindu and Buddhist worship, as is apparent to the observer in present-day Sylhet, where Muslim edifices stand on raised mounds and under banyan trees.

There are, then, three significant trends apparent in the advent of Islam to Bengal, each of which is a form
of response to the Buddhist and Hindu society which the Muslims found and in which they remained a minority until the twentieth century. Firstly, there is the inclination of government towards policies open to charges of syncretism, or more recently secularism, so fine and subjective is the distinction between tolerance and encouragement. Some tension between the desire to propagate Islam and the need to respect the rights of different sections of society is inevitable. Islamic scholars, however, were not faced with such immediate pressures and could choose to conduct their work in relative isolation. They therefore tended to become a force for occasional renewal or reform rather than a constant vital resource of the life of the Muslim community. Thirdly, many of the sufi masters, whether proficient or not in traditional Islamic studies, became immersed in the culture of Bengal, a process facilitated by the propensity of the Bengali people to welcome, adapt and adopt the traditions brought from the west.

C THE MUSLIM FAMILY AND VILLAGE IN SYLHET

The Muslims of Bengal are deeply Bengali and deeply Muslim. Contact with the heartlands of Islam has continued to the present day, sustaining in the Bengali Muslim the awareness of the world-wide umma.23 Both the universal community of Muslims and the community in which he was born have a claim to his allegiance. The sense of belonging to the universal umma is so important to all Muslims that it has been used, in an account of the problems of Muslim minority groups, as a definition of what it is to be a Muslim: 'For the purposes of this discussion a person would be considered a "Muslim" as long as he feels, even vaguely, to be part of the overall Muslim ummah wherever he might be'.24 The writer here echoes sentiments expressed by Muhammad Iqbal in a refrain that, earlier this century, was sung by the Muslims of India to proclaim their unity: 'Neither Hindustan nor Pakistan is my home, but the whole world; and wherever I am, I am a Muslim'.25 This powerful sense of belonging is sustained by the universal use of the Arabic Quran, the prayer-rite and by the annual convergence of Muslims from all over the world upon Mecca for the hajj. Yet all Muslims will acknowledge that, however significant these
symbols of unity may be, the ideal represented by the community of believers who first heard the Quran has not been realized in subsequent history. Iqbal's words are still sung by Muslims of the Indian sub-continent, as in the Bengali mosque in Bradford one Sunday at the end of an address by the imam, but they are also now a part of the national anthem of Pakistan.

Muslims of Pakistan, India and Bangladesh cannot but be aware of the tension between the umma as an eschatological ideal and the actuality of division between Muslims. The collapse of the Ottoman caliphate and of the Khilafa movement, the dissension between Muslims regarding the creation of Pakistan and the break-up of the new nation in 1971 have all contributed to a weakening of the sense of belonging to the worldwide umma. When conflict arises between Muslims, personal identity is sought primarily in the communities in which people are born and raised. So to be a Muslim is to be a Bengali or a Punjabi, a Sylheti or a Mirpuri. And it is the actual community to which he belongs that is the resort of the migrant in a non-Muslim society. The Bengalis in Bradford seek the company not of fellow members of the worldwide umma, but of other Bengalis. The settled migrants, therefore, who seek to create a community in Britain are inspired not by the ideals of umma so much as by the experience of life in their home villages.

In a Bengali village, be it Muslim, Hindu or Christian, people are rarely addressed by name. Rather, terms of kinship are used, not only within families but between all members of the village. A Bengali calls only those younger than himself by name: all others are brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents etc. There are far more distinctions within the terminology of kinship in Bengali than in English, so that forms of relationship can be precisely indicated. To be is to belong. An English schoolteacher, who stayed for several weeks in a Sylheti village, observed the closeness, both emotional and physical, of relationship within the family.

Perhaps the most significant difference, for us at least, between family life in England and in the village, was the womb-like security of the family, and the impossibility of breaking away
from it to be alone. So strange was the idea of being alone that someone not a member of the family) suggested that my husband was mentally ill when he went away to be alone. No one slept alone, not because there wasn't space, but because it would have been lonely. 26

It is within the family and the wider family of the village that the sense of being a Muslim is fostered in those who later, as migrants, experience the loneliness of breaking away.

Perhaps the most constant and deep-rooted characteristic of a Muslim home is the repeated mention of the name of God. 'Allahu akbar' are the first words a new-born baby hears, as his father softly recites the azan, the call to prayer; and as the child grows he will learn to imitate his parents in their response to that call. Formal prayer apart, the child will learn to repeat the basmala before eating or undertaking any task, and to recite various short prayers at particular moments of the day. 'Before anything is done God's name is pronounced over it', observed the teacher in Sylhet.28 Even the noonday tedium is punctuated with sighs of 'Allah'. The child soon learns that nothing in life is to be done or even contemplated without reference to the will of Allah, inshallah being the ground of both caution and hope in speaking of the future.29

The azan that is whispered in the baby's ear is, of course, recited five times each day from the mosque. Thus a bond is established between the individual Muslim and the community of which the mosque is the most prominent symbol. It signifies the unity of the people who pray there under the leadership of the imam. It may also represent the cooperation of the villagers in its building and maintenance, or the generosity of a particular benefactor. The buildings vary greatly in their architecture. Some, erected by wealthy individuals or communities, are fairly ornate constructions with painted pinnacles and minarets crowned with loudspeakers, while others are indistinguishable from ordinary dwellings. The mosques in the village studied by Ellickson were built of mud or brick with metal roofs, and several I observed in Sylhet had simple thatched roofs.30 Even the mosque within the grounds of a student's
hostel in Sylhet was constructed in the same style and of the same materials as the rest of the building. It is evidently not essential that a mosque should be distinguished by dome and minaret: it is its use as a place of prostration, the literal meaning of masjid, that marks it out.

It is indeed the act of prayer and particularly the congregational prayer, rather than the mosque building, that is the most expressive symbol of Islam. The act of prostration is an enactment of that submission in faith before God which is islam. At the hours of prayer in village or town one is bound to see people at prayer in the mosque, in the fields, in their shops or homes. And in the village at the Friday congregational prayers and on other occasions when attendance is obligatory, few men are absent. In Bengal women do not attend the mosque but observe the prayers within the home. They therefore never share the experience of community enjoyed by the men, but it is unusual for a woman to pray alone, for female relatives living together in the same house perform the prayers together. The one exception to this practice that I observed in Sylhet was within the Darga of Shah Jalal. At the foot of the hillock on which stand the shrine and the main mosque lies a small building with a sign stating that it is a 'Women's Mosque'. Here, behind curtains, women may pray: they are allowed no closer to the shrine itself. My guide referring to this 'mosque', said, 'This is shirk'. He would not explain the remark, but it is possible that he condemned not only devotion to the pir, but the presence of women in a place of prayer.

Children, however, do go to the mosque, the older ones to join the congregation and all to attend the maktab. From an early period the mosque has been closely associated with learning, especially with Islamic studies. The maktab, an elementary school for the teaching of Arabic, the recitation of the prayers and the Quran, was held in the mosque itself or nearby building. It still plays an important part in the life of the whole village. There the boys learn how to take their place in the congregation and the girls acquire the skills expected of those who are to impart the fundamentals of Islam to the next generation. The whole community may take an active interest in the maktab, in the appointment of its
teacher, who is often also the imam, and in celebrating the children's graduation through the stages of learning. It is the nature of the Quran and its particular function in Muslim life that gives the maktab its peculiar significance, for here the children take to heart the very word of God, committing it to memory in a way that is essential to the survival of the Muslim community.33

However, by no means all the religious activity of the community is related to the mosque. The festivals that mark the months of the Islamic calendar are occasions for formal prayer, but also for much informal celebration in which men, women and children are all involved. The informal aspect is as significant as the formal, if indeed the distinction be tenable, such is the coherence of the recitation of the Quran and prayers with social activity. The solemn month of Ramadan is a time when the whole village is united in the daily cycle of fasting, prayer and communal eating. Even those who for some reason break the daylight fast do so without causing offence to others, and each evening families or larger groups meet to share the iftar meal. Families rise early each day for the sahur meal before dawn. More of the men of the village spend longer in prayer together during this month than at any other time of the year. The hardship of the fast is shared by all, even by children who fast only for a few days.

The joy of the festival of breaking the fast, Id al-Fitr, is also a communal experience. It is celebrated in formal congregational prayer by the men, while the women pray at home, but the whole family takes part together in the rest of the festivities. After the prayers, the day is taken up with visiting, for to call, if only briefly, at the homes of relatives and all in the neighbourhood is essential whenever a Bengali family or village has something to celebrate. People, or at least the children, wear new clothes and gifts of sweets, made at home, are exchanged. Even the poorest families, unable to spare the milk and sugar needed for confectionery, give their visitors the pan, made of betel nut and spices wrapped in betel leaf, without which no Bengali festival is complete.

Thus the Islamic festival is embellished by local custom. Interaction between universal Islamic
observance and Bengali culture is also evident in the performance of the rites of passage, especially at a wedding. The ceremony wherein the bride and groom separately give their consent to the marriage is conducted according to Islamic law, but surrounded by rites that are common to Muslims and Hindus in Bengal. Religious leaders in Sylhet tend to regard the extent of Islamic modification of these rites as insufficient and have a reputation for condemning them as syncretistic. One particular custom that gives offence is the ritual bathing of the bride and groom in their respective homes before the marriage. Prior to the bath, the body is smeared with a paste of turmeric and water (which gives its name to the ceremony, gaye halud, 'turmeric on the body'). This is said to have a cleansing effect on the skin. The ceremony may begin solemnly but degenerates into a mock fight, especially as the groom is daubed with paste and teased by the women of the household, who may also sing and dance before him.

My personal experience of gaye halud is limited to an adaptation of the same rite that was performed at my own (Christian) wedding in West Bengal. But it is described in Muhammad Chowdhury's account of the rites of his own village in Sylhet, and a Bengali in Bradford reported that it was observed when his family returned to Sylhet for the marriage of his daughter.34 The imam in Bradford stated that he had never seen the ceremony in Sylhet; but this is quite possible as his presence is not required and would be unwelcome if his disapproval were known. He would censure the singing and dancing and possibly also the purificatory overtones of the rite. On the other hand, there is an aspect of this and other ceremonies within a wedding that the imam regards as essential, for together they ensure the participation of the whole community. It is this participation, almost as much as the giving of consent or the registration, that legitimates the marriage: in a largely illiterate society, people prefer to see for themselves what happens rather than consult a document. So, after taking part in a wedding in Bradford, remote from most corrupting influences and conducted entirely properly according to Islamic law, yet attended by only a few, the imam commented that it had been a poor substitute for the day-long celebration by hundreds of guests that would have
Thus through the rituals of daily prayer, festivals and many other ceremonies, the Sylheti villager learns Islam. It is important, finally, to discuss one other aspect of life that indicates that the community to which he belongs is Muslim, namely the physical appearance of its members. Even where Hindu and Muslim live in proximity, they can often be distinguished by their clothing. Women of both communities wear saris, but it is the Muslim who observes purdah, putting on a burqa when she leaves the home. Among men who adopt western dress, Hindu and Muslim are of course indistinguishable, but there are significant variations in the traditional Bengali male attire, the dhuti. This is a long piece of cotton, wrapped around the waist, that may be worn with the pleated ends of the material passed through the legs and tucked into the waist or simply as a straight, skirt-like, garment, reaching the ankles. In the early nineteenth century the straight dhuti became a symbol of Muslim identity when worn by the followers of Titu Mir, who led Muslim peasants in the struggle with Hindu zamindars and British administrators. In recent years the lungi, a simplified version of the straight dhuti, has served the same function: the principal of a madrasa in Sylhet stated that the adoption of the lungi by Muslims was one sign that East Bengal had become a more truly Muslim society after the creation of Pakistan in 1947. The Islamic character of the lungi is said to consist in its economy, a shorter length of cloth being required, and its decency, for it covers the legs completely.

Another mark of the devout Muslim is his beard. This too distinguished the followers of Titu Mir and became a symbol of defiance when a Hindu zamindar imposed a beard tax of two and a half rupees per head upon his tenants, who refused to pay. Today men are encouraged by religious leaders to wear beards because to do so accords with the Sunna of the Prophet. Conformity is regarded as a sign of Islamic revival and, conversely, failure to conform indicates secularization. It is in respect of their appearance as much as anything else that returning migrants, 'Londonis', are said to offend against Islamic principle. The clean-shaven man who wears a shirt, tie and jacket is censured as much as the woman who abandons the burqa.
There are, then, many varied elements in the life of a Sylheti village whereby the traditions of Islam are preserved and the identity of the community affirmed. As prominent among these as the mosque or the maktab, the burqa or the beard, are the memorials of holy men, the pirs of Sylhet.

D THE PIRS OF SYLHET

(i) The Shrines

The Bengali Muslim is one of a community whose foundation was due in large part to the work of sufi masters. None can be unaware of the tradition in which he stands, for thousands of tombs and other memorials are to be seen throughout the country. In Sylhet every inhabitant, Hindu as well as Muslim, knows the stories of Shah Jalal and his 360 companions, and all visit his great Darga and the numerous lesser shrines. Pirs are accredited with a spiritual power, baraka, which is held to be present in their shrines and a source of blessing to those who worship there. The wealth and magnificence of the greater shrines, such as that of Shah Jalal in Sylhet, is proportionate to their baraka, and a pilgrimage to them may confer great blessing on the pilgrim. But lesser pirs and their shrines, which may consist of no more than a raised stone under a banyan tree, are not insignificant, for they may be endowed with peculiar powers and characteristics. Certain shrines are approached with particular intentions, for healing from disease, for example, or for the birth of a child. And the pirs have distinct reputations. Shah Paran, nephew of Shah Jalal, whose darga stands on a hill five miles east of Sylhet, is said to be garam, very powerful but easily offended, so that misfortune awaits any who approach him unworthily.

Belief in and experience of the baraka of the shrines is sustained by the stories of the pirs and miracles wrought in past and present, but also by the very appearance of these memorials and their surroundings. Even the tree that shades the simplest of them is an object of wonder, while the great dargas are full of symbols of divine power and blessing. A brief description of the Darga of Shah Jalal may convey
something of the impression it makes. The street leading to the main eastern gate is lined with shops selling shirni, food to be taken as a gift to the shrine, sticks of incense, candles and rose water. Through the gate one enters a large courtyard and faces the mound on which the tomb stands, in the north-west corner of the Darga. Also on the mound, to the south of the tomb, are a domed central hall where visitors to the tomb are received, a large mosque and huge modern minaret. Within the south and east walls of the Darga are a madrasa, offices, dwellings for various officials, and a room containing relics of Shah Jalal. The main courtyard includes an area for the overflow of worshippers in the mosque at the Friday prayers and the small 'Women's Mosque' at the foot of the steps to both mosque and shrine, for in neither place are women allowed. To the north of the courtyard stand large cauldrons for the preparation of food for festivals, a large cove-cote, a tank for ablutions (and fish) and a hostel for students of the madrasa. Surrounding the tomb itself is a graveyard where companions of Shah Jalal lie with others fortunate enough to be buried near him. On the west side of the tomb and graveyard is a well, whose water is said to have curative properties and is dispensed in small bottles.

Questions concerning the significance of different aspects of the Darga were invariably answered by further stories of Shah Jalal. The earth of the hillock on which the shrine stands was found by the pir to conform in 'colour, odour and flavour' to that given him by his uncle in Mecca with instruction to settle wherever he found its like.41 The pigeons are descendants of two pairs given to Shah Jalal by Nizamuddin in Delhi: these bring good fortune to any home in which they nest. Neither the pigeons nor the fish of the Darga are ever killed for food, for they are loved by Shah Jalal. Everything associated with him, including his sword and wooden sandal, serves to reinforce the worshipper's sense of awe and wonder and his belief that as God had evidently blessed Shah Jalal, so he would bless all who came to his shrine. Asked why they liked to pray by the tomb of Shah Jalal, people said that he was Allahr priva, dear to Allah.
Several informants described the Darga as a highly successful business enterprise. Certainly its endowments and income are great. Gifts of real estate or livestock, made in accordance with Islamic law, are common, but there is also a constant influx of smaller offerings in kind or cash, whose legality is dubious. The Darga's income provides the salaries of its staff, including the families of approximately one hundred khadim, and maintains the madrasa and its hostel as well as the general fabric of the whole institution. It has benefited in recent years from remittances sent by migrant workers in Europe and the Middle East, which made possible the construction of the new minaret. By this means those who have no opportunity to visit the Darga retain some association with it and therefore some assurance of reward.

The main significance of the shrines of Sylhet for the present research lies in the particular form of worship practised there. The manner of worship in a mosque and at a tomb differ as widely as the appearance of the two edifices. The mosque, whether a humble building in a village or a magnificent construction as in the Darga, is stark within, virtually devoid of ornamentation. But a pir's grave may be covered by a bright shamiana, its stone decked with expensive cloths, perfumed with rose water and incense, garlanded with flowers and illumined by candles at night. In the mosque prayers are offered formally and mainly in the congregation, the simplicity of the performance according with the environment; but at the tomb the worshipper may come bearing gifts of money or sweets, rose water to sprinkle on the grave, and may light candles or burn incense in niches of the wall around it. At the tomb of Shah Jalal there is a stone which people stoop to kiss. In prayer they stand facing the tomb hands uplifted.

The inward intention of the worshipper and the content of his prayer are the subject of controversy. Some, assuming the mantle of orthodoxy, accuse devotees of shirk, stating that they pray not to Allah, but to Shah Jalal. The response is often made that prayer is indeed directed to Allah alone, but in association with the prayers of the pir. It is said that the pir intercedes for those who are thus associated with him or that he will speak for them on the Day of Judgment: one official at the Darga of Shah Jalal said that
prayer to Allah by the tomb was like going to a powerful man with a reference from another. Yet this is also liable to be denounced as shirk. Orthodox disapproval of practices at the shrines occasionally takes the form of a demonstration. There is a branch in Sylhet of the Islami Chhatra Shibir (literally, the Islamic Students Camp), an association that campaigns among students for the implementation of the Sharia in both personal and political life in Bangladesh. Some of its members described how they once entered the Darga of Shah Jalal in a body to condemn non-Islamic practices, but were prevented from approaching the shrine by a group of fakirs who said that any change would be resisted to the point of death. However, the defence of the Darga does not depend solely on the enthusiasm of a few fanatics: such is the extent of popular devotion and investment in the shrine that any changes there would require a major political upheaval. The tradition that the rulers of Sylhet should, on coming to power, first visit the Darga is maintained by ministers of the government of Bangladesh as it was by British Collectors in the eighteenth century.44 The connection between religious institutions and political power has not been broken since the time of Shah Jalal himself.

(ii) The Pirs of the Present Day

The distinction between past and present, dead and living, pirs is in many respects insignificant, for devotees believe that the pir, who does not die but only slumbers in the grave, is their contemporary guide and a very present help in time of trouble.45 However, there are also men who are in all senses alive today and are known as pirs. These are no less controversial than the shrines. Some people claim that the only true pirs are those of past generations and that the present age has produced only charlatans. Others, however, acknowledge that there are pirs in the present, but are careful to distinguish between the true (satya) pir and the false (bhanda). The data and scope of this research do not permit detailed discussion of the issue, but some attitudes towards pirs of the present day may be illustrated by reference to people encountered during fieldwork in Sylhet.

A tailor in his shop in Sylhet town laughed when asked who could be called a pir. 'I’m a pir,' he said.
'He's a pir.' He pointed to a man with a beard and panjabi (a shirt worn over a lungi) that, by their length, symbolized the piety of the wearer. The clear implication was that anyone of suitable appearance could claim to be a pir and have no lack of credulous followers. The tailor had in fact saved sufficient money to open his business from the proceeds of writing verses from the Quran to be worn as amulets for healing or protection from evil. Others present during our conversation confirmed that a man who performed this service was often called a pir, and one added that he could hardly lose: if the amulet 'worked', the wearer would show his gratitude to its provider, if not, he would blame his ill-fortune and try harder next time. This kind of pir in no sense acts as a spiritual guide and is unlikely to be a member of a sufi order: his acceptance as a pir depends entirely upon his appearance, his ability to write what passes for Arabic, and presumably upon a degree of success.

What then are the marks of a true pir? Many look for karamat, the ability to work wonders or see into the future. A man celebrating the anniversary of his grandfather, Shah Pir, spoke of the latter's reputation as a seer (alokika), who had foretold the death of one of his grandsons, the man's elder brother. Complete strangers could be told details of their past or future by Shah Pir. He, like other pirs, could, if the need arose, change a fistful of soil into gold. But the grandson was aware that many so-called pirs were chalatans. The test of a pir, he said, was to offer him money, which a true pir would never accept.

Others subject a reputed pir to yet closer scrutiny. The one undisputed pir whom I met in Sylhet is a sufi of the Naqshbandi school. He denied the significance of manifestations of spiritual power, saying that if people were cured or blessed in any way, that was the work of Allah, not of man. To him the chief characteristic of a pir was that he say the daily prayers correctly and that he perform not only the prayers of obligation, but others, especially the night prayers, practised by the Prophet. He also stated that a pir never lied and never took money. He spoke less of himself than of his father, who had worked for the reform of the Muslims of Sylhet after studying in Mecca under the khalifa of the Haqshbandi school.
Both men are well known: several of the older Bengalis in Bradford said that they had heard the father speak, and the Principal of Sylhetis Alia Madrasa numbered him among the great reformers of recent times. These men are pirs in the technical sense of being spiritual masters, having disciples, murids, whom they formally accept. Yet the sufi stressed that they never sought to make a murid, but only to restore all Muslims to the straight path. Those were accepted as disciples who had a genuine desire to learn the very exacting spiritual discipline of the Naqshbandis, the heart of which is the silent, inward recitation of the name of Allah. This khafi dhikr distinguishes the Naqshbandis from other sufi groups that practise jail (vocal) dhikr. The goal, however, is one, namely the purification and enlightenment of the soul through its penetration by the light of Allah.46

Pir-muridi, as Bengalis term the relationship of master and disciple, is a controversial subject. Some who regard themselves as orthodox deprecate the whole sufi tradition as detracting from that allegiance due to Allah alone. Yet their protestations, like those of their predecessors in the nineteenth century, are ignored not only by the few who have made formal commitment of discipleship, but by the majority of Sylhet's Muslims. The pir is needed because he, and perhaps he alone, gives reassurance and direction to any who approach him. Ellickson notes that whereas 'the imam could only tell the troubled worshipper what the rules of the religion were, not whether God would forgive him . . . the fakir or pir could, and would, tell a man exactly what to do to gain grace'.47 Whether or not it is true to say, as Ellickson does, that people who consult a pir seek an intermediary with God, they certainly go in expectation of achieving 'peace of mind', a phrase that is frequently used to describe the experience of prayer at a shrine.

E SUMMARY

The diverse cultural origins of the Bengali Muslims, reflected in their language, have also influenced the development of the Muslim community in Bengal. It owes its genesis to the soldiers, sufis, scholars and traders who came to Bengal from Arabia and Central
Asia. These observed Islam in a variety of ways, according to their different needs and interests. While some sought to remain aloof from the indigenous culture, others found it amenable to Islam. Tension between the two elements of the Bengali Muslim heritage is evident in recent history, but within the Sylheti village there is much to indicate their fusion. The means by which the Sylheti learns Islam are also the means of his acquiring a distinctively Bengali identity. He shares with Muslims throughout the world the fundamental aspects of Islamic observance, but the manner of his celebrations is evidently Bengali, while his dress may betoken his identity as both Muslim and Bengali. Those who brought Islam to Sylhet have a special place in the memory and in the religious observance of its people. The shrines afford the opportunity for a form of prayer quite distinct from that offered in the mosque. However, the traditions of the sufis live not only in the shrines, but in pirs of the present day, who are widely consulted for help and guidance. Pir and shrine together constitute a major resource of the life of the Muslim community in Sylhet.
Bengali Muslims have been coming to Britain for over a century and to Bradford for nearly forty years. In order to understand the ways in which they seek to preserve their religious traditions, it is necessary to examine the nature of the community which they have created and within which Islam is observed. Since the shape of the community has been greatly affected by the pattern of migration, especially over the past twenty years, the major part of this chapter comprises an account of the processes of migration and settlement and of the relation between them. It will be seen that the emergent Bengali community cannot be simply characterized. Yet it has produced a number of organisations that have themselves in turn affected the development of the community, not least with regard to the observance of Islam. These are, therefore, described in the third section of the chapter. Finally, we discuss the various forms of leadership exercised within the community, for although the thesis will concentrate upon the work of the religious leader, the imam, there are others with authority who also seek to influence the direction of the lives of the Bengalis in Bradford.

A THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION

A large proportion of the Bengalis now resident in Britain migrated between 1962 and 1964, but this movement was only a part of a process that began in the nineteenth century and has not yet ended. It is not possible here to note all the factors that have affected this migration, but only those that appear most significant. At the same time it is necessary to describe the process in such a way that its complexity is not grossly simplified. The popular
concept of migration as flight from poverty to wealth, even when presented in academical dress as a 'push-pull' model, stresses the pressures on migrants and ignores their own perceptions and ability to determine their movements. Migrants are not mere automatons within economic processes, but respond in a variety of ways both to the initial causes of migration and to its effects. It is also essential to an understanding of their behaviour that migrants be seen not so much as individuals but as members of their families. It is the family that takes the decision whether a member should work abroad, and the migrant worker's attitudes towards his new environment and his work are based wholly upon the system of values which he shares with his kin in Bangladesh. Of prime importance among these is the value of the family's sense of pride or honour. The Urdu term izzat and the Bengali sanman are both used in Bengal to describe the esteem in which a person or family is held. It is from within this perspective that decisions about migration, settlement and return have to be seen.

The model devised by Everett S. Lee, and used by Anwar, to comprehend the factors that affect these decisions fits far better within the perspective of izzat than does a simple 'push-pull' model. He notes that both within the area of origin and the area of destination there are factors that attract or repel the potential migrant. These may differ for each family and are further complicated by the intervention of financial or legal obstacles. Finally, the migrant's assessments of the relative merits of each area may change as he becomes better acquainted with a country of which he previously knew little and as the situation which he left itself alters. Since this model is capable of taking into account the fluctuations that occur within a process of migration that extends over a long period, it is well suited to discussion of Bengali migration to Britain.1

Throughout the following account the term 'migrant' is preferred to 'immigrant' in reference to Bengalis who have come to Britain. 'Immigrant', as J.L. Watson notes, carries a pejorative connotation in current British English and also implies an intention of settlement which is denied in theory by many Bengalis and by some in practice. On the other hand, return to
Bangladesh is not so frequent as to warrant the description of the Bengalis in Britain as an émigré community. Thus it seems best to write of those who have come from Bangladesh as migrants, while acknowledging the growing number of Bengalis who were born in Britain.2

Sylhet is geographically and linguistically part of Bengal, but under British administration it was a district of Assam Province. The Assam District Gazetteer of 1905 reports 'a certain amount' of movement across provincial boundaries in and out of Sylhet. Referring to those who leave Sylhet, it notes that 'the majority of these people go to Bengal as servants, priests and shopkeepers, as the pressure on the soil there is as severe as in their native district'.3 Pressure on the soil, then, was one of the forces that stimulated migration, firstly from Sylhet into Bengal and then further abroad. The Permanent Settlement of 1783 had resulted, in Sylhet, in a multiplication of separate holdings, many of which soon returned to the hands of zamindars, while others were too small to sustain several generations of a family.4 The purpose of migration was to reduce the pressure for a particular family not so much by the removal of one or two individuals, who in any case returned, as by the acquisition of more land and property. The family that lived by subsistence farming had no other means of increasing its landholding than the securing of an income elsewhere. Thus it could ward off the predations of the zamindars and save the family honour.

The search for work took some Sylhetis as far as Calcutta. There they found employment in restaurants serving seamen in the Kidderpur docks and eventually themselves began service on board ships. As news of their success reached Sylhet, others followed and were received by recruiting agents into camps at Kidderpur. Sylheti culinary skills were put to use in the galleys of merchant ships and, when opportunity arose to leave ship, in British ports. It seems that there were Sylheti restaurant workers in London as early as 1873.5

Recruitment into the British merchant navy continued in the twentieth century, particularly in the course of two world wars, but it was not until the 1940s that small communities of Sylhetis and Punjabis began
to develop in inland industrial towns. Some were
directed there to work in munition factories and other
wartime industries; others simply jumped ship and
found work for themselves. As Commonwealth citizens
they were free to enter the United Kingdom, and
responsibility for tracing deserting seamen lay with
the shipping companies rather than with the police.
Bengalis in Bradford tell the story of a whole crew
that jumped ship at Newcastle, to be replaced by
another crew of Sylhetis, who immediately emulated
their predecessors.

Very few of these early migrants stayed for life in
Britain. They worked here as long as suited them and
returned home with their savings, often being replaced
by a younger relative. The network of communication
between Sylhet and Britain became well established, so
that it was not difficult to arrange the recruitment
of a relative. No further sponsorship was necessary.
It is not known how many men entered the country by
these means, for no records of Commonwealth immigrants
were kept before 1955. Dahya states that in Bradford
in 1944 there were some thirty former seamen from
undivided India. A Bengali who came there in 1950
knew of only two other Bengalis in the city at that
time. He had arrived in Britain in 1930 and had worked
in many towns from London to Dundee and in a variety
of occupations. Bradford offered him and others who
followed in the next two decades stable employment in
the wool trade or the expanding engineering industry,
and cheap housing.

During this period, although some seamen continued to
arrive, more migrants came directly into employment
through the sponsorship of their kinsmen already here,
who could raise loans and make arrangements for them.
Kinship and village networks played an important part
in the process of migration, for although the early
migrants are termed 'pioneers', they were such not as
individuals but solely as representatives of their
families. As more of the migrants stayed for longer
periods they were not replaced but joined by their
brothers and sons. Very few were accompanied by their
wives: of 3457 Pakistanis in Bradford in 1961, only
81 were women. However, groups based on family and
village relationships began to form. These offered a
base for new arrivals and became parts of a network of
communication within Britain which facilitated movement
between towns.
It is evident that at this period the attractiveness of migration to Britain had not diminished. Negative factors, the long hours of unpleasant work in an alien environment, remained and migrants still intended to return to their homelands. Yet the development of systems for the support of their own way of life within Britain certainly made their situation more tolerable. Then in the early 1960s this development was further stimulated by a major change in the process of migration. The threat of immigration control by the British government prompted thousands more people to enter before the doors were closed. Between 1955 and 1960 17,120 Pakistanis entered Britain, but in 1961 and the first half of 1962, 50,170 entered. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 then imposed a system of regulation through the issue of employment vouchers. There were three categories of voucher: 'A' for people with specific jobs to come to, 'B' for those with special skills or qualifications, and 'C' for unskilled workers without definite prospect of employment. Within the last category priority was given to ex-servicemen. From 1962 to 1964 over 30,000 'C' category vouchers were issued in India and Pakistan.

It was at this time that many Sylhetis migrated, as unskilled workers. It is essential to perceive that the issue of vouchers, especially in category 'C', was seen in Sylhet not as a form of regulation but as direct encouragement on the part of the British government. One Bengali informant in Bradford spoke of his coming in 1963 as a response to an invitation extended to ex-servicemen in Bengal. Reactions to later changes in immigration policy have to be seen in the light of these assumptions and consequent expectations. In the 1960s, although there was not the same shortage of labour as in the previous decade, there were still sufficient opportunities of employment for migrant workers in jobs that white British were reluctant to undertake. The Sylheti in London, Birmingham or Bradford found that by sharing accommodation and working long hours, often on night-shifts, he was able to remit to Bengal a large percentage of his income. That the actual income was, by British standards, low did not worry him, as his overriding concern was for the well-being of his family in Sylhet, not for himself.
Thus the effect of legislation intended to reduce the flow of immigrants was actually to increase the number of new entrants and to consolidate a tendency towards settlement. Since it was no longer easy to sponsor a young relative, particularly after the cessation of the issue of 'C' category vouchers in 1964, newcomers were more likely to remain than be replaced after a few years; and if they were to remain, they were more likely to wish their wives and children to join them. However, the 1971 Immigration Act finally made it impossible for all but the wealthiest entrepreneurs to enter the United Kingdom from the 'New Commonwealth', thus ending the chain of migration of single men. This Act still permitted the entry of dependants, although the mode of its operation and subsequent further restrictions have delayed the arrival of many and prevented others from coming.

Before 1971 Bengalis were not distinguished from other Pakistanis in any statistics and estimates of their numbers vary: Dahya writes that in Bradford in 1964, of a total Pakistani population of 12,000, 1,500 were Bengali; however, a Bengali who has lived in Bradford since the 1950s estimates that there were some 4,000 Bengalis there in the mid-1960s. This was an almost entirely male population. The total number decreased during the 1970s to under a thousand, although the proportion of women rose. The drop in numbers appears to have been due mainly to movement to other towns in search of employment. Decreasing need of unskilled labour, particularly in the textile industry, but also in engineering, has greatly affected the non-white population of Bradford, who in 1979 constituted six per cent of the total workforce and fifteen per cent of the unemployed. At the same time more of those remaining have been joined by their wives and children. Statistics compiled by the Directorate of Educational Services in Bradford indicate that the number of dependant relatives arriving is still rising.

Future trends are impossible to predict accurately as they depend on many variables, but it seems likely that the number of Bengalis in Bradford will change little. In 1980 unemployed men, living apart from their families, were still moving out of the city, but if unemployment worsens throughout the country, even these may be discouraged from moving. Those
with families are less likely to consider a move, particularly once they have bought a house in Bradford, where prices are still relatively low. The continuing arrival of wives and children will redress the balance of sex and age to some extent, but the composition of the community will for a long time be quite unlike any in Sylhet.

The changes within the Bengali community in the two decades from 1960 to 1980 have been accompanied by a change in the balance and intensity of factors that attract or repel the migrant. The developing community continues to offer comfort to the worker, but may be regarded very differently by his wife. Moreover, even he cannot fail to be aware of elements in British society that would, if permitted, literally repel him. However, in order to understand his perception of the present situation, it is necessary also to consider the changes that have occurred over the same period in Sylhet.

The most obvious result of the influx of the earnings of migrant workers into Sylhet is an increase in the prosperity of many families. The town of Sylhet and those villages from which migrants have gone are dotted with new buildings, houses, mosques and other prestige-winning institutions, constructed by the 'Londonis', as all migrants, whatever their actual location in Britain, are called. Indeed, President Zia al-Rahman is reported to have said on a visit to Sylhet that he wished to see the whole town become 'a little London'. Migration, therefore, has certainly fulfilled the immediate ambitions of those families whose representatives abroad have met with success: considerable prestige is associated with not only the land and property that are the traditional signs of prosperity, but with the new symbols of English furniture, fittings and even baths. All this has occurred at the same time as the Bengali sika, used by the poor in Bengal for storing food, has become popular as a hanging basket for plants in middle-class white British homes.

However, the 'Londonis', prominent as they may be, are only a small proportion of the population of Sylhet. There are some villages where most families have a member abroad, but others reveal a great inequality between the newly rich and the ever poor;
for while migration may have served to reduce pressure on land owned by migrants, it has also contributed to inflation of the cost of land. The Collector of Biswanath, who is responsible for land revenues in a part of Sylhet District that has sent many people to the United Kingdom, stated that the price of land there had risen by 300 per cent in one year. This he attributed mainly to the influx of migrant wealth and the diminishing availability of land for purchase. Observations of this nature give ground to the Marxist conclusion that 'labour migration is a form of development aid given by poor countries to rich countries'.

The Bangladesh government has attempted to ameliorate these effects by encouraging the investment of foreign earnings in agricultural and small industrial cooperatives. But only in 1979 was an office set up in Sylhet to advise migrants on such investments, while travel agents have been flourishing for years. Moreover, any move towards a use of foreign earnings more profitable to the whole community is frustrated in several ways. Village people prefer visible signs of their status and wealth and do not trust banks or governments to invest it on their behalf. (In this they may not be altogether foolish, but there are as a result occasional spectacular burglaries in Sylhet, and new houses resemble decorous fortresses.) Furthermore, the government is reluctant to discourage migrant workers as it requires foreign exchange, for the taka has no value outside Bangladesh. Encouragement is in fact given in the form of the Advance Import Profit scheme, which enables a migrant worker to obtain a rate of currency exchange approximately 30 per cent above the ordinary rate.

In the absence of other factors it might be expected that the combined forces of reduced availability of land and inflation in Bangladesh might stimulate further migration. Certain countries of the Middle East, notably Saudi Arabia, do offer opportunities, under strict contracts, to Bengalis who are able to raise the finance for the initial journey, and a new series of short-term migrations may develop. However, further migration to the United Kingdom is impossible, but for a few exceptions. Yet at the same time as immigration controls have altered the pattern of migration and finally put an end to it, both these controls and other circumstances of life in Britain
have so changed that little of its original attraction remains and there is much, in Lee's terms, to repel. But for the majority of Bengalis in this country, return is improbable. The issue facing them is not whether they remain or return, but whether their original aspirations and attitudes towards life here can be modified sufficiently to cope with the changes demanded of them.

B TOWARDS SETTLEMENT IN BRADFORD

(i) Phases of Settlement?

The processes of migration and of settlement are closely, but not inextricably, linked. At the risk of some repetition, they are treated separately here, in order that the issues facing migrants who consider settlement may be clearly stated. The development of ethnic minority groups in Britain has now been examined in several studies, including one by Roger Ballard and Catherine Ballard who conclude that 'it is possible to isolate a chronological sequence of four phases in the development of South Asian settlements in Britain'. The Ballards' conclusion, which is better characterized as a hypothesis, being based upon the study of Sikh communities, provides a useful framework for comparative analysis.13

The phases of settlement detected by the Ballards may be summarized as follows:-

Phase One: Mid-nineteenth century to 1945.
The migration of individual pioneers who formed small nuclei of itinerant workers.

Phase Two: 1945 to 1960.
The mass migration of unskilled workers, who lived in all-male households.

The migration of wives and children, whose arrival meant the consolidation of settlement.
Phase Four: 1970 onwards.

The emergence of a British-educated second generation. A tendency towards dispersal in British society.

The authors note the characteristics of each phase, the dates of which are not precise and vary from group to group. Indeed, the character of different communities may vary even within otherwise equivalent phases. Moreover, it is acknowledged that some migrants, such as the Mirpuris and the Sylhetis, have not yet reached phase four. However, the main question raised by the hypothesis is whether other groups will follow the same broad pattern of settlement. The following account of three phases in the development of the Bengali community in Bradford indicates that no clear pattern has yet emerged.

(a) The Bengali pioneers - Mid-nineteenth century to 1962

This long period could be sub-divided into two phases, before and after the second world war, for it was then that migrants found employment in northern industries and the London rag trade as well as in their traditional dockside cafes. Throughout the period and particularly in its latter stages, the chains of migration were established which became the basis for the mass movement which did not occur until the 1960s.

The few Bengalis who came to Bradford before then lived in a part of the city that Dahyr termed 'an area of transition and marginal to the local people'. Here they rented rooms in houses owned by the eastern Europeans who had found a refuge in Bradford after the war. So marginal is Howard Street, part of the area in question, that in 1980 most of its houses were unoccupied and blocked-up: immigration had ceased. The terraces of back-to-back cottages and larger houses provided ideal accommodation for the migrants, many of whom eventually bought such property. Dahya reports that as late as 1964 some cottages could be bought for as little as £45. Even larger houses were priced in hundreds rather than thousands of pounds. Their condition and life-expectancy was of secondary importance to their low cost and situation, close to the mills and factories where the men intended to
BRADFORD

A  The Twaqulia (Tawakullia) Mosque
B  Howard Street: location of the first mosque
C  The City Hall
work for a few years before returning home with their savings.

These migrants had few requirements, beyond accommodation and work, that necessitated the development of the institutions typical of settled ethnic groups. In 1959, when there were some 3,000 Pakistanis in Bradford, the only Pakistani businesses were two shops and three cafes. They had no need to seek any reinforcement of their cultural identity other than that provided by the sharing of accommodation, in which respect Bengalis always stayed apart from Pakistanis. Bradford was to them indeed an area of transition, not one from which they would move to more salubrious parts of the country, but from which they would return to the villages where they belonged. Life in Britain and the migration itself was meaningful only in terms of life back home.

(b) The voucher-holders - 1962 to 1964.

It was the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 that prompted large numbers of Sylhetis to migrate within a short period. They arrived with expectations of life and to conditions that were identical to those of their predecessors, and it was with them that they first stayed. Informants in Bradford invariably reported having lived with a relative for a period before finding work. Unemployment was seldom for long as not only was there demand for labour in the mills but an efficient network of communications about opportunities in different cities had developed through families, shops, restaurants and other concerns. Dahyr reports that by 1966 Bradford had 133 Pakistani institutions, including 51 shops and 16 cafes.

Thus in the course of this new phase of migration the initially alien environment began to take on some of the characteristics of the area the migrants had left. As a result of the presence of relatives and other developments that reminded them of their other world, the migrants 'began to find that they were becoming involved in social obligations in Britain which they were bound to fulfil if they were not to lose face in the eyes of their fellows'. The Ballards regard this phase, which occurred earlier for the Sikhs, as
crucial, for it was then that there began the transfer of the arena in which izzat was won or lost from the home society to Britain. It is certain that the transfer, or rather extension, of the locus of izzat is crucial for the development of migrant settlements, but it is debatable whether it took place at a similar point in the Bengali community.

Firstly, as Dahya stresses, the area of social obligation in Britain was strictly confined to the migrant population. No Pakistani, with the possible exception of a few professional men, sought affirmation of his self-esteem from the natives, but from his fellows. Dahya well illustrates this by reference to the different values of the migrant:

An immigrant visitor evaluates his host not on the basis of the type of his house and its lay-out, the kind of furnishings and amenities provided in it, and the social reputation of the area in which it is located, but on the basis of his hospitality, his friendliness and his qualities as a fellow-immigrant.17

Secondly, among Bengalis in Bradford there seems to have been little awareness of themselves as a community. Their ethnic identity was asserted, if at all, purely in relation to the West Pakistanis and the host community, and expressed mainly by the specific locations of their housing within the inner city. That is, any sense of identity as a community was formed as much by external pressures, such as the limitation on the kind of housing that would have been made available to them, as by internal preferences. Although attempts were made to form cultural, community or political associations, all failed until the crisis between 1969 and 1971 of the emergence of Bangladesh. And there was no community in the sense of the kinship network of a Sylheti village, for although there were several households of brothers, cousins and in-laws, the major part of all families remained in Bengal. The migrants came from different families, different villages and different parts of the District, so that it is not surprising that a sense of belonging together was aroused only by a crisis, and that in Bengal. They had little reason to compete for family honour in Bradford, except in the limited sense described by Dahya.
Among the Bengalis who came as voucher-holders were a few, from Sylhet and other districts, who sought further education and professional employment. One or two had come earlier, in the 1950s. Like their compatriots from the villages, they were unemployed at first and stayed with other Bengalis, moving from town to town in a succession of jobs until they found the training or occupations they sought. Now working in banking, teaching, insurance and catering, they appear in many ways to be best equipped for settlement. Their wives accompanied them or arrived sooner than other Bengali women and their children have been brought up, and some of them born, in Britain and educated in schools here. They speak fluent English, live outside the inner city and have altogether far more extensive contacts with British society than have most of their fellow Bengalis. Yet these are the families that are among the most likely to return to Bangladesh, and they retain strong links there. They appear to have much investment in Britain, but in fact have little or none that cannot be withdrawn. Thus neither seclusion from British society in the ghetto nor confident entry into it are reliable indicators of a process of settlement.

(c) The reunion of some families - 1964 onwards.

Migrants from Sylhet have been slower than most other groups in bringing their wives and children to join them in the United Kingdom, and by no means all have decided to do so. Several factors account for the delay and reluctance. Firstly, the Sylheti men arrived in large numbers only in the early 1960s and the decision to reunite a family presupposes a sense of security, especially financial, that takes several years to establish. Secondly, many were reluctant to subject their families to the customs of a society they regarded as morally corrupt. Thirdly, many managed to maintain sufficient contact with their families in Bangladesh by making return visits, which became more frequent as earnings increased. Nonetheless, for many others the pain of separation outweighed all the disadvantages of reunion, and applications were made for wives and children to enter the country.

The process was then further complicated by the 1971 Immigration Act, which closed almost all ways of entering Britain left open after 1964, and so
radically altered the options available to Bengalis. Since 1964 only professionally qualified or highly skilled people from the New Commonwealth had been able to replace or join a family member here, but now restrictions were imposed upon the dependent relatives who could go to live with the chief wage-earner of the family. The character of immigration controls has been determined by British assumptions about the nature of family relationships: in 1980 the categories of dependent relatives with the right of entry to the United Kingdom were restricted, virtually excluding all but close relatives. Consequently, the decision to reunite a family in Britain now entails a severance within the family far greater than the migrants wished and greater than that experienced in communities that migrated earlier.

Those who did decide to come to Britain were then faced with delays of several years before they could obtain their legal right of entry. Having arrived, the women and children have had various effects upon the life of the migrant community and have responded in various ways to it. In Bradford, where the ratio of men to women remains high, in the region of 5:1, there has been little change in the housing pattern. The families have so far remained within existing areas of settlement in the inner city, and some have moved into previously all-male households there. Others have settled apart from the main areas of Bengali habitation, but there is as yet no confirmation of the hypothesis that such movement inevitably occurs in this phase of settlement, nor that the all-male dormitory becomes marginal to the migrant community. The extraordinary mixture of households that makes up the Bengali community in Bradford bears little resemblance to a village or town in Sylhet.

The changes that have occurred are not apparent on the surface. But the presence of women and children has in some respects united the Bengalis, and begun the process of the formation of a community on the basis of mutual interest. In London this has been occasioned largely by the need for security against racism, and organizations with this purpose have proliferated. In Bradford relations with the host society are not so bad, but there is growing appreciation that provision must be made for the social and educational needs of the women and children, and
that this has to be organized by the Bengalis themselves. The aims of the Bangladesh People's Association and of the Twaquilia Islamic Society, examined in detail below, evince this concern. However, some claim that such action has come too late for many women for whom the experience of entry and settlement into Britain has been traumatic. They find themselves isolated and secluded in Britain as they never were at home. The absence of female relatives and friends, the observance of purdah where few or no neighbours are fellow-villagers, and, when they need to go out, the constant stress of encounter with racial prejudice or even physical attack have resulted in serious psychological illness for some and great distress and loneliness for many.

The development, then, of the Bengali community in Bradford has been marked by three stages which approximate to the three phases of the Ballards' hypothesis. Yet it is impossible to state whether the same pattern of settlement, leading into and through a fourth phase, is being followed. Since the process of Bengali migration has differed from that of the Sikhs, especially in that it has been affected by the 1971 Immigration Act, the community has not simply passed through the early phases of settlement. The characteristics of the second phase are not only to be seen in the past, but are found in the present alongside those of the third phase. There are still many Bengali men living apart from their families and such reunion of families as has occurred has been only partial. Settlement in Britain, therefore, is not the sole option before the migrants and the future of the community will depend on a multiplicity of decisions to be made by individuals and families.

(ii) Present Options

There are certain similarities between the situation of the Bengalis and that of the larger Mirpuri community in Bradford, in that many people within both groups migrated in the early 1960s and Mirpuris, like Sylhetis, have been slow to reunite their families in Britain. The Mirpuris in Bradford have been thoroughly studied by Verity Saifullah Khan, whose assessment of their way of life is pertinent to consideration of the options that lie before members of the Bengali community. She notes that the migrants
find themselves living in two worlds, with considerable investment in both. The process is complex:

There is no clear correlation between the villagers' emotional and financial involvement with the home society and degree of participation in British society. It is not an either/or decision; individuals vary in ability and desire to manipulate two cultural systems. Nor is time an obvious factor influencing one's orientation. It is the movement to and from the homeland, rather than time in Britain, which makes villagers more aware of the changes taking place in the village and their changing perceptions of life at both ends of the migration chain. Their experience of life in two different worlds affects their attitudes, which in turn affects their behavior.23

Saifullah Khan observes that the behaviour of the migrant in one context has consequences and repercussions within the other: thus, while the wealth he gains in Britain wins him status in his home society, the further he advances into British society, the further he departs from his origins. The migrant lives not so much in two worlds as between them:

Having left village life and his home, the migrant becomes dependent upon both worlds. In one he achieves economic advancement and in the other he is accorded recognition of his success. Restricted to one world at any time he lives totally in neither.24

This very complex situation is liable to be misrepresented if migrants are regarded as having a simple choice between settlement and return, but an examination of these alternatives may serve to clarify the changes that have occurred in Bengali perceptions of life in Britain and in Sylhet. It is also important to note that return to Sylhet is a real option for some people, as well as a distant prospect for many others.

The intention of return has come to be seen by researchers as a myth which is used by the migrants 'to legitimise continued adherence to the values of the homeland and to condemn the assimilation of
English cultural values as irrelevent and destructive'.25 This observation has some foundation, but the migrant communities, Sikh, Muslim and Hindu, from the Indian sub-continent bring with them mythologies that provide ample resources for the maintenance and application of their cultural traditions and norms. If the life or death of the myth of return depended upon its function as described above, it would be short-lived. There are other factors, related to actual return, that sustain or threaten the existence of this myth.

Some individuals and some families do in fact return to Bangladesh, to re-settle there. A new school in Sylhet town has about sixty pupils who speak and write better English than Bengali, for all have lived in Britain, but have now returned to the care of relatives who will ensure they receive a proper upbringing. And it is not uncommon for a girl to return to Sylhet to be married and to settle there with her husband. Elderly migrants are perhaps most likely to return permanently, to retire in their home villages. Finally, no Bengali who dies in Bradford, young or old, is buried there: all are flown home to lie among the graves of their kin.

The myth is also sustained to an extent by the frequency of return visits, which last from a few weeks to several years. A Bengali bank manager in Bradford estimated that by the late 1970s most adult males return, alone or with their families, once in two years. People go back for various reasons: to purchase land or property, to organize the construction of a house, mosque or other building, to arrange a marriage, or to see sick parents. Such visits reinforce the sense of belonging to Sylhet and are opportunities for enjoying the enhancement of family honour which migration has achieved.

But while people continue to return permanently or temporarily, there are other factors that undermine the myth of return. The chief of these may well arise on a return visit, when the migrant experiences a home-coming that is at the same time alienating. The Sylheti discovers that he has become a 'Londoni' or even a bideshi, a foreigner. Subtle changes have occurred in his neighbours' perceptions of him, so that alongside the approval and respect he seeks, he also receives a certain disdain. He may even sense
that others exploit his new wealth and his need to display it, while also being acutely aware that local inflation has eroded the value of his savings and therefore his ability further to extend his prestige. The heightening of the family's izzat is achieved at the cost of increased demands upon its members. The home-coming may also result in disillusionment about a quality of life that in absence had been idealized. The urban migrant may soon tire of the lack of diversion in the village. Finally, those who return with their children are liable to be confronted with acute problems of adjustment, especially with regard to systems of education, both secular and religious.

Permanent return to Bangladesh illustrates the change that may take place in the balance of factors that repel or attract the migrant within the areas of origin and destination. While new circumstances in Britain have resulted in new attitudes to life here, perceptions of Sylhet have also changed, so that some attractive elements have become more prominent and those that originally stimulated migration have diminished.

But the number who do return remains small. It is still a live option for single men faced by long-term unemployment, for this totally deprives them of their raison d'etre in Britain as even the most frugal can save little on the dole. They may choose to cut their losses and return, possibly to migrate again elsewhere. And return is a possibility for those families with the means of maintaining a standard of living in Bangladesh that is comparable to that enjoyed in Britain, and with sufficient confidence in and retention of their traditional values and customs to enable the children to adapt to the new way of life.

The other option before people is that of settlement, but this may mean settlement alone or as a family. It cannot be assumed that all men living alone in Bradford will bring their wives and children from Bangladesh. Some have decided to remain in Britain alone and to return in retirement. Here they find sufficient support and companionship among brothers and other relatives, who may well include women and children. But the main reasons for this decision lie in the disadvantages of reunion: the decreased
value of savings and earnings that could then be remitted to Bangladesh; the threat of British culture and the racism, covert or overt, that the family would experience; and the decreased mobility that the presence of a family would entail, at a time when it may be necessary to make several moves, as in the early days of migration, to find work. The lifestyle of these men has changed little over nearly twenty years. When in employment they work hard and long, have little time for recreation or any kind of social activity, and seek improvement of their status not in Bradford, but in Sylhet. They recognise the increased difficulty of life here, and express a bitter puzzlement in response to the changes about them, particularly with regard to race relations. One man in Biswanath said:

Your government asked us to come to work and said we could stay. It is the government's responsibility to make life possible for us there. If on the other hand the people of Britain decide that they do not want us any more, they should say so clearly and we would return. What we cannot understand or tolerate is the present uncertainty.

It may be that those who decide to remain in the face of these odds will be the more inclined to take positive action to enable the community to cohere and be better able to cope with its changing environment, and even to affect the direction of change.

The migrants who remain in Britain with their families are those most acutely aware of being between two cultures. For while their family honour is maintained through interaction with their fellows here, they stand to lose the stability that a closer relationship with the home village had given. What is lost cannot be compensated by increased financial security or an improved 'standard of living', nor by finding a degree of acceptance by white neighbours. Emotional links, forged through generations in a family in Sylhet, have been suddenly snapped and cannot be remade. It is not easy for an English person, brought up in a culture that values individual independence and creativity, to appreciate the placing of a very high value upon a closeness, physical and emotional, of relationships and upon correspondingly high levels
of dependency and responsibility between members of a family. The English misapprehension of dependency as a sign of immaturity is balanced by the Bengali assessment of English behaviour as irresponsible and selfish. Conflict between the first generation of Bengali migrants, and their children is due not least to the tension between these divergent outlooks. The result is often confusion, in which the traditional values operate in certain spheres, as in the mosque, while modern western ideas are absorbed elsewhere, as at school. The home is the melting pot from which in time some form of replacement for what has been lost may emerge.  

Significant attempts to influence the development of the life of the community are being made by the organizations it has created and by its leaders. These are important elements in any settlement, indicating both its future and its present state, and are now examined in turn.

C BENGALI ORGANIZATIONS IN BRADFORD

Throughout Europe hundreds of organizations have emerged over the past two decades within ethnic minority groups. The first to be founded among migrant workers were mostly political organizations, based in the home country, but as fuller migrant communities developed, with the arrival of families, so the number and variety of organizations grew. The growth of religious and educational bodies within the Muslim community in particular has been proportionate to the growth of family life, for the development of both has been associated with changes in immigration policy, in 1962 in the United Kingdom and in 1973 and 1974 elsewhere, that have stimulated the reunion of families. Among Muslims and others in the United Kingdom most of these associations are locally based and are not affiliated to national or international organizations. One main reason for this may be the presence of a 'professional' class of migrants with the skills to organise and direct their fellows, especially in relations with the host community. Where no such class exists, as among Turkish workers in Germany, home-based political and religious organizations have been more effective.
There are at present dozens of organizations among the Muslims of Bradford, including welfare associations, religious bodies and political parties. Some are very small, while others claim to act on behalf of the whole Muslim population. One of the first attempts to unite the Pakistanis in Bradford was the founding in 1957 of the Pakistani People's Organization. This was, however, constantly beset by internal divisions, particularly by the tension between West and East Pakistanis which came to a head in 1971. The Pakistani People's Organization was soon defunct and the activities of its two wings were superceded by the work of support for the two sides engaged in the civil war. Local action committees sent thousands of pounds in 1971 to West Pakistan and to the leaders of emergent Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Sangram Parishad collected £20,000 from Bengalis in Yorkshire alone. These bodies were disbanded after Bangladesh had attained independence.

1972 saw the foundation of a new organization, the Bangladesh People's Association in Great Britain, but this attracted little support until a major effort was made to reform it in 1979. The man who wished to take over its leadership and to develop the Association's work had to contend with the incumbent president and the ensuing election itself generated considerable interest. This took place in the hall that the Bengalis also hire for the Id prayers, and the imam observed that more attended the election than the prayers that year. In fact about four hundred Bengali men were present, seventy per cent of the adult male population. The challenger was elected with a majority of 2:1.

In 1980 the Association claimed a membership of 554 men. It was hoped, by the president, that membership would later be open to women. He stated that 'only a handful' had not joined the reconstituted Association, either because they were out of the country or because 'they have their own organizations'. The Bangladesh People's Association can now purport with some justification to represent the Bangladeshi community, as the High Commissioner of Bangladesh acknowledged by addressing a meeting called by the Association when he visited Bradford in 1980.

The Bangladesh People's Association aims to work for the 'upliftment' of all Bangladeshis in the city.
This is one instance of the significance of the term Bangladeshi, for the Association excludes any Indian Bengalis while embracing non-Muslim Bangladeshis. There is one Hindu member of its executive committee. In 1979 the committee designated six spheres of operation—culture, employment, law, youth, religion and women—and appointed sub-committees accordingly. An application was made in 1980 for a grant from the city's Comprehensive Community Programme to enable the Association to develop its work. £17,000 was claimed that would be used to improve and adapt the premises owned by the Association, a house in a terrace in the main area of Bengali settlement, and to employ a community worker. The latter would be responsible for the organization and execution of a Community Project, based on the Association's premises, which would include English classes for women, health education, again especially for women, family planning advice, welfare rights advice, and cultural and educational activities. By the summer of 1980 the resources of the Comprehensive Community Programme had not yet been allocated and little progress had been made by the Bangladesh People's Association, except in respect of its weekly advice surgery, manned by the president and a few others with the necessary time and ability.

The future success of the Bangladesh People's Association depends largely on whether the interest and unity achieved in 1979 can be sustained. This in turn will be affected by the course of its relations with other organizations in the Bengali community. There are three known to the researcher: the Twaqulia Islamic Society, the Dawat al-Islam and the Bangladesh Working People's National Association. The membership of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, founded in 1969, comprises all Bengali Muslims in the city of Bradford. Its aim is simply to encourage the observance of Islam. As the latter is fairly narrowly interpreted both in the constitution of the Society and in practice to mean the observance of prayers and the Islamic education of the children, the Twaqulia Islamic Society has little reason to quarrel with the Bangladesh People's Association. The memberships of the two societies are virtually coextensive: the Bangladesh People's Association excludes no Bangladeshi and only the few non-Muslims do not belong to the Islamic Society. The former even has a sub-committee for
religion, whose chairman is responsible for liaison with the mosque. (He was easily recognizable at a meeting of the executive committee, for he alone wore a beard.) However, not all members of the Twaqulia Islamic Society have chosen to join the Bangladesh People's Association: some belong to the Dawat al-Islam and others to the Bangladesh Working People's National Association. These are the ones who 'have their own organizations'.

The Dawat al-Islam has a national headquarters in London and branches in Bengali communities throughout the country. Its founder and current president was until 1978 imam in Bradford. The Dawat al-Islam aims to call all Bengalis and then all the people of this country into the household of Islam. Its concept of Islam is far broader than that encapsulated in the constitution of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, for it stresses that Islam is 'a complete code of life'. Its members tell their fellow Bengalis that they cannot be content with the observance of Islam on a personal and private level; rather they should seek to implement Islamic principles at every level of society. The Dawat al-Islam shares the concern of the Bangladesh People's Association for human welfare, but regards secularist principles as inadequate. So comprehensive is the guidance given by Allah in the Quran, that by its light Muslims can see the path to the establishment of an Islamic state, in which justice would flourish. The aims of the Dawat al-Islam are no less than revolutionary and its members regard the aims and work of the Bangladesh People's Association as non-Islamic and as supportive of a political system that actually creates the injustices it claims to combat. In 1980 the differences between the Dawat al-Islam and both of the main organizations were becoming apparent and the cause of rifts within the Twaqulia Islamic Society.

This quarrel among Bengalis is more than an academic disagreement over the relative merits of secular and Islamic political systems. Members of the Dawat al-Islam are suspected by others of sympathy with the Jamaat-i-Islami, which in 1971 supported the Pakistani government and armed forces against the independence movement in Bangladesh. There are few Bengalis in Bradford who regret the break-up of Pakistan and many who lost relatives and friends in the civil war.
Membership of the Dawat al-Islam is liable to remain small, at least in Bradford, until these memories fade.

The other small organization, the Bangladesh Working People's National Association, has its roots in a conflict that is personal as much as ideological. Its president is the former chairman of the Bangladesh People's Association, defeated in the 1979 election. He has served on West Yorkshire County Council and is an experienced politician, skilled in making use of the press. He is well known in Sylhet, where many think of him as their first Member of Parliament in Britain! A member of the Labour Party, he represents the view that the situation of the Bengali community as of other minority groups will be improved only by active involvement in mainstream politics in this country. However, one of the local elections in which he was a candidate has been used to illustrate the hypothesis that ethnic groups may choose temporarily to back a formal association such as a political party purely for their own purposes. Thus the Pakistani voters of Manningham Ward supported the Conservative candidate in May 1971 not because they agreed with Tory policies, but in order to defeat the Bengali Labour candidate.30 The formation of the Bangladesh Working People's National Association may represent nothing more than this man's personal following, but its policies, as stated by him, constitute an important alternative to those of the other organizations.

D AUTHORITY IN THE COMMUNITY, IN BANGLADESH AND BRADFORD

A community such as that of the Bengalis in Bradford, composed of people who are mostly illiterate and unaccustomed to urban life, has in the course of its development increasing need of people who are capable of acting as its spokesmen or negotiators in relation to the host society. Typically these serve on the local Community Relations Council or similar bodies and tend to be regarded by their white colleagues as leaders of the groups they represent. Research has shown, however, that their leadership consists of little more than the exercise of the functions of spokesman or negotiator: their actual authority is
limited. To regard them as leaders is to perpetuate false assumptions about the cohesion of the groups and the role of their representatives. It may therefore be more profitable for those who study minority groups to eschew questions of leadership and to ask who has authority in the community. This approach leads immediately to distinctions between spheres and kinds of authority, which may prove more tractable than a distinction between 'leaders' and leaders. It is also necessary to consider the exercise of authority in the migrant community in relation to the traditional patterns of authority in its place of origin.31

General anthropological studies of Bangladesh show that patterns of authority and social stratification in its villages are fluid and diffuse.32 Research on the District of Sylhet is lacking, but Ellickson's work, conducted in the neighbouring District of Comilla, supports the general conclusion. Ellickson asked villagers whom they regarded as the most important men in the village. Most respondents took the semi-formal village council to be the seat of authority and judged their fellows by the way they spoke there. Others looked to wider political structures and saw the village's representative on the Union Council as the most powerful man, for his actions affected the availability and distribution of government resources in the village. Ellickson observes that two types of people with authority were little mentioned by her respondents. Neither those who held hereditary authority over their own social group in the village, nor those with authority in matters of religion were regarded as being influential in the village as a whole. Ellickson suggests that this was due to purely local considerations and that elsewhere such people were still powerful. But if so, this only indicates that the actual influence exerted by the holder of hereditary or religious authority depends on factors other than the title he bears.33

A similar inference may be made from Zaidi's study, The Village Culture in Transition. Zaidi observes that the hereditary authority of the sardars is waning, being open to challenge, especially from factions within the village; and yet a strong and popular sardar may still wield considerable power.34
It is significant in this connection that the caste-like system that still prevails among Bengali Muslims is far more flexible than its Hindu counterpart. A new and more prestigious title may be adopted by a Bengali Muslim whose economic status improves. The villager is well aware that birth is not the sole determinant of status: 'Last year I was a julaha (weaver); this year a sheikh and next year, if the harvest is good, I shall be a sayyid'.

Ellickson's work also indicates that the authority accorded to a person is determined not only by his personal characteristics or his wealth, but by the situation in which he seeks to exert his influence. Data reported in other sections of her thesis imply that if she had asked who influenced decisions made concerning relationships within the family, those with hereditary authority as sardars, or simply as senior members of the family, may have appeared more powerful. Similarly with regard to questions of religion, the villager would seek advice from the imam or possibly from his pir, and not from those whose influence lay in other quarters.

Two conclusions may be drawn from this brief survey. Firstly, within the village there is no single person who exercises overall authority; rather, degrees of authority in relation to certain defined spheres are accorded to certain people. Secondly, with the exception of the holders of hereditary authority, the holders of positions of power change.

Study of Pakistanis in Britain has shown the continuance of the authority exercised by senior members of kinship networks. Among Bengalis in Bangladesh and particularly in Britain, the nuclear family is as prevalent as that extended horizontally through relationships of brotherhood, but still it is within the family that most decisions affecting the lives of its members are made. With regard to the wider social group, the restriction of particular kinds of authority to certain spheres is as apparent as in Bangladesh. One conclusion of Bentley's study of Indians, Pakistanis and West Indians in Britain was that 'the legitimacy attached to a leader's claim to authority was determined not by individual leadership qualities but by the situation in which that claim was made.'
There is in Bradford no equivalent of the village council, as there is no village: the two main areas in which certain people have most influence are the mosque and the secular organizations.

The chairman of the mosque committee has constitution- al authority as the president of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, and is subject to election each year. From 1977 to 1980 three men held this office in succession. The kind of leadership exercised by the president depends largely upon his own abilities. He is responsible for the internal administration of the Society but may also represent it in its external relations, for example, with solicitors or the Council. Little initiative could be taken in this field by one president who worked night shifts and spoke little English. On the other hand, another bearer of the office, who worked as a school-teacher and served on the Community Relations Council, was better placed to represent the Society to others, but in danger of having too many commitments and too little contact with other members of the Society. If the president of the Twaqulia Islamic Society is powerful, it is not so much by virtue of his office as on account of his own aptitudes and personal standing in the community. This is not to contradict but to qualify Bentley's conclusion. It remains true that the president of the Twaqulia Islamic Society has a legitimate claim to exercise authority only within the Society: his authority is not transferable to other situations. Yet the actual influence he has within the Society does depend largely upon his personal qualities.

The status and role of the imam are examined in detail below. Here it is important to note, firstly, that he is not in any sense a leader of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, and, secondly, that the extent of his authority is strictly limited. The imam is appointed by the mosque committee, the executive of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, but, since he does not become a member of the committee, he has no administrative power within the Society. He is also subject to dismissal by the members of the committee, who are themselves dependent on the support they gain in annual elections. The imam is accredited with authority as leader of the congregational prayers and as a teacher of Islam, but he has no power, beyond that of
his word and example, to enforce compliance with Islamic law.

The nature of the authority of the head of an organization such as the Bangladesh People's Association is less easy to define, for he has more than one sphere of operation. His influence over the internal workings of the community is constantly liable to challenge from within the groups upon which he depends for his re-election. He may, for example, propose a series of sewing classes or English lessons for Bengali women, but the response will be determined by decisions taken by senior members of households. A cynical observer may regard this proposal as part of a package designed purely to convince the directors of the Comprehensive Community Programme that the Bengalis need £17,000. In other words, this could be seen as belonging to his other sphere of operation, that of maintaining relations with the host society. There is no doubt that it is in this respect that the leader of an association the size of the Bangladesh People's Association has greatest authority. The eventual use of the grant from the Metropolitan Council will be decided by the broadly based executive committee of the Association, but it is the president who is largely responsible for the success or failure of the initial application. In this respect the Bengalis depend upon him and are prepared to regard him as one of themselves. Even so, the extent of his power is qualified both by the presence in the community of several others with equal ability to act as spokesmen, and by his own dependence upon his internal network of support. Political alignments of this sort change far more rapidly and frequently among Bengalis than, for example, among the electorate of a British local council or voluntary association. The outsider may be inclined to regard the process of constant change as mere factionalism destructive of communal life, but it may stem from a sound view of the nature of human authority that recognizes the ability of individuals and groups to confer or deny authority in others.

Given the diffusion of authority within the whole community and the need for any of the professional minority who negotiate on behalf of their fellows to maintain a balance between their two spheres of
operation, these men cannot afford to become alienated from the majority. Verity Saifullah Khan has suggested that they may have little interest in the cohesion of the community after traditional patterns, for to be identified with the majority would hinder their own integration in British society. With regard to the Bengalis, it is true that the professional minority remain at some distance from others, but they are not necessarily predominantly interested in integration. It has been noted that these may be the first to return to Bangladesh with their families. Moreover, they differ among themselves as to the extent of their acceptance of British culture and standards and of their involvement in the affairs of the Bengali community. Those who become closely identified with the host society lose contact with and influence among Bengalis, while those who lack any understanding of British ways are of limited use to their own community, however deep their commitment to it.

E

SUMMARY

The pattern of Bengali settlement in Bradford has been determined by developments in the process of migration, especially since 1960. Increasing control of immigration ended the chain of migration from Bengal and temporary work in Britain that had begun in the nineteenth century. Those who came in the 1960s were to be the last members of their families, apart from dependent relatives, who would be allowed into Britain. They did not intend to settle and had little interest in the development of a community in Bradford. However, needing to make considerable financial gain before they could return with honour, they remained longer than intended and the reunion of some families began. The subsequent increase of stress and need of support were important factors contributing to the formation of associations that could claim to unite the community. While capable of such concerted action, the Bengali community, whose composition was still quite different from that of a village in Sylhet, displayed no unified attitude to settlement. The migrants adjusted their perceptions of life in Bradford and in Sylhet in a variety of ways, and for some return remained the more attractive prospect.
Several organizations had been formed since the 1950s, but the Twaqulia Islamic Society was the first that won the allegiance of all Bengali Muslims. A decade later, in 1979, at a time when the number of women and children in the community had grown and unemployment was spreading, the Bangladesh People's Association gained widespread support. The development of organizations was related not only to the needs of the community but to the influence of certain people. As the traditional patterns of authority are changing in Bengali villages, so in Bradford authority and power are diffused within the community. Several men have influence within particular spheres. Some may be seen by non-Bengalis as leaders of the community but all depend upon the trust and support of other Bengalis for the retention of their positions of authority. Their influence is further qualified by the continuing authority of the senior members of Bengali families, for it is within the family that the most important decisions affecting the lives of migrants are taken.
The early Bengali migrants in Bradford had left behind them their families, villages and the numerous symbols of Islam that had sustained the sense of belonging to a Muslim community in Sylhet. In Bradford there was initially neither the opportunity nor the need to establish a form of common life after the pattern of the home society. The limited companionship experienced in the shared house and at work prevented a feeling of total isolation and sufficient communication could be maintained with the family in Bangladesh to enable the migrant to cope with temporary exile. However, as the form of the community in Bradford developed, so it both needed and became capable of reproducing some of the features of a Muslim society. It is the movement towards Muslim community that is traced in this chapter.

The most significant single development was the foundation of the Twaqulia Islamic Society and its mosque in 1969. The first section of the chapter, therefore, is an account of the circumstances in which the Society was founded and of its aims and structure. The mosque and its functions are described in the second section. The Society thus provided both a means of and a stimulus to the performance of basic Islamic duties within the Bengali community. In section C an assessment is made of the extent of observance of the pillars of Islam a decade after the mosque was established. However, as is evident from our discussion of the Muslim community in Sylhet, the pillars are pillars only: they do not constitute the whole Islamic edifice. It is necessary, therefore, to consider other aspects of Bengali Muslim life in Bradford. The fourth section of the chapter describes the celebration of Muslim festivals, and finally, in the fifth section, we examine the ways in which other traditions of family and village life,
especially the observance of purdah, are maintained, or falter, in the new environment.

A THE TSAULIA ISLAMIC SOCIETY

(i) The Circumstances of Foundation

Before 1960 the Muslims of Bradford had no place in which to meet for congregational prayer. Bengalis gave varying accounts of their religious practice in this period. Some stated that people seldom said the prayers and were altogether ignorant of the dates of festivals and even of Ramadan. There may be an element of exaggeration in such a remark, for all migrants maintained some form of communication with the community they had left. However, even in his own village, a Bengali is dependent upon religious functionaries for information as to the dates of festivals, for he lives by the Bengali calendar, which is a twelve-month cycle that does not correspond with the Islamic lunar calendar. Other informants in Bradford claimed that they continued to observe their Islamic duties as they had in Sylhet, unaffected by the changed conditions of life and work. Again, although a few may have sustained their observance in this manner, it is likely that the resolve of the majority was weakened by the lack of the constant reminders provided in Sylhet by the sight of a mosque and the sound of the azan. There are indeed two times for prayer, at dawn and at sunset, of which no Muslim could remain unaware, but still some felt the lack of the incentive afforded by the presence of others who wished to pray. One particularly devout Bengali reported an experience that may have been common: if several men were together at the time for prayer and the subject was mentioned, then they prayed, but not otherwise.

However, in 1960 an Islamic Centre was established in a terraced house in Howard Street by Pakistanis. This was Bradford's first mosque. Now the observance of the daily prayers and of festivals could be organized: bulletins giving the varying times of the prayers and notice of festivals were worked out and published. This mosque was used by Bengalis, some of whom served on the mosque committee, as well as
by the more numerous Muslims of West Pakistan. Since the small building was not large enough to accommodate the whole Muslim population, public halls were hired for the celebration of major festivals. In July 1963 the Belle Vue barracks in Manningham were used for the observance of Id al-Fitr. Two times were given for the congregational prayers: 'many thousands arrived, but only one third could get in at both services'.

This was the period in which the Muslim population of Bradford rapidly increased. Plans were published for the construction of a mosque that would accommodate three thousand people. The Yorkshire Post even reported that 'an imam, or high priest, would come from Egypt to teach and explain the Arabic meaning of the Quran'. By 1980 this grandiose scheme had not come to fulfilment, but the number of mosques established in converted buildings of various kinds had steadily grown. Among these was the mosque founded in Southfield Square in Manningham by the Jamiat Tabligh al-Islam, a mainly Pakistani organization that had the support of a few Bengalis.

The mosque committees were able to organize the formal aspect of Muslim celebrations, but for the men who formed the vast majority of the Bengali population in Bradford in the early 1960s there was nothing to compensate for the lack of all the other activities that accompanied a festival in Sylhet and as yet no mosque in which their own language was spoken. In the absence of the family there was little reason to prepare special food or to go visiting. Instead they would send extra money home to Sylhet, especially at Id al-Adha to enable their families to make a sacrifice of a goat or cow.

However, by 1969 the Bengalis needed to consider the needs not only of the men, but of the slowly increasing number of families within the community. The Pakistani People's Organization had aimed to meet both the social and the religious needs of the Bengalis, but had been prevented by internal conflict, even on its Bengali side, from functioning effectively. Many members of the Organization agreed that the Bengali community needed a mosque, but they feared that if one faction within the Organization were to take the initiative in establishing a mosque in its name, another group might set up a rival mosque.
Apparently, in Scunthorpe, where only three hundred Bengalis lived, two mosques had been established on the same street by different Bengali factions. Wishing to avoid a similar situation in Bradford, a group of men decided to found a mosque that would be administered by a new association, independent of the Pakistani People's Organization. They therefore formed the Twaqulia Islamic Society and, from their own funds and public subscription, purchased two houses in Cornwall Road, in the main area of Bengali habitation, which they immediately began to use as a mosque. Thus they not only fulfilled one of the requirements of Islamic law, but showed that the money which they had collected had been properly used. They also effectively prevented a duplication of mosques, for, although some other members of the Pakistani People's Organization did purchase another house (later to be the premises of the Bangladesh People's Association), it was never used for prayers, as the Twaqulia Islamic Society had already won almost universal support.

The speed that was necessary in the purchase and use of the mosque served to overcome problems within the Bengali community, but it created others in relation to the City Council. Planning permission for the use of the property in Cornwall Road as a mosque was not sought until it had been in use for some time, and was then, in 1973, refused. The Council issued an enforcement notice to prevent its use as a mosque. However, by this stage the Twaqulia Islamic Society was sufficiently well organized to be able to make an appeal to the Department of the Environment. An inquiry was held at which the planners argued that neighbours would suffer 'loss of amenity', while the Bengalis claimed that the football ground in the next street caused a far greater public nuisance. Permission was granted for five years on condition that the premises were not used for funerals, and in 1978 temporary permission was renewed on the same condition.

Many Muslim organizations went through a similar process in adapting buildings, including a factory and a church, for use as mosques. The chief obstacle to the granting of permission for the conversion of older property was not that of nuisance, to which publicity was always given, but rather uncertainty.
as to the future developments of such areas of the city. Both Little Horton, including Howard Street, and Manningham, where the Southfield Square and Cornwall Road mosques are situated, were due for redevelopment, but only in the 1970s were decisions taken as to precisely which areas would be demolished and which renovated. Had permanent permission for the use of a building as a mosque been granted and subsequently a decision taken to demolish it, the Council would have been liable for the payment of compensation not simply for a house, but for a mosque. The Twaquilia Islamic Society made provision for this eventuality in its constitution:6

God forbid, but if the present mosque is demolished and if any compensation is available, the money will be spent on building a mosque in this country for the use of Bengali Muslims; failing that, the money will be sent to a needy mosque in Bangladesh. (Clause No. 12.)

According to one past president of the Society, it was failure to obtain planning permission for the use of the property in Cornwall Road as a mosque that led the Society to plan the construction of a new mosque of distinctive Islamic architecture. Permission for the new building was granted by the Council in 1980 and it was hoped to begin construction, on the site of demolished housing in Cornwall Road, in 1981.

(ii) The Aim and Structure of the Society

Depending on the grace of Almighty Allah t'ala, the Twaquilia Islamic Society aims, in the following ways, to encourage and enable the inhabitants of Bradford, especially the Bengali Muslims, to live an Islamic life:

(i) by the observance of the congregational prayers;

(ii) by the provision of Islamic teaching for the children. (Clause No. 1.)

The first clause of the constitution of the Twaquilia Islamic Society (Twaquilia meaning 'dependent on God') declares its aim. The proposed means of its fulfilment
clearly reflect the situation of the community, whose growth demanded not only a place where the men could pray, and receive Islamic teaching in Bengali, but also a way of ensuring the continuance of its Muslim traditions by the next generation. The universal character of the aim, which embraces all Bradfordians, signifies that the mosque should be open to all, rather than an intention to proselytize. It is, however, as will become apparent, somewhat belied by other clauses in the constitution.

Underlying the declared aim of the Society was the hope and purpose of its founders that its work would sustain and increase the measure of unity among Bengalis that had brought it to birth, for without unity there would be no congregation and no school. It was evidently considered that a high degree of organization would be required in order to attain this goal. Informants in Bradford and Sylhet confirmed that the structure of the Twaqulia Islamic Society is very similar to that of mosques in Sylhet, although not all require the same level of organization. Ellickson's research provides an interesting example of the differences between three mosques in a village in neighbouring Comilla District.

The mosques were organized in various ways. The mosque of south neighbourhood was attended only by the people of south neighbourhood. As the Majumdar gusthi dominated the neighborhood, so they dominated the mosque. The pay of the imam, a member of the dominant gusthi, had been provided for, and no cooperation was necessary. In east neighbourhood the entire congregation met to make the decisions for the mosque and their contributions for its continuance. The west neighbourhood mosque with the largest and most diverse congregation from different parts of the village had the most complex organization with a committee for the administration of the mosque.

The disparate association of people who attended the last of these mosques bears some resemblance to the composition of the Twaqulia Islamic Society.

The structure of the Society is set out in the constitution. Although the Society aims to help all
the inhabitants of Bradford to follow Islam, its membership is, by implication, restricted to Bengalis: 'All Bengali Muslims have the right to be members'. (Clause No.2.) The constitution provides for the annual election of an executive committee:

For the proper and disciplined running of the Society, the members will meet and elect by a majority vote fifteen Bengali representatives, taking into account their abilities, to form an executive committee. This executive committee will work for one year or 365 days. Each representative on the committee will pay £1 per week. Every year, at a certain time, there will be an election of a new executive committee. This committee, as the representatives of all the members, will carry out the work of the Society in accordance with its rules and regulations. (Clause No.3.)

Attempts to secure the autonomy and unity of the Society are apparent in two clauses that were added to the constitution in the final version made in 1971. The first of these (No.13) specifically excludes non-Bengalis from membership of the executive committee. At the same time the word 'Bengali' was inserted into the clause quoted above with reference to the fifteen representatives on the committee. It seems that the exclusion of non-Bengalis had not been considered necessary in 1969, when the Society was founded, but by June 1971 there was armed conflict between the two wings of Pakistan and Shaykh Mujib al-Rahman had declared Bangladesh an independent nation. Although there was no actual fighting in Bradford between Pakistani and Bengali Muslims, the two communities moved further apart and such cooperation as had existed when the first mosque had been established in 1960 now ceased. The Twaqulia Islamic Society also felt the need to secure its own independence against other Bengali organizations: the second extra clause (No.14.) states, 'The members of this committee will not be able to be members of the executive committee of another society'.

The Society, therefore, has no official links with any other organization, Bengali or Muslim. The Bengalis of Bradford are aware of the conflicts that external affiliations can produce. During the period
of the research a group of Muslims attending one of the mosques run by the Jamiyat Tabligh al-Islam, one of the largest Muslim associations in Bradford, staged several public demonstrations against the Jamiyat's central committee. The 'Bradford 7 Muslims' claimed that the decisions of the local mosque committee had been overridden by central officials, particularly in respect of the appointment of imams.8

There is no central Bengali Muslim organization in Britain and it appears that none is desired. Naturally, informal links exist between Bengalis in different parts of the country, and the imams of their mosques occasionally meet, but neither the imam of the Twaqulia Islamic Society nor any of its committee members could establish any firmer forms of relationship without jeopardizing the unity of their own Society.

The power of the executive is strictly and democratically controlled:

The representatives on this committee will be directly accountable for their work to all members of the Society, and, indirectly, to Allah t'ala. One or more representatives on the committee can be removed before the end of his (their) term if he (they) is (are) proved unworthy by a majority of the members. New representative(s) will be elected in his (their) place by a majority. (Clause No.4.)

In the subsequent clause the constitution sets out the duties of the officials of the Society. Their titles, President, Secretary, Treasurer and Auditor, do not sound particularly Islamic, but they are commonly used in Bangladesh and the organization of the Twaqulia Islamic Society is based on similar structures there and not on that of a voluntary association in the United Kingdom.

The constitution includes the careful regulation of the spending power of the officials of the Society. (Clause No.8.) Caution is necessary in view of the instability of the Society's financial situation. Its income is derived solely from voluntary donations. Every member is bound to pay a regular subscription, the amount of which he determines. The treasurer appoints people on each street or area of Bengali
habitation who collect the subscriptions each month. These form the major part of the Society's income and enable it to budget for the payment of the imam and for other recurrent expenditure. Other needs, notably the cost of land for the new mosque and of its construction (estimated to exceed £100,000) have to be met by specific contributions made in addition to the regular subscription. Special collections are taken at festivals for such needs and also for the imam, in return for his supererogatory services.

Mosques in Sylhet having a budget comparable with that of the Twaqulia Islamic Society would almost certainly have income from endowments in addition to current subscriptions. From an early period the building and endowment of mosques has been regarded as work that God will reward: 'for him who builds a mosque, Allah will build a home for him in Paradise'.9 Islamic law includes specific legislation to govern the nature of endowments, a main provision being that all gifts to a mosque should yield a usufruct, and so be of lasting benefit.10 Endowments therefore often take the form of real estate, although, as noted above, institutions such as the Darga of Shah Jalal receive donations in many forms, including cash, cloth, grain and livestock. The largest mosque in Sylhet was built with a small shopping centre within its compound and along its front, and derives an income from rents. It is also common, as in the example given by Ellickson, for a person or family to provide an endowment specifically for the salaries of an imam or muezzin.11 Even a small village mosque is likely to be endowed in some form. One which I visited received a levy from stall-holders in a twice-weekly market held in the village, without which it would have been unable to employ an imam.

It is therefore very unusual for a mosque with financial commitments as great as those of the Twaqulia Islamic Society to be dependent entirely upon voluntary contributions. Grants have been sought, with some measure of success, by Muslim societies in the United Kingdom from wealthy Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, but occasional aid is no substitute for steady income. The instability of mosque finances has recently been worsened by increasing unemployment among ethnic minority groups, whose members may be unable to sustain a commitment to a regular subscrip-
tion over a long period, let alone extra donations, however much they may value the presence of the mosque.

A most important aspect of the organization of the Twaqulia Islamic Society is the procedure for the appointment of an imam:

The executive committee will be directly responsible for the appointment of a suitable imam to organize the prayers and to teach. But all the members of the Society should be able to trust and depend on the imam. In respect of the organization of the prayers and of teaching, the appointed imam will assume all the responsibility of imamate in accordance with Islamic law. Those who are taught must obey his instruction and there should be no interference. But if an individual or a few people think that the imam has done something that is beyond the bounds of Islamic order, then it should be reported to the committee. Taking into account the gravity of the complaint and its urgency, the executive committee will arrange to resolve the issue together with all the members and in consultation with religious scholars. An imam will be appointed for one year. At the end of the year the same imam can be re-appointed or a new imam appointed. (Clause No.6.)

There is a fine balance between the independent authority of the imam and the control exercised over him by the Society. He does not assume the responsibility of imamate by virtue of a professional qualification or ordination; rather, the Twaqulia Islamic Society appoints him to imamate among the Bengali Muslims in Bradford. Since he bears considerable responsibility for the fulfilment of the aims of the Society, he is acknowledged to require a certain freedom of operation. Therefore, 'there should be no interference' in his conduct of the prayers or in his teaching. At the same time, however, it is essential that he retain the confidence of those who appoint him. The Society has, therefore, devised two means of exercising some control over its imam.

The first of these devices, contained in the constitution is that the appointment should be subject to annual review. In practice the imam continues in office, unless a complaint is made against him and
upheld by the Society. In this respect the judgment of the executive committee is checked not only by the total membership of the Society, but also by religious scholars (ulama) who would be brought from outside Bradford to represent independent Islamic authority.

The second device, which is unwritten, is the one that most severely restricts the power of the imam: the exclusion of him from membership of the executive committee. The intention of the Society in excluding the imam is to maintain the unity of which he is an important symbol. Were he to exercise authority with regard to the policy of the Society, he would certainly become involved in factional conflict. The result could be a split in the Society and the consequent loss of the authority he had assumed. So runs the argument, its proponents claiming that this situation is common in Sylhet, a claim denied by the imam. A compromise has been adopted by the Jamiyat Tabligh al-Islam in Bradford, which permits the imam to sit on the executive committee with the consent of the whole congregation. Even so he takes no active part in the management of the society. The policy of the Twaqulia Islamic Society has so far preserved its unity, preferring this to effective religious leadership.

B THE MOSQUE

(i) The Building

The two houses that have been converted into a mosque stand in what was the middle of a terrace running downhill from Manningham Lane. In 1978 the houses at the lower end of the terrace were demolished, and it is here that the Twaqulia Islamic Society purchased land for its new mosque. The houses are Victorian, with two rooms on the ground floor, two on the first, an attic and a cellar. The wall dividing the two dwellings has been retained, but the partitions within each house have been removed, thus creating two large rooms, with connecting doors, on the ground and first floors of the mosque. The front door of one house is the entrance and immediately inside is a rack for shoes. The ground floor rooms are used for the
children’s classes and for prayers when there is an overflow from the rooms above. There is no furniture apart from low reading desks for the children’s textbooks and Qurans, and a mat and cushion for the teacher. The first-floor rooms are used daily for prayers: prayer caps and 

lungs

12 are kept there for the convenience of worshippers. The walls are bare apart from one or two calendars, the timetable for daily prayers and a plan of the new mosque. In the corner of the inner room stands a purely symbolic carpeted minbar, of three steps, which is also the only indication of the qibla, the direction faced in prayer. Here too is a microphone, for a public address system is used to convey the voice of the muezzin and imam to the other rooms of the mosque. A table and chair are used by the imam when he lectures on the Quran. The cellar has been converted into a kitchen and place for performing wudu, the ablutions, before the prayers. There is a toilet outside, at the back of the building. The attics, comprising two bed-sitting rooms, and a small kitchen, are used as accommodation for the imam or others.

The building is unsatisfactory in several respects, chiefly in that only twenty to thirty men can pray together in one room and are separated from their brethren in others. It is also unusual for a single building to house so many facilities. The school-room is often separate in Bangladesh, sometimes held in the main room of a home.13 Facilities for ablutions are normally external but in Bradford the climate necessitates their being indoors. It is unsatisfactory that ground floor rooms that are used for prayer have to be crossed to reach the stairs that lead to the cellar. Architecturally the mosque bears no resemblance to the magnificent Islamic edifices of the Indian sub-continent, and yet it is comparable with numerous small mosques in Bengali villages whose external appearance is that of ordinary houses.

The Bradford mosque may also be compared with mosques in Sylhet in respect of the location of prayer rooms on more than one storey of the building. The Prophet is reported to have said, ‘A time will come over my umma when they will vie with one another in the beauty of their mosques: then they will visit them but little’.14 Certainly one of the most frequented
mosques in Sylhet is among the ugliest. Looking more like a Bradford car park than al-Aqsa, it can accommodate over four thousand people on its five storeys. Here the imam takes his place on the ground floor and his cries of 'Allahu akbar' are conveyed, as in Bradford, by loudspeakers (or, when they fail, by relay through the congregation) to the other floors. Other town mosques use one storey for the main prayer hall and another for a madrasa. The design of a mosque is therefore evidently adaptable to suit the land available and the size of the congregation.

The new mosque in Cornwall Road will provide the same facilities as the old one, only better ordered, with the addition of a room for the preparation of bodies for burial. The main prayer hall, which will accommodate nearly three hundred people, is to be on the ground floor, and a flat for an imam on the first floor. The design of the domed building is based on that of one in Manchester: distinctive, yet unostentatious, it will be a more eloquent symbol of Islam and of Muslim community than the present mosque.

(ii) The Functions of the Mosque

Mosques have always fulfilled several functions, the earliest being places for meeting, marketing, eating and residence as well as for prayer. But prayer is the prime function of the mosque. The individual has no need of a special place for prayer, as any clean space will suffice: 'Wherever the hour of prayer overtakes you, you shall perform the salat, and that is a masjid'. The designation of a special place arose from the need to pray in congregation. Indeed it came to be regarded as meritorious to pray with others in the mosque. There is another hadith frequently quoted by preachers: 'The prayer-rite of the man who joins the congregation is more than twenty degrees better than that of him who prays in his place of merchandise or in his house'. The mosque in Cornwall Road is used five times every day for prayers. The daily congregation may comprise only a handful of people, but more attend on Fridays, at weekends and during holidays. The form of prayer is of course identical with that observed throughout the Muslim world. A certain number of rakas are stipulated for each time of prayer, some of them being obligatory, others falling into lesser categories.
The obligatory rakas are performed by the whole congregation in unison, but others individually. The timetable for the prayers gives both the times within which the prayers may be performed and also the time of each congregational prayer.

Some people come to the mosque before the time given for the congregational prayers and perform non-obligatory rakas in any part of the mosque. Their concentration, having entered the prayer-rite remains undisturbed by others who continue to enter the mosque. When the azan is given, all form lines behind the imam, each man just touching his neighbour, taking care to ensure that no spaces are left. After the final raka of the congregational prayers, the rows break: some remain seated in prayer, some perform additional rakas, some leave the mosque and others stay for conversation.

The mosque is used not only for the congregational prayers but as a general meeting place. Its informal use is restricted by the need to keep the building locked against theft, but men often remain in the mosque after the prayers to discuss the affairs of the community. Consequently, some who would not otherwise attend the prayers go to the mosque so that their voices may be heard in such discussions. Formal meetings of the Twaqulia Islamic Society are also held in the mosque. On account of its function as a meeting place, the mosque is often said to be central to the life of a Muslim community. However, it is important to recall that the women of the Bengali community are never permitted to enter the mosque.

It is at the festivals and during Ramadan that the mosque's functions as a place of prayer and meeting most clearly combine, particularly when the celebration takes place at night. After the formal prayers, people remain in the mosque to hear the imam's sermon, to pray or read, to prepare food in the kitchen, or simply to converse, activities which may all occur simultaneously. In Ramadan men who live some distance from the mosque share the iftar meal there, while some do not leave the mosque at all for the last ten days of the month, but keep a form of retreat, itikaf.
The mosque is also used as a school. Classes are held every day except Thursday and Friday for the children of the Bengali community. Such schools are common to Muslim communities throughout Europe. But, as we have seen, they are not in themselves a response to the new situation of the migrants: in Pakistan, Bangladesh and all over the Muslim world children attend similar classes in addition to or in lieu of their ordinary schooling. The provision of some Islamic education for the children, the second of the two aims of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, is perhaps the more urgent for migrants in a non-Muslim society, but the form that education takes is much the same as at home.19

Finally, the mosque is used to provide accommodation. In Sylhet some mosques include rooms for muezzins: in Bradford the only salaried official is the imam, for whom a room in the attic is reserved. This is particularly necessary when a man comes to this post from Bangladesh. The present imam, having brought his family to this country, bought his own house. Occasionally people come to the mosque in the course of a preaching tour and are given food and lodging there. This is the regular practice of members of the Tabligh Jamaat, an organization based in nearby Dewsbury, who also invite others to stay with them for a period in their own mosque.20 On occasions such as these visits even the terraced house in Bradford stands in a clear line of descent from the courtyard in which the Prophet both prayed and had his home in Medina.

C OBSERVANCE OF THE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The Bengali Muslims of Bradford were indeed both encouraged and enabled to live an Islamic life by the establishment of a mosque in their midst. It is necessary now to consider whether their actual practice complies with the demands of their faith.

A Muslim has five fundamental duties: belief in God and his Prophet, prayer, fasting, alms-giving and pilgrimage to Mecca. The observance of all five pillars of Islam proved difficult to investigate and assess, but consideration of the first pillar is
especially complex, for it cannot be treated independently of everything else that is comprised by the notion of ibada, the service due from man to God. When a Muslim recites the kalima tayyiba, 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Apostle of God', he makes an ethical rather than a metaphysical pronouncement, which is said to imply the whole of Islamic teaching. It affirms the sovereignty and oneness of God and the status of Muhammad as the one who conveys the word of God. Interpretation of the kalima is concerned not with questions of the existence of God but with his attributes and their implications for the conduct of human life.21

Therefore, in order to examine the way in which this first pillar is observed, it is necessary to know not only whether people recite it (as all seem to do), but what they understand it to mean. It will become clear in our review of the imam's teaching that there is no single view of Islam held by all members of the community, and certain significant differences will be examined.22 For the most part, however, it is not possible clearly to state what the kalima means to those who daily recite it. They are unaccustomed and reluctant to discuss their beliefs as such, and it would not be legitimate, particularly for an outside researcher, to attempt to infer their beliefs from observation of their behaviour. Yet it is necessary to give some account of that behaviour, in the knowledge that this is where a Muslim would look to see whether recitation of the kalima is sincere.

Information concerning the observance of the other pillars of the faith is in theory easier to obtain, but in practice requires such a detailed survey as was not feasible in the course of the present research. With regard to the performance of the prayers, it was possible to observe the number of men who attended the mosque. The imam stated that when he arrived, in 1978, only two or three people came to the daily morning prayers, but by 1980 as many as ten were present. At the Friday prayers there were seldom more than forty in 1978, but two years later there were up to sixty. During Ramadan these figures increased further, so that by 1980 there were up to eighty present at the Friday prayers and approximately one hundred and twenty at the nightly congregation.
Attendance at the mosque is no measure of the extent to which daily prayers are performed in people's homes or at their places of work. It is always meritorious to pray in the congregation, but obligatory only at the Friday prayers. Those who regularly attended on a Friday claimed that they also said the prayers at other times, while others, for whom it was inconvenient to go to the mosque, said they prayed at home. It is notable that there seemed to be little difficulty concerning the performance of prayers at work. Informants were of the opinion that those who wished to say the prayers would do so and stated that arrangements could be made with employers for the necessary short breaks. The imam also reported that nobody had discussed this issue with him as a problem. Again, however, only a thorough survey could yield accurate information.

Such a survey was conducted in Dhaka in the early 1950s in order to assess the impact of technological change upon society. Its detailed findings cannot, of course, be directly related to the situation of Bengalis in Bradford, but the condition of a villager working in industry in Dhaka is in some respects similar to that of the subjects of the present study. One conclusion of the research in Dhaka is of particular interest:

It may be that the new generation of workers coming from the villages is less religious than the older generation, for which, however, there is no evidence. What is more likely is that the first impact of factory conditions on the life of a worker produces a sense of bewilderment or shock which impairs his traditional pattern of religious behaviour somewhat. There appears to be a substantial increase in the saying of prayer by the worker over the next few years of service in a factory . . . The increase in the observance of religious practices with an increase in the length of service is no doubt due, in a large measure, to an increase in the age of the workers concerned.23

If migrants in Bradford do indeed perform the daily prayers at work as well as at home or in the mosque, it is largely because they have now overcome initial
disorientation and have been able to organize themselves sufficiently to negotiate with their employers.

With regard to the observance of fasting, it may reasonably be assumed that the hundred or so who pray in the mosque each night of Ramadan do keep the fast. On the other hand, it is well known and a cause of resentment that many of those who celebrate Id al-Fitr have not fasted for the whole month. Even in Bradford, where it might be assumed that a greater privacy is possible than in Bangladesh, Bengalis seem to be nonetheless aware of one another's behaviour. It is important to recall that standards of what constitutes observance of the fast vary: children fast for only a few days, if at all, and an adult may consider that he has not completely failed in his duty if he fasts for at least ten days of Ramadan.

The details of legislation regarding the obligation to give alms, zakat, are complex and there seems to be little popular understanding of what constitutes observance of this pillar. Zakat of two and a half per cent is payable only on income remaining after provision has been made for the needs of the family. Few of the Bengalis in Bradford would have had an income in Bangladesh large enough to render them liable to pay zakat, and as nearly all continue to support a family, whether in Bradford or Sylhet, they may still have little or no surplus income. Some Bengalis who know they ought to pay zakat are of the opinion that their obligation is discharged by financial contributions to the mosque. Others are aware that zakat is to be given to the poor, but state that they do not know how such gifts are to be made in this country. There is no system for the collection of zakat within the community. In the ideal Islamic state this would be the responsibility of government, but even in Bangladesh the payment of zakat is largely dependent upon individual initiative. The Anjumane Khedmate Quran, of which the imam in Bradford is a founder-member, has made the collection and distribution of zakat part of its operations in Sylhet, but it is doubtful whether such a system could be implemented in Bradford.

Observance of the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, is obligatory only upon those who can afford it. It appears to be easier for the migrant to save the necessary money in Britain than it would have been
in Sylhet, and several men from the Bengali community make the hajj each year. One man who has lived in Britain for twenty years and has no family here went in 1979 for the second time, on behalf of his mother. There is a Bengali term (badli hajj) for this vicarious observance, and it is especially commendable for a man to represent his mother in Mecca. There is a degree of prestige that accrues to the hajji, although the title itself is not commonly taken. The returning pilgrim is expected to evince a renewed zeal in his practice of Islam. One man who performed the hajj in 1980 thereafter grew a beard and took an active interest in the work of the Tabligh Jamaat, devoting much of his time and energy to the work of dawa among his friends and colleagues.

The work of members of the Tabligh Jamaat is in no small part responsible for the continued observance of the pillars of Islam by Muslim migrants in Britain. The Jamaat was founded by Mawlana Ilyas in 1939. Its central organization is in Delhi, but the base of its European operations is in Dewsbury, only a few miles from Bradford. In Britain, as in the Indian sub-continent, the Jamaat encourages Muslims to leave their homes and usual occupations in order to live in a mosque for a period, observing a purely Islamic life. In the mosque they devote themselves to prayer, the reading of the Quran and the discussion of the life of Muhammad and his companions. New members of the Jamaat then visit their neighbours in order to teach them to observe the pillars of Islam. Some Bengalis from Bradford have stayed in the mosque at Dewsbury for a week or a weekend at a time, and a group of five men go to the mosque each Thursday evening to hear a sermon and share a meal with the large and racially mixed congregation there. The Jamaat is criticized, notably by the imam in Bradford, for presenting an incomplete view of Islam, but in stressing observance of the pillars of the faith, it provides people with a goal that is both simple and attainable.
One of the main benefits to the Bengali community of the foundation of their mosque was that it provided a place where the Muslim festivals could be celebrated. Here sermons could be given in Bengali and food prepared in a Bengali manner. At the major festivals of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha it remained necessary to hire a hall for the very large congregation, but at other festivals the mosque sufficed. It was possible for the researcher to be present in the mosque on these occasions, which can therefore be described in some detail.

The Islamic New Year, 1 Muharram, is not marked by feasting although the imam may address the congregation at the next Friday prayers on the significance of the Hijra, the migration from Mecca to Medina, which marked the beginning of the Islamic era. Ashura, 10 Muharram, is also quietly observed, again by a lecture given on the nearest convenient day. The first main occasion of celebration in the Islamic calendar is the Anniversary of the Prophet, Milad al-Nabi, on 12 Rabi al-Awal. This festival originated as the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet, but in India has at times been observed as his urs, the anniversary of his death, the preceding days of the month being a period of mourning. The celebration is held in the evening, as this is the most convenient time, but it is not an occasion for a night vigil.

Recitation of the scripture revealed to Muhammad plays an important part in the Milad, which therefore begins with recitation of the Sura al-Fatiha and several other short suras of the Quran. The imam then speaks on the life and character of Muhammad, after which the whole assembly chants prayer for blessing, durud, upon the Prophet. There follows a traditional Arabic recitation, given by the imam, that recounts the events immediately preceding the birth of Muhammad, the occasion of his birth and a summary of his teaching. The account of the birth is the heart of the festival. As the imam leads up to it, a phial of scent is passed around the congregation, each taking a little and applying it to his hands and face, and rose water is sprinkled on everyone. Then at the climax all
stand to chant a greeting of peace, salam, upon the Prophet. The term for this rite, qiyam, means 'standing' and also 'resurrection': it is believed that at this moment the soul of the Prophet is present in the congregation. The qiyam has been condemned by Islamic reformers as an innovation that implies the divinization of Muhammad, but the imam in Bradford makes no objection. It is certainly a moment of intense devotion for the congregation. The recitation is followed by prayer, dua, and the sharing of food, shirni, which may be a token sweet or a meal of rice.

This form of ceremony, whose focus is a recollection of the Prophet, is observed on occasions other than the anniversary of Muhammad. A milad may be given at any time by an individual or a community, especially if there is cause for thanksgiving or penitence. Zaidi reports the observance of a milad at the time of harvest or a crop failure as well as on occasions such as the birth of a son. It is also common for milads to be given in the month of Shaban, in the days leading up to Shab-i-barat. In Bradford the opening of a shop was celebrated thus. The imam was invited to recite the Quran and speak on the life of the Prophet as well as to recite the traditional heart of a milad, and then some two hundred guests were given dinner. A far simpler observance was made by a man after the death of his mother. At his request the imam cut short his lecture on a Sunday afternoon and held a simplified form of milad, without any speeches. The prayers after the recitation of the events of Muhammad's birth and of his teaching included intercession for the dead woman. The one who gave the milad provided scent, rose water and shirni of fruit.

The milad, then, has been successfully transplanted onto British soil. It is a ceremony whose form can be adapted to suit the occasion, the status or financial situation of the giver, and the character of the local community. At least one member of the Bengali community adapted the milad yet further, presenting what may be regarded as a secular form of the rite. When opening a restaurant in a small town near Bradford that has an almost totally white population, he held no religious rite, but gave a dinner for the residents of a nearby old people's home.
His action is untypical but does emphasize the discernible tendency for a milad to be used as a form of thanksgiving expressed in generosity rather than as a way of honouring the Prophet of Islam.

Three other important festivals are all celebrated at night: Laylat al-Miraj (27 Rajab), Shab-i-barat (14 Shaban) and Laylat al-Qadr (27 Ramadan). The basic form of observance in the mosque is constant. The late evening prayers are performed in the congregation and are followed by a lecture given by the imam. He then leads prayers of adoration and supplication, after the example of the Prophet, who prayed much at night. There is then time for individuals to pray or to read the Quran and the whole event ends with the sharing of food, shirni, prepared in the mosque kitchen. The congregation usually fills the mosque at these festivals, especially when they fall on weekends. During the winter months such a celebration does not last for the whole night, the length being determined largely by the imam, who may speak for two hours or more.

The belief that prayer offered at night is especially meritorious is a significant element in the celebration of all three festivals. On the occasion of the night-journey of the Prophet people are taught that their own performance of the prayer-rite is to them a miraj, a time when they are drawn very close to Allah. This is also the night on which Muhammad was given the regulations that govern the life of a Muslim community, so that those who observe it not only learn about these gifts of Allah by hearing the lecture, but place themselves where they too can receive his blessings. On the night of mercy, Shab-i-barat, the congregation gathers in the mosque as Allah determines their destiny for the coming year. Here the thought is of him coming to them:

Allah descends at sunset and stays till sunrise, asking, 'Is there any seeker after salvation, so that I may give it to him? Is there anyone in want of food, so that I may feed him? Is there anyone suffering, so that I may cure him?'

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On Laylat al-Qadr, the night of power, the performance of the prayer-rite is considered better than the prayer of a thousand months. This festival may be kept on any of the odd-numbered days of the third period of Ramadan, but is usually observed on the 27th. Every night of Ramadan the late evening prayers are followed by twenty rakas of prayer that include the recitation of one thirtieth, a para, of the Quran.\textsuperscript{2} The observance of Laylat al-Qadr is therefore particularly demanding. At least in the summer, vigil is kept for the whole night, ending with prayer and the meal taken before dawn, sahur.

The Muslim is not obliged to attend any of the above festivals, nor even those of Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha. All are observed because they commemorate or were instituted by the Prophet: they are his sunna, not the direct command of Allah. The Id prayers, however, have acquired additional significance as the occasions on which the whole community gathers to pray. A village in Bangladesh may have two or three mosques, but only one Id-ga, a space specially marked out and kept for the Id prayers. Even a town has more than one Id-ga only if it is impossible for everyone to assemble in one place. So in Bradford the prayers are not held in the mosque but in a large hall. Approximately four hundred men and boys, eighty per cent of the male Bengali population, attend. The majority of Muslims in Bradford meet at Id as at other times in their own ethnic and linguistic groups, but in 1980 a number of Pakistanis attended the prayers organized by the Bengali community, making it necessary for the imam to give part of his address in Urdu. Their attendance was probably motivated by considerations of convenience, for many return to work after the prayers, but it may also be some indication of the significance of the Id prayers as a unifying force within a diverse Muslim community.

At Id, as on a Friday, the imam's address precedes the prayer-rite, and as the congregation gathers early, there are many to hear him. These are occasions for him to remind every Muslim of the basic duties which he is bound to fulfil not only at Id but every day, in the knowledge that 'we shall not all meet at the next Id'. At Id al-Adha, the imam speaks of the need to offer the whole of one's life to Allah,
making a sacrifice of the will, as Abraham did. He may also give detailed instruction as to the manner of the sacrifice to be made on this day, at the same time as the sacrifices offered by the pilgrims in Mecca. And at both festivals the imam carefully explains the form of the prayer-rite, which differs slightly from the ordinary prayers. A khutba is read at Id after the congregational prayers and the whole ceremony ends with brief dua, prayer of supplication. Greetings are then exchanged between members of the congregation, many of whom seem particularly anxious to greet the imam and form a small crowd near him.

Few Bengalis perform the sacrifice on Id al-Adha, partly because of the cost and partly because of the problem of consuming so large a quantity of meat. If a family sacrifices, each mature person is bound to give a sheep or a goat, or seven people may share a large animal such as a cow. One person reported that this might be feasible if everyone owned a freezer! It is also required that one third of the meat be given to the poor, and, as in respect of zakat, it is difficult to know to whom to give. Nevertheless, each year one or two families do make a sacrifice, distributing the meat widely within the Bengali community.

With the possible exception of the milad, the extent to which the observance of festivals in Bradford resembles that in Sylhet depends largely upon the composition of families here. A family of brothers, each with his wife and children, is able to celebrate in a way that the single man cannot. The family has new clothes at Id al-Fitr and all eat the festival meal together. At the night vigils children may accompany their father to the mosque (if only to fall asleep there), while women may pray together at home. The role of a woman in the observance of festivals appears to consist chiefly in the preparation of sweets and other food and in the practice of prayer in private, for the focal point of communal observance is the mosque, which is an exclusively male preserve. A woman's isolation may be relieved by the presence of female relatives, but these are few in a community that comprises people from many villages. It cannot therefore be claimed that satisfactory compensation has yet been found for the
annual cycle of festivals in the Sylheti village, but the migrant community has certainly laid a foundation upon which future generations may build.

E THE MAINTENANCE OF OTHER BENGALI MUSLIM TRADITIONS

The various and vital resources that sustain a Muslim community in Sylhet are not all available to the migrants in Bradford. The foundation of the Twaqulia Islamic Society and its mosque enabled continuity of observance of congregational prayer and, to an extent, of Muslim festivals, but there are many aspects of life in the home society that the community in Bradford has been unable or unwilling to reproduce. It is important in this discussion to recall that the Bengali migrants cannot yet be said to have settled completely and that many of their needs with regard to the preservation of their identity may still be satisfied by continuing contact with their home villages.

At the shrine of a *pir* in Sylhet the Muslim is not only made aware of the centuries of tradition that link him to his ancestors, but is able to engage in a form of devotion that is significantly different from the performance of the formal prayer-rite. It is unlikely that any substitute for a shrine could be created in Bradford, but none may be needed as long as the migrant is able to remit gifts to Sylhet or to make return visits. On the other hand, it is possible that the migrant community could produce a *pir*. There is a Naqshbandi sufi in Birmingham who has a circle of associates who meet for the performance of *dhikr*, and a *Pir Sahib* was responsible for the foundation of the Jamiyat Tabligh al-Islam in Bradford. However, at present, although *pirs* from Bangladesh occasionally visit Britain, there is no one resident among Bengalis in Bradford who is recognised as a *pir*.

Another important aspect of Sylheti Muslim tradition is the observance of various ceremonies performed by a family to mark stages in the lives of its members. However, the pattern of migration and circumstances of settlement have been such that a transplantation of these rites of passage to Britain has not yet been
fully effected. There are still relatively few Bengali families settled in Bradford and all comprise only the migrant parents and their children. The parents of the original migrants remain in Sylhet with many other members of the extended family. Moreover, even those families that are related to one another may live in various parts of Britain and visit each other infrequently. Their conditions of life and work are quite different from those obtaining in Sylhet where members of the extended family may live in separate homes but in proximity. A man whose son married in Bradford stated that relatives who live in London did not come to the wedding as they were 'too busy', a response inconceivable in Bangladesh.

Consequently the location of major rites remains, if at all possible, in Sylhet. Marriages are celebrated there when the nuclear family settled in Bradford makes a return visit. Burials almost invariably take place in Sylhet, as it is considered essential that relations and fellow-villagers greet their dead, both at the time of burial and subsequently. The East Pakistan Burial Society was formed in the early stages of settlement in Bradford in order to ensure the provision of funds for the repatriation of the dead. Ceremonies relating to the birth and growth of children may be postponed until a return visit or celebrated vicariously by the family in Sylhet. If the traditional sacrifice, *aqiqah*, is to be performed, it will amost certainly be in Sylhet rather than in Bradford.

Family celebrations that are observed in Bradford are conducted in a comparatively private and simple fashion. Whereas in Bangladesh several male relatives would share the expense of a wedding, for example, in Bradford the burden may fall upon one man, unable to afford the extravagance of ceremonies extending over several days. Again, after the birth of a child it is customary to invite the imam to the house, where he would offer prayer and be entertained to a dinner, but in Bradford few such invitations are given. More traditional forms of observance may be restored in time, if the structure of the community comes to bear closer resemblance to that of the home society.

It was noted in discussion of the Muslim family and village in Sylhet that clothing is an important
constituent of Muslim identity. In Bradford it is noticeable that many Bengali men still wear the lungi when at home and that most do so in the mosque. It is without doubt more comfortable to perform the prostrations of the prayer-rite in a lungi than in trousers, but, if so, this only reinforces the association of the garment with the practice of Islam. The white cap that is customarily worn at prayer may also be seen at other times, and thus, like the beard, functions as an indicator of the piety of its wearer; but in Bradford the climate does not favour the continual use of a light cap and beards are worn mostly by older men. However, it is important to note that these small symbols remain available to the community and their use may be extended.

Another, related, symbol of Muslim community that has so far largely survived migration is the purdah system. Religious leaders in Bradford stress the need to continue to observe purdah and returning migrants meet with disapproval in Sylhet if they are seen to have relaxed their observance. However, relaxation of the very strict conditions of purdah in Sylhet is not equivalent to abandonment of this major element of the Muslim way of life. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the variations in the observance of this tradition within the migrant community in relation to practice in Sylhet.31

In Sylhet the observance of purdah remains almost completely untouched by forces of modernization. In the village the women work within the home, although not confined to the house, for most homes have screens erected around their boundaries in order to enable women to work outside and remain unseen. If male visitors who are not close kin arrive, the women go indoors and the men are entertained outside or in a separate room if the house is large. The extent to which women move about within a village depends upon its size and the structure of its population; movement is more restricted in a large village than in a small one, most of whose members are inter-related. Outside the home, and within it in the presence of senior male relations, a woman wears her sari with the end covering her head. She uses a burka only when travelling outside the village. Additional measures may also be taken such as the covering of a cycle rickshaw with a sheet or the use of a
palanquin to obviate the need of walking. The ability of a family to observe purdah depends upon, and is therefore a sign of, its economic status: only the wealthy can afford a house with separate female quarters or to pay bearers of a palanquin, while the poor, who cannot afford even a burka, may be forced to work for others as servants, where purdah is impossible.

In Bradford the village family enters an alien, urban environment and is subjected to opposing pressures, some tending towards stricter observance of purdah and some towards its relaxation. The movements of a woman may be further restricted by several elements of the new situation. The family now lives in a pukka house, often a terraced-house in which the back room serves as female quarters. If the house is shared by other families, a woman may find company here, but there is otherwise far less opportunity for seeing other women than in Sylhet. The city is a strange world in which few, if any, of her kin live, but where there are many Bengali men. The woman who comes to live with her husband in a single room in isolation from other Bengalis may find herself totally secluded in a way that she has never previously experienced. Even within an area of predominantly Bengali habitation the traditional devices for the maintenance of purdah outside the home may no longer be satisfactory. The burka may conceal identity but draws the attention of the native population, while use of the sari or headscarf is considered inadequate by many Bengalis. One man, seeing a woman outside who was not wearing a burka, remarked, 'We hate women like that'. There is, moreover, a tendency for some men, who still see life in Britain in terms of life in Sylhet and so seek traditional symbols of success and honour, to enforce the strict observance of purdah, for this is one of the most important symbols.

On the other hand, if her husband is less conservative and they live apart from other Bengalis, a woman may take on new responsibilities in the home, dealing with tradesmen, taking children to school or to the clinic, and shopping. There is a group of five or six women who live away from the main area of Bengali settlement in Bradford, who, although not close neighbours, spend much of their time together,
especially in activities related to the school. They wear saris, long coats and head-scarves and thus observe the proprieties of Islamic dress, but enjoy considerable freedom of movement. It was noticeable, by comparison with experience of Sylhet, that these women, and even some in the mainly Bengali area, would speak to an Englishman. This, however, may be taken not as an indication of the relaxation of purdah so much as of the different way in which members of an unrelated community are treated. Purdah is to be observed primarily in relation to Bengali men, rather than to members of the host society. Those who live in yet closer contact with the host society tend to have greater freedom of movement. The wives of western-educated, professional men are the most 'liberal' in their observance of purdah, although only one of these goes out to work. In discussion of purdah with two such families the term 'mental purdah' (mane parda in Bengali) was used. They stressed that in every family, Muslim or non-Muslim, certain limits are established with regard to the extent of mixing between the sexes, limits that vary according to circumstance and attitude. Purdah, like a curtain drawn at dusk, facilitates and protects intimacy between husband and wife.

The variety of interpretations of purdah evident within the Bengal Muslim community in Bradford is similar to that which would be found in a city in Bangladesh, where many people come from the villages in search of work, to live alongside an urban population whose ways are less conservative. This pattern of observance is likely to continue as dependent relatives are gradually admitted to the United Kingdom, thus retarding any tendency towards assimilation of British custom. The current practice of the western-educated Bengali families indicates that despite some erosion of tradition, a modified form of purdah will remain a characteristic of the community.

Finally, it is necessary, if only briefly, to consider the children of the community, who will be responsible for the future of its traditions. It has been seen that there are in Bradford a number of aspects of traditional Bengali Muslim life that continue to sustain in the migrants the awareness of
belonging to a community of Muslims. However, while
the adult Bengalis came to Britain with an already
developed sense of their Muslim identity, the child-
ren who are brought up in Bradford have fewer re-
sources upon which to draw, fewer opportunities for
participation in the rites that mark family and
village life in Sylhet. They may also feel more
deeply than their parents the need to belong to the
community represented by their non-Muslim friends
or school-teachers. Families in Bradford cannot be
entirely confident that their children will grow up
to be good Muslims.

The Muslim home in Bradford indeed shares many of
the characteristics of the home in Sylhet, for here
the child still hears the name of Allah and learns
to pray, perhaps also to read the Quran. However,
the founders of the Twaqulia Islamic Society were
conscious of the insufficiency of the instruction
that could be given by parents, and provided for
the children to be taught in the mosque by one who
was qualified. The teaching given there by the imam
is the subject of Chapter 7, but it can be noted at
this point that these classes have been assigned an
important role to play in ensuring the continuity
of the traditions of the community.

SUMMARY

The Muslims of Bradford lacked a mosque and oppor-
tunity for the communal observance of Islam until
1960. As the Muslim population grew in the 1960s
several buildings were adapted and used as mosques,
in which Bengalis prayed alongside the more numerous
Muslims from West Pakistan. The gradual expansion
of the Bengali community, including more women and
children, led to the foundation of the Twaqulia
Islamic Society in 1969. This was independent of
the existing Pakistani community association and
its formation anticipated the final division between
Bengalis and Pakistanis in 1971. In order to
further its main aim of promoting the observance of
Islam within the Bengal community, the Twaqulia
Islamic Society developed a constitution designed
to secure its unity and autonomy. Its structure
includes careful controls of the power of its
executive committee, officials and imam. Two adjacent houses were converted to create a mosque, which was equipped and used for worship and also for the preparation of food at festivals, for meetings of the Society, for a schoolroom and for accommodation. This makeshift mosque was unsatisfactory in several respects, especially in that permanent planning permission was not granted by the Council. Plans were therefore made for a new building.

The existence of a mosque and the appointment of an imam has made it possible for Bengalis to observe the congregational prayers and to understand and practise their basic Islamic duties. The extent of actual observance of the pillars of Islam is difficult to estimate, but it appears that the number of Bengalis who pray at the mosque and who fast in Ramadan has increased in recent years. A community that is still composed mainly of men cannot celebrate Islamic festivals in the same way as in a Sylheti village, but at least the basic formal observance can be maintained. The mosque is usually full on these occasions and for the Id prayers a large hall is hired. Forms of devotion associated with the shrines of pirs and the ceremonies surrounding birth, marriage and death continue to be observed in Sylhet rather than in Bradford. However, the migrant community has preserved the system of purdah in a variety of forms, both rigorous and flexible. This remains an important symbol of the identity of the Bengalis as a community of Muslims. Hopes of the future maintenance of their traditions have been largely invested in the instruction of children in the mosque by the imam.
The Imam and his Imamate

The imam bears considerable responsibility for the fulfilment of the aims of the Twaqulia Islamic Society. His teaching, if heeded, may influence the ways in which Islam is observed by the Bengalis in Bradford and so affect the character of their community. Chapters 6 and 7, therefore, give an account of the imam's instruction of adults and children respectively. In the present chapter we examine the historical and contemporary context of the imam's work and his perception of it. Analysis of the actual effect of his teaching and of his wider role in the community is reserved for the Conclusion.

In the first section of this chapter the history of imamate is briefly surveyed and the status of the modern imam in Bangladesh compared with that of his predecessors. The post in Bradford to which the present imam was appointed in 1978 is the subject of the second section. The method of appointment and the duties and qualifications of the imam are described and compared with conditions obtaining in Sylhet. Finally, we consider the aims of the imam, recounting his own ideals of imamate, his attitude towards the people in his charge, and his view of himself as a reformer among the Bengali Muslims.

A, IMAMATE PAST AND PRESENT

Imam is a Quranic term, derived from the verb amma, to precede or lead, but it also connotes a person or thing that serves as a guide or pattern. Thus in Sura 2:124 it is said of Abraham: 'I will make thee an Imam to the nations'. Two different translations of the same term as it occurs in Sura 25:74 illus-
trate these two aspects of its meaning: Pickthall
writes, 'Make us patterns for (all) those who ward
off (evil)', while Yusuf All has, 'Give us (the
grace) to lead the righteous'.

Just as Abraham was regarded as the leader whose
life of obedience of God was a model for all the
nations, so the Prophet Muhammad was imam of the
community he founded. His imamate was expressed
supremely in his leadership of the congregational
prayers, in which he stood in front of the others,
who copied the movements of each raka as he
performed them. Thus imama came to denote a
specific function that was itself to be regarded
as a pattern of the relationship between the commun-
ity and its head, 'a practice on a small scale for
running a big government'.

The successors of the Prophet exercised the same
undivided temporal and spiritual leadership, and it
is significant that the caliph, khalifa, was also
known as imam. He stood in the place of the Prophet
when he took his place at the front of the rows of
worshippers. Islamic jurists were to prefer the
term imam, for they saw the leadership of the prayers
as the most important function of the caliph: the
election of Abu Bakr was defended on the grounds
that, in the absence of the Prophet, he had led the
prayers. The ritual imama was a powerful, visible
symbol of the political imama.

However, the multiplication of Muslim communities
led to widespread delegation of the authority of
the khalifa as imam, until a distinction had to be
drawn between the greater imamate, al-imama al-kubra,
of the ruler and the lesser imamate, al-imama al-
sughra, of the prayer leader in a local mosque. The
latter exercised authority over a limited area, but
it was still seen as the authority of a khalifa, a
representative of the Prophet in his community.

The Hadith reveals that a congregation required that
an imam have qualifications similar to those expected
of the caliph by his electorate. Both were to be of
unblemished life and character, free of physical
defect and to have a thorough knowledge of the Quran
and of Islamic law. These remain the qualifications
demanded of the present-day imam, although of course
estimates of a man's character and of his knowledge are both relative and variable. One informant in Bradford reported that when an imam is appointed from within the congregation, the office, being a great honour, is given to one whom honour is due among those who are competent to lead the prayers. In so far as honour is due to the old, confirmation of this view is found in the Hadith:

He who is the most excellent reader* of the book of Allah from a people shall be their Imam. If they are equal in reading the Quran, then he who is the most learned of them in Hadis, if they are equal in Hadis, then he who is the foremost of them in hijrat, and if they are equal in hijrat, then he who is the oldest of them in age. No man shall ever be Imam of (another) man where the latter has authority.3

In contemporary Bangladesh an imam is far removed from the early Muslim rulers: his title carries only faint echoes of the power and authority conferred upon the one who was both khalifa and imam of the Muslim community. The term imam itself strictly refers to the one who leads the prayers, who outside of the prayer-rite ceases to be imam. When two or three Muslims pray together, one is imam. The salaried imam, who is given overall responsibility for the ordering of worship, comes to be known as imam outside of the mosque as well as within. But his imamate is an occupation rather than a profession or an order in which he is set apart from others. A man may take a post as an imam for a time and then leave for a different job, when he would no longer act, or be known as, imam. The present imam in Bradford envisages working as a teacher, not as an imam, when he returns to Sylhet.

The various titles by which an imam in Bangladesh may be known both reflect the authority an imam, as caliph, once enjoyed and to which his successors may yet aspire, and also by their usage reveal contemporary attitudes to him. The usage reported here varies widely, even within the Indian sub-continent, and is not claimed to be definitive: similar variations may be expressed elsewhere by different terminology. There are three terms commonly used, all derived from the Arabic mawla, protector or leader, a Quranic term

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* refers to the Quranic reference

3 Reference to the Hadith is from: [Hadith Collection](https://example.com/hadith-website)
used of God. **Mulla** (mullah) is the Persian form of mawla and is used as a synonym of imam, often in a derogatory sense of uneducated village imams. **Mawlawi**, or **maulvi**, meaning 'my leader' is used as a term of respect or sometimes as a title: some say it refers to one who has achieved a middle grade in a madrasa, but it is popularly used with no such precise meaning. **Mawlana**, literally 'our leader', is frequently adopted as a title by scholars and teachers who have graduated from a madrasa, but this too has an indiscriminate popular usage with reference not only to imams but to any men of learning.

In Sylhet an imam may also be known as a munshi, a scribe or clerk, or as a khari (Arabic qari), one who reads or recites. **Qari** is also the proper designation of a functionary of the mosque who recites the Quran. Its application to the imam is probably due to the imam's assumption of the duties of the qari, especially where there is no other person suitably qualified. Some Bengalis may address their imam simply by a term of respect, **miah**. A further term of respect, **sahib**, may be added to any of the above titles thus: mawlana sahib, khari sahib, imam sahib or even miah sahib. Of course the man so addressed may or may not genuinely be respected.

**B IMAMATE IN BRADFORD**

The executive committee of the Twaqulia Islamic Society appoints an imam on behalf of the whole community. It is unlikely that a suitable man could be found among Bengalis already in Bradford, for few would be competent to lead the prayers and those with sufficient knowledge and command of respect have more remunerative occupations. Candidates are therefore sought elsewhere, the first imam coming from Scunthorpe and his successors from Bangladesh. The present imam responded to an advertisement in a Sylheti newspaper and was interviewed by members of the committee there. The appointment was then confirmed by a meeting of the full committee in Bradford.
The relationship between the imam and the executive committee has been discussed in the course of our examination of the structure of the Twaqulia Islamic Society. The imam is given authority to lead the prayers and to teach Islam, but he has no voice in the administration of the Society and no power to enforce what he teaches. In a Bengali village an imam would probably exercise a degree of control over others by means of such sanctions as the boycott, refusing to visit or to perform any rites for an offending individual or household. An imam of the Jamiyat Tabligh al-Islam in Bradford claimed to exercise such authority still, but in general it seems that an imam in Britain is likely to be circumscribed by the mosque committee and less powerful than in his home society.

The imam is paid by the Twaqulia Islamic Society and allowed no other form of employment. Informants differed as to whether a similar stipulation is usually made in Sylhet: some reported instances of an imam deriving income from a small landholding or a business partnership, but others said that this was impossible. It seems reasonable to conclude that it would be exceptional for a salaried imam to have another occupation, although a competent farmer or shop-keeper may act as imam where no full-time appointment had been made. The intention of a ban on other forms of employment is to ensure the imam's availability for the prayers, but the effect of this condition depends upon the adequacy of his wages.

An imam's pay varies according to the wealth of the mosque and its people. If the mosque is well endowed or the congregation large and prosperous, he may receive a high salary; otherwise he is likely to be poor. The imam of a mosque in Sylhet town was paid 900 taka per month and provided with accommodation, while imams in poor villages might receive only 200 taka per month, or its equivalent in kind. (A comparison may be made with the pay of a village school-teacher estimated at 600 taka.)

A combination of low pay and a ban on other employment has two major consequences for the imamate in Bangladesh. Firstly, there are few highly educated imams. The imam in Bradford estimated that only twenty per cent of imams in Bangladesh are madrasa
graduates, while Zaidi states that the majority are 'only semiliterate'. Those with suitable qualifications apparently seek more rewarding occupations. The second consequence is that an imam may seek to supplement his meagre income by taking payment for various functions that he performs in addition to the conduct of the daily prayers. He may be given cash, clothing or food in return for a milad, for an amulet, or even for performing a funeral rite. The mosque committee may itself, as in Bradford, organize a collection in payment for his services during Ramadan or at a festival, but other gifts have no official sanction.

The present imam of the Twaqulia Islamic Society regards all such fringe benefits as a sign of corruption, which can be eradicated only by adequate pay. His previous salary had been relatively high, but he had received no additional payments from any source. He came to Bradford partly because the pay appeared good, but then discovered that it was not so by British standards. He therefore accepts the extra payments made by the Society. He is known to disapprove of gifts made in return for his prayers for individuals, but they are still offered. The story is told of his predecessor that, when offered money, he once said, 'Your £5 will not affect Allah's response to your prayers.'

The duties of an imam also vary. In a town in Bangladesh his official duties comprise the conduct of the daily prayers and the delivery of an address and reading of the khutba at the Friday congregation-al prayers. Other activities would be the responsibility of an assistant imam or of others employed for specific tasks, whether regular, such as teaching the children, or occasional, such as reciting the Quran at the night prayers during Ramadan. However, in a village the imam may be the sole religious functionary and required to meet a great variety of demands, formal and informal.

Imamate in Bradford is in this respect similar to that in a village in Bangladesh. The imam has one day off each week, but otherwise he leads the prayers five times every day. Since there is no assistant imam, he cannot take leave as readily as he would in Sylhet. Others do deputize when necessary, but the congregation demands that a
scholar, alim, perform this function, and the sole alim in the community is the imam. He also gives an address at the Friday prayers, and a weekly lecture on the Quran each Sunday, conducts and preaches at the celebration of festivals, and is responsible for the organization of all such events in the mosque. He produces the monthly prayer timetable. In addition, he is expected to spend time in study, especially of the Quran and commentaries. The imam states that in Bangladesh no one of his qualifications would give elementary teaching, but in Bradford he alone taught the children until 1980, when there were over one hundred in the class and it was evident to the mosque committee that he could not continue without an assistant teacher.

Outside the mosque the imam may be required for the celebration of rites of passage within particular households, but these occasions are less common than in Sylhet. It is a Bengali custom to invite the imam to dinner, for his pronouncement of the basmala is said to bring blessing, baraka, upon the house, but this too is infrequently observed in Bradford. However, the imam is consulted for authoritative judgment on points of Islamic law, especially concerning the observance of prayers, fasting or similar duties. He may also be asked to provide guidance or arbitration with regard to a dispute between families, whether its cause lies in Bradford or Sylhet.

In Sylhet someone who seeks help or consolation regarding a personal problem may go to various people or places. There are shrines and pirs, there are imams and others competent to pray or to write out a verse of the Quran. In Bradford, however, such people are few, and this form of help is often requested of the imam. Illness is a common cause of distress, especially within a community of migrants unfamiliar with the world of the National Health Service, whose institutions or staff may arouse suspicion, fear or sheer bewilderment. The imam encourages people to consult their doctor, but he also gives other forms of assistance.

A sick person commonly wears an amulet made of a small metal case, enclosing a paper bearing a verse of the Quran, tied on the body by the affected part.
The imam gives such amulets, tabij, claiming that they are effectual because they contain the word of God. He also follows a practice, said to have been Muhammad's, of breathing and reciting Quranic verses over a glass of water, which the sick person then drinks. Similarly, after leading the Friday prayers for the first time in Bradford, he was approached by a man whose child was sick. Taking some strands of cotton, the imam tied them in knots at intervals, blowing upon them and reciting from the Quran. The thread was to be bound on the child's arm.

The imam is also able simply to listen to a person and to understand his Sylheti speech, giving him the time that a doctor may lack. He states that he responds to requests for a symbol of prayer or of God's blessing, in order to give peace of mind to one who is uneducated and anxious. The customs he follows are not forbidden by Islam; moreover, if anything is wrong, 'God can forgive'. The imam believes that, in case of illness, prayer is always necessary, whether or not it is given material expression; it is, however, complementary to medical attention and not a substitute for it.

The nature and amount of an imam's work varies in accordance with the demands made upon him and the availability of others to meet them. It also depends in part upon his own abilities, for one who can lead the prayers is not necessarily capable of reciting the whole Quran or of making pronouncements about Islamic law. The Twaqulia Islamic Society has taken care to appoint well qualified men to imamate in Bradford. The present imam, like his predecessor, is a graduate of a madrasa and of a university. He gained the title hafiz (which he uses before his name) at the madrasa in his home village, having learned to recite the whole Quran from memory. He studied further to the highest level of madrasa education, kamil, thus winning the right to be known as alim, a scholar.

This traditional Islamic education was then supplemented by study at Comilla College and at Dhaka University, where his degree course comprised English, Bengali, Civics, Economics and Islamic History. At Dhaka he was active in the Islami Chhatra Shibir, an association that campaigns for the implementation of Islamic law, and he claims to have brought several
fellow students back to the right path. He was particularly influenced by the writings of Mawlana Mawdudi, whom he regards as the mujaddid, renewer of religion, of the twentieth century. The imam's own teaching reflects the emphasis of Mawdudi on the totality of Islam as a way of social, political and economic, as well as of personal, life. The inspiration of Mawdudi is also evident in the imam's approach to the task before him in Bradford as one who aims to reform the Muslim community by means of education.

C  THE AIMS OF THE IMAM

The imam regards his office as one of authority. He claims to stand within the tradition of imamate represented by Abraham and Muhammad and, with reference to his own status as alim, he quotes a hadith that describes the ulama as the heirs of the Prophet. He accepts the dual role of the imam as leader and exemplar: as he acts as a pattern for the congregation in the mosque, so he must conform with Islamic law in all that he does. Ideally, he would, by virtue of his imamate, not only exemplify but enforce compliance with Islamic standards of conduct. He looks for the establishment of a truly Islamic form of government, a new caliphate, that would endow the local imam with powers of coercion. His present imamate is far removed from this ideal, but even within the restricted scope afforded him in Bradford, he has certain aims that, if fulfilled, would change the character of the Bengali Muslim community. In order to understand these aims, it is necessary to note how he regards the community and its situation in Britain.

Very few members of the Bengali community are reckoned by the imam to be good Muslims. He considers that their observance of Islam is incomplete and their faith weak. The imam perceives the root of this weakness to lie in a deficient understanding of Islam, itself the result of a lack of Islamic education. The majority of Bengali migrants had at most only a few years of schooling. Their view of Islam was shaped by participation in the daily and seasonal rituals of the village, not by formal learning of Quran and Hadith. Moreover, the very ceremonies by
which Islam was mediated to them are regarded as syncretistic by an orthodox teacher. On the other hand, those who are fully literate and professionally qualified received an education that was secular rather than Islamic in character. The children of both parties are seen by the imam as subject to the influence of parents who are not true Muslims and also of British society.

The imam, like many other migrants from the Indian sub-continent, once imagined that Britain was a Christian country. He assumed that the British way of life was governed by a set of traditions that, while different from those of Islam, were recognizably religious. Since his expectations were not met, he has come to see Britain as a secular society. He has not altogether abandoned the belief that it is at the same time Christian, for secularism is not seen as equivalent to atheism, but as a relativizing force to which Christianity has succumbed. He acknowledges that religion has not been banished from society, but sees its role as limited. Indeed, he accuses Christian leaders, in accepting restriction of their sphere of influence, of contributing to the process of secularization. It also appears absurd to the imam that a government so closely related to the Church should do little or nothing to enforce Christian principles of conduct.

The imam's view of the relations between the Church and State may be uninformed but his conception of secularism is very significant. To the Muslim who seeks the realization of Islam at every level of human life, a division between religion and politics, the personal and the private realms, presents a strong threat to the development of a Muslim community. The faith of adult Bengali Muslims in Bradford is threatened by a tendency towards the privatization of religion and, to a lesser extent, by failure to adhere to Islamic standards of personal morality; while their children are exposed to a system of education that does not recognize the sovereignty of God or the guidance given by the Prophet.

The aim of the imam, therefore, is so to present and instil true Islamic doctrine that his fellow Bengalis will be purged of their traditional syncretism, protected from secularism and come to view and practise
Islam as a complete code of life. He hopes thus not only to reform the community but to inspire its members to work for the creation of a society whose law is the Sharia. The twofold goal of a purified, distinctive Muslim community and a theocratic state he shares with others, who have at times during the past two hundred years attempted to reform Bengali Muslim society. Their immediate aims and their methods have varied greatly, but the Islamic ideals of movements such as the Faraidis, led by Shariat Allah in the early nineteenth century, were similar to those propounded in the twentieth century by Mawdudi and, indeed, to those of the Anjumane Khedmate Quran, founded in 1970 in Sylhet, of which the imam himself was a founder-member.10

The imam believes that the Bengalis today need a revolutionary leader, in Bradford as much as in Bangladesh, but that is not to be his role. 'In respect of the organization of the prayers and of teaching, the appointed imam will assume all the responsibility of imamate in accordance with Islamic law'.11 His is the slow and steady work of the educator, and as such he is given authority by the Twaqulia Islamic Society. The Society is particularly concerned that the children receive some Islamic education, but the imam's responsibility also embraces adults. He regards his educational work as of the highest importance, for this is the chief means by which he can hope to influence the behaviour of others. Moreover, he considers that he is well qualified for the task, claiming that, as a result of his education, he has an understanding of western as well as of Islamic thought. As a hafiz and alim, skilled in the art of tafsir, commentary on the Quran, he not only knows the scripture by heart, but can interpret its meaning. The Quran and Hadith are the main tools of his trade, for he believes that within them is to be found the total and sufficient guidance which Allah has given for the conduct of human life. His immediate aim, therefore, in his teaching is that the adults of the community should share something of his understanding of the Quran and that the children should begin to learn it by heart.
D SUMMARY

In the early Muslim community the one who was at once imam and caliph both exemplified and enforced the law of Islam, his leadership symbolized by the conduct of the congregational prayers. As Islam spread, the local imam retained some of the authority of the caliph within his own area. However, in contemporary Bangladesh, evidence of the erstwhile power of imamate survives only in the titles an imam may bear.

The man appointed to imamate in Bradford by the Twaqulia Islamic Society has authority within the mosque but little actual power. His salary is, in real terms, less than he had received in his previous post in Sylhet, but his official duties are many and varied, for he is the only person available who is sufficiently qualified to meet all the demands of the Society. He is also called upon by individual members of the community for prayer or guidance.

Since he lacks the power of the ideal imamate, the imam attempts to influence others by his teaching. He considers that the Bengalis in Bradford are imperfect Muslims, lacking Islamic education and subject to secularizing forces in British society. He aims, therefore, chiefly by means of exposition of the Quran, to purify and strengthen the community and to exhort its members to observe Islam as a total way of life.
The Imam's Teaching of Adults

The Imam regards the Islamic education of the men of the Bengali community as the most important part of his work. He once said that this was the main reason for his coming to Britain. By the time of his arrival the Twaqulia Islamic Society was well established and provided several regular opportunities for the Imam to instruct the congregation. In the first part of this chapter we examine each of these occasions in turn, considering the form of the Imam's teaching and the style of his addresses. Two conferences, organized by a separate body, but chaired by the Imam, are also discussed.

The content of his teaching is surveyed in the second and third sections of the chapter. This account is based on approximately thirty addresses, ten of which were recorded and translated in full. An example of a Friday address is given below in Appendix II. It is not possible to give a full account of all that the Imam teaches, nor would it be particularly interesting; for it consists largely of traditional, fundamental Islamic doctrine and exhortation to true observance, such as can be found in numerous basic works by Muslim authors. It seems best, therefore, at the risk of giving a distorted picture, to indicate certain emphases that the Imam frequently makes, showing what he considers to be of special importance. We therefore explore two dominant themes, namely the insistence on the observance of the pillars of Islam, and the conviction that Islam is a complete code of life.
(i) The Friday Prayers

Every adult male Muslim is obliged to perform the congregational prayers at midday every Friday in the mosque. This ceremony has therefore acquired a significance far beyond that of the congregational prayers at other times and has been used by leaders of the Muslim community as an opportunity for instruction of the faithful. Prior to discussion of the form of the Friday prayers and of the imam's teaching, it is necessary to explain certain matters of terminology.

The Bengali terms for the prayer-rite and the Friday prayers differ slightly from those used in Arabic. In Arabic Friday is known as juma, the day of assemblies, and the prayers as salat al-juma. In Muslim Bengal Friday is called juma din (juma day) as well as sukrabar, its Bengali name, but the Persian term namaz is preferred to the Arabic salat, so that the Friday prayers are known as juma namaz. It is also important to note the distinction between namaz, the formal prayer-rite, and dua, prayer of supplication, which differ in both form and content. Finally, the khutba must be distinguished from the Bengal address which precedes it. To this end we use the terms khutba and 'address' or 'Bengali address' and avoid reference to either as a 'sermon' for a phrase such as 'the Friday sermon' is confusing.

The form of the whole ceremony, as performed in the mosque of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, may be set out thus:

Azan
Bengali address and dua
Individual namaz
Azan
First khutba
Dua
Second khutba
Juma namaz
Dua
Individual namaz

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The first azan, call to prayer, is given half an hour before the second. The azan is given within the mosque, for non-Muslim local residents would not tolerate its broadcast. Only a small proportion of the congregation is present at the beginning of the imam's address, the whole of which may be heard by only twenty people; however, by the time the second azan is given, all have arrived who will attend the prayers. In Bangladesh mosques are equipped with loudspeakers to broadcast both the azan and the address, but in Bradford these are heard only by those who are present in the mosque. Since many people arrive during the imam's address, his words are subject to constant, if discreet, interruption, and concentration is required of those who wish to listen.

Yet the imam takes care over the preparation of these addresses and has drafted a syllabus which, in the first two years of his imamate in Bradford, comprised the five pillars of Islam, basic belief about God and Muhammad, the character of a Muslim, relationships within Muslim community, and Islamic law, the Sharia, and religion, din. The scheme is occasionally modified according to season, so that during Ramadan, for example, instruction is given on the observance of the fast. The address lasts for about twenty minutes and its style is simple. This is not an occasion for detailed commentary on a text or for lengthy historical explanation of Muslim practice, but for straightforward instruction on Islamic duties and exhortation to their observance.

The teaching is illustrated by reference to the Quran, but chiefly by use of the Hadith, the corpus of traditions of the Prophet. A hadith is quoted without citation of the particular anthology in which it is written, for the imam does not possess a collection of these vast works, but has learned many hadiths by heart. Instruction on a particular point is almost invariably accompanied by promise of reward for obedience and occasionally by threat of punishment for failure to obey. The latter is often implied in the statement that whoever does not obey is not a Muslim.

The address as a whole may be punctuated by corporate recitation of a prayer for blessing of the Prophet.
(tasliya or durud), chanted several times, in Arabic, by the whole congregation: 'May God call down blessing on our Lord and Master Muhammad and on his family and companions, and greet them with peace'.

This has the function of giving both speaker and audience a break, and continues until the imam begins to speak again. The congregation also responds to the address by reciting with the imam any well-known phrase he uses, such as the kalima tayyiba or the invocation of the peace of God at each mention of the name or title of Muhammad or any other prophet. The imam also questions his hearers from time to time, demanding a denial or affirmation of what he has said, or calls on them to repeat a phrase such as the hamdala, al-hamdu lillah ('thanks be to God'), or the tasbih, subhan Allah ('praise God').

This weekly address has high potential as a medium of Islamic teaching, but its effectiveness is reduced by the fact that relatively few hear the whole of it each week. Moreover the imam states that of those who do listen, few understand all that he says. Misunderstanding is partly linguistic. The imam, although a native of Sylhet and Sylheti speaker, gives all formal addresses in 'high' Bengali. This is not the language of Rabindranath Tagore, for it is recognizably eastern in pronunciation and includes a high proportion of Arabic and Persian vocabulary, but it is still different from Sylheti. One reason for speaking in 'high' Bengali is that there may be some present in the congregation who come from districts other than Sylhet, although such people would learn to understand Sylheti soon after settling in a British Bengali community. The main reason, however, is that formal Islamic teaching always is given in Bengali, or Urdu. Stating this, the imam was surprised at the suggestion that he might lecture in dialect and said that nobody ever does. A further and deeper reason for misunderstanding of the content of his teaching is rooted in the chasm that lies between the different ways in which the speaker and his hearers have imbibed their faith.

The address concludes with a brief period of supplicatory prayer, dua. All sit with arms raised, palm upwards, a posture that indicates not only supplication but a receptiveness of Allah's blessing. At the end
of the dua everyone draws his hands down his face, taking the blessing to himself. This prayer consists of a litany chanted by the imam, with the congregation responding 'amin' to each phrase. The manner of prayer is intense, the words tumbling in rapid succession, often accompanied by tears, especially as people pray for Bangladesh, for their families or for forgiveness of their sins. The very language of dua expresses this intensity, being a conglomeration of Bengali and Arabic, virtually incomprehensible to the non-Muslim Bengali, but evidently meaningful to the participants. The prayers may be related in part to the subject of the address.

There is then a pause of five minutes or more before the second azan. Silence is kept, while people individually perform two rakas of namaz. This is not obligatory, but was the practice of the Prophet and is known as sunna namaz. As the azan is given, lines are formed, as for the congregational prayers, and the congregation sits to hear the khutba.

The delivery of two khutbas at the Friday prayers is an ancient Muslim tradition. It was the practice of Muhammad himself, whose khutbas have been preserved and are still in use. The khatib (the pre-Islamic term for the spokesman of an Arab tribe), who gives the khutba, was the ruler of the community or his deputy. He had two symbols of office as khatib, a staff or wooden sword in his hand, and the steps on which he stood.

The imam in the Bengali mosque does not carry a staff, but otherwise observes the ancient ceremony, standing beside a token minbar. He owns several collections of khutbas, by both historical and contemporary authors, from which he selects two to read each Friday. They are short, each of five to ten minutes duration, in accordance with the hadith. 'Make your salat long and your khutba short'.4 The imam stands to read the khutbas and sits between them, as was the custom of the Prophet. During this brief interval dua is offered (which traditionally included prayer for the caliph), the hamdala is recited and blessings are invoked upon the Prophet.
The **khutba** is given in Arabic. Its content may be related to the season of the Islamic year, but is incomprehensible to the Bengali congregation. It is not obligatory that an Arabic khutba be read, but only in Kamalist Turkey has the vernacular been used. The khutba, then, is no longer an effective means of instruction or exhortation, but it remains an important element in the gathering of a Muslim community under its titular leader. It is, therefore, solemnly observed by the Bengalis, who take care to arrive at the mosque in time for the khutba and listen in silence, knowing the hadith, 'If a person says to his companion, "Be quiet and listen," even then he does something wrong'.

The **iqama**, the rapidly spoken form of the azan, is recited by the muezzin immediately after the second khutba. The imam then leads the congregation in the observance of the two obligatory rakas of juma namaz. At the end of the second raka, the congregation remains seated while the imam offers dua, which may last for as long as ten minutes. Finally, people begin to leave the mosque, although some may stay to perform further namaz, two rakas that are sunna and two optional, nafl. Approximately one hour has passed since the first azan was pronounced.

(ii) **Tafsir**

**Tafsir**, commentary on the Quran, is an ancient Islamic science, taught in madrasas and universities, and is an important element in popular Islamic education. In Syihet, the Anjumane Khedmate Quran uses tafsir as a main instrument of its work, deploying mawlanas to speak in mosques throughout the District. Tafsir is given at a time when it is most convenient for the people to attend. In Syihet this may be early on a Friday morning, but in Bradford it is after the midday prayers on a Sunday. The imam speaks for an hour or more. As in the case of the Friday address, relatively few hear the tafsir. There may be fifty men at the prayers, only twenty of whom stay to listen to the imam. Perhaps thirty to forty attend more or less regularly. The imam notes that over a period of two years the number increased slightly, which he regards as significant, for the **tafsir** is to him the most important means of instruction in the faith.
There is no obligation to give or hear tafsir: it is a voluntary means of education. In this mosque it has sometimes to give way to a meeting of the mosque committee and is also abandoned when the imam is not present. The only other person to have given this address during the period of research was a visiting mawlana from Bangladesh.

The imam hopes to complete his tafsir of the whole Quran in five years. Each week he covers a section that may comprise only three or four verses, following the order in which they occur in the Quran. Commentary takes the form of a continuous lecture, punctuated with corporate recitation of durud or other short prayers. There is no open discussion, although someone may interrupt to ask for clarification of a particular point. Having first recited the whole passage for the day, the imam then takes each verse or phrase in turn, repeating it in Arabic and then commenting. The aim is that the people should understand the meaning of the Quran rather than learn it in its Arabic form, so that the main task of the teacher is to translate what he recites. He then further expounds the text using a variety of techniques. The lecture ends with dua.

The techniques of exposition are simple. When beginning a sura the imam gives a historical introduction before translating and commenting in detail. The first question he raises is, 'Why did this sura come from Allah?' He answers with an account of the date and circumstances of the revelation. One whole lecture was devoted to introduction of the second sura, al-bagara. The imam explained that this, the longest sura in the Quran, was revealed in part to Muhammad after the Hijra, and was gradually completed through the course of the Prophet's life. He spoke of the need to establish a firm basis for the life of the Muslim community in Medina, particularly with regard to their dealing with three groups of people, the non-believers, kafirun, the Jews, and those Medanese upon whom the Prophet could not rely, the munafiqun. Persecution by non-believers, which had been tolerated by Muslims in Mecca, was now to be opposed by word and, if necessary, by sword. The Jews, who had some knowledge of God but in whom true faith had become mixed with alien beliefs and their own false notions, were to be shown the light of Allah.
And the munafiqun were to be exposed. These were nominal Muslims who were in fact opposed to Islam. Munafiq is often translated 'hypocrite', but the term is used in several senses, which the imam explained as referring to distinct groups of people, from those non-believers who deliberately infiltrated the Muslim community to Muslims who doubted and wavered in their allegiance. The imam thus gave an overall view of the historical background of the sura, much of which would be repeated or further illustrated in the course of detailed commentary.

Sometimes the subject of a particular tafsir leads the imam to pursue a theme, adducing evidence from other parts of the Quran. In the first tafsir he gave in Bradford he spoke on the prayers that precede every reading of the Quran. The major part of the address was concerned with the first of these, 'I take refuge with God from Satan the accursed'.

Quoting various Quranic texts, he narrated the creation of the first man and woman, the angels and jinn, the disobedience of Iblis, a jinn, and his temptation of Adam and Hama. He then gave solemn warnings against the wily attacks of the 'satans' in the present day.

In the tafsir, as in the Friday address, the Hadith provides an important resource for the teacher. The traditions of the Prophet are used in various ways, some of them adding substantially to Quranic teaching. For example, with regard to the performance of the prayer-rite, details of Muhammad's practice are known only from the Hadith. The imam insists that the Quran is never superceded by the Hadith but is the source of the basic commandments of God. Thus, the Muslim learns from the Quran that he must pray, but when he asks, 'How shall I pray?' he needs to consult the Hadith in order to know the Sunna of the Prophet, which is his authoritative guide.

Other traditions, however, are used simply as illustrative material and may be humorous. One such hadith was quoted during discussion of the omnipresence of satans:

The Apostle of God left Aisha one night. She was jealous of him; and he came and saw her, and said, 'What is the matter with you, Aisha? Are you jealous? Certainly your satan has come into
you.' She said, 'Apostle of God, do I have a satan?' He said 'Yes.' She said, 'And do you, Apostle of God?' He said, 'Yes, but he has become a Muslim!'

The congregation evidently enjoyed the 'punch-line' of this story, which suggests that the imam intended to amuse as much as to instruct. (There seems to be no inhibition of laughter in the mosque during a lecture.) However, it is interesting to compare this version of the hadith with the translation given by Karim, who has the Prophet say, 'Yes, but Allah helped me over him till he submitted'. The verb aslāma, 'submit', may indeed bear the meaning given by the imam, for from it are derived the terms Muslim and Islam, but Karim gives the more literal, perhaps the original, meaning.

So rich a source of illustration is provided by the Hadith that a teacher with a thorough knowledge of the traditions needs little additional material. Another way in which the imam frequently amplifies the meaning of a text is by the use of brief similes. In speaking of the creation of man as God's khalīfa, he said, 'It is as when a shopkeeper leaves someone else in charge of his shop, or when a landlord sends a man to work on his land, giving him precise instructions'. The recording angels are referred to as policemen or detectives, and the sin they record is like a black mark on a clean sheet of paper. Further illustrations are sometimes taken from daily life in order to drive home a particular point: 'A cousin comes to you and says, "Come brother, let's go to the cinema." He looks like your cousin, but in fact he is Satan, who never comes to force you, but as a friend who tempts'.

The imam also occasionally refers to contemporary political events. With reference to the 'law of equality' (qisas), which is prescribed in Sura 2: 178-179, he spoke of the necessity of Islamic law for the government of human society. He praised the Islamic revolution in Iran, while condemning British democracy for its failure to control crime within Britain, and for its hypocritical attitude towards Islamic law:
Islamic law is not barbaric, but a perfect medium between the real barbarity of vengeance exacted through generations and the casual attitude of modern societies that say, 'What is the point of taking another life?' Even some Muslims might say that Quranic laws were written 1400 years ago and should now be changed, but whoever says such things is an enemy of Islam. In Iran at present the new government has killed 268 people and protests are loud in the West. But the government was right, because those 268 had killed 50,000 people. Where were the protesters when all those were killed? Nobody said anything because they were Muslims.

The imam was speaking in June 1979, when popular British reaction to events in Teheran was characterized mainly by shock and hostility, but illustrations of this kind are made whenever he explores the theme of Islam as a complete code of life. It is, however, noteworthy that he rarely illustrates his teaching by reference to the immediate situation of the Bengali community in Bradford: even the similes he employs are ones that he would also use in Bangladesh.

(iii) Festivals

The celebration of a Muslim festival in Bangladesh bears some resemblance to a fair, for thousands of people gather to pray, to sing and dance, to feast, to buy or sell. However, a central element in any festival is a mahfil, a meeting at which lectures on the meaning of the festival are given by renowned Islamic scholars and preachers before a large audience. Our account of the observance of festivals in Bradford showed that the celebration is rather muted by comparison with what happens in Bangladesh; yet the small mosque is usually full and the imam undertakes the task of expounding the significance of the occasion. The festivals, therefore, still provide an opportunity for Islamic teaching.

The imam regards these occasions, especially Id al-Fitr and Id al-Adha, as the times in the year when he is able to remind most of Bradford's adult male Bengali population of their obligations as Muslims. His lecture, therefore, invariably includes exhortation to faithful observance of Islam and especially
of the pillars of the faith. Its length varies from one to over two hours, depending upon the importance of the festival and the time of day or night at which it is celebrated; but the general style of the address does not differ significantly from that of those he gives each week in the mosque.

In addition to the didactic purpose it may serve, the imam's lectures have a certain ritual value. They are appreciated not on account of any novelty or depth of thought or expression, but for their very familiarity and repetitiveness. It would indeed be impossible to deliver or to hear a complex discourse in the Bradford mosque, for there is frequent interruption as people come and go, as rose water is sprinkled on everyone or perfume distributed. The congregation comes to the mosque not to be informed, so much as to celebrate the goodness of God or the excellence of his Prophet, in which celebration the lecture plays a part alongside more obviously festal activities.

(iv) Conferences

A mahfil may be held in Bangladesh not only as part of a festival, but at any time of year. 'Conference' is here given as a translation of mahfil, although the meeting is usually addressed only by the invited speakers and does not provide an opportunity for general discussion. Such a conference may be organized by a mosque committee, or a group with a congregation, or by an independent body. Ellickson gives the following description of the form of the mahfils she observed: 'A well known religious leader would be invited to conduct prayers, recite from the Quran, and deliver sermons over a loud speaker to an assembled crowd from about three o'clock in the afternoon until about three o'clock in the morning'. In a town the number of eminent speakers available is greater than in a village: at a conference attended by the researcher in Sylhet a small audience of only one hundred people heard eight speeches.

In Bradford a mahfil is held only occasionally, for it is difficult to bring together enough speakers to attract a large audience. Two were staged during the period of research, on Sunday afternoons, one in a school hall and one in a warehouse. They were
organized by the Dawat al-Islam, whose president was the predecessor of the present imam of the Twaqulia Islamic Society. The imam himself did not speak at either meeting, but acted as chairman. Thus, while what is examined here is not, strictly speaking, the imam's own teaching, it is, nevertheless, a natural extension of his educational work.

There were three speakers at each meeting. At the first one about six hundred men from West Yorkshire and Manchester were addressed by two mawlanas from Bangladesh who were on a tour of Britain, and by a member of the Dawat al-Islam from London. The second conference heard one of the previous visitors from Bangladesh, an Islamic teacher from the Bengali mosque in Birmingham, and the President of the Dawat al-Islam; but only three hundred or so were present, owing to poor publicity. On each occasion, a time was published for the beginning, but the conference was to be of indefinite duration, as the main speaker may continue for several hours. The man who addressed both conferences spoke for only one hour at the second on account of the small number present: in Bangladesh his audience is counted, not in hundreds, but in tens of thousands.

The conferences began with recitation from the Quran, given on each occasion by a child, and concluded with, led by one of the speakers. The speakers used no notes, reciting passages of the Quran and Hadith from memory. It was interesting to note the range of traditional stories that were used as illustrations, some of which came from the Hadith, while others had been adapted from Buddhist or Hindu contexts. Thus the ancient tale of the blind men and the elephant was employed to illustrate the falsity of a partial view or observance of Islam. With reference to the goodness of God's creation, a speaker quoted a popular Bengali story of a man who sat under a banyan tree on a hot day, cursing the tree for bearing only tiny, dry fruit, until one fell on him, when he thanked God that the fruit was not large and heavy with juice. Another, slightly outrageous story, of uncertain origin, concerned Noah. It was said that when he built the ark, people not only mocked him, but defecated on the ark. Then a leper, who had slipped in the mess, was seen to be healed, and
everyone came to remove the medicinal faeces. Thus the ark was cleaned and diseases, 'even toothache', cured. The audience laughed and applauded.

The man who told this story, and was the main attraction at both conferences, had a distinct style that certainly won his hearers. He made a deliberate effort to arouse everyone, beginning with praise of God for bringing them together and for the beauty and perfection of his creation. He called upon all present to join his praise, saying, 'Subhan Allah'. When the response was rather restrained (possibly the result of too long a stay on British soil), he cried, 'Are you ashamed of Allah? No? Then praise him!' And a great roar of 'Subhan Allah' ensued. He also had a technique of chanting his words in a rhythm and intonation similar to that employed in reciting the Quran, only more rapidly. This he used when translating a Quranic passage he had quoted, but occasionally he chanted at greater length, to the evident delight of the audience. These burst of song were completely extempore, in colloquial Bengali with some English words thrown in for good measure.

The same speaker was also remarkable for the way in which he appealed to people's emotions. Although, most speeches, including those given regularly by the imam in the mosque, may contain humorous illustrations, they tend to be rather impassive in tone, giving instruction in the form of imperatives or straight Quranic narrative. However, as this mawlana exhorted his audience to learn the Quran, he did not simply tell them to do so, or recount the blessings they would eventually receive, but said,

> When your father or mother dies, you can pay the imam to come and recite the Quran by the grave; but you cannot pay him to weep for you. Though you give him thousands of taka, he will not be able to shed one tear. But if you can stand there and recite the Sura Ikhlas, the tears will stream down your face as you thank Allah for giving you your parents.

The content of the speeches given at these conferences is considered further below in relation to the imam's own teaching, but it may be noted here that some
difference of emphasis was apparent between those who had come from Bangladesh to speak and those who were resident in Britain. The dominant concern of the former was that the Bengali Muslims in Britain should remain good Muslims, and the content of their speeches was entirely traditional. They insisted on observance of the pillars of Islam and denounced such sins as laxity in purdah and the consumption of alcohol. Indeed, one Bengali commented that it reminded him of his childhood, when his father had taken him to a mahfil in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the speakers from Birmingham or London, who were members of the Dawat al-Islam, spoke of the task before the Muslim community of converting the people of Britain to Islam. There is no doubt that most Bengalis present at the conferences went to hear the popular mawlana from Bangladesh, but at the same time as they were so strongly reminded by his presence and by their own numbers, of their identity as a community of Bengali Muslims, they also heard the challenge to proclaim Islamic dawa. It is significant that the imam was chairman of both conferences, for both the restoration and the expansion of true Muslim community lie within his own purposes, as he himself teaches that Islam is to be observed in respect of its five pillars and as a complete code of life.

B THE PILLARS OF ISLAM

(i) Belief in God and his Prophet

la ilaha illa 'llah
wa Muhammad rasul Allah
There is no god but God
and Muhammad is the Apostle of God.14

The imam has no need to instruct the congregation in the saying of the kalima tayyiba, for it is known to every Muslim. Also called the shahada, the witness, it is recited by the faithful on each occasion of prayer and is also used to signify a convert's entry into the household of Islam, for it is held to contain the whole of Islamic belief. However, the imam does consider it necessary to discuss the meaning of this kalima. Under this heading, therefore, we examine some aspects of his teaching about the nature of God.
and, more briefly, report the attitude to the Prophet of Islam exemplified in his addresses.

The first part of the kalima tayyiba proclaims the oneness, tawhid, of God. The imam likes to discuss the formula in two parts: la ilaha, there is no god, clears the ground for the affirmation of the one God, illa 'llah. However, tawhid is not simply a meta-physical doctrine: it has such implications for the conduct of human life, that it is said to be the foundation stone of all Islamic law.15 La ilaha repudiates not only the existence of other gods, but the validity of all claims to sovereignty over mankind other than that of Allah. The imam appears most frequently to apply the negative element of the kalima tayyiba to the practices associated with pirs and their shrines. Prayer to Shah Jalal, or any pir, is forbidden, as is the custom of making gifts to contemporary holy men, for whoever honours mere mortals in this way is guilty of shirk, associating them with God himself. The imam was especially forthright in a lecture on Shab-i-barat, when the Darga of Shah Jalal in Sylhet is full to overflowing, as he denounced those who ask the pir to grant their request for a job, a child, or whatever. He warned the congregation that they would be as guilty as the people in the Darga itself, if they responded to promises of prayer in exchange for donations from Britain.

As the imam rejects devotion to Pirs, so he dismisses all forms of sufism as worthless. The words la ilaha illa 'llah are at the heart of sufi practice of dhikr, remembrance of the name of God, but the imam states that the only dhikr required of a Muslim is that he remember God in all that he does each day of his life. Similarly, the only tariga to which a believer is called to belong is Muhammad-i-tariga, entered by all who follow the way of the Prophet.

The religion of the host society in Britain is also scrutinized in the light of the kalima tayyiba. In one address the imam quoted Sura 112, which proclaims the purity (Ikhlas) of the Quranic concept of God, in opposition to pagan and Christian ideas:
Say: He is God,  
The One and Only;  
God, the Eternal, Absolute;  
He begetteth not,  
Nor is He begotten;  
And there is none  
Like unto Him.

He summed up other texts in his own words, 'He has no father, mother, wife or children'. The imam did not dwell on the doctrine of the Trinity (conceived as a union of God the Father, Jesus and Mary) in order to refute it, but simply used it as an extreme and absurd example of the false divinization of humans of which Muslims are also guilty when they pray to a pir. Thus, while Christianity is not seen as a direct threat to the Muslim community, it is recognized that Muslims are liable to commit the same errors of belief or conduct as Christians.

The imam also reckons certain aspects of secular, western thought among the 'other gods' excluded by tawhid. He once spoke of western 'worship' of Darwin. The whole theory of evolution was confuted by reference to the Quranic account of creation and by a single rhetorical question, 'Were you monkeys?' The imam made it plain that, although he regards modern education as necessary, it may in no way be allowed to modify Islamic doctrine or to diminish the sovereignty of God.

In speaking positively of God, illa 'llah, the imam tended to emphasize three of his attributes as Lord, rabb, merciful, rahman, and Master of the Day of Judgment, malik yawm al-din. Addresses at festivals and conferences began with praise of God as Lord of creation, 'The Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds', a phrase often repeated at the mention of the name of God. Obedience is due to God as the one who has provided the means both for sustaining human life and for its guidance on the right path. The mawlana from Bangladesh who spoke to the two conferences stressed on both occasions God's gracious provision for all his creation, and quoted these Quranic verses:
It is He Who brought you
Forth from the wombs
Of your mothers when
Ye knew nothing; and He
Gave you hearing and sight
And intelligence and affections:
That ye may give thanks
(To God).

Do they not look at
The birds, held poised
In the midst of (the air
And the sky? Nothing
Holds them up but (the power
Of) God. Verily in this
Are signs for those who believe.18

The imam speaks of the providence and grace of God
chiefly in respect of his gift of the Quran and of
his commands for the direction of human life. He
compared the Quran with the sun:

It rises upon everyone. The one who says,
'There is no sun', is blind. If a non-Muslim
says he has no need of it, it makes no differ-
ence. The Quran is still there and it is there
for him. Whatever we do, we need the sun, and
so we need the Quran for everything in life.

The imam was not simply using a simile, but following
the Quranic doctrine of the signs of Allah. The
Quran contains many references to the creation of
the heavens and earth, of all creatures and of man
himself as containing signs for believers. Thus the
flight of birds is a sign, as are the sun and moon:

Verily in the alternation
Of the night and the Day,
And in all that God
Hath created, in the heavens
And the earth, are Signs
For those who fear Him.19

The very manner of revelation of the Quran itself
is a sign:
And thou wast not (able)  
To recite a Book before  
This (Book came), nor art thou  
(Able) to transcribe it  
With thy right hand:  
In that case, indeed, would  
The talker of vanities  
Have doubted.  

Nay, here are signs  
Self-evident in the hearts  
Of those endowed with knowledge:  
And none but the unjust  
Reject Our Signs.20

The following verses firmly state that the revelation of the Quran as proclaimed by the Apostle of God is a final confirmation of all the natural signs that God has given, and are sufficient to dispel all doubt. The Quran, like the sun, points to its Creator, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds.

A closely related attribute of God that is given frequent mention is his mercy, as revealed in the names rahman and rahim, which the imam terms the 'soft' names of God. His mercy is apparent in his gifts, as already noted, but chiefly in his forgiveness and blessing of believers. That mercy is shown chiefly in forgiveness is clear from the Quranic couplet, al-ghafur al-rahim, the 'oft-forgiving, most merciful'.21 This the imam stresses particularly in Ramadan. He spoke of the first ten days of the month as a time for meditating upon Allah's mercy, rahmat, for this was the time when it was most fully revealed; while the second period of ten days was for the confession of sins in the knowledge that Allah would forgive, and the third period for prayer for the dead relatives, as at that time Allah would save them from the fires of hell. The mercy or compassion of God and his will to forgive is given as much emphasis as the denunciation of sin and possibly more. Again this is a Quranic attitude:

Such are they from whom  
We shall accept the best  
Of their deeds and pass by  
Their ill deeds.22
The mercy of God is also shown in the way he rewards the faithful. Virtually every address includes the promise of reward for those who observe their Islamic duties. Precise calculation may be made of the extent of God's blessing:

'He that doeth good shall have ten times as much to his credit'. So if you observe namaz five times, Allah will give you credit for doing it fifty times . . . But if you observe namaz in the congregation, you will be rewarded twenty-seven times as much as if you did it alone. So multiply ten by twenty-seven and see how great a reward . . . Allah will give you.23

In Ramadan, the month of blessings (Bengali-mubarak mash), such rewards are yet further multiplied, beyond calculation.

However, as the imam often reminds the congregation, Allah has other names beside the 'soft' ones. He is the Almighty, with power to destroy as well as to create:

The Day that We roll up
The heavens like a scroll
Rolled up for books (completed), —
Even as We produced
The first Creation, so
Shall We produce
A new one.24

God is often spoken of as Master of the Day of Judgment. In his commentary on the opening verses of the second sura, the imam said that there are two ways of speaking to people who do not follow the right path: they can be threatened or rewarded. And these correspond, respectively, to two categories of people, the non-believers, kafirun, and the sinful believers. For the former, who in no way follow the path of Islam, there can be no thought of reward, but only threat of punishment. In addressing the believers, therefore, the imam inclines towards more frequent mention of rewards than punishment, but the latter is not altogether omitted, for it is characteristic of his teaching to admit the possibility that one born a Muslim might become a kafir.
The preacher is aware that the Day of Judgment seems as yet far off to most people, and he therefore speaks as much of the present watchfulness of God and his angels as of future perils. The angels are a divine police force, who both deter people from doing wrong and also take note of all their actions. With respect to the latter function, one speaker at a conference, noticing the tape-recorders placed beside him, said, 'If men can record what I say, cannot Allah's angels record our every word and deed?'. On the Day of Judgment the books of record will be read, but further testimony will be given by the human body itself:

On the Day when their tongues
Their hands and their feet
Will bear witness against them
As to their actions.25

This verse was quoted by the imam in a sermon on the obligation to pay zakat. It is interesting that the Lordship of Allah as Judge is expressed not in remoteness but terrifying proximity. The imam firmly believes that without supervision or fear of punishment, nobody would do right.

The second half of the kalima tayyiba is the affirmation that Muhammad is the Apostle, rasul, of God. It is not possible to relate details of the imam's teaching about Muhammad, for none of the addresses heard during fieldwork was specifically concerned with him. However, every address given by the imam testifies to the significance of the words and deeds of Muhammad, for he makes constant reference to the Hadith. He is careful to distinguish between the commands of God and those of his Prophet: only the former are compulsory, fard, while the latter are sunna. The relationship between Quran and Sunna has been disputed, but the imam leaves no doubt that what Muhammad regularly did, believers are also required to do: 'This is the hadith of the Rasul, and if you believe the Rasul, you must believe the hadith, the word of the Rasul, the teaching of the Rasul'. The Bengali term biswas kara, here translated 'believe', could also bear the meaning 'believe in'. Certainly, there is a sense in which people have faith in the Prophet, or at least hold him in the
highest honour. The frequent recitation of the *durud*, the chanted prayer calling down blessing on the Prophet, also provides a further indicator of his status.

(ii) The Prayers, Alms-giving, Fasting, Pilgrimage

The pillars of Islam are mentioned in all major addresses and were the subject of a long series of sermons at the Friday prayers. It is stressed that each one is both essential and of itself insufficient. Thus every Muslim knows and must recite the *kalima*, but that alone does not make a Muslim: 'In the 1971 war even Hindus were saying *la ilaha illa 'llah*'. Every Muslim must perform *namaz* five times a day and fast in Ramadan, but his duties do not end there. If he has any surplus income, he is to pay *zakat*, and, again if income permits, he is to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, even the poor Muslim is bound to take into every aspect of his life the lessons learnt in recitation of the *kalima* and in observance of the prayers and fasting.

In his addresses the imam teaches the regulations given in Quran and Hadith for the correct observance of each pillar and exhorts people to obedience by stressing certain characteristics or benefits of each. Prayer and fasting are regarded as the basis of *ibada*, the service man is bound to render to God, for these can be performed by every Muslim. The imam speaks of prayer as the greatest of God's gifts, for in this rite God comes face to face with the believer. *Namaz* is compared with the food that sustains the body and with the water that cleans it. The imam insists upon the correct performance of the prayers, particularly with regard to the time taken:

One can say *namaz* as if it is a burden, saying it quickly without sitting to talk and listen to Allah. One is not to say *namaz* as one wishes, but as Allah wills. If we have the opportunity to meet a president or prime minister we make the attempt to stay as long as possible with them - but we fail to do that when we meet Allah, who is the greatest of all.

He makes no concession to those whose hours of work prevent or discourage regular or unhurried performance of the daily prayers. In one address the imam
referred to the factory worker's plea that he would make up lost prayers at another time: 'Nowhere in the Quran has Allah allowed this'. The imam is concerned to counter abuse of a particular hadith:

The Messenger of God said: 'When any of you omits the prayer due to sleep or he forgets it, he should observe it when he remembers it, for Allah has said, "Observe prayer for remembrance of Me".' 26

The imam teaches that to perform the prayers at the wrong time because one oversleeps or forgets occasionally is no sin, but stresses that it is not permitted for a Muslim regularly to pray thus.

The imam frequently reminds the congregation that in the Quran salat is often coupled with zakat, charity of alms-giving, as in the words of the infant Jesus, the Prophet Isa:

And He hath made me Blessed wheresoever I be, And hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long As I live. 27

The customary translations of zakat are somewhat misleading, for it is not a form of voluntary giving, but is obligatory upon those who have a surplus income, that is, after the needs of their families have been met. The imam carefully explains exactly what is to be given in fulfilment of this obligation. He also states why it is to be given, as a divine means of redressing the inequalities of human society: 'When you give to the poor, don't think you are being generous. They have a right to it. Zakat is the right of the poor to your property'. By giving zakat, the rich are cleansed in respect of their possessions, which would otherwise burn and cling to their bodies on the Day of Judgment.

However, despite such strongly-worded admonitions, the imam is unable to state precisely how zakat is to be given. He is able to disabuse those who are of the opinion that a donation to the mosque constitutes a form of zakat, but, in the absence of a
system for its collection and distribution, the imam cannot give positive advice. There are some members of the congregation who argue that zakat is not obligatory in a country like Britain, which has a system of taxation and social security. Indeed, the imam's own teaching tends to support this argument, for he often compares the collection of zakat with taxation and the money the poor receive with social security payments. Thus, his final insistence that zakat is still due, as an expression of thankfulness to God, is considerably weakened.

In exhorting the congregation to observe Ramadan, the imam speaks of it as a month of training. The Muslims are like soldiers whose minds are to be trained to control their desire for food, for sleep and for sexual satisfaction. At the same time the Ramadan fast is said to be a reasonable discipline: it is not too severe, and the very young or inform are exempt. The imam stresses the value of the fast to the individual and to the community as a whole. Fasting has a beneficial, purificatory effect upon the body, and to fast for the whole of Ramadan actually changes a person. Change is believed to consist in his or her becoming a better Muslim, who thenceforth continues to be faithful. The observance of Ramadan also creates a strong bond between Muslims and is a form of witness before the rest of the world to the claims of God upon mankind. Finally, as already noted, the imam speaks at length of the blessing to be acquired by prayer and fasting in this most blessed of months.

If Ramadan affects the Muslim, how much more does the hajj. As this particular pillar is one that is obligatory only on those who can afford the pilgrimage and then only on one occasion in their lifetime, it is not given the same attention as teaching on the others. The imam has in conversation said that he regards the hajj, and particularly the encircling of the Kaba as a symbol of the devotion of the whole of life to Allah. Having performed the pilgrimage, one is purified and thereafter, ideally, should give oneself to Islamic dawa.
In speaking of Islam as *din*, the imam contrasts it with other forms of religion. He denounces as false two common modes of religious observance which may broadly be termed ascetic and individualistic. The former is the way of those who create for themselves a manner of life devoid of any responsibility for their own families or communities. The imam cites the fakirs of Muslim society as well as the Hindu saddhus. Theirs is a totally man-made form of religion, quite alien to Islam. Individualistic religion is exemplified and propagated primarily by Christianity, which stresses the need of a personal relationship with God yet fails to give adequate direction for the conduct of that relationship, and which lacks any law for the government of a community or state. Christians are characterized as people who go to church once a week, forgetting about God for the rest of the time, or, worse, as those who allow others to perform their religious duties on their behalf. It is said that many Christians pay a priest to pray for them, so releasing them from their obligations. The imam condemns Muslims who seek to practise Islam in a similar way, for theirs is not one religion (*dharma*, in Bengali) among others; it is *din*, in which God has given guidance to the whole of mankind for the proper direction of all human affairs, from family life to international relations.

This guidance is to be found first of all in the Quran. The imam speaks of the way in which the Quran has been 'shut in the mosque' by religious and political leaders, conspiring to control the affairs of state according to their own wishes. The guidance given in the Quran for the observance of prayer and fasting is indeed important, but this constitutes 'only one per cent of Islam'. Similarly, he refers to the use of the Quran to free people of jinn and ghosts. This he does not condemn, but shows up its inadequacy; for jinn are to be found everywhere, in an office or shop as much as in ponds or houses, and the Quran needs to be consulted if one is to be free of jinn in all aspects of life. Although the imam does not share the common superstitious fear of jinn (perhaps because he is confident of the protective power of his knowledge of the Quran), he does not
seek to eradicate it in others, but makes his own use of it. He then takes his argument further, stating that the Quran is given not only for Muslims, but for solving the problems of the world. It is a 'blueprint' for human life.

If the Quran is not to be shut in the mosque, the imam looks for the implementation of its teaching first of all in family life. He draws strong contrasts between the Muslim community and the host society in Britain, believing that Islam can heal and bring peace to what he sees as a sick and divided nation. He exhorts the congregation to ensure that children are brought up in the way of Islam, learning in the home the rudiments of formal religious observance and the etiquette of a Muslim household. The imam's concern for the maintenance of Muslim family life is given strong emphasis by the preachers from Bangladesh who spoke at the conferences. One dramatically declared that when the children are accused on the Day of Judgment of being bad Muslims, they will turn to God and ask him to ask their parents if they ever taught them Islam. The same man saw signs of decadence in the giving of non-Muslim names to children and in their style of dress: he urged parents not to let their daughters dress 'like shameless English girls'. It must be noted that the imam and his fellow preachers also stress the responsibility of children for their ageing parents. They contrast Muslim principles with the attitude of neglect that they believe to lie behind the number of special institutions for the elderly in Britain.

The observance of purdah is believed to be essential to the survival of the Muslim family. The imam, therefore, relates the Quranic regulations as to the clothing of men and women and the proper relationships between the sexes. The term purdah, of course, covers a far wider range of behaviour than the practice of the veiling of women; indeed, the instruction given in Sura 24:31 need entail neither the wearing of a Burka nor total seclusion. However, this verse is given a strict interpretation by the imam, in his teaching and in practice.28 The imam does not neglect the preceding verse of Sura 24, which enjoins believing men to 'lower their gaze and guard their modesty'. He cannot ignore the fact that in Bradford Bengali men are bound to see more
women than they would in Sylhet, and he therefore advises them to regard any woman they do see as a mother, sister or daughter, and not to allow Satan to alter their perception.

A further element in the imam's teaching about family life is his instruction concerning what is halal, permitted, and what is haram, forbidden, to the Muslim. The distinction can be applied to all kinds of conduct, but is applied particularly to questions of diet. The imam has devoted whole addresses to this subject, to ensure that people know what they may eat and drink. Adults have little reason or desire to change their diet, for English food has no appeal and, there are sufficient Muslim shops. But the imam notes that alcohol, which is forbidden, is more easily available in Britain than in Sylhet and warns people against its consumption. This is a common theme of visiting preachers also. Instruction on basic diet is directed mainly to parents, for various items of food available to their children in shops, schools or hospitals may contain forbidden products without appearing to do so.

Muslim journals in Britain publish lists of such products from time to time, but these are of no use to the illiterate, who rely on people such as the imam for guidance.

However, the implementation of Islam as a complete code of life cannot be limited to the home and to personal relationships. It is to be sought and achieved in society as a whole. The imam set out the principles for the government of an Islamic state in a series of Friday addresses on the Sharia. Since no country on earth conforms with the Islamic ideal, the imam is unable, in such teaching, to present the congregation with a concrete example; however, he often mentions with approval those nations where the attempt to found an Islamic state is being made. The idea of attempting, of seeking the right goal, is important to the imam. Knowing that the Muslim is at present unable, either in Bangladesh or in Britain, to live in that network of relationships that constitutes the ideal community envisaged by Islam, he concedes that it is sufficient if a Muslim both observes his religion fully in his personal and family life and then does what he can to extend the
sphere of Islamic influence in the world.

The imam, therefore, advocates political involvement: 'Participation in politics is fard'. In Bangladesh there are parties that openly campaign for the Islamization of the state. The imam does not explicitly commend these organizations in the mosque, for to do so would be to invite dissension within the Twagulia Islamic Society, but it is clear that he approves their objectives.29 In Britain, however, there is no political cause that the imam could readily espouse. He considers that the system of government is so far removed from that of an Islamic state, that no true Muslim could participate in mainstream politics, although he might stand at an election as an independent Islamic candidate. The effect of the imam's teaching, therefore, as applied to the situation of the migrant community, is to discourage the very kind of action he envisages.

It may appear, then, that the presentation of Islam as a complete code of life is either of purely theoretical interest or mere rhetoric. Islam cannot be observed in Britain except partially and individually. However, the imam seeks not only individual compliance with Islamic principles, but a firm response to the pressures exerted by the host society, a refusal to conform with non-Islamic norms, on the part of the whole Muslim community. In this respect, it is worth noting some remarks of the speakers at the conferences, who repeatedly returned to the same theme. They insisted that Muslims be faithful to Islam not only in the relatively unseen aspects of their observance, such as the performance of the prayers, but in public life. Aware of the expansion of Muslim commercial interests in Britain, they demanded honesty in business dealing, and stressed the need to keep shops clean and tidy. Muslims were urged to boycott a banking system that was anti-Islamic and Muslim bankers were sharply criticized: 'A banker goes to the mosque to perform namaz and in the bank he may wear a hat to show he prays, but his bank disregards Islamic law'. The unstated implication was that the Muslim community needed to create an Islamic economy of its own, as a model for British society.
We noted above that at these meetings speakers who were themselves resident in Britain impressed upon the Bengalis the responsibility of dawa, while the visitors from Bangladesh tended rather to give general encouragement to be good Muslims. But the latter emphasis was very much part of the message of those who wish to call the nation to Islam, for they saw dawa not as a separate enterprise, but as the inevitable result of the faithfulness of the Muslim population. They spoke of Islam as the gift of God, entrusted to the Muslims. If the Muslims, as a community, behaved in accordance with Islam, then they would be able to bring peace and justice to a world troubled by conflict, the guidance of God to a country that was lost, and true religion to people who had only false religion, or none at all. Finally, recalling that ordinary people, such as themselves, had played no small part in the spread of Islam in Bengal, they insisted on the possibility of the conversion of Britain: 'We are few, but we can change this country'. Indeed, signs were already apparent of a growing interest in Islam: 'A few years ago there were virtually no books on Islam on the shelves of libraries and bookshops, but now people cannot get enough Islamic literature'. Similarly, the imam himself once claimed that the lengthening of women's skirts during the 1970s had been due to the influence of Islamic morality in Britain.

Thus the view of Islam as a complete and perfect code of devotional, domestic and political life is taught. In the Conclusion we shall consider the extent to which other Bengali Muslims in Bradford share the imam's outlook, and estimate the actual effect of his teaching.

D SUMMARY

On two occasions each week the imam speaks to approximately twenty members of the congregation in the mosque about Islam and its scripture. His address at the Friday prayers, which is to be distinguished from the ceremonial, Arabic khutba, may be related to the Islamic calendar or one of a series of talks on a chosen theme. On a Sunday
afternoon the imam gives a commentary, *tafsir*, on the Quran, progressing slowly through the whole book. His teaching is illustrated by the Hadith and, to a lesser extent, by reference to contemporary events, although few illustrations are drawn directly from the situation of the Bengali community in Bradford. The imam also lectures, at greater length, at festivals, when the mosque is full. He speaks on the meaning of the festival and urges the congregation to be constant in the observance of Islam, but his words also have a ritual value, as one element in the general celebration. The imam has also participated, as chairman, in two conferences, organized by the Dawat al-Islam, which served to consolidate and extend his own educational work. The presence of a renowned preacher from Bangladesh attracted a large audience on both occasions.

In his teaching the imam speaks frequently of the pillars of Islam and of Islam as a complete code of life. The first pillar, expressed in the *kalima tayyiba*, is said to exclude all false objects of human worship and allegiance, such as *pirs*, Jesus, and the theories and theorists of secular thought. It affirms the oneness, *tawhid*, of God, whose attributes as Lord, as merciful and as Judge are emphasized by the imam. By his constant use of the Hadith, the imam teaches that the sayings and actions of Muhammad are to be followed by Muslims. With regard to the other four pillars, the imam demands strict observance, while also stressing their value to the believer. He teaches that Islam is the religion par excellence, requiring the total allegiance of its followers. The Quran is to be applied not only in the mosque, but in the home and in public life. Muslims are to seek the implementation of Islamic law in society, although the imam is unable to advocate a suitable course of political action in Britain. His theme was taken up by those who spoke at the conferences, exhorting the Bengalis to be faithful Muslims, as individuals and as a community, so that the non-Muslim people of Britain would be attracted to Islam.
The provision of an Islamic education for the children of the Bengali community is the second specific aim of the Twaqulia Islamic Society, the fulfilment of which is entrusted to the imam, who teaches in the part-time Quran school held in the mosque. In the first section of this chapter we survey the historical background to the development of this form of education, taking into account its Arabian origins and the encounter of Islamic and English systems of education in India, especially in Bengal. The methods and content of the imam's teaching in Bradford are examined in the second section. An assessment is then made of the value of the Quran school to the Bengali community: particular elements of the curriculum are scrutinized, as are criticisms made by non-Muslims.

Since the Quran school is part of a living tradition, it is liable to further alteration and development, especially as the involvement of a migrant community in a non-Muslim society deepens. Therefore, in the fourth section of the chapter we report contemporary Muslim critiques of the state of Islamic education in relation to modern, western learning, and examine some recent literature that may influence the ways in which Islam is taught in Quran schools in Britain.

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The classes held in the mosque of the Twaqulia Islamic Society in Bradford have their origin in the classical period of Islam: schools in which children were taught the Quran were established by the tenth century A.D. Modern scholars differ
slightly in their accounts of the early development of Islamic educational institutions. Tibawi writes that the early elementary school was run by privately employed tutors, who gave some instruction in the fundamentals of Islam as well as in a basic syllabus of reading, writing and arithmetic.1 This kind of school was known as a maktab or kuttab, literally a 'school in which writing is taught'.2 (In the Indian sub-continent the term maktab is still in use, while kuttab is preferred in the Arab world). Fazlur Rahman, however, suggests that Islam, in bringing 'a definite educational instrument of religious culture, the Quran and the teaching of the Prophet', greatly affected the form and content of elementary teaching.3 The maktab became a Quran school. 'Quran school' is certainly the most accurate English term for most contemporary maktabs, in which the Quran is the sole object of study.

Rahman also stresses that 'elementary education . . . was a self-sufficient unit and there was np organic link between it and the higher education'.4 In other words, the maktabs were not preparatory schools for the madrasas the first of which was founded in the eleventh century), in which a full curriculum of Islamic studies was taught. Yet the importance of the Quran school should not be underestimated, for knowledge of the Quran was essential not only for the few who would later pursue a complete Islamic education, but for all who would participate in the daily rituals of prayer. In India the maktab was an important means of building up the Muslim community and was often established in association with a sufi khanqa or at the darga of a pir. A large number of such schools continue to flourish in present-day Sylhet. In order to understand the function and value of the contemporary Quran school, whether in Sylhet or in Bradford, it is necessary to give a brief account of the recent history of Muslim education in Bengal, which has produced various types of school in addition to the traditional Islamic institutions.

In a discussion of education in Bengal, the principal of a new Islamic school in Sylhet mentioned the name Macaulay. Thomas Babington Macaulay, who in 1835 recommended to the Committee on Public Instruction of the East India Company that an English system of
education be introduced into Bengal, is still remembered, with displeasure. The decision of the Company to abolish Persian as the official language and to promote the English language is regarded as a deliberate impediment to the educational and social progress of the Muslim community and to the spread of Islam.

Certainly, after 1835, Muslims who lacked an English education were greatly disadvantaged with regard to obtaining positions of influence in Bengal. When Shah Alam had made over to the East India Company a formal grant of Diwani in 1765, it had been agreed that Persian would remain the official language and that fiscal and judicial policy would continue to be made in accordance with Muslim law. In 1781 Warren Hastings had founded the Calcutta Madrasa, which turned out recruits for government service for half a century. However, after 1835 the Madrasa was no longer able to fulfill this function. Attempts were made to introduce English into the curriculum, but were resisted by the people whom they were supposed to benefit, for Muslims refused to adopt the language of their western rulers. Consequently, they lost their previous dominance of government service. 'By 1856 the Muslim disadvantage was overwhelming; of 366 persons listed as holding appointments in the judicial and revenue service of Bengal with salaries of fifty rupees and upwards, only fifty-four were Muslim'.5

However, Muslims such as the school principal in Sylhet have further reasons for their criticism of British policy in Bengal. They believe that the popular Muslim boycott of English education was justified because the whole system of education was anti-Islamic. They argue that even the courses offered by Calcutta Madrasa were essentially secular, for 'Hadith and Tafsir, the fountain-head of Islamic learning and culture, had no place in the Madrasa course, although these subjects formed the pivot of the whole course in all seats of Islamic learning elsewhere, both in India and abroad.'6 It must, in fairness to Macaulay, be noted that he actually professed neutrality with regard to matters of religion:
It is said that the Sanscrit and Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are, on that account, entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of the British Government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false History, false Astronomy, false Medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain, and I trust shall always abstain, from giving any public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work of converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues of the state to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat?27

The modern Muslim critics of Macaulay may, perhaps, agree with some observations of W.W. Hunter as to the effect of his supposed neutrality upon those Muslims who did undergo an English education:

No young man, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, passes through our Anglo-Indian schools without learning to disbelieve the faith of his fathers . . . In addition to the rising generations of sceptics, we have the support of the comfortable classes: men of inert convictions and of some property, who say their prayers, decorously attend the mosque, and think very little about the matter.8

Hunter's words appear to justify the Muslim reaction to British policy, but his conclusions were disputed by some members of the English-educated Muslim elite,
who sought to draw the Muslim community towards accommodation of English education. A leading figure, whose convictions were by no means 'inert', in this movement was Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who founded the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh in 1875. He cherished a vision of the integration of Islamic and western scholarship, exemplified in his own writing but never realized in the College, which came increasingly under government influence.

Most people who might go to an English-style college would be able to find employment only if they met government qualifications. A college that failed to meet these requirements . . . would be a college without students. As Sayyid Ahmad descended from his dream, it was the short-range, practical view that took over . . . By and large he had to surrender in the area of secular control as he did in the religious.

The pressures that forced Sayyid Ahmad Khan to compromise weighed even more heavily upon those with less prestige. A large number of traditional maktab lost their distinctively Islamic character by adopting the government's course of primary education in exchange for financial grants. However, those Muslims who clung tenaciously to an uncompromising orthodoxy did not remain passive spectators of the spread of English education. In 1867 the Deoband Madrasa, which made provision for none but traditional Islamic teaching, was founded entirely out of private resources. Here, moreover, the graduate was recognized within the Muslim community as alim, a qualification that might enable him to earn a living.

In Bengal the government made an attempt to meet the needs of the Muslim population by founding madrasas at Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi in the 1870s, but a modern writer claims that these had little impact. S.M. Hussain observes that a tendency towards a complete separation of modern and traditional systems of education continued into the twentieth century. A large proportion of Muslim children attended private maktab and madrasas, which provided a purely Islamic education. The government recognized the failure of its existing madrasas to allay the fears of the Muslim community, and in 1914
instituted the Reformed Scheme of Madrasas. Based upon recommendations made by Mawlana Abu Nasr Wahid, Principal of Dhaka Madrasa, who had been sent on a tour of Islamic centres of learning in the Middle East and Europe, the Scheme was so designed that Arabic and Islamic subjects were taught alongside 'modern' subjects, and students could pass between the madrasas and secular schools and colleges. It was intended that those who studied in madrasas of the Reformed, or, as it became popularly known, New Scheme 'would be so well grounded in traditional learning that exposure to Western ideas at a later stage would not destroy their faith or undermine their belief in their own history and heritage'. 11 At the same time a Department of Arabic Studies was established within Dhaka University, where the same stress was laid on the combination of old and new learning. (It was here that the present imam in Bradford completed his education.)

In present-day Sylhet there is a large New Scheme Madrasa in the town, linked with many other institutions throughout the country. Alongside them are not only the secular state schools, in which religious education is not given a high priority, but also many traditional maktabs and madrasas, of ancient and recent foundation. The latter are now known as 'Old Scheme', the most traditional having a syllabus which comprises Arabic, Persian and Urdu, to the exclusion of Bengali, English and all modern science. One such madrasa is housed within the Darga of Shah Jalal. At another, in a nearby village, Bengali is taught (in addition to Arabic, Persian and Urdu), but even here scientific education is given, as a teacher explained, 'within Arabic'. There are, then, three distinct forms of education in Sylhet, although all three are not universally available. All villagers have access to a state primary school, which most children attend for a year or two. Those who proceed to secondary education may go to one of the secular high schools located in the larger villages, or to a madrasa of the New Scheme. Some villages have a full-time traditional maktab and a madrasa, which may indeed be combined. Education in all state schools and madrasas, whether of the Old or New Scheme, is provided free of charge, but there is a number of secular schools in the towns, which are privately administered and charge fees.
There is one new and potentially influential exception to the above categorization of schools in Sylhet. The Anjumane Khedmate Quran has founded a primary school, the Shah Jalal Jameya Islamiya, which is financed by fees. The school aims to provide both 'modern materialist' and traditional Islamic education, holding the two together under the dominance of the latter. At the beginning of each day the pupils recite the Sura al-Fatiha and an oath of allegiance to Islam. The principal, whose comments on Muslim education in Bengal are cited above, claims that the pre-eminent status of Islam within the curriculum of the school, and as the source of the principles of its administration, distinguishes it from other modern educational institutions. Islam has no such place within secular schools nor, it is asserted, within the madrasas of the New Scheme. The admission of modern learning distinguishes the Shah Jalal Jameya Islamiya from the Old Scheme madrasas and maktabs, which are regarded as anachronistic and unable to make a positive contribution to contemporary society.

It is important to note that, despite the many changes which Muslim educational institutions have undergone since 1835, the traditional full-time Quran school still survives. For the very conservative it remains an indispensable resource of Islamic teaching. Yet most Muslim children in Bangladesh attend a modern school in which Islam may be taught only by a peripatetic mawlana, in a manner not entirely dissimilar to that of Muslim teachers employed by Local Education Authorities in Britain. Since many parents are concerned that the new generation learn rather more of their Islamic heritage than is taught in the state school, a form of Quran school has been developed that is designed to supplement state education. Classes are held for an hour or two every day before school in or near the mosque, whose imam is often also the teacher. The goals of the part-time Quran school are strictly practical, limited to the training of children in certain skills, especially the performance of the prayers, that are required if the Muslim community is to survive. It is neither a 'self-sufficient unit' or elementary education, nor a form of preparation for 'higher Islamic studies, but an adjunct to the secular system of education. Nonetheless, it represents an adaptation of the
traditional system that is particularly significant because it has proved capable of direct transference from Bangladesh to Britain.

B THE QURAN SCHOOL IN BRADFORD

(i) Organization and Methods

The Quran school of the Twaqulia Islamic Society (which is, rather grandly, designated a 'madrasa' on the Society's calendar) differs little from many part-time Quran schools in Bangladesh or from others in Bradford. The classes are held in the evenings, rather than before school, but are otherwise very similar. Quran schools in Bradford vary in size, accommodating from thirty to over two hundred pupils. In 1980 more than one hundred boys and girls, aged five and above, attended the classes in the Bengali mosque. These are held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 5.00 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays from 9.00 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. Thursday is the imam's day off, and on Fridays he gives private tuition to a small group of children. Until 1980 the imam was the sole teacher, and when numbers rose to over sixty he divided the children into two groups, the first attending on Saturday, Sunday and on Monday until 6.00 p.m., and the second on Monday from 6.00 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday. As this system also became impossible to manage with further increase in numbers, the Society appointed an assistant. No fees are charged: as in Bangladesh the members of the congregation pay a subscription to the mosque and may in addition make specific donations for the work of the Quran school. The imam receives no extra income for this teaching, which is regarded as an integral part of his job.

Classes are held in the ground-floor rooms of the mosque. The floor is covered with sheets and the children sit behind low, sloping benches (which are afterwards stacked at one end of the room) arranged around the edge. The imam sits on a cushion and mat by one wall. The benches ensure that no book, especially the Quran, touches the floor. Some Qurans are kept in the classroom on the old mantelpiece, there being no higher shelf available, but many children bring their
own Qurans and other books from home. Copies of the Quran are always carefully covered and wrapped in cloth. The children are arranged in as many as ten small groups, according to sex and stages of learning, and each group progresses independently. A group learns something new by sitting in front of the imam and repeating what he reads or recites. Imitation and repetition are the chief methods of learning, and no aids are available other than the teacher and books. Having learned to recite a prayer, for example, or to read a verse of the Quran, the children return to their places and continue to repeat the lesson at their own pace. Sometimes older children are deputed to assist the younger ones. One day each week is used for revision, when the imam hears each group repeat the lessons of the previous week and children may be asked individually to recite part of the Quran.

The classes have no formal beginning and no register is kept, for the imam knows the Bengali families well and seems to notice who is present and who absent. Towards the end of each session he speaks to the children on some aspect of the faith and the class concludes with corporate recitation of the Quran and prayers, dua, which a child may lead. However, for most of the time the children work without direct instruction or supervision and the room can become very noisy and chaotic. The imam then enforces a degree of order by use of a short cane. Quran schools, especially in Europe, have been criticized for the use of corporal punishment as a means of maintaining discipline: the Bengali mosque apparently has a bad reputation in this respect among schools in Bradford. But it must be noted that the teacher often, as in this instance, works under very unsatisfactory conditions, and also that the use of short canes is not uncommon in primary schools in Sylhet. The imam himself disapproves of the practice and would prefer to have better facilities and more staff to facilitate supervision of the children.

(ii) **The Curriculum**

The curriculum is devised by the imam. It is not derived directly from any used in Bangladesh or elsewhere in Britain, although in fact it differs little from others. The aim of every Quran school
The teacher is that the children should be able to take their places within the community at prayer, whether in the mosque or at home, and that they should gain all the blessings to be had from recitation of the Quran. The basic teaching given by the imam, therefore, has three main components: the Quran, the prayer-rite, and other daily prayer, dua. However, he has added a fourth element, iman, faith, as expressed in the kalima tayyiba and other formulas. The imam would not normally teach this subject to young children, but he considers that those who live and are educated in a non-Muslim society need to learn the basic tenets of Islam as early as possible.

The four components of the curriculum do not represent different stages of learning, but are taught together. Knowledge of the Quran is fundamental. The youngest children first learn to read Arabic, using alphabets and simple primers. At no stage do they learn to write Arabic, or understand the language. Reading of the Quran begins with the Sura al-Fatiha, but the children then turn to the other end of the Quran and work backwards, so tackling the suras in order of increasing length. The imam is confident that those children who attend the classes regularly can learn to read the whole Quran in two to three years. Much of what they read, they also learn to recite: indeed a child may be able to say the Sura al-Fatiha before being able to read it. Every child learns by heart the short suras, required for performance of the prayer-rite, and a few learn to recite the whole Quran, from beginning to end. In 1980 four boys met daily in the mosque, during classes and at other times, learning to recite the Quran Para by para.13 They will eventually be examined by the imam and presented with certificates that entitle them hafiz.

The prayer-rite, salat, or namaz, is a complex subject. The children need to learn all the regulations governing the ablutions, wudu, as well as the manner of the performance of the prayer-rite itself. The basic movements of wudu and namaz are familiar to any child who has watched his parents at prayer, but in the Quran school he learns by heart the Arabic prayers that accompany each action, and, as already noted, the short suras that may be recited within the prayer-rite. As when he learns the Quran, the child understands little or nothing of what he reads or recites, although
the imam is able to explain the meaning of the more simple utterances, such as the *takbir*, 'Allahu akbar'.

The third element in the curriculum, *dua*, is the least prominent and, in some respects, less important than knowledge of the Quran and practice of the prayer-rite. But the dozens of brief supplications on the lips of a Muslim throughout the day are as essential and unobtrusive as the air he breathes. In the Quran school the children are taught more thoroughly numerous short prayers that they may already have heard at home. These *dua* are drawn from traditional sources, particularly from the Hadith, and are published in little manuals of prayers. The imam uses no text-book in the Quran school, but it is possible to quote some of the prayers he teaches from a Bengali manual, *A Treasury of Prayers*, owned by a member of the congregation:

On entering the mosque, and for women on approaching the prayer mat:

   O God, please open the door of your mercy for me.

At the beginning of a meal:

   I start in the name of God, asking his blessing.

After a meal:

   All praise to God, who has fed us and given us to drink, and made us Muslims.

On going to bed:

   O God, I will live and die in your name.

As soon as you get up:

   Praise God, for he has brought me to life after sleep, and everyone will go to him.14

In the booklet the prayers are printed in Arabic, transliterated into Bengali, and then translated into Bengali, so enabling one who cannot read Arabic to recite them in Arabic with understanding. Similarly, in the Quran school the imam teaches the children to recite the Arabic form of *dua*, but also explains their meaning in Bengali.

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Iman is summed up in the kalima tayyiba, which the children learn to recite and understand. They also learn two Arabic formulas that are used as brief creeds, the iman-i-mujmal (faith in brief) and the iman-i-mufassal (faith in detail):

Iman-i-mujmal

I believe in Allah (as He is)  
With all His Names and Attributes  
And I accept all his Commands.

Iman-i-mufassal

I believe in Allah, in His Angels,  
in His revealed Books, in all of His Prophets,  
in the Day of Judgment;  
in the fact that good and evil all come from Him,  
and in the life after death.15

The latter formula comprises the seven kalimas, 'words' or articles of faith, which are often reduced to six, the fifth and sixth being combined in the concept of taqdir, destiny. In the latter form they are included in a Bengali catechism, which is the chief means by which the imam conveys the tenets of their faith to the children.

The catechism is always used on a Monday, which is set aside for revision, and is recited entirely by the children. One child puts the question to another, or to the whole class, so that by repetition they learn both the questions and the answers by heart. The language of the catechism is basically Bengali, but it includes a number of Arabic terms and one of Persian origin. The answer to the tenth question is linguistically the most complex: 'Allah, firista, kitab, nabi, taqdir, parakal’.16 In the following translation only the proper names are given in Arabic:

Q. Who are you?  
A. A Muslim.

Q. Whom do you call a Muslim?  
A. One who obeys the commands of Allah.

Q. What is your religion?  
A. Islam.
Q. What is Islam?
A. Obedience of the commands of Allah and following the way of Muhammad.

Q. Who was the first man?
A. Hazrat Adam.

Q. Who was the first woman?
A. Hazrat Hawah.

Q. Who was the first prophet?
A. Hazrat Adam.

Q. Who was the last prophet?
A. Hazrat Muhammad.

Q. How many articles of faith are there?
A. Six.

Q. What are they?
A. Allah, his angels, his books, his prophets, destiny, and the after-life.

Q. How many angels are there?
A. An unlimited number, but four are well known: Jibrail, Mikhail, Izrail, Israfail.

Q. How many books of Allah are there?
A. An unlimited number, but four are well known: Quran, Torah, Injil, Zabur.

Q. How many prophets are there?
A. An unlimited number, but some are well known: Muhammad, Ibrahim, Musa, Nuh, Isa, Harun, Yaqub, Yusuf, Sulayman.

Vigorously chanted, the catechism has a powerful rhythm: 'Tumi ke?' 'Musulman'. It is interesting to compare this, the first question and answer, with its counterpart in a Christian catechism. The child in the Church of England is asked, 'What is your name?', while the question put to a Muslim is, 'Who are you?'. The response to the latter, 'A Muslim', makes plain the difference: the beginning of the Muslim child's knowledge of himself and of his faith lies not in his individual identity, nor in relationship to his family, but in his membership of the household of Islam.
A main purpose of the education given in the Quran school is to inculcate in the children the awareness that they belong to a Muslim community; and this is achieved, as the catechism illustrates, not only by the content of the imam's teaching, but by his methods, and even by the form of the crowded class.

C THE VALUE OF THE QURAN SCHOOL

It must be emphasized that what is being examined in this section is the value of the Quran school to the Bengali community as a whole. It is not intended here to consider whether the school fulfils the imam's own aim of securing the children against secularism, for this issue is treated in the Conclusion. Of course, there is considerable overlap between the imam's personal aspirations and those of the community, but the distinction is maintained in order that our own analysis of the imam's work may be separated from the following, broadly descriptive, account of the importance to the Bengalis of one of the institutions they have established in Bradford.

The part-time Quran school has the important role, traditionally played by the maktab in communities throughout the Muslim world, of being a means whereby the traditions of Islam are entrusted to the next generation. It is in the classes in the mosque that the children first become aware that they are members of a community of Muslims. By comparison with Sylhet, there are relatively few opportunities in Bradford for the development of a sense of Muslim identity; consequently much hope is invested in the Quran school, as the wole resource available outside the immediate family. Herein lies its primary value. However, an assessment of the worth of this means of preserving Islamic traditions needs to be based not only upon such general statements, but upon closer examination of what and how the children are taught.

The most important element in the curriculum is the Quran, the book that distinguishes Islam from all other religions. To the Muslim the Quran is a revelation that has been sent down from God, by whose throne stands the tablet that is the original of the Quran, the 'mother of
By the Book that
Makes things clear,

We have made it
A Quran in Arabic,
That ye may be able
To understand (and learn wisdom),

And verily it is
In the Mother of the Book,
In our presence, high
(In dignity), full of wisdom.18

The Quran, then, is thought of as created by God (not by Muhammad) and derived from the uncreated, self-existing expression of himself that is the mother of the book. To read the Quran or hear its recitation is therefore not only to read or hear the very words of God, but to enter, in a sense, into his presence. Hence arises belief in the baraka of the Holy Book, the spiritual blessing received by one who reads, recites or hears it. Hence also the need to preserve the Arabic text of the Quran. It is not an accident of history that the Quran was revealed in Arabic; rather this language is 'inextricably connected to the content of its message and providentially chosen as its vehicle of expression'.19

S.H. Nasr, whose words these are, makes it plain that the sacred language is as essential to performance of the prayer-rite as it is to knowledge of the Quran. He admits the legitimacy and value of non-Arabic Muslim literature, and then states:

But neither a Persian nor a Turk nor an Indian Muslim could participate in the barakah of the Holy Book and perform his rites as a Muslim if he were to use, let us say, Turkish or Persian in the daily prayers. The efficacy of canonical prayers, litanies, invocations, etc. is contained not only in the content but also in the very sounds and reverberations of the sacred language. Religion is not philosophy or theology meant only for the mental plane. It is a method of integrating our whole being including the physical and corporeal. The sacred language
serves precisely as a providential means whereby man can come not only to think about the truths of religion, which is only for people of a certain type of mentality, but to participate with his whole being in a Divine norm.20

As the child learns the Quran, so he learns to pray. The performance of the daily prayers is the supreme expression of Islam. The Bengali child could not translate into his own language all that he recites in the prayers, but the repeated takbir at the heart of the rite has a meaning that he cannot escape. The imam well illustrates Nasr's statement, for he teaches his class that to say 'Allahu akbar' has an effect on the body, making it bow and prostrate before Allah, the Lord. The Muslim seeks first of all not to understand the Word of God, in the sense of being able to translate it, (although that may follow), but to internalize it; similarly, his understanding of the prayers is gained by their performance.

The other short prayers, dua, that are also learned by heart, represent an extension into every aspect of daily life of the submission to God expressed in the prayer-rite. The child is taught the Bengali translation of these prayers, but, again, it is of no importance that he does not understand every syllable he utters, for the meaning of each prayer is made clear by its usage.

The imam includes the teaching of iman in the curriculum of the Quran school in order that children growing up in a non-Muslim society may have some knowledge of the basic tenets of Islam. The value of this aspect of his teaching is difficult to assess. By learning certain credal formulas and a catechism, the children certainly become acquainted with the Arabic terminology of their faith, but it is doubtful whether they attain the level of understanding which the imam intends to instil in them. It is possible that rote learning of the catechism is not the most appropriate means of assimilating information of this kind, although, as noted above, it has a value of its own in reinforcing awareness of individual and corporate identity as Muslims.

In the light of our examination of the value to the Bengali Muslims of the education given in the Quran
school, we may now consider some of the criticisms made by non-Muslims. The controversy surrounding corporal punishment has already been mentioned. Perhaps the most serious consequence of its use may be the association in the child's mind of mosque and cane: asked to state the main difference between the maktab and his primary school, one child said, 'Here we are beaten'. At the same time it must be acknowledged that corporal punishment has only relatively recently fallen from favour as a means of keeping discipline in English schools.

It is also said that attendance at the Quran school tires the children. However, observation of and discussion with teachers in three Quran schools in Bradford leads to the conclusion that they are aware of the danger of exhausting children who have already spent a day in school. The Bengali imam knows that this limits what they can learn, and he also acknowledges that his class fulfils to an extent the function of a club for the younger children of the community. The criticism may yet be justified, but justification will require careful assessment of the performance of children in both maktab and school.

The question of the educational value of learning by rote is, perhaps, the most serious of the issues raised by those who criticize Quran schools. Firstly, it should be noted that Muslim teachers themselves acknowledge that their achievements are inadequate. The largest Quran school in Bradford, that of the Jamiat Tabligh al-Islam, is well staffed and follows a syllabus used in Pakistan, so that arriving or returning children can transfer easily, but even here the imam is dissatisfied. Both he and his Bengali counterpart believe that the children should at some stage have the opportunity to study the meaning of the Quran and to explore the faith at greater depth than is at present possible. However, as we have seen, this is a deficiency inherent in the form of part-time Quran school which developed alongside the English system of education in the Indian sub-continent. It may be that growing familiarity with educational methods in British schools will lead to further adaptation of the Quran schools here: some possible developments are considered below.
However, the improvements that the imams would like to implement would not replace learning by rote. People outside the Muslim community who regard this method of learning as worthless are seldom in a position to be able to judge its actual value. Rote learning may play only a small part in contemporary British school education, but the whole purpose of the maktab is very different from that of the school. It is a Quran school, and the methods of teaching are very closely bound up with the content of what is taught and the use to which it will be put. To be internalized, the Quran must be known by heart. Moreover, those whose only experience of worship consists of the reading of prayers and singing of hymns written in cumbersome piles of books can have little understanding of Muslim prayer. They have, therefore, no right to criticize the way in which children are taught to take part in a form of worship characterized by a depth of concentration and inner freedom of expression that can only be gained when the words used are written not in books, but on the heart.

D THE FUTURE OF THE QURAN SCHOOL

The Quran school is part of a living tradition of Islamic education. However, in Bangladesh, as in many other parts of the world, there is no longer a single tradition, but a variety of forms of education, Islamic and secular, that have an uneasy coexistence. We here report some contemporary Muslim views of the state of Islamic education and the place of the Quran school within it, and examine ways in which the provision of Islamic education in Britain might develop in Britain.

The introduction of English education into Muslim societies has resulted in what S.S. Husain and S.A. Ashraf have termed a 'diarchy in education'. They claim that the result has been a conflict that occurs not only within the individual, but within a whole society in the form of civil war:

We described the presence of these two systems as diarchy in education because both systems claim the allegiance of a large number of men and women. In some cases, as in Turkey,
Bangladesh and Indonesia, this allegiance has led to bloodshed and bitterness.22

Past attempts to unify Islamic and western thought, such as that, noted above, of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, have been heavily criticized by modern Islamic educators. The two publications so far produced by the contributors to the First World Conference on Muslim Education, held in Mecca in 1977, evince a strong measure of agreement concerning the futility of schemes of integration that in fact only perpetuated the divisions they had sought to end. There is agreement too as to the direction that the renewal of Islamic education must take. 'Present-day knowledge' is compared with a body 'possessed by foreign elements and consumed by disease' that cannot be cured, that is 'Islamized', merely by grafting or transplanting Islamic sciences and principles. The foreign and diseased elements must first be removed.

Our next important task will be the formulation and integration of the Islamic elements and key concepts so as to produce a composition which will comprise the core knowledge to be deployed in our educational system from the lower to the higher levels in respective gradations designed to conform to the standard of each level.23

It may eventually be possible to institute a system of education that conforms with these ideals within a Muslim society. Indeed, there are already some signs of its beginning. The work of Ali Shariati in writing a sociology based on key Islamic concepts, yet retaining insights found in western literature, may prove influential beyond the borders of Iran.24 On a different plane, but also potentially influential, is the foundation of the Shah Jalal Jameya Islamiya in Sylhet, although this may be open to the charge that the old is merely being grafted onto the new, without radically transforming it. Yet even if Saudi Arabia, Iran or Bangladesh were able to present to the world a model of Islamic education, the present diarchy would persist for a long time, not least in places where Muslims form a minority of the population.

H.H. Bilgrami, in his discussion of the educational needs of Muslim minorities, writes,
In the developed countries we do not have a sufficient number of mosques, nor do we have the madrasahs. Moreover, in Western countries the teaching of Islam after the pattern of the madrasah will be a futile venture. Education must be viewed as a whole and there cannot be two systems of education and two channels of organization diametrically opposed to each other.25

Evidently there cannot be, in Britain at any rate, 'diametrically opposed' systems of education, although the degree of conflict within the present 'system' should not be overlooked. However, it is possible for Muslims to establish schools in Britain, either privately financed or within the state system, along the lines of those founded by Christian and Jewish communities. There is as yet no Muslim school of the latter type, while the sole private school is the Dar al-Ulm in Lancashire. This provides a form of education that appears to be similar to that of the madrasas of the Reformed Scheme in Bengal; 'These boys will study the basic subjects taught in any English school. But the way of life will be strictly Islamic and the boys will devote much time to the Koran'.26 However, at a single-sex boarding school, most of whose pupils pay fees, the Dar al-Ulm is unlikely to have a wide impact upon British education or upon the Muslim community. And if this were to become a model for the future development of Muslim schools, the social dangers indicated by Husain and Ashraf would be higher than those raised by schools more thoroughly integrated into the existing system.

In full-time Muslim schools, of either kind, there would no longer be the 'psychological conflict' which Bilgrami observes in the child who participates in two divergent forms of schooling; neither would there any longer be a need of the Quran school. However, at present the need, and the conflict, remain. It is possible that, in order to reduce the tension within the Muslim child, there may be more widespread changes in the form of religious education and worship in British schools, and also that the Quran school itself may be adapted, so that the methods of teaching become, at least in part, similar to those employed in state schools.
Developments of Muslim teaching are indicated by some recent publications by Muslim organizations in Europe, intended primarily for use in the home or in classes held in the state school, but which may also influence the Quran school. Their content is largely unremarkable, including in greater or lesser detail, according to the age of the proposed readership, instruction in the fundamentals of the faith and its practice; but there are some points of particular interest.

The Union of Muslim Organisations hopes that its Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education may be the foundation for an independent Islamic system of education in Britain, but it includes hints that may be taken by the Quran school teacher. It suggests that infants be given not only such practical training (for example, in the performance of the ablutions and prayers), but also instruction by means of stories about 'events which prove the mercy of Allah' and by the use of picture books to evoke a sense of wonder at the beauty of creation. Little such material has yet been produced that would be suitable for this age group, and none is used in the Bengali Quran school.27

It is also noteworthy that these publications are written in the language of the country of settlement. At present instruction in the Quran school is given in the children's mother-tongue (although very few children learn to read and write Bengali or Urdu), but in the future more use may have to be made of English. The Children's Book of Islam represents a form that teaching in English is likely to take. Here bald and simple statements are made in such a manner that they can easily be learned by heart:

Allah is Great and Merciful.
He is Kind and Loving.
He has provided us with everything.
He created us in the best form.
He created the world for us.
He sent the Prophets to guide us,
to tell us how to obey Him;
how to live like good human beings;
and be happy and successful.28

Such material could be used as the catechism is now used in the Bengali Quran school.
A very different, far more radical, and extremely unusual approach is exemplified by the Religionsbuch für Moslemische Kinder, published by the Islamisches Zentrum Hamburg, a Shi'ite organization. The style of this book, with its simple language and illustrations, is much closer to that of ordinary children's literature than many other specifically Muslim publications. It adopts a variety of methods of presentation in its text, which opens with this prayer:

Oh, lieber Gott, der Du uns geschaffen hast und uns viel
Gutes geschenkt hast.
Oh, allwissender und allmächtiger Gott, Du bist zu allen lieb.
Um die Menschen zu führen, hast Du ihnen viele Gesandte und Bücher gegeben.
Du hast den Menschen vorgeschrieben, Gutes zu tun, um glücklich leben zu können.
Oh, Gott, Dich haben wir lieb, wir befolgen die Gebote Deiner Gesandten, Dich allein beten wir an, und Dich bitten wir um Hilfe.
Oh, Gott!
Hilf uns, Gutes zu tun.29

The prayer appears to be an original composition rather than a translation of an Arabic text. It is not, as a whole, derived directly from the Quran, but its themes are familiar. Certain phrases are reminiscent of the Sura al-Fatiha, the fifth verse of which is recognizable in 'Dich allein beten wir an, und Dich bitten wir um Hilfe'. Indeed, standing at the beginning of the book, the prayer is a fatiha, suitably expressed for children.

The Religionsbuch also gives instruction in a form familiar to readers of children's Islamic text books in Britain: there is a list of the most important prophets, and another of sayings of Muhammad, 'unser islamischer Führer'. But there are also more imaginative chapters, such as a conversation between a teacher and his pupils concerning the gifts of God, and another between a girl and her mother:

Es sagte einmal das Mädchen Faride zu ihrer Mutter: 'Mutti, immer bevor du essen beginnst, sagst du, "Besmellah", und wenn das Essen beendet ist, sagst du, "Alhamdolellah"; was
Die Mutter antwortete: 'Mein Töchterchen, "Besmellah" bedeutet "im Namen Gottes", und "Alhamdolellah" heißt "Gott sei Dank"'. 30

There are also pictures of children performing the ablutions and the prayer-rite, accompanied by a text that begins, 'Sahra und Said sind Geschwister. Sie stehen morgens vor Sonnenaufgang auf und bereiten sich auf das Morgengebet vor'. 31

The book contains many moral injunctions, derived from the Quran and other sources. Children are instructed to love and respect their parents: 'Im Ghoran steht: Betet außer Gott niemanden an und tut den Eltern gute Dienste'. There is a story of Ali, who helped a poor widow, which ends: 'Imam Ali war zu alien Kindern Sehr Freundlich'. Another story, of Moses rescuing a lamb, tells 'von der Liebe zu den Tieren'. Similar incidents from the life of Muhammad, including a chapter on his childhood, are also related. 32

One section is devoted to Jesus, 'der Gesandte Issa', who was once asked, 'Warum sorgst du dich mehr um die Sünder als um die guten Menschen?'. His reply is reported in words that are not a quotation of the Quran, but a paraphrase of verses from the gospels:

Der Mensch, der Schlechtes tut, ist wie ein krankes Lamm, das von der Herde zurückgeblieben ist. Der Hirte läßt ein krankes und schwaches Lamm nicht in der Wüste zurück. Er nimmt das Lamm und trägt es auf seinen Schultern, um es pflegen und heilen zu können. Dann läßt er es zurück zur Herde gehen. Das ist der Grund, warum ich mehr um die schlechten Menschen kümmere und versuche, sie auf den rechten Weg zu führen, damit sie das Schlechte verlassen und das Gute tun. 33

The section concludes with a sentence that faces the theological differences between Muslim migrants and the basically Christian culture of the host society, yet without a hint of polemics: 'Issa ist einer der größten Gesandten Gottes, die sich um die Fahrung der Sünder bemüht haben, er war wie die anderen Gesandten ein Mensch und Gottesdiener und kein Gottessohn'.
It is significant that the Religionsbuch comes from a Shi'ite source. For many Sunnī Muslims its language may be too similar to that of non-Muslim religious books. Pamphlets produced by the Islamic Foundation, the Union of Muslim Organisations and Minaret House, for example, seem invariably to use the Arabic 'Allah' in preference to 'God'. Some Sunnis may also be offended by the illustrations of people. Yet the book has the great advantage of being as attractive to the child as other material that he uses at home or in school. If literature of this quality were available to teachers in Quran schools in Britain, it might serve to reduce the wide gap that exists at present between the mosque and the state school. It certainly appears to offer an appropriate means of teaching iman, although only as a supplement to the traditional and necessary rote learning of the Quran and prayers.

SUMMARY

The Quran school is an ancient institution of elementary education, originating in Arabia and later established by Muslims in India. British rule greatly affected the course of Islamic education in the subcontinent. English schools having been boycotted by many Muslims in Bengal, a variety of forms of madrasa were founded by Muslims themselves and by the British. In the traditional, orthodox madrasas western education was totally rejected, while in others a conjunction or integration of the new and the old was sought. In Sylhet the traditional Quran school survives among several other types of school, religious and secular; but a part-time Quran school has also been developed, for the sake of children whose general education provides inadequate instruction in Islam.

A part-time Quran school has been established by the Twaqulia Islamic Society in Bradford. Over one hundred children study for two hours after school, five days per week. They learn, mainly by imitation and repetition of the words of the imam, who teaches them to read and recite the Quran. All the children memorize the suras required for performance of the prayer-rite, while a few learn the whole Quran by heart. The salat and some dua are also learned, as
are the basic tenets of Islam, expressed in brief Arabic creeds and a Bengali catechism.

The main value of the Quran school is that the children discover what it means to belong to a Muslim community. More specifically, they need to know the Quran and the prayers in Arabic, in order to be able to pray and to receive the baraka of the word of God. However, the rote learning of statements of Islamic faith is of less certain value. Several criticisms of Quran schools are made by non-Muslims, not least concerning the rote learning of scripture; but these arise mainly out of ignorance of the value of this practice to the Muslims and of the function of the school in the community.

However, the social and psychological conflicts that can arise as a result of the separation of ancient Islamic and modern western schooling, and of the participation of some children in both systems, is a matter of concern to many Muslim educators. They aim to develop Islamic concepts and institutions that will yet make use of the resources and insights of western scholarship. However, at present the gap remains and the part-time Quran school is still required by Muslims in order to supplement the secular education their children receive, especially in non-Muslim societies. In Britain the state education system may better accommodate Muslims, through improvements in religious education and by the foundation of Muslim schools; but the Quran school may also adapt. Certain publications, notably the Religionsbuch fur Moslemische Kinder, indicate ways in which methods of teaching Islamic faith may be assimilated to teaching methods in western schools.
Conclusion

The first purpose-built mosque to be erected in Bradford may be that of the Twaqulia Islamic Society. Thus the members of a migrant community that is numerically and economically weak will have established in their place of settlement the primary physical symbol of Islam. The mosque, even in its present form, symbolizes not only the religious tradition of the Bengalis' place of origin, but the continuing life of that tradition in an alien environment. In this concluding chapter we present a survey of the process whereby the Bengalis have preserved something of their heritage and examine the symbolic power and meaning of the mosque for its congregation. Finally, an assessment is given of the work of the imam, in a review of his teaching and of his role in the community.

A THE CONGREGATION AND THE MOSQUE

In the 'quest of Islam' pursued in his book *Sandals at the Mosque*, Kenneth Cragg enters the mosque to listen not only to the sermon but to those Muslims who say of the preacher,

He preaches well enough for a Muharram of the past centuries, even of the nineteenth century. But he has allowed himself to be left behind by the newness of the present years. Doubtless by his education he really knows his faith, as we, his Muslim critics, hardly do . . . Truly our preacher is aware of his Islam as a heritage and a retrospect, in a way that we, with our science and secularity, are not. But is he truly aware of it as a present reality, adequate to the prospects of twentieth-century man? Has he
grappled with how, as well as with what, to believe?1

There is thus within the mosque itself a debate as to the nature of Islam and the manner of its realization in the modern world. Differences of opinion are also to be found within the Bengali congregation in Bradford, where the debate is more complex than in Cragg's example. The imam indeed has his critics with their 'science and secularity', but there are others who differ both from the orthodox preacher and from their more secular brethren. Given the complexity of human nature and of the community in Bradford, any categorization of people must be tentative, but there appear to be three main views of Islam represented in the mosque.

The majority of the congregation have come to Bradford from the villages of Sylhet. There they had little or no education, many being illiterate. Islam, therefore, has been mediated to them not through the study of scripture so much as in the rites and ceremonies of the family and village. Their religion is indeed a total way of life, but it is the life of a cohesive Muslim community, dependent upon the caprice of nature and divine providence for its survival. Like the imam, they are conservative of tradition, but the tradition they wish to preserve does not entirely correspond with his.

Others, far fewer, in the mosque also have their roots in the village, but have been educated in the towns of Bangladesh. They have thus become acquainted with ways of life and thought other than those of their parents. Muslim traditions remain important to them, but do not regulate life to the same extent. These people are more akin to the critics mentioned by Cragg: they have some knowledge of Islam and seek to observe their religion, but are not content to leave its definition to the ulama. Unable to accept the totality of the conceptions of Islam of the conservative villager or the imam, they may allow observance to be modified by circumstance and tend to regard religion as a predominantly private concern.

The imam himself is also acquainted with both rural and urban life, but his concept of Islam has been acquired mainly in the town. He studied the faith by
the reading of the Quran, Hadith and law in madrasa and university: he is, to borrow a term from Geertz, a tscriptionalist\textsuperscript{1,2} His views have been formed not in isolation from, but rather in conscious reaction to, the traditions of the village and modern western thought. He shares the experience of the villager in that Islam dominates his own way of life, but rejects a culturally limited view of Islam. Like the urban-educated he is aware of the plurality of world-views, but resists the relativization of what for him is absolute. Islam is seen by him as a gift not only for the Muslim community or for the private consolation of the individual, but for the whole world.

There are evidently no very clear divisions between the three categories outlined, and members of the congregation have many very important elements of belief and experience in common. Islam is, in one form or another, the heritage of all, and all have come to live in a society that is devoid of the familiar symbols of Islam and Muslim community. Moreover, all have in some way contributed to the restoration of some of those symbols in Bradford.

When they originally migrated most Bengalis suffered an almost total lapse of religious observance; yet migration was not perceived as a threat to their heritage. It was possible to live on the margin of British society, avoiding any deeper involvement than work necessitated. Gradually a community was formed, based on shared memories, values and goals that were all located in Bangladesh. Indeed, in so far as the observance of practices such as prayer and purdah is related to social and economic status, the remittances from abroad enabled families in Sylhet the better to maintain their Muslim traditions. The migrant lived and worked in Britain on behalf of his family, who, it may be surmised, prayed on his behalf.

There was, therefore, at first no need of any replication in Bradford of Bengali Muslim traditions which belonged and thrived elsewhere. Need arose, however, as the Bengali community rapidly grew during the 1960s. Many migrants arrived between 1962 and 1964 and towards the end of the decade the prevention of further temporary migration by the British government prompted the reunion of families here. For those Bengali men whose wives and children arrived
in Bradford the distance from Sylhet was, in a sense, decreased; but at the same time there occurred a dislocation of the values and customs of the family. In the terms of the Bollards' hypothesis, this was the point at which, for the Bengalis, the location of the family's sense of pride and honour was capable of transfer, but it was thereby also most deeply threatened. The traditions of centuries could not be torn from their native soil and be transplanted intact and unharmed. As the structure and character of the community thus changed, it became necessary to establish some means of support for its traditions, now located in Bradford.

The foundation of the Twaqulia Islamic Society served to restore a semblance of the order of the life the migrants had left. Several major symbols of Muslim community emerged. Chief of these was the mosque, within whose walls the congregational prayer could be performed and a Quran school established. The imam too was an important symbol of unity, and together with the mosque committee, he provided the organization required for the communal observance of festivals and of Ramadan, as well as constant encouragement of the practice of daily prayer. Thus the migrant, whether living with or apart from his family, was enabled once again to be a good Muslim, taking responsibility for his own religious observance. These developments were soon followed by the struggle for the independence of Bangladesh, which further united the Bengalis and made even the host society aware of their separate identity as Bengali and as Muslim.

Having noted the elements of their Islamic heritage that the Bengalis have reproduced in Bradford, it is necessary to consider the meaning of these symbols. Firstly, however, it must be emphasized that the community has preserved what it has so far been able to preserve in an alien environment, while much that constitutes Bengali Muslim identity remains in Bengal. The Twaqulia Islamic Society is powerless to recreate in Bradford the myriad elements of traditional life that lie outside the strictly Islamic order. The continuity of rites of passage that are steeped in Bengali culture depends upon the ability and willingness of migrant families to preserve them, rather than upon a central organization. Moreover,
there can be no replacement in Bradford for the shrines of the pirs, nor, at least within this particular community, are there any living representatives of the sufi tradition. Therefore, although the appearance of such fundamental signs of Islam as a mosque and an imam may seem to an outsider to indicate a reinforcement of orthodox Islamic practice, it is in fact open to other interpretations.

The Twaqulia Islamic Society has not imposed a framework upon the religious life of the community, but provided for it the raw material of observance. The mosque, and even the imam, do not have a single symbolic reference. Certainly their primary significance is the representation of Islam and of Muslim community, but, as noted above, people differ in their experience of the latter and in their understanding of the former. It cannot be concluded, however, that the mosque has one meaning for the conservative villager and another for the Muslim of an urban and secular education, for cutting across these categories and even dividing families is a further point of tension. To people who live partly in Bengal as well as in Bradford, the mosque may symbolize Muslim community and the observance of Islam in either location.

The terraced house with a small sign above the door does not obviously evoke memories of Sylhet, let alone visions of Mecca. Its external appearance suggests extreme adaptation to conditions of life in Bradford. However, as was noted in Chapter 2, many mosques in Sylheti villages are distinguished from other buildings not by their architecture but by their function. So the house in Bradford is transformed within as people enter, taking off their shoes and putting on lungis and caps to pray, or as children recite their lessons in the Quran school. Thus the mosque can be used as a refuge from British society and as a focal point for the recollection of a personal and corporate identity that is rooted in Sylhet.

This particular function and symbolic value of the mosque is reinforced by continuing contact with families in Bangladesh, for many Bengalis in Bradford still have considerable economic and emotional investment there. Those who live apart from their families may still intend to return to Bangladesh
permanently and have no wish for their wives or children to join them in Bradford. Others have brought some of their children, leaving others, often the girls, in Bangladesh. Even those who constitute complete nuclear families in Bradford are not necessarily committed to settlement, for the first generation of migrants may retain a sense of responsibility for the care of elderly relatives at home and the second generation, again especially the daughters, may return to marry. It is uncertain for how long these contacts can be maintained, but for the present they enable many to preserve their cultural traditions in their place of origin and to use the mosque in Bradford as a symbolic link with them.

Geertz usefully distinguishes between the 'force' of a cultural pattern and its 'scope'. The former term refers to 'the thoroughness with which such a pattern is internalized in the personalities of the individuals who adopt it, its centrality or marginality in their lives'. 'Scope', on the other hand, refers to 'the range of social contexts within which religious considerations are regarded as having more or less direct relevance'. In these terms, the religious beliefs of those for whom the mosque is primarily a symbol of Islam as observed in Sylhet, may have great force, but narrow scope. The continuing force of religious experience and cultural affinity is evinced by the full mosque and the frequency of return visits to Sylhet, a force that has contributed to the formation of the community in Bradford. The scope, however, is narrow for the community thus formed is 'cohesive yet confined', living in relative isolation from surrounding society, within which the inherited pattern of belief and practice has little relevance.

It is important to emphasize that this particular retrospective or introverted symbolic value of the mosque is not static, nor is it characteristic of one clearly defined group of people. It forms a part of the attitudes of almost all Bengali Muslims here. Such introversion is not to be dismissed as the mentality of the ghetto, for it may have great positive value for the future members of the community, wherever they choose to live. Cohesion and confinement is necessary for those who only temporarily live in Britain and wish to return as little affected as possible by their migration, while others who do
settle here may also need to find their strength in periods of isolation from the society in which they become increasingly involved.

The mosque, then, may evoke memories of Sylhet, but it is equally capable of being used by Bengalis as a resource of their identity precisely in order to enable them to relate to British society. The plans for the new mosque represent a community's investment and involvement in Bradford: the architectural style, no longer unobtrusive but distinctly Islamic, suggests advance rather than retreat. There may, however, be different ways of advancing. The mosque may be a stimulus to the revival of the personal observance of Islam, such as several Bengalis have experienced since migration. The resumption or, for some, the beginning, of the practice of the basic duties of prayer and fasting does not necessarily spring from or contribute to introversion or isolation, but may represent a genuine attempt to live an Islamic life within a non-Muslim society. On the other hand, the mosque may also become the focus of a more political form of solidarity. There are some Bengalis who would reject the image of themselves as living on the margin of society, but see their community as at the bottom of the social pyramid. The mosque may, for them, become an important symbol of the unity of a group seeking to exert political influence.

However, at the time of writing the new mosque is yet to be built, and there are few signs within the Bengali community of the kind of involvement in British society which it might symbolize. The possible developments sketched above may indeed coincide, both springing from the mosque: the devout and politically active Muslim is not unknown. Yet such activity has not been encouraged by the use of the mosque as a symbol of the traditions of Sylhet, nor by the two imams who have served there during the period of research. To them the community symbolized by the mosque is not found exclusively in Sylhet nor in Bradford: it is the world-wide Muslim umma. The present imam shares the desire of some of his compatriots for involvement in British society and there is much of Bengali Muslim culture that he too seeks to preserve; yet he is also critical of forms of political action and of aspects of culture that he regards as non-Islamic. His teaching on these matters
has already been recounted. It is necessary now to undertake a critical review of his teaching and analysis of his role in the community, in order to understand his relationship to others in the mosque and to be able to assess the extent of his influence.

B THE IMAM

(i) The Teacher of Islam

In teaching Islam, the imam aims to purge the Bengali Muslims of syncretism, to instil in them the concept of Islam as a complete code of life, and to prevent them from becoming secularized. These aims are basically one, arising from the conviction that a purified Muslim community is a strong community, capable of expansion, and that, conversely, Muslims are weak when corrupt. In such terms he is able to account for the past subservience of Muslim nations to western colonial powers and for the present resurgence of Muslim nations that attempt to develop their laws and constitutions in accordance with the Sharia. He therefore believes that both Bangladesh and Bengali communities abroad could be strong if Islam were correctly observed. It is to this end that he constantly stresses the importance of basic Muslim duties. However, few others appear to share his ideals, and the effect of his teaching may be other than intended.

It is almost a part of the tradition of Muslims in Bengal, as elsewhere, that their leaders deplore the ignorance and syncretism of the people. As a consequence, many Muslims are somewhat inured to the customary protestations of the orthodox. The addresses of the imam in Bradford, denouncing various practices at the shrines of pirs, are not the first that the congregation has heard. From the earliest days of Muslim presence in Bengal there has been a diversity of forms of observance of Islam and therefore a degree of conflict within the community. It became clear in the course of fieldwork that the concept of shirk that the imam brings to bear upon the Darga of Shah Jalal, for example, is not shared by many others. The imam is very clear as to where the boundaries of orthodoxy lie: it is shirk to
seek intercession from, or to make vows to, anyone other than God. However, to others the boundaries are less distinct. Those people at the shrines who were able and willing to discuss their practice denied that they worshipped the pir, but considered it proper to request his intercession on their behalf. This they saw as no more than an extension of the practice of asking people in their lifetime for assistance.

The imam is less forthright in his condemnation of other Bengali Muslim customs which he regards as relatively harmless cultural accretions upon pure Muslim observance. He takes part in the qiyam at a milad and is prepared to give amulets to those who require them. He expresses doubt as to the validity of certain ceremonies associated with childbirth and marriage, but does not forbid them. He believes that such local practices are capable of being refined, as was the wearing of amulets in Muhammad's day. As the images of false gods were replaced by verses of the Quran, so the meaning of a rite can be reinterpreted by the use of Islamic scripture and prayer. It is the imam's belief that customs of this kind can be tolerated so long as they do not contradict Islam, and that all will eventually fade away.

The veneration of saints has persisted throughout the Muslim world for centuries despite all the protestations of the orthodox, and for this reason alone the imam's teaching in Bradford is liable to have but slight influence. However, given a situation in which there is little opportunity for the exercise of such customs as he would terminate, it is possible to imagine the effect of his doctrine if it were indeed heeded. Firstly, although the imam seeks to banish shirk by emphasizing the sovereignty of God, the result may be to deepen the need of an intermediary. It has been conjectured that the growth of the cult of saints in Muslim communities 'was actually furthered by the stern monotheism of Islam, which made intercessors almost necessary for filling up the gap that separated men from their god'.5 If Muslims experience such separation in circumstances that do not permit traditional means of filling the gap, then their conception of Islam must either change or falter.
It has been noted that the illiterate villager is largely dependent upon rite and ceremonial for his apprehension of Islam, whereas the urban elite, typified by the imam, has access to scriptural tradition. It may be possible to discredit the human intermediaries and the minor religious symbols upon which the villager has relied and from which he is separated, but it is less easy to convey to him the verbal, scriptural conception of God that appears to sustain the imam. Of this the imam is aware: he believes that the congregation needs to be educated in order to observe Islam correctly. However, it is not clear that he appreciates the possible subversion of Muslim faith that may ensue from the separation, deliberate or accidental, of belief from the traditions which have mediated it. As both Geertz and Cragg have observed, the crisis facing Muslim communities in the modern world is one of knowing not what to believe, but how to believe. If the former traditions of a community are no longer available or powerful, they must be modified or replaced if religious faith is to survive.

The solution proffered by the imam lies in the concept and implementation of Islam as a complete code of life, symbolized by the Islamic state. Again this is a highly conceptual symbol, whose few, imperfect, empirical manifestations do not attract many members of the Bengali community in Bradford. Neither in Bangladesh nor in Britain do they seek the expansion envisaged by the imam, whether in respect of political power or the conversion of a population. There are deep-seated reasons for Bengali rejection of the imam's ideals. The people whom the imam addresses in the Cornwall Road mosque have in their lifetime witnessed the creation first of Pakistan and then of Bangladesh. The former was carved out of the sub-continent as a nation of Muslims but was governed by a British-educated elite who opposed parties that campaigned for the implementation of the Sharia in Pakistan. Mawlana Mawdudi, leader of the Jamaat-i-Islami, was imprisoned four times, for a total of nearly five years, between 1949 and 1967. Within East Pakistan the Bengali nationalist movement, led by Shaykh Mujib al-Rahman and the Awami League, had little interest in reformulation of the country as an Islamic state. Indeed the constitution of the new state was denounced as secular
by Islamic reformers. The Islamic parties which had supported the Pakistani government in 1971 were banned or effectively prevented from participating in national politics until after the assassination of Mujib in 1975. They have since re-emerged and been largely rehabilitated in politics as a clearly identifiable element in the highly diffuse opposition to martial law, although they still seem to hold little attraction for the majority of the people, whether in Bangladesh or expatriate.7

If Bangladesh does not appear to be a likely arena for Islamic political involvement, neither does Britain. The imam may see himself as standing in the line of reformers and exponents of the faith whose teaching and actions have resulted in forms of Islamic revolution, but contemporary British society is quite different from that of nineteenth century Bengal or of Iran under the Shah, and its Muslim population is numerically weak. This is not to deny the conditions of stress under which this minority lives, nor to overlook the political influence that some Muslims have begun to exercise, especially in the field of education and in situations of violent racial oppression. So far, however, it has not been an Islamic ideology that has informed their actions. Implementation of the imam's ideals would appear to require oppressive social conditions, disillusionment with mainstream politics and a high degree of unity not only among Bengalis, but among all Muslims in Britain.

There are indeed some Bengalis, notably members of the Dawat al-Islam, who share the imam's vision of Islamic expansion. However, the imam's association with the Dawat al-Islam is regarded by some other Bengalis as a threat to the unity of the whole community. This may indicate that if the imam were more powerful and his teaching more influential, a polarization of the community would ensue. Fazlur Rahman has observed that 'it remains one of the curious but persistent paradoxes of most ultra-right-wing reform phenomena in Islam that while their express purpose is to unite the whole Community for a reformist purpose, they are impelled to break even the existing unity'.8
The imam has a third objective in his teaching, namely the prevention of secularism. In a sense all that he does is directed to this end, but there are two particular symbols of traditional Muslim community that he is anxious to preserve and that will illustrate both his purpose and the obstacles in the way of its achievement in Bradford. The practice of purdah and the maintenance of a Quran school will be examined in turn.

It has been noted that there are many traditional Bengali Muslim customs which the imam regards as non-Islamic and inessential. Purdah, however, is seen as an essential mark of Muslim community, which would otherwise suffer destructive disorder. The observance of purdah, as taught and practised by the imam, is very strict, but the influence of his word and example may in fact be only slight. In other Bengali families in Bradford purdah is kept less rigidly. Women who need to take their children to school or to go shopping or who wish to attend English classes cannot remain secluded. When out of the house they dress according to Quranic principle, but do not wear a conspicuous burka. They consider themselves devout Muslims and no less observant of their religion than one who remains in seclusion. The distinctiveness of the practice of the imam's family is clearly determined not only by his beliefs, but by his social and economic status. He is, as imam, bound to set an example of adherence to the law, while his occupation allows him to perform many tasks outside the home which, in other Bengali families, the woman has to undertake.

If, on the other hand, the imam had greater influence, it is conceivable that the practice he commends as supportive of family life could, in Bradford, prove detrimental to it. In Sylhet the whole environment enables the practice of customs such as purdah. To tear a particular form of purdah from its context and apply it rigidly in a different society signifies an outward continuity of tradition, but at the cost of a change in its symbolic meaning. The burka that in Sylhet enables a woman to travel away from her home becomes in Bradford a symbol of oppression and alienation. The encouragement of the observance of purdah in this strict form may lead to the depressive
isolation of women to which Amrit Wilson's *Finding a Voice* testifies and to a widening of the gap between such women and their daughters. The imam regards anything less than the strict observance of purdah as indicative of secularism, but his own attitude and practice may itself be an inadvertent agent of secularization in so far as it may contribute to the disintegration of the family and community within which traditional values are given life. It is possible that the function and meaning of purdah can be preserved in Bradford only by a modification of its form.

The Quran school, like the burka, is viewed by the imam as an important means of defence against the secular world. He is aware that in that world Islamic beliefs and values are seen as relative to other worldviews and to the environment and structure of Muslim communities. Within the Quran school, therefore, he aims to instil in children the concept of the absolute sovereignty of God and of his commands as known and practised in Islam. The form of the classes and the content and methods of his teaching are essentially the same as those he employed in the instruction of children in similar institutions in Sylhet. He perceives the greater threat to Islam posed by British society, but remains optimistic as to the effect of his teaching. The claims made by the imam are very similar to those of the authors of the Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education: 'any child who has gone through the lessons prepared along the guidelines given is expected to have built within himself or herself the positive power to resist the disintegrating and degenerating forces of modern civilization and gain certainty and peace of mind'.9 It is questionable, however, whether such optimism is entirely justified.

The imam acknowledges the practical obstacles to the fulfilment of his purpose for children, but there are deeper reasons for the failure of the Quran school to conform to his ideals. The Quran school in its present form is itself the product of a secular system of education. It offers a truncated version of the teaching given in the traditional maktab, but only as an adjunct to the secular school. This is therefore no ground on which to take a stand against the forces of secularism. Moreover, although
the Quran school may have undergone little change in the course of migration, the children of Bengali migrants in Britain live in an environment quite different from that which their parents first knew. Here the children themselves are subject to other forms of education that also influence their development.

Critics of Quran schools, therefore, point to the tension that arises within the child who is taught according to two entirely distinct sets of principles; but in this respect the Quran school only presents in an acute and easily perceptible form the problem that faces all Muslim children brought up in Britain, whether or not they attend such classes. If their parents adhere to the values and traditions of the village, then the children will necessarily live, to some extent, in two worlds. The Quran school may exacerbate, but is not solely or chiefly responsible for, psychological conflict of this kind. It is possible that both the Quran school teacher and his critics exaggerate its influence. He may aim to instil Islamic values in the child, but the actual function of the Quran school appears to be rather less exalted, lying in the provision of a form of practical training for participation in the rites of prayer.

In the Quran school, as in all its work, the Twaquilia Islamic Society can provide only the raw material of Islamic observance. The need and value of this provision is immense, but its results cannot be predicted. Attendance at the Quran school impresses upon the children a sense of their communal identity, but, as noted above, a Muslim community may take various forms and its members have a variety of conceptions of Islam. There is certainly no guarantee that the growing child will be immune to secularization. The skills that the imam imparts may indeed form the basis for his own ideal of a complete, Islamic way of life, but they may equally well be used as a token of cultural identity for a generation whose religious outlook is not otherwise markedly different from that of their non-Muslim peers.

The imam's teaching, then, plays an important part in the continuity of Muslim traditions; yet the effect of his words and the future shape of Bengali observance of Islam may not accord with his intentions.
If his aims do remain unfulfilled, this will be due, in part, to the distance between the teacher and the taught. We have observed that the imam has little experience of the life and work of most of the congregation: the pressures upon the factory worker and the schoolchild are unknown to him. His personal observance of Islam, therefore, is largely unaffected by migration, and in the mosque he can continue to relate the unchanging content of the faith, expounding Quran and Hadith. If he does not grapple with how to believe, it is not least because he does not need to. However, the imam's work as a teacher must be viewed in relation to his wider role in the community, for there are other respects in which the imamate in Bradford falls short of his ideals.

(ii) Leader or Servant?

The imam perceives imamate as the exercise within a particular community of the leadership once given by Muhammad. However, examination of the ways in which authority is exercised in the Bengali community led to the conclusion that no single person holds total authority, but that each of several men has power in a certain restricted sphere. The role of the imam, therefore, is governed less by his own aspirations than by the attitudes and behaviour of his fellow Bengalis, who appear to want to assign him a leading part in the mosque, but not outside it. The imam himself, aware of how he is used by the community, assesses his actual status and function as those of a servant rather than a leader.

The imam enables people to learn the content of their scripture in an environment where they may apply it as they will. Thus, although he may wish to derive from the Quran a blueprint for the conduct of individual and communal life, the extension of his Islamic authority outside the mosque depends entirely upon the willingness of his hearers to take it with them. They may use his words as a guidance for their lives if they wish, but only so. The imam's objectives can be achieved only by the power of his exhortation and example: he has no other way of influencing the behaviour of others. It is not that strong leadership is not valued; indeed, several members of the Twaqulia Islamic Society regard it as beneficial to
a Muslim community. However, they place a yet higher value upon unity: the imam is deprived of power in order that all may pray together.

Thus the imam retains an important symbolic role in the community. Standing in the place of the Prophet at the head of the congregation, he represents the unity of the people under the authority of God. Yet he is able to symbolize unity only so long as he lacks power, for others imagine that disunity would ensue upon the execution of the authority for which he also stands. The symbolic and titular head of the community finds himself, outside the congregational prayer, isolated, standing at the edge rather than at the centre. The imam explains the sense of isolation that he feels as due to the absence of relatives in this country and of Bengalis of similar status to himself, but it can also be seen as engendered by his role.

The isolation of the imam is increased by the ways in which he is used as a representative of the community. Firstly, the imam represents their own ideals to the Bengali Muslims. He and his family are expected to exemplify what it means to be a 'good Muslim'. Thus he is admired by others, but is at the same time capable of becoming an object of derision. The strict observance of purdah, for example, is both expected of him and also regarded as slightly absurd. The imam who is respected in public may be ridiculed in private. He is of course himself partly responsible for the adoption of this role, but it is written for him by a community that prefers to keep a distance between ideal and reality.

Secondly, the imam represents others before God. In this role too, the script is written mainly by others. The imam denounces the use of human intermediaries with God and tries to prevent people from using him as one, but he does respond to requests for an amulet or for some concrete expression of his prayers. Despite the most careful teaching, he is unable to control the interpretations that people may put upon such gestures. It is very difficult for an outsider accurately to assess the role of the imam in this respect, for it is common practice for people to ask each other for prayer, expecting not a pious
promise but immediate action. Nonetheless, in that the imam is more likely than any other person to be approached for a tangible sign of God's favour, the possibility remains that people will regard him as in some sense their representative before God.

Thirdly, in so far as many Bengalis are dependent upon him for their apprehension of the word of God in the Quran, the imam represents God to them. He does not claim, nor is he accorded, any exclusive access to God, and there is a sense in which all hear God speak each time the Quran is recited. However, the imam stresses the importance of understanding the meaning of the Quran as well as of knowing the Arabic text, and by his recitation and interpretation 'he exemplifies what he enjoins'.

In a largely illiterate community in which no other person has so thorough an Islamic education, the imam has a special responsibility for making plain the word of God and thereby may acquire a particular status. In exercising this responsibility the imam retains something of the authority of the ancient khalifa: at least within the mosque his teaching is undisputed.

A final conclusion which may be drawn from observation of the imam's work, and which is implicit in the above analysis of his role within the Bengali community, is that he has virtually no part to play in relation with the wider, multi-cultural society of Bradford. It is not the imam who represents the Bengalis to others, but the President of the Twaquilia Islamic Society, or the President of the Bangladesh People's Association or the representatives on the Community Relations Council. This very research project may have served to create a role for the imam in this respect, but otherwise he has little contact with white society or indeed with other Muslim groups. His predominant concern is with his own community. It is significant that when he arrived in Bradford he spoke little English: evidently a command of the language was not required by those who made the appointment. The imam's gradual learning of English and his cooperation in this research indicate a certain desire to make contacts beyond the boundaries of the Bengali community; for the most part, however, he works, or attempts to work, in Bradford much as he would in Sylhet. It is possible that an imam who settled here and who
came to share and understand more of the life of people around him would eventually find his role and his teaching undergoing modification. However, having selected a man from Sylhet who states that he will return after five years, the Twaqulia Islamic Society has ensured a minimum of change.

C CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

S.H. Nasr has remarked of western scholarship, especially as it is brought to bear upon non-western cultures, that an obsession with change and novelty has blinded it to the significance of continuity. He emphasizes the cultural bias in the scholar's interpretation of the experience of people who still adhere to the ancient traditions of their society. There is indeed liable to be a certain arrogance in any attempt to enter another's world and to describe and interpret what is found there. Fieldwork for this thesis, therefore, proceeded only within the bounds set by the Bengali community itself. However, throughout the largely descriptive body of the thesis and particularly in the interpretative conclusions of this final chapter, the view presented remains that of an outsider.

It is, therefore, neither desirable nor possible to draw any neat or simple conclusion as to the shape of Bengali observance of Islam in Bradford. From the beginning of Muslim presence in Bengal, Islamic observance has assumed a variety of forms and continues to do so in Bradford. However, through the complex of attitude and practice among regular members of the congregation in the mosque and throughout the whole community, there runs a strong thread of unity and continuity of tradition, represented by the preservation in Bradford of the central symbols of Islam. Changes that have occurred through the process of migration have been noted, as have divisions among Bengalis, but these apparently negative factors do not necessarily diminish the importance of the preservation of their heritage which the Bengalis have achieved. They need not signify weakness or disintegration. It is possible that the strength of the Bengalis as a community of Muslims lies in the tension between those whose view and observance of
Islam is formed by recollection of the traditions of Bangladesh and those who allow present circumstances to impinge upon their faith and seek ways of believing that will in turn prove formative of circumstance.
Epilogue

In the four years that have passed since this thesis was written many changes have of course taken place in the Bengali Muslim community in Bradford. A brief visit to Bradford in March 1985 enabled me to note the most obvious developments, in particular the new, purpose-built mosque of the Tawwakulia (Twaquilia) Islamic Society. The former mosque premises now house 'Jubo Bangla', a Bangladeshi youth organization. There has been a slow but steady influx of dependant relatives of the original migrants, so that the numbers of men, women and children in the Bangladeshi community are less unbalanced than before.

An apparently predictable process of settlement is well under way, and yet I remain cautious in trying to discern its course and the continually developing shape of the observance of Islam in this community. The construction of the mosque is of great significance. Here four hundred men can pray together. Here at last, it seems, lies that focal point of Bengali Muslim identity sought for so many years. At the same time, however, the tensions within the community are evident. In a converted warehouse on a neighbouring street stands a new 'Islamic Centre', founded by the former imam and supported by the Dawat al-Islam, with its own large prayer hall, classrooms and other facilities.

Thus the tendency towards polarization, discernible four years ago, has found concrete expression. For the present the Tawwakulia Islamic Society holds the allegiance of the majority, but the Bengali Muslims of Bradford who once had no mosque to call their own, may now choose their place of prayer. Interpretations of this development may vary as much as predictions of the future, but one thing it surely signifies is the continuing life and liveliness of this small part of Britain's Muslim community.
Appendix I
Constitution of the Twaqulia Islamic Society

1. Depending on the grace of Almighty Allah t'ala, the Twaqulia Islamic Society aims, in the following ways, to encourage and enable the inhabitants of Bradford, especially the Bengali Muslims, to live an Islamic life:

   (1) by the observance of the congregational prayers;
   (ii) by the provision of Islamic teaching for the children.

2. All Bengali Muslims have the right to be members of this Society. Every member will be present in the congregation as often as possible, pay regular subscriptions and make donations to fulfil the aims of the Society. All the members, individually and collectively, will be responsible to Allah for their work.

3. For the proper and disciplined running of the Society, the members will meet and elect by a majority vote fifteen Bengali representatives, taking into account their abilities, to form an executive committee. This executive committee will work for one year or 365 days. Each representative on the committee will pay £1 per week. Every year, at a certain time, there will be an election of a new executive committee. This committee, as the representatives of all the members, will carry out the work of the Society in accordance with its rules and regulations.

4. The representatives on this committee will be directly accountable for their work to all the members of the Society and, indirectly, to Allah t'ala. One or more representatives on the
committee can be removed before the end of his (their) term if he (they) is (are) proved unworthy by a majority of the members. New representative(s) will be elected in his (their) place by a majority. If for any reason a representative is unable to perform his duties, he should inform the committee. The members of the Society will then immediately elect another representative in order to release him from his duties.

5. Of the representatives on the committee one will be President, one Secretary, one Treasurer and one Auditor. The rest will be ordinary representatives. The President will lead the committee and take the chair in every meeting. He will also represent the Society. He will be one of the signatories for the Society's bank account. The Secretary will be responsible for all internal and external correspondence and will arrange meetings. He will be one of the signatories for the Society's bank account. The Treasurer will keep an account of the income and expenditure of the Society. He will make deposits. He will be one of the signatories for the Society's bank account. His signature is essential in all withdrawals from the bank, together with that of the President or Secretary. The Auditor will inspect the accounts every four months. In consultation with the Treasurer, he will publish an annual report of income and expenditure at the end of the year. The other representatives will collect subscriptions, donations etc. for the income of the Society. This will be used for the fulfilment of the main aim of the Society, the observance of the congregational prayers, the maintenance and, if necessary, the improvement of the mosque, and the provision of Islamic teaching for the children. They will also be responsible for expenditure on the care of the mosque and the appointment of an imam. Nobody will collect any money without the proper seal and receipt of the Society, and, so far as possible, there should be a receipt for each item of expenditure.

6. The executive committee will be directly responsible for the appointment of a suitable imam to organize the prayers and to teach. But all the members of the Society should be able to trust and depend on
the imam. In respect of the organization of the prayers and of teaching, the appointed imam will assume all the responsibility of imamate in accordance with Islamic law. Those who are taught must obey his instruction and there should be no interference. But if an individual or a few people think that the imam has done something that is beyond the bounds of Islamic order, then it should be reported to the committee. Taking into account the gravity of the complaint and its urgency, the executive committee will arrange to resolve the issue together with all the members and in consultation with religious scholars. An imam will be appointed for one year. At the end of the year the same imam can be re-appointed or a new imam appointed.

7. The President, Secretary and Auditor will frequently and jointly inspect the progress of the children’s education.

8. The President, Secretary or Treasurer will be able to spend up to £5 whenever necessary for the benefit of the Society. They may jointly spend between £5 and £10, but the committee should be informed as soon as possible. Any expenditure over £10 and up to £25 should first be approved by a majority of members of the executive committee. Expenditure over £25 should be approved by a majority of ordinary members.

9. If on account of some difficulty or inability, the post of President, Secretary, Treasurer or Auditor is vacated, it will be filled by another executive member.

10. At the end of the year the out-going committee will hand over to the new committee. In the event of the delay of an election, the old committee will continue to function.

11. Any law or bye-law of this constitution can be changed only by three quarters of the members of the Society.

12. God forbid, but if the present mosque is demolished and if any compensation is available, the money will be spent on building a mosque in this country
for the use of Bengali Muslims; failing that, the money will be sent to a needy mosque in Bangladesh.

13. All the members of the executive committee must be Bengali Muslims. No non-Bengali will be able to be a member.

14. The members of this committee will not be able to be members of the executive committee of another society.

We have read, understood and signed this constitution.

(Signed by 17 members) 6 June 1971.
Appendix II
A Friday Address

We take refuge with God from the pleasures of our selves, and from the sins of our actions. 
Whomsoever God guides, nobody can lead him astray, and whomsoever God misleads, nobody can guide him to the right path.
We bear witness that there is no god but God, who is one and without associate, and we bear witness that our Lord, our Prophet, our Beloved and our Master is Muhammad, who is the Apostle of God. Peace be upon him and his family and companions, and blessed be his name.
I take refuge with God from Satan the accursed.
In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful:

0 Prophets Truly We
Have sent thee as
A Witness, a Bearer
Of Glad Tidings,
And a Warner, -

And as one who invites
To God's (Grace) by His leave,
And as a Lamp
Spreading Light.

God and His Angels
Send blessings on the Prophet;
O ye blessings on him,
And salute him
With all respect.3

May God call down blessing on our Lord and Master Muhammad and on his family and companions, and greet them with peace.
Respected assembly,

Let us thank Allah, the Almighty, the Lord of the Worlds, for bringing us to this month of Rajab. This month is special for two reasons. Firstly, this is one of four months that have been specially chosen by Allah out of all the months he created. These months are important for the Muslim community, and one of them is Rajab. The second reason is that in this month Allah t'ala called the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) to himself. In this month of Rajab Allah has granted us life, so that we may reach the twenty-seventh day. Now we have come to that day and therefore we give thanks to Allah.

Our thanks to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, will be genuine when we perform the work for which Allah t'ala called his Prophet to himself from earth. Then our thanks will be genuine. Having called Muhammad, Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) to himself, Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, gave him gifts for the whole of mankind and especially for the Muslims. One of these gifts was namaz.

If you think, you will see what an important place Allah t'ala has given to namaz. A major part of the Quran contains Allah's commands: 'Do this. Don't do that'. But all the other commandments Allah t'ala has given, for example, concerning the hajj and zakat, all the other commandments were given by Allah t'ala upon the earth. He called the Prophet to himself, right next to himself, and during this meeting he gave him the gift of namaz. So you can understand the high status of namaz. It is impossible to talk now about all the many gifts Allah t'ala gave to his Rasul (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) on the miraj, and of these I shall speak tomorrow night, when I discuss the purpose of the miraj of the Rasul to Allah. And I shall say what gifts he brought for us.

Today I shall tell you about namaz, so that you may understand the basic principles of namaz and the high standard of its performance. I have said that all the commandments of Allah, the Lord of the worlds, in the Quran were revealed upon earth, except for namaz which
was given during a meeting with Allah t'ala. You know that at first Allah t'ala commanded namaz to be said fifty times. But when the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) was returning to earth, he came to the sixth heaven and met Hazrat Musa (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) who asked, 'What are you taking for the umma?' Then he told him about namaz. Musa said, 'Your umma will never be able to say namaz fifty times a day. So go back to Allah and petition him to lessen it'. So the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) went back once, twice, three times, four times, until finally on the fifth occasion Allah t'ala deducted forty-five from fifty and made compulsory the saying of namaz five times a day.

It is written in the Quran:

He that doeth good  
Shall have ten times  
As much to his credit.

If one does only one good work, then Allah, the Lord of the worlds, will bless him ten times. So if you observe namaz five times, Allah t'ala will give you credit for doing it fifty times. 'If you observe it the five times by yourself', Allah t'ala said to the Prophet, 'I will reward you for doing it fifty times. That is if you say it alone. But if you observe namaz in the congregation, you will be rewarded twenty-seven times as much as if you did it alone'. So multiply ten by twenty-seven and see how great a reward, how much credit, Allah will give you. That is one aspect of namaz: now consider another.

When a man works, his body becomes unclean. Allah t'ala has provided water for us, so that by bathing a person may become clean. And Allah t'ala has provided soap that a person may wash his clothes and his body. This is the condition of man: so long as he lives on earth, his clothes and body will become unclean. Therefore in his mercy Allah, the Lord of the worlds, has provided soap and water so that he may clean himself. In precisely the same way Allah t'ala has given us namaz, so that when we become involved in wrong-doing, we may bathe ourselves and cleanse ourselves from it all. How great is the mercy of Allah!
The Hadith of the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) covers many subjects, but what is discussed most of all is namaz. Once the Prophet said, 'As soon as you start going towards the mosque to say namaz in the congregation, then for each single step you take, a sin will be forgiven and you will be given a reward'.

So now I ask you, is what the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) said in the hadith true or false? TRUE. TRUE. If when you are alone you think, 'What is all this fuss about the congregation?' Can the faith remain in you? No, it cannot. This is the hadith of the Rasul, and if you believe the Rasul you must believe the hadith, the word of the Rasul, the teaching of the Rasul. So if you have faith and set out to say namaz, as soon as you take a step a sin is forgiven and you receive a reward.

The Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) said in the hadith, 'When a man does wudu . . .' - a man who sins. Consider, a man's hands, a man's mouth, a man's eyes, a man's feet, these are the parts of a man that sin most, that do most wrong. The Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) said, '. . . Whatever bodily sins a man has committed, even the slightest of them, when he does wudu, Allah, the Lord of the worlds, will cleanse him of them all. All say, 'subhan Allah'. SUBHAN ALLAH. As you wash your hand, whatever sin you have committed with your hand Allah t'ala will forgive. As you put water in the nose and wash your mouth, whatever sins you have committed with your tongue, with your mouth, are cleansed. And your eyes - you commit so many sins with your eyes - as you wash them, Allah t'ala will forgive you all the sins you committed with your eyes. So with your feet - Allah t’ala will forgive you all the bad things you have done.

These days our faith is weak. Every Muslim knows that a man is bound to sin. So we go to the mosque and know we shall be forgiven. But even before namaz, sin has already started to be forgiven in wudu. The noble companions of the Prophet had great faith in the word of the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) - like our faith in the sun. If someone swears, 'It's not day but night' would we believe it? No, we would not. Just as we have this kind of faith about the sun in the daytime, so his noble companions believed every
word Muhammad, the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) said. That was the extent of their faith and respect. And because of this great faith it was said, 'When we do wudu, we see the sins coming off our hands, our mouths, our eyes'. Think about it. Consider what Allah, the Lord of the worlds, has done for us.

Look at it another way. After a person becomes a Muslim, whenever he says LA ILAHA ILLA 'LLAH WA MUHAMMAD RASUL ALLAH - I obey the commands of none other than Allah, apart from Allah I worship no one else, and Muhammad is the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM), his Prophet - what then is obligatory for this person in his life? I've told you many times. What is obligatory? Namaz. NAMAZ. In our life the very first thing that is obligatory is namaz. Consider, our first duty is namaz. The Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) at the last moment of his life - any Muslim, any person, when he knows his death has come and the time to leave the world has come, then he tells his children and his relations those things that he thought most important and most valuable in his life - so our Prophet Muhammad (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) at the time of his leaving the earth, said, 'Al-salah, al-salah'. He was not strong enough to say the whole sentence. He could only say, 'Al-salah, al-salah'. Namaz, namaz. If he had had strength, he would have said, 'Remember what I am leaving for you - namaz. For you namaz is a fundamental duty of life'. So we can see, whoever can observe namaz correctly, yesterday or today, although he might have weakness in his character, although in his life he might have made mistakes, although he might have committed some error, still we can hope that Allah will not reject this his servant. This servant of Allah will not stray too far. If he does stray, he will return. This can be our hope. This is why the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) at the last moment of his life, bequeathed to us namaz.13

And there is another thing the Rasul Allah said about namaz: 'Al-salat miraj al-muminin'.14 Muhammad, the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) went on the miraj, but for you and me will there ever be a chance of going on a miraj, through seven heavens? Will there? No. But, Allah, the Lord of the worlds, has said to his Prophet, 'There is no need for your umma to cross
seven heavens to come to me. Every day I will give them a miraj five times'. What is this miraj? Al-
salat miraj al-muminin. What is the main thing about the miraj? On the miraj the Rasul went to be beside Allah. The Rasul went near Allah. The Rasul said in the hadith, 'When a man prostrates, then he comes closest to Allah'. On the miraj the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) talked with Allah t'ala. They had a dialogue. Allah t'ala gave him guidance. Concerning namaz the Rasul says 'Whoever prays, calls upon his Lord'. When a person stands for namaz, what does he do with Allah? He talks with Allah. How many times do we say namaz each day? Five times. So how many times do we go on miraj each day? Five times. Allah t'ala has of his mercy given us this. The miraj of the muminin is namaz. So just think - who have we come to here? To Allah. We have come to prostrate before Allah. We have come to see Allah.

In the hadith it is said, 'Do your ibada and say namaz, as if you were looking at Allah'. Do your ibada, as if looking at Allah. If it is not possible to see Allah, then believe that Allah t'ala sees you as you perform ibada. So now think, when somebody has come to say namaz, leaving his family and all his work, he has come for no other reason than to prostrate before the Lord of the worlds. But Satan has some tricks, some temptations, which the man must remove far from his mind and think, 'I have come here to my Lord, the Lord of the worlds. Even if I do not see Allah, Allah t'ala sees me'. There are some beautiful words about this in a hadith. A man is standing at namaz. Every now and then his eyes wander. Don't they? Satan is trying to tempt him. In the hadith it says, 'When the man's eyes look upon other things, Allah t'ala calls him.' Although we cannot hear it, Allah says, 'O man, what have you found that is better than me, that you turn away from me and look at other things? For the man who has gone far from me there is nothing other than damnation'. Think about it, remember all this, and keep this hadith in mind when we stand at namaz.

I told you in my tafsir on the Sura al-Fatiha that when I say the Fatiha and repeat, 'al-hamdu lillah rabb al-
alamin', as I say this phrase, the response comes from heaven, 'hamidani abdi'. Allah t'ala says, 'My servant praises me'. He responds immediately to man's words. That is the best hadith of all. And when one says,
'al-rahman, malik yawm al-din', Allah t'ala responds to each verse one utters. And the angels listen to the conversation. So, as the Rasul Allah (SALA ALLAH ALAYHI WA SALLAM) went to talk with Allah on the miraj, when we stand at namaz we are in contact with the Lord of the worlds, we build up a relationship with the Lord of the worlds. Don't we? And that is why the Rasul Allah said, 'al-salat miraj al-muminin'. Namaz is the miraj of the believers.
Notes

Abbreviations


EI(N) The Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, edited by E. van Donzel and others (Leiden, 1960-).


Transliteration

Arabic terms are transliterated according to the system used in The Encyclopaedia of Islam, with certain exceptions common in English usage, for example, q for k, j for dj. Diacritical marks and apostrophes are omitted.

Bengali terms are treated according to the customary system of transliteration of Devanagri script, although this gives little guide to pronunciation. Terms derived from Persian are given in their Bengali form, with the exception of namaz (strictly namaj in Bengali).

Islamic names are given in their Arabic form for the sake of consistency as transliteration from their Bengali form leads to inconsistency and anomaly in spelling. Thus we write Mujib al-Rahman, not Mujib-ur-Rahman or Mujibur Rahman.

Terms such as purdah and burka that have been adopted into the English language are written accordingly.
In accordance with the principles of transliteration and the practice and command of the government of Bangladesh, the name of its capital city is spelt Dhaka, no longer Dacca.

(c) References to the Quran and Hadith

Unless otherwise stated, all Quranic references are to The Holy Quran: Text, Translation and Commentary, by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Leicester, 1975; first published, Lahore, 1934).

Since forms of citation of Hadith are complex and varied, reference is given, whenever possible, to the volume and page number of a translation. This applies to the works of al-Bukhari, Muslim, and to the Mishkat al-Masabih: full publication details are given in the Bibliography. If found in a secondary source, a hadith is usually quoted in the form given in that source.

For hadiths other than those included in the above collections, a reference is given in the form found in the secondary source.

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1. Two works by Muslim authors have been especially useful: Muhammad Enamul Haq, A History of Sufism in Bengal (Dhaka, 1975); Abdul Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Down to A.D. 1538) (Dhaka, 1959).


Another research project, originally sponsored by a relief organization, resulted in an independent publication: Jenneke Arens and Jos van Beurden, Jhagrapur: Poor peasants and women in a village in Bangladesh (Amsterdam, 1977).


Among periodicals the most useful has been New Community, the Journal of the Commission for Racial Equality.

7. Stephen W. Harrison and David Shepherd, A Muslim Family in Britain (Exeter, 1980).

8. Syed Sajjad Husain and Syed Ali Ashraf, Crisis in Muslim Education (Jeddah, 1979), and Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education, edited by Syed Muhammad al-Naqib al-Attas (Jeddah, 1979). These are two of seven volumes to be published as a result of the First World Conference on Muslim Education held in Mecca in 1977.


14. ibid., p.227.


17. Anwar, who discusses the advantage of sharing the language and symbolic systems of the community he studied: op.cit.  pp.228-29.


20. Alim, 'one who knows', an Islamic scholar. The plural, ulama, has been taken into English.


23. ibid.


### CHAPTER 2 THE BENGALI MUSLIMS

2. Bengal, properly bangal, is a combination of band and al, the latter being a Sanskrit term for raised mounds constructed by the early rulers of Bengal. See Kamruddin Ahmad, A Socio-Political History of Bengal and the Birth of Bangladesh, fourth edition (Dhaka, 1975), p.vi.

3. Western scholars have inclined to the former view: see Murray T. Titus, Indian Islam: A Religious History of Islam in India (London etc., 1930), p.44. Titus relied upon the judgment of H.H. Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal (Calcutta, 1891). For a recent denial of this view, see Syed Sajjad Husain, 'Bangladesh', in The Encyclopaedia Britannica, fifteenth edition.


7. The Muslim contribution to the movement begun by Bankim Chandra Chattapadhyay is assessed in Reflections on the Bengal Renaissance, edited by David Kopf and Satiuddin Joarder (Rajshahi, 1977).

8. For an account of Sylheti Nagri, see Akbar, op. cit.


11. ibid., p.125.


14. Khanqa, a Persian term of uncertain origin for the building used by sufis.


16. Ibid., p.33.


21. Dawa, 'summons' or 'call' to Islam.

22. Darga, literally 'place of a door', a term of Persian origin widely used in the Indian subcontinent for a Muslim shrine. See below, pp. 46-49.

23. Umma is usually translated 'community', sometimes 'nation'. It seems that Muhammad originally conceived of the Arabs as an umma, then the Medinese community, including Jews, but finally applied it to Muslims alone, whence is derived its current usage with reference to the universal community of Muslims. See EI vol.IV, pp.1015-16.

25. I am informed that this is a quotation from Muhammad Iqbal, Bang-i-Dara (Lahore, 1924), but I have not been able to trace the precise reference.


27. Basmala, bismillah, 'in the name of God'.


29. Inshallah, 'if God wills'.


31. The infinitive of the verb aslama, 'submit', Islam is used in the Quran to denote the characteristic attitude of the believer in relation to God; whence is derived Islam, denoting the system of beliefs and rituals based on the Quran. SEI, pp.176-78.

32. Shirk, 'association', denotes the sin of associating a companion with God. This is the error of the polytheists, but also of any whose belief or practice obscures the oneness, tawhid, of God.

33. For an account of the history, and present function and value of the maktab or Quran school, see below, Chapter 7.


35. The observance of purdah in Sylhet is described and compared with practice in Bradford below, pp.118-22.

37. ibid.

38. Sunna means 'custom', 'use', 'statute'. With reference to the practice of Muhammad, it has acquired the meaning 'standard', so that the Sunna of Muhammad is authoritative with regard to the behaviour of believers. See SEI, pp.552-53.

39. The degree of merit depends somewhat upon the distance travelled: a resident of Sylhet cannot consider a visit to the Darga of Shah Jalal a pilgrimage, but a Muslim from elsewhere might do so.


42. The law of waqf requires that the object of endowment be of a permanent nature and yield a usufruct. Some interpreters allow this to include animals, trees and books, as well as land. SEI, pp.624-28.

43. Khadim, 'servant'.

44. See All, op.cit., pp.30-31.


CHAPTER 3 MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT


6. Dahya, op.cit., p.84.


14. Dahya, op.cit., p.84. Data in this and the following paragraph are derived from the same article, pp.84-90.

15. ibid., p.90.

16. Ballard and Ballard, op.cit., p.32.


19 Informants in Bradford reported total delays of four years or more. The average length of waiting time for an interview at the British High Commission in Dhaka was 25 months in 1976, 20 months in 1978, and 22 months in 1979. House of Commons Hansard, Written Answers, Issue No.1134, Col.81-82 (12 March 1979); and House of Lords Hansard, Written Answers, Vol.400 No.8, Col.530 (24 May 1979); cited in Runny. mede Trust, Bulletin: Race Relations and Immigration in Britain and the EEC No.109 (May 1979) and No.111 (July 1979).

20. See Ballard and Ballard, op.cit., pp.41-43, and
Dahya, op.cit., p.88.

21. See below, pp.77-80 and 90-100. Twaquilia is an approximate transliteration of Arabic, meaning 'dependent on God'. This is the form used on the sign outside the mosque, although the Society now also uses the more accurate Tawakkulia.


23. Verity Saifullah Khan, 'The Pakistanis: Mirpuri Villagers at Home and in Bradford', in Between Two Cultures, pp.57-89 (p.82).

24. ibid., p.83.


26. For an account of conflict of values and consequent stress in a migrant community, see Verity Saifullah Khan, 'Migration and Social Stress: Mirpuris in Bradford', in Minority Families in Britain: Support and Stress, edited by Verity Saifullah Khan (London, Basingstoke, 1979), pp.36-57.

27. Several views of Muslim communities in Europe are collated in 'Attitudes to Islam in Europe - an anthology of Muslim views', edited by Jorgen S. Nielsen, Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations Research Papers No.5 (March 1980).

28. Sangram, 'struggle'; parishad, 'organisation'.

29. The Jamaat-i-Islami, founded by Abul Ala Mawdudi in 1941, has no branches outside the Indian sub-continent, but its sympathizers seem to be known within migrant communities.


34. Zaidi, op.cit., p.62.


37. Bentley, op.cit., p.156.


CHAPTER 4 BENGALI MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN BRADFORD

1. Even the relatives of a devout sufi, with whom I stayed in Sylhet, knew the date only by the Bengali calendar.

3. ibid.

4. The conveyance of a mosque is completed only by its use. SEI, p.625.


6. See Appendix I. Subsequent references to the constitution are made by citation in the text of the relevant clause number.


8. Telegraph and Argus, 30 April 1979, p.3.


10. See Chapter 2, Note 42.

11. See above, p.95.

12. See above, p.45.


17. 'The word used for the bowing position, **ruku** . . . has also become typical of the rite, **raka** being

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(Fard rakas are obligatory, Sunnat accord with the Sunna of the Prophet, and Nafl and Witr are optional.)

18. Itikaf can be undertaken at any time, for any number of days, but in particular during the last ten days of Ramadan, as this was the practice of the Prophet. EI(N), vol.IV, p.280.

19. See above, pp.41-42, and below, Chapter 7.

21 See below, pp.109-10.

21. Kalima, 'word'; tayyiba, 'supreme', 'excellent'. Kalima is used, as here, of statements or articles of faith. The customary translation of rasul, 'apostle', is retained here, although 'messenger' is also possible and sometimes preferred by Muslims to avoid the Christian overtones of 'apostle'.

22. See below, pp.203-05 and 211-16.


27. See Appendix II, pp.235-36.

28. A hadith cited in an article on the meaning of Shab-i-Barat in The Bangladesh Times, 4 July 1979. I have been unable to trace its source.

29. Para is derived from the Persian siparah. When he cites a passage of the Quran, the imam refers not to sura and ayya (verse), but to para and ruku, the latter being a sub-division of a para, comprising ten or fewer verses, at the end of which the reader bows.

30. Khutba, the traditional Arabic address. A khutba is read each week before the Friday prayers: see below, pp.144-45.


CHAPTER 5 THE IMAM AND HIS IMAMATE


7. The custom is known as *tagapara* (Bengali), from *taga*, 'thread' and *para*, 'wear'.

8. The content and method of Mawdudi's teaching is exemplified by two well-known works: *Towards Understanding Islam* (Lahore, 1960), originally written as *Risala-e-Diniyat*, a school text-book, and *Fundamentals of Islam* (Lahore, 1975), which is a collection of Friday sermons given in a village mosque.

9. The hadith, as related by Bukhari, actually refers to the prophets, plural: 'religious scholars are the inheritors of the Prophets', Bukhari, vol.I, p.59.


CHAPTER 6 THE IMAM'S TEACHING OF ADULTS

1. See Appendix II, a Friday address containing numerous traditions.

3. See below, pp.203-05.


6. Mawłana: see above, p.128.

7. The second prayer is the basmala. See Appendix II, p.230, where Quranic recitation precedes the address.


9. Mahfil (Arabic) means 'assembly'. The event is also known as a waj mahfil, waj being derived from the Urdu wach, 'speech' or 'recitation'.

10. See above, pp.110-16.


14. See Chapter 4, Note 21.


17. 'The Arabic word Rabb, usually translated Lord, has also the meaning of cherishing, sustaining, bringing to maturity.' A.Yusuf Ali's commentary on Sura 1:2. For the imam's use of this name of God, see Appendix II, where I have used the usual translation.


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28. See above, p.121.
29. See below, pp.214-15 for further discussion of this issue.

CHAPTER 7 THE QURAN SCHOOL

4. ibid.
7. Thomas Babington Macaulay, 'Minute on Indian Education (2 February 1835)' in Macaulay, Prose and Poetry, selected by G.M. Young (London, 1952),


13. See Chapter 4, Note 29.


15. The creeds are quoted in the form given in The Children's Book of Islam, published by The Islamic Foundation (Leicester, 1978), Part One, 22.29 and 30.

16. Firista ('angels') is Persian; kitab, nabi, taqdir ('books, prophets, destiny' Arabic; and parakal ('after-life') is Bengali.

17. See below, pp.218-220.


19. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam 224

20. ibid., p.47.

21. The criticisms mentioned are ones that I have heard, not read, although Muhammad Iqbal states, 'In the religious sphere, continuous criticism has been levelled by the Education Welfare Departments on the education of Muslim children in the mosque'. M. Iqbal, 'Education and Islam in Britain - a Muslim view', New Community 5 (Spring-Summer 1977), pp.397-404 (p.397).


27. Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education, published by the Union of Muslim Organizations of United Kingdom and Ireland (London, 1976), p.21 cites only three books, including The Children's Book of Islam, suitable for 'beginners'.


30. ibid., p.39.
31. ibid., p.32.
32. ibid., pp.41, 28-29, 20 and 11-12.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

3. ibid., pp.111-12.
6. Geertz, op.cit., p.61; Cragg, op.cit., p.49.
7. A lack of sympathy with Islamic parties in Bangladesh was also reported among Bengalis in Birmingham: Clinton Bennett, 'Islam in Bangladesh: a survey of its historical, constitutional and experiential dimensions' (unpublished dissertation for The Certificate in the Study of Islam, University of Birmingham, 1979), pp.24-25.
9. Guidelines and Syllabus on Islamic Education,
published by the Union of Muslim Organizations of United Kingdom and Ireland (London, 1976), p.16.

10. Cragg writes of the preacher in the mosque, 'In rehearsing certain familiar passages or alluding to them . . . he exemplifies what he enjoins. For the Quran above all else exists to be recited and so also to have constant auditors.' Cragg, op.cit., pp.40-41.


APPENDIX I CONSTITUTION OF THE TWAQULIA ISLAMIC SOCIETY

1. Translated from Bengali. The Arabic phrase Allah t'ala, God Almighty, is retained as it is used in Bengali as a name of God and when combined with a Bengali epithet (for example, 'almighty' in Clause No.1) is virtually untranslatable.

APPENDIX II A FRIDAY ADDRESS

1. 22 June 1979 A.D.

2. This form of introduction, recited in Arabic, always precedes the address.

3. Sura 33:45, 46 and 56.

4. This form of durud is frequently used by the Bengali congregation, who here repeat it after the imam. All such responses are typed in upper case letters.

5. The Arabic Allah and several other terms and phrases (for example, namaz, Rasul) are neither translated nor underlined in order to retain something of the tone of the original Bengali, which includes many Arabic words.
6. The short form of *durud* is used at each mention of the name or title of Muhammad and other prophets. It may be translated, 'May God call down blessing on him, and greet him with peace'.


13. The form of the hadith quoted by the imam does not always correspond with that in the main collections. According to the *Mishkat*, Muhammad 'was heard to say in a whisper: Prayer, and what your right hands have possessed (slaves). Then a sudden change came over him, and soon he breathed his last reciting in a whisper "Lord: (to) the Highest Companion."' Vol.IV, p.452.

14. I have been unable to trace the source of this hadith.

15. Muslim, vol.I, p.254. The Bengali phrase translated 'prostrate' is literally 'give (Allah) one's *sajda*' (sujud), the act of prostration.


17. I have been unable to trace the source of this hadith.


19. The whole conversation is quoted in SEI, p.498, where reference is given to Ahmad b. Hanbal ii, 460.
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Glossary

ALIM: 'one who knows', an Islamic scholar.
ALOKIKA: seer.
AZAN: call to prayer.

BADLI HAJJ: vicarious observance of pilgrimage.
BARAKA: divine blessing; spiritual power.
BASMALA: (BISMILLAH) 'in the name of God'.
BIDESHI: a foreigner.
BURKA/BURQA: a loose garment covering the whole body, worn by a woman in purdah.

DAR AL-ISLAM: house of Islam.
DARGA: 'place of the door'; Muslim shrine.
DAWA: summons or call to Islam; mission.
DHIKR: recitation.
DIN: religious duty.
DUA: prayer of supplication.
DURUD: prayer for blessing.

FARD: compulsory.

GAYE HALUD: the ceremony in which turmeric is placed on the body prior to marriage.
HADITH: corpus of traditions relating to the life of the prophet Muhammad.

HAFIZ: one who has learnt the whole Quran from memory.

HAJJ: pilgrimage to Mecca.

HALAL: permitted.

HARAM: forbidden.

HIJRA: Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E.

IBADA: the service due by man to God.

ID AL-ADHA: the festival of sacrifice which marks the end of the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj).

ID AL-FITR: the festival of breaking the fast after the month of Ramadan.

IFTAR: evening meal (after the sun sets) in Ramadan.

IMAM: prayer leader and teacher.

IMAN: faith.

INSHALLAH: 'if God wills'.

IQAMA: a rapidly spoken form of azan, the call to prayer.

ITIKAF: retreat.

IZZAT: honour, family pride (urdu).

JALI DHIKR: vocal recitation.

JINN: spirits of fire and air.
JUMA: Friday, the day of assemblies.
JUMA NAMAZ: Friday prayers.

KAFIRUN: non-believers.

KALIMA TAYYIBA: articles of faith; 'There is no god but God and Muhammad is his messenger'.

KARAMAT: magical or clairvoyant powers.

KHAFI DHIKR: silent recitation.

KHANQA; a building used by Sufis.

KHUTBA: traditional Arabic address given by imam.

LAYLAT AL-QADR: the night of power, celebrated during Ramadan with prayers and Quran readings. Muslims ask forgiveness from God.

LUNGI: garment worn by men.

MADRASA: institutions of theological instruction.

MAHPIL: conference; a meeting led by well-known speakers and leaders.

MAKTAB: Quran school; elementary school held in mosque for the learning of the Quran in Arabic.

MANE PARDA: 'mental purdah'.

MASJID: 'a place of prostration'; mosque.

MAWLANA: a leader (imam) who has graduated from a madrasa.

MILAD: a service in which the prophet and his activities are recollected.
MILAD AL-NABI: anniversary of the prophet Muhammad.

MIRAJ: the night journey of the prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem and his 'ascent' into heaven.

MUEZZIN: one who calls others to prayer in the azan.

MUHURRAM: the first month of the Islamic year.

MUJADDID: a renewer of religion.

MULLAH: religious leader or imam.

MUNAFIQUN: nominal Muslims at the time of the prophet; hypocrite; one who cannot be trusted.

MURID: pupil.

NAMAZ: formal prayer rite.

PIR: sufi master or elder.

PURDAH: seclusion of women.

QARI: one who recites the Quran.

QIYAM: 'standing': 'resurrection'; the time when the soul of the prophet is felt to be present in the congregation.

QURAN: 'reciting'; Arabic scripture; the message of Allah to his people, the Muslims, through his prophet, Muhammad.

RAKA: 'prostration'; a section of the formal prayer of Muslims.
RAMADAN: month of fasting; period in which Muslims refrain from eating, sleeping and sexual relations during the hours of sunlight.

RASUL: apostle, messenger.

SAHUR: meal taken before dawn in Ramadan.

SALAM: a greeting of peace.

SALAT: 'prayer'; in the sense of regular or ritual acts of prayer.

SALAT AL-JUMA: Friday noon prayers.

SANMAN: family pride; honour (Bengali).

SHARIA: the sacred law of Islam.

SHIRK: 'association'; denotes the sin of associating a companion with God, or polytheism.

SHIRNI: food to be taken as a gift to a shrine.

SUFI: one who wears wool (suf); Islamic mystic.

SUNNA: custom, use, statute, standard; that which is authoritative.

SURA: 'chapter'; divisions within the Quran.

TAFSIR: commentary on the Quran.

TAKA: Bangladeshi currency.

TAKBIR: 'allahu akbar'; an utterance repeated in prayer.

TAQDIR: destiny.

TAWHID: oneness; unity of God.