

The Role of Factionalism in Political Encapsulation: East Indian Villagers in Guyana

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One of the major problems in the study of complex societies is the nature of the interaction between the national and local levels of society. In the Caribbean context, this recognition of levels has been limited to the notion that "certain features of the social structure are only explicable if seen as part of a wider social system which cannot be regarded as being merely 'external' to the village" (Smith 1962:5). Such a notion has been mainly applied to studies of kinship and family organization (for example, Solien 1961; Kunstadter 1963) while the plural society debate has also touched on the concept of levels, but the microlevel is viewed as secondary to national machinations (Despres 1967) or as merely part of the total plural character without reference to the dynamic and interaction of the two levels as discrete, albeit interrelated, entities.

Related to this lack of specification as to the nature of vertical interaction within West Indian societies, has been the minimal analysis of so-called sectional rivalries as these are exhibited on the local level. The assumptions have been that ethnic segments do not interact to any great extent; that each section is separately mobilized as a totality by sectional/ethnic leaders; or, in contradiction to this viewpoint, that shared values preclude the degree of sectionalism postulated by the pluralists.

The present article is an attempt to deal explicitly with both types of interaction through an analysis of local-level politics. More specifically, the aim is to demonstrate the process by which national politics can infiltrate local political arenas despite the "plural character" of the society, while at the same time national infiltration is utilized by the local arena to perpetuate its own parochial character. The process of inter-

action between national and local levels/arenas and the manner in which "political pluralism" can be attenuated given particular circumstances are the foci of this article.

THE CONCEPT OF ENCAPSULATION

The method by which this problem can perhaps be best viewed is through the use of the concept of encapsulation as formulated by Bailey (1969). In *Stratagems and spoils*, the basic premise is that "a political structure and its environment together constitute a political system, and such systems are understood when the continuous process of adaptation and adjustment between structure and environment is understood" (1969: 10). Bailey notes that "almost without exception today" village "structures exist within larger encapsulating political structures" (1969: 146). And to understand an encapsulated structure requires an analysis of the similarities/dissimilarities between encapsulated and encapsulator and an analysis of the adaptation of the encapsulated structure to the encapsulation situation. The variables which Bailey postulates as being relevant to an understanding of the interaction/adaptation include, first, the extent to which the encapsulating structure concerns itself with what goes on in the smaller structure. This policy can range from nominal encapsulation through indirect rule to integration attempts (1969: 147-151). The second variable is the other aspect of policy, implementation. The success of policy implementation will depend on the resistance of the encapsulated structure and the resources which the encapsulating structure puts into the struggle (1969: 151-152).

The third relevant issue is the nature of the middleman roles which come into existence to bridge the communication gaps. Such roles will vary according to the manner in which they are generated. They may be formally created by the encapsulating structure; they may arise as pragmatic additions to the previous structural system; or finally, they may be generated by local arena personnel themselves. Middleman roles will also vary according to the tasks which are carried out. For example, a middleman may build himself a team and become a faction leader (1969: 152-174).

The fourth variable relevant to an analysis of the encapsulation situation is the patterning of change in the encapsulated structure. This runs a continuum from resistance to seizure of opportunity to uniformity with the larger arena (1969:154).

The final variable to be investigated is how the encapsulation process

finally ends. When the middleman loses his communication monopoly, or when the encapsulating structure will no longer allow for local diversity, encapsulation has given way to integration (1969: 175-176).

THE SETTING

Rajgahr Village, West Berbice County, in Guyana, is located sixty miles from the capital of Georgetown, a journey of two and one-half hours by car. The village has a population of three thousand and is totally East Indian in ethnic composition. This is because it was founded in 1902 as an East Indian Land Settlement Scheme for former indentured laborers and because the racial disturbances in 1962 and 1964 induced the ten resident African families to leave the village.

The economic base is rice cultivation, with a pattern of dual occupations characterizing the majority of households. The secondary occupations include cattle rearing, estate labor, entrepreneurial activities (such as the running of shops and parlors), and the provision of local services (such as goldsmithing, huckstering, and machine rental).

Because of this occupational diversity, there exists in the village a complex pattern of vertical differentiation cross-cut by economic stratification which is an index of the differential success families have had as a result of economic strategizing. For example, large-scale farmers combine cattle rearing on Crown land which was originally opened up in 1920. The occupation of the first depth gives them access, according to Land Ordinances, to almost unlimited acreage in the latter depths for the expansion of both rice and cattle. At the opposite extreme are the small cultivators farming limited acreage (five acres approximately) rented from the village authority. Such families have no access to the large tracts of Crown land since they lack first-depth holdings. They subsist by combining small-scale cultivation with casual labor, the latter being scarce in the area. Depending on the economic choices made by family groups in the 1920's as to whether to occupy first-depth Crown land or to expand into the then lucrative wage-labor market, positions in the stratification scheme will vary. Additionally, the other occupations open to families are carried out with differential success depending on entrepreneurial ability and investment capital. The result is that income distribution in the village ranges from between five hundred dollars per annum to over twenty thousand.

THE LOCAL POLITICAL ARENA

Rajgahr Village has always been, by definition, an encapsulated political structure. What is crucial, however, is that the nature of this encapsulation has been consistently changing over the years as a product of government policy and implementation; in terms of the nature of middlemen who linked the village with the larger structure; and in terms of the patterning of change in the village as a response to the encapsulation itself.

Generally speaking, however, prior to 1967 the nature of the encapsulation can be viewed as of a nominal type with an emphasis on indirect rule. Although the colonial government was directly responsible for the founding of the village, it did not interfere in local politics or autonomy as long as the local organization appeared to be functioning. This policy and its implementation met no resistance from the Rajgahr structure. Further, the middleman roles which emerged during this period were based either on formal roles, such as that of the district commissioner, or on local personnel building the roles for themselves. These latter persons were generally faction leaders. Through these, one can begin to view the nature of village politics within this nominal encapsulation situation. For the village has been characterized by factional politics since its inception. Over the years these have retained a continuous character in that each faction, at every point in time, was genetically related to those which existed previously.

At the same time, factions had not become *parti* (Boissevain 1964) in that their ephemeral nature has been maintained and there has been a fit with Nicholas's definition of factions as being noncorporate groups recruited by leaders on the basis of diverse principles (1965: 27-29). What is important, however, is that although factions and factionalism have altered their structures and goals over time with changing resources (Silverman 1975), they have been the basic means of organizing political activity on the local level. Village politics have been and are the politics of factionalism.

Given this preeminence, there are several aspects of village factional politics that are relevant for the present discussion. The first points to be noted are the traditional competitive arenas in which factionalism was carried out. The primary arena is the village council which, as a result of the Ordinances, has the potential for control over persons and resources because of its management of village finances and because of the council being a major employer of local labor. As a result of its having power, authority, and influence, the council is the focal point of com-

petition as factions vie for its control by attempting to gain the majority of its twelve elected seats.

An added dimension to the political nature of the council is the fact that from among the councilors a chairman and a deputy are elected. These exercise executive control with the result that the positions are actively solicited by council members and especially by faction leaders. In addition, the council appoints persons to the positions of overseer, assistant overseer, ranger, and clerk. These are supposed to function in an administrative capacity with appointments persisting despite changes in council personnel. However, successful administration for which the council takes credit requires the cooperation of these officers who in turn are local personages with their own alliances and interests. There thus emerges competition by factions on the council to control appointments to these positions to ensure partisanship.

The second traditional arena within the village has been a religious one. In the village there is a Muslim mosque, a Sanatan temple, an Aryan temple and a Christian Catholic church. The former three are located on common-land in the center of the village and their physical proximity, given different religious rituals such as the Muslim sacrifice of cattle, has often led to conflict as has the competition for more land in the limited common-land area. More important, however, are the particular roles which these churches provide, notably, the roles of priest and religious leader. These roles give persons access to their religious community for use as a resource in political competition. In fact, the majority of political protagonists have leadership roles within their churches. As a result, potential splits in the village between the various churches become translated into part of the political process and vice versa.

The second major point of relevance to a discussion on the general nature of village factionalism is the manner in which factional structures have been genetically related over a period of six decades. The original faction leaders, Panchar and Ramprashad, were two rice millers competing for the economic and political support of the village population. Economic indebtedness to the millers as a result of the need for credit facilities underwrote the patron-client relationship which resulted. The millers, their families, and close friends constituted the core of the factional groupings and this, in turn, emphasized the distinction between this small familial-based elite and the mass of village population who were used as resources in the competition for *padi* [credit clients] and council control.

After twenty years of the oscillating competition within a limited elite group, alterations in the economic base of the village enabled the economic

monopoly of the millers to be undercut, thereby releasing the majority of villagers from indebtedness.¹ Accompanying this was the extension of the franchise for local council elections with the result that a new group of "young persons" challenged the rice miller competition. Under the guise of overturning the old system,² they received the support of the villagers, took control of the Panchar faction, and proceeded to eliminate the Ramprashad faction, which was then being led by Premisingh, a close friend and supporter of Ramprashad.

During this period, a massive economic expansion occurred which, for a time, reduced the scarcity of resources.³ An increased number of economic choices was made available which resulted in cross-cutting interest groups both on the council and in the village generally. The costs of factional team maintenance were thus rendered too high for practical purposes, in addition to the fact that economic opportunity precluded the need for political strategizing for economic gain. As a result, factions were eliminated from the political field and the winning Panchar faction retained consensual control of the council and took up a strategy of conciliating disputes and arbitrating interpersonal conflicts.

The expansion, however, was to have major ramifications. First, an end was reached in the extent to which the expansion could occur with a minimum of conflicting interests. Second, an entirely new stratification pattern had emerged in the village. Basically, the ascribed membership of the original elite had been expanded to include those families which had been especially successful in the expansion.⁴ In addition, there also occurred horizontal differentiation due to increased occupational multiplicity and the diversification of types of productive enterprises.

This situation was then made more complex by the introduction of the

¹ What occurred was a diversification in the monocrop production pattern coupled with the introduction of alternate methods of marketing produce.

² This group of challengers was in fact intimately related to the old Panchar elite through first-order kinship ties and friendship links.

³ The sugar industry and hence wage-labor opportunities increased and stabilized such that wage labor was available to all who wanted it; acreage available for rice cultivation expanded both in village scrub land areas and in surrounding areas; secondary crop production was increased; a large-scale cattle industry developed; and lastly, new means of production were introduced. These included mechanization; the introduction of the cooperative movement; and a renewed emphasis on joint economic ventures by extended family groups.

⁴ More specifically, a large number of families became the new elite of the village because of their economic success. Those who were moderately successful became the middle class; while those whose success depended on external features such as the continued expansion of the sugar industry and wage-labor opportunities were caught in a general economic recession.

People's Progressive Party (PPP) which began to offer political alternatives to those who had not been absorbed into the elite group and to those who felt that the council was no longer functioning as a conciliatory body. This latter fact had become the case since the economic sphere had become too complex for the council to represent all of the village's interest groups.

Meanwhile, the PPP, in keeping with their policy of grass-roots organization, allowed a local PPP faction to form to compete in local politics. This faction was led by Dabi Maraj, a first cousin of the Panchar family. As soon as they organized, the remainder of the council elite, with Premisingh as leader, reorganized in opposition.

The result was that two factions again characterized the political sphere. One was defined as a national party arm; the other was defined as the opposition attempting to prevent the infiltration of party politics into the village.

THE NATIONAL ARENA AND LOCAL POLITICS

The national political scene has been well documented in terms of the growth of the PPP as a nationalist movement, its subsequent split into two opposing camps, and the formation of a second political party, the People's National Congress (PNC), with each competing for the support of the two main ethnic groups in the country — the East Indians and Africans respectively. The growth of "apartheid politics" and the outbreak of racial disturbances in 1962 and 1964 intensified this polarization and filtered to the local level (Smith 1962; Despres 1967).

It was quite predictable, given the PPP infiltration in Rajgahr and the emergence of factional competition, that when the initial split occurred within the national PPP ranks, there would be some division in the village as to which families would support which national PPP faction. Then Maraj died, and the two fragments of the national PPP began to polarize along ethnic lines. With the outbreak of riots in 1962, the sympathies of the Rajgahr population turned to the Jagan-led PPP group as opposed to any continued support for the newly emergent PNC which was by then associated with the African segment. One person, however, continued in support of the PNC. This was Premisingh, councillor, reverend of the Christian Catholic church, village chairman, and faction leader. With this exception, Rajgahr village was a PPP stronghold by 1962.

This support was further reinforced by the race riots of 1964,⁵ the concomitant polarization of ethnic groups in the society at large, and the effects which Jagan's economic policies had on Rajgahr during the carrying out of the 1960-1964 development program.⁶

The implication of Rajgahr being a PPP base for local factional politics was that issues over which factions competed after 1962 still remained local in nature. Factions were not defined as competing political parties in terms of their deployment on the national level. Rather, one faction was defined as the arm of a national party, while the other was defined as merely being against the introduction of party resources into village business. At the same time, in elections which pertained to matters outside the village, the Rajgahr population voted solidly PPP. Even Prem-singh's stated affiliation with the PNC did not affect his local factional position. He was merely regarded as the opposition to the Maraj faction which was now being led by Sultan, the Muslim priest.

Then, in 1967, with the PNC firmly in control of the national government, a "Muslim wing of the PNC" was formed in order to wean East Indian Muslims away from the PPP and into the PNC. The aim of such a policy was to divide the East Indian community to prevent further ethnic riots while exploiting for party support what had been a traditional schism in the majority of East Indian communities. At this point, national arena competition became part of the local political arena of Rajgahr and the nature of factionalism altered to include this new situation.

LOCAL-NATIONAL INTERACTION: THE POLICY OF INCORPORATION

The PNC policy discussed above has been labeled "incorporation" since the PNC was basically attempting to integrate the local level into the national arena. The manner in which the process progressed and the effects of this policy on the village can be viewed from the perspectives of the nature of policy implementation; the nature of middlemen; the patterning of changes; and the movement of the local structure towards integration.

⁵ A village near Rajgahr was destroyed and minority groups throughout the area moved into villages where they would be in a majority with their "own kind." In Rajgahr, several African families left in 1962 and the remainder in 1964.

⁶ More specifically, large tracts of land were opened up in areas very near to the village; the price paid for *pañi* was kept very high; and gasoline for farm machinery was allocated to farmers duty-free.

Policy Implementation

The implementation of the incorporation policy was based on three main strategies. First, attempts were made to control the workings of the local government organs within the village. Second, and related to this, was the creation of political middlemen or brokers who were historically tied to local factional competition. Lastly, the incorporation policy exploited existing political, economic, and religious schisms in the village.

It was this latter strategy which enabled initial infiltration to occur. For the basic schism was a political one which had been developing since 1960. Briefly, there was conflict over the personage of Petamber Singh, a staunch supporter of the Premsingh faction who had been appointed overseer in 1960 when the Premsingh faction was in the majority on the council. Since that time, there had been numerous encounters between the two factions because of Sultan's efforts to fire him and Prem-singh's aim to maintain Singh in the position. The competition culminated in 1966 when Sultan publicly accused Singh of maladministration. Singh countered by suing Sultan for slander and this suit had given rise to secondary lawsuits involving the families of both parties and their political allies. The slander suit reached the courts in 1967 and Sultan was ordered to pay Singh twenty-five hundred dollars in damages. Sultan supposedly blamed the PPP for this economic and prestige setback since the party had done nothing to support him.⁷ He was then open to suggestions as to where he should place his allegiance.

Several months later, the Muslim wing had been formed. Sultan was approached by them and became the PNC activist in Rajgahr. In this move, he took with him his council supporters and their families. This was possible because of the long factional history wherein family groups had been in alliance or competition for decades so that a new coalition against Sultan was impossible. His allies moved to the PNC with him.

In addition to this, two further schisms aided the initial infiltration. First, since the PNC wing was designated as Muslim, and since Sultan was the Muslim priest, it was inevitable that the majority of Muslim families would follow him. This was also a logical extension of the

⁷ Singh had as his lawyer a former cabinet minister in the PPP government. It is alleged that Sultan, as leader of the local PPP faction, went to the national party to obtain support in the case. Apparently his request was refused.

tensions which had been building over the years between the various religious groups over land shortages and animal sacrifice.

The second kind of schism that became relevant was that which existed between the economic elite of the village and the general mass. For with PNC infiltration, elaborate patronage resources were introduced which served as an additional impetus for subversion, particularly among the wealthier families in the village who had the most to lose in an adverse political situation and little to gain by continued support of the PPP. The poorer families had no political access to the economic resources and therefore remained largely separated from this strategy.⁸

The second major PNC strategy which emerged is apparent from the method of initial infiltration. The creation of activists who were already local notables meant that the PNC was in fact allocating to them the role of middleman between the party and the local arena. In Rajgahr this notable was a faction leader and an influential member of the village council. Through the use of Sultan as well, the third major strategy, control of local government organs, could also be carried out. As a result, political factionalism in the village became a microcosm of national level competition.

The three-pronged strategy of the PNC thus embodied a coherent method for village incorporation. It involved the creation of middlemen roles in the form of local activists who were allocated resources for subverting the local population. In addition, the brokers chosen were involved in village factionalism which had preexisted the incorporation attempt. As such, they already had a political base. This support could then be turned over to the PNC while additional support could continue to be gleaned through the schisms which the on-going factional game was continuing to create.

In turn, because the new resources were filtered into the village through selected brokers so that the local arena was never in direct contact with the national arena, the original factional process could continue intact. In fact, the PNC policy was to allow for the continuation of

⁸ The extension of patronage was an aspect of the PNC incorporation strategy which would later be picked up by other Indian subsections, thereby increasing the overall success with which incorporation was being carried out. Within Rajgahr especially, this extension fitted well into the situation of scarce resources which had been characterizing the village since the end of the economic expansion in the early fifties. In specific terms, the extension resulted in land leases being given for vast tracts, and in civil servant and government jobs. In addition, public works projects, benefiting entire villages, were utilized. In Rajgahr, this was the metalling of the middle dam to provide an all-weather thoroughfare. It has been said that the distribution of these projects coincided with the extent to which a village had supported the party.

factional politics in order to encourage divisions which could then be exploited for further subversion attempts.

Village divisions and factional politics thus enabled infiltration while at the same time providing resources for further incorporation. In turn, the new resources provided by the incorporation efforts perpetuated factional politics. These represent what can be labeled the patterning of factional politics. There were, however, changes which occurred in these traditional changes in the village as Rajgahr moved toward integration with the national arena.

The Patterning of Change

The changes induced by the incorporation policy and implementation can be seen from the ways in which factional politics were altered, and, related to this, from the manner in which new categories of support were generated, thereby enabling the continuation of factional competition.

The first change, already noted, was the alteration in the definition of the basic nature of factionalism. The village, which had been aligned along factional lines for decades, suddenly found itself aligned between two national political parties.

The second major change was the incorporation of this new idiom into council competition coupled with an increased intensity with which competition in this arena was carried out. The arena was further complicated by the Suspension of Elections Bill, passed in 1961, which suspended local elections. This resulted in inbred council membership as members retained their positions for almost a decade. PNC attempts to control the council were thus attempts to subvert already-elected members. Council competition, as a result, came to be characterized by a complex pattern of subversion, while the major portion of council politics became concerned with the defection of support.

For example, by the time of chairmanship elections in 1969, the Muslim wing had subverted Sultan, his factional supporters, and his councillor Amin. In this move, they lost the support of councillor Bharat who remained a staunch PPP supporter and who could be expected to vote for Prem Singh in the election. A tie would thus result in the position of chairman depending on the drawing of lots. The PNC recognized this situation and presumably the minister of local government called Prem-

singh in for a discussion. The minister informed Preamsingh that since he was a PNC member the party wanted him to vote for Sultan. Preamsingh refused on the grounds that he "was the oldest PNC member in the village and therefore should be chairman." The minister apparently disagreed. The evening before the election, councilor Bharat was arrested by the police and held in custody until noon the following day. Since the election was held in the morning, Sultan won by one vote.

For the year 1970, the patronage of the PNC was allegedly used in an attempt to secure the requisite number of votes for Sultan's election. The middle dam of the village was being metalled by the government as part of village patronage, and councilor Deeroop was hired as a supervisor. Deeroop joined the PNC. The election seemed won. Then defections occurred from the Sultan camp. The Preamsingh faction had offered Taharally the position of deputy chairman if he would vote for Preamsingh as chairman. Already angry that he was receiving only five dollars a day on the road project as compared with the amounts other councilors were receiving, Taharally threw his support to the Preamsingh faction.

Meanwhile, conflicts in other arenas resulted in the defection of Amin: a land dispute in which the Sultan faction supported the other party; a quarrel in the mosque between Sultan the priest and Amin the president over mosque repairs; and the impounding of Amin's cattle by village rangers. These disputes culminated in Amin's voting for Preamsingh in the 1970 chairman elections. His vote, plus Taharally's, gave the position to Preamsingh despite threats of sanctions from the PNC.

Now this kind of strategizing brings into relief several results of the PNC infiltration methods. With the PNC attempting to control local councils and with the initial step in this strategy being the control of the council executive, the payoffs of the executive positions radically altered after 1967. These positions, chairman and deputy, were given national arena support if they were sympathetic to an outside entity, the PNC. Support referred to two basic aspects. First, the PNC explicitly allotted the role of middleman to the chairman. Second, the PNC gave the executive access to patronage resources, such as government jobs, to enable them to extend their influence among the local population.

In the Rajgahr context, Sultan's need to control the executive not only derived from his role as a faction leader, but also was a political necessity if he were to survive as a major PNC figure on the local level. Preamsingh, in turn, had similar motives. Controlling the executive positions meant increased influence for his faction but it could also mean that

the PNC would accept him as their major representative in the village.⁹

At the same time that payoffs had altered, a concomitant importance was being placed on council control. For to have a PNC executive, one had to have a PNC council. Again, national policy increased the extent and intensity of competition which had traditionally been associated with council control and with the use of the council as a political resource.

Related to this alteration in council competition was a third major change, the redefinition of factional goals. Two types of goals emerged.

First, there were those goals oriented to the politics of the national arena. Persons and faction leaders were attempting to gain and retain control of the middleman role which the national arena had created, since this allowed access to high political credibility and to resources which the national arena was deploying for use on the local level. Control meant that both the resources and credit could be deployed for local competition. At the same time, successful control would also result in the political credit needed for mobility in the national arena and for recognition in the larger political sphere.

Second, there were those goals oriented to the local arena. The aim here, as in the traditional factional game, was control of the village electorate. But this prize had different implications after 1967. What the prize now involved was the building of credibility to reinforce the retention of the middleman role, or in other words, to create the legitimacy needed to compete and succeed in the national arena according to the definition of success put forth by this arena.

The national and local arenas were thus intimately involved in a feedback situation in terms of the goals of the competition. Success in one arena resulted in credit, credibility, and access to resources for use in the other. The successful local politician would be the successful national arena personage. In turn, the successful national arena incumbent would have the resources and credibility for success in local competition.

The fourth major change in the traditional factional competition was the change in the nature of recruitment ties to factions. The transactional tie became the basic means of recruiting followers. In contrast, during the preincorporation period, the majority of factional ties were based on

⁹ Despite Preamsingh's protestations as to his party membership, two factors alienated him from actual leadership of the local PNC. The first was the suspicion of his loyalty in the light of rumors that he was a PPP supporter, given the fact that the majority of his faction were PPP personnel. The second was phrased by an informant who stated that "Preamsingh is not recognized by the party as being PNC. They see him as Rajgahr." In fact, Preamsingh's preference for British rule in postindependence society was hardly able to endear him to the PNC which viewed itself as the legitimate nationalist movement.

kinship, friendship, long-term patron-client relationships, and other linkages which by definition were more intense and durable than transactional ties. After the PNC infiltration, the percentage of transactional links per person in a faction increased from 18.6 to 71.4. The percent of transactional ties based on total linkages within factions increased from 13.3 to 23.1. Thus, the incorporation policy which emphasized subversion, instrumental recruitment, and extension of patronage, altered the content of factions so that less durable structures emerged.

The final major alteration in village factionalism was the change in issues over which factional encounters took place and arenas in which competition was waged.

The first change occurred in the religious arena. The old division between Hindu and Muslim became irrevocable after Sultan joined the PNC. Since he took some wealthy Hindu and Christian families with him, the split was not schismatic. This break, however, was superseded by another in the religious sphere. For as a result of politicoreligious movements on the national level, the Sanatan community had divided into two competing subgroups.

In the 1930's, the Maha Sabha organization, based in Georgetown, had been introduced into Rajgahr as a cultural organization. In the early fifties, another organization, the Gandhi Youth, was introduced into the country and a chapter formed in Rajgahr. A jurisdictional dispute arose between the two, coupled with counter accusations of each being a secret PNC supporter.¹⁰

¹⁰ The Gandhi Youth, upon entering the village, also organized cultural programs and in 1966, began a membership drive. At this time, Gandhi Youth activists left the Maha Sabha alleging that it was aligned with the PPP. Informants stated that the following year the national Maha Sabha factionalized over whether to support the PNC or remain totally a cultural organization. While this split was occurring, the Maha Sabha was apparently visiting the village and accusing the Gandhi Youth of attempting to take over traditional Maha Sabha functions. Disagreement also occurred over the nature of ritual to be used in the temple, with the result that the Maha Sabha supporters began holding services in members' homes since the pandit was a Gandhi Youth supporter. Finally, an informant stated that in 1969 the Maha Sabha leadership in Georgetown committed itself to the PNC and therefore lost its Rajgahr chapter, while the Gandhi Youth remains divorced from politics.

A similar but slightly different chronology is available from the supporters of the local Maha Sabha group. They maintain that conflict did occur in 1967 over which group should represent the Sanatan community and that the Gandhi Youth did take over the temple because the Gandhi Youth were PNC supporters. Moreover, the Gandhi Youth leader in Georgetown was alleged to have been thrown out of the Maha Sabha because of his political affiliation and was therefore trying to destroy his old organization, with his only success to date being the Rajgahr chapter. Informants in the Maha Sabha also maintained that their organization does not mix in politics but remains a cultural organization.

The polarization which resulted in the village is exemplified in a land dispute which emerged in 1968. The Maha Sabha applied for a section of common land on which to build a school. The village council agreed, only to have the commissioner of lands and mines inform them that the land was Crown land and therefore permission would have to be obtained from the commission. Before this could be done, the Gandhi Youth applied to the commission for the same piece of land.¹¹

This type of encounter is an indication of a fission which was created and exacerbated by competing national political parties which utilize the split as a resource. This strategy is in turn filtering to the local level. For example, Sultan maintained studious neutrality throughout the land dispute although rumor stated that he actually supported the Gandhi Youth since they were PNC allies.

Similarly, the Muslim community was dividing in a manner which also had implications for political manipulation and competition. According to informants, Sultan had given strict orders to the stray catchers to impound Amin's cattle. This was in turn related to a quarrel in the mosque in which Sultan accused the executive committee, of which Amin was president, of not carrying out church works. At that point, the land rented by several of Amin's sons was supposedly allocated to Loknauth on the grounds that the Amin family was ploughing the wrong land. The "bad feeling" lasted until the council election when Amin voted for Premisingh although the PNC had warned him to cooperate with Sultan. Simultaneously, Amin, who had been active in the village horse race club, maintained that a meeting and elections had been called without his instructions as president. He attributed this to the fact that his brothers and their allies, who had been with him in opposition to a second village club, wanted his position as club president. He then withdrew from the club.

In general terms, it appears that arenas of competition have opened in what were previously united fronts within the village. On the other hand, while this fissioning was occurring, new and larger arenas of competition were opening up. Competition in the village came to include larger geographical and political entities.

For example, all the local authorities in West Berbice are organized into a Union in which chairmen and councilors meet several times a year

¹¹ A special council meeting was called to discuss the matter. Nothing, however, was settled. The issue still remains as to which group should obtain the land, with the council claiming that the common land was part of the original land grant and, therefore, under the jurisdiction of the village. In contradiction, the government claims the common land as Crown land.

to discuss common problems and in which an election for executive positions is held annually. In 1969, Prem Singh was unanimously elected president and Petamber Singh was reelected assistant secretary. Prem Singh's nominee was unanimously elected treasurer and nominations began for the positions of committee members. Among the ten nominated, with six to be elected, was Sultan, nominated by Prem Singh. In the election, all Prem Singh's nominees were elected with the exception of Sultan who received the lowest number of votes.

It is thus apparent that Prem Singh and his allies had influence in the larger West Berbice area. Equally apparent is the fact that Sultan had little recognition beyond the immediate village and outside the PNC hierarchy. Prem Singh nominated him to prove this point and to embarrass him. Wider influence could now be used as political credit.

Probably as a result of this, Sultan attempted to utilize his PNC backing to extend his own influence in West Berbice. According to informants, he took steps to organize PNC Muslims outside the village as well as to bypass the Muslim wing and penetrate the middle echelons of the general PNC organization. In doing this, he came into conflict with the activist in a nearby village; with the party in terms of their own strategy of having activists located in villages to organize and maintain local participation; and with the national party policy of fragmenting the Indian community by emphasizing one segment of it. As a result, the party forced Sultan back into the wing.¹² For both Prem Singh and Sultan then, the new type of political competition had opened the need for wider arenas and more extensive political influence.

Related to this alteration of arenas as a product of fission and expansion, competition in these arenas had the effect of creating new categories of support which could be utilized in the continuing factional competition. In a random sample of village households, factional and party support was associated with income and religious affiliation. The findings indicate important trends and changes in village organization.

First, the PNC has definitely been successful in subverting the Muslim portion of the Indian population. The policy aims of incorporation are working.

¹² At a 1969 celebration for the PNC in a nearby village, Sultan was insulted by the party when he was not invited and when Armin was made chairman of the proceedings. Sultan then supposedly approached the Georgetown chairman of the wing to obtain a job on a government corporation. This was refused. Sultan then made an appointment with the prime minister, who proceeded to send Sultan back to the Muslim wing chairman. In this manner, Sultan was forced back into the wing.

Second, it was found that despite Petamber Singh's preeminence in the Sanatan community, the Prem Singh faction, with which Singh is intimately aligned, does not exhibit the massive support that is predictable. Somewhat the same situation holds true for Prem Singh's role in the Christian community. These points can be related to the fact that Singh was a supporter of the Maha Sabha group during the fission between it and the Gandhi Youth. This split probably contributed to Sultan's strong support among the Sanatans. This is further borne out by the large Aryan support which Prem Singh commanded as compared with Sultan. This group, uninvolved in the Sanatan split, turned logically (as Hindus) to the Prem Singh-Singh faction.

In this way, the Christian support which Prem Singh could have expected as a Christian minister was undercut by the factional history of the village, for the vast majority of Christians were part of the extended Maraj-Panchar-Loknauth family who had their allegiances predetermined. Consequently, Prem Singh's ability to gain support on religious grounds was limited.

The village thus appears to fall logically along lines of predicted variation in relation to religious affiliation and factional alignment. The intervening variables here are the competition being waged in other arenas and the historical dimensions of factionalism in the village.

Finally, the village can also be seen to split along economic class lines. The Sultan supporters are definitely in a higher income group than are those of the Prem Singh faction. This is in keeping with the realization by the wealthier families that support in the PNC direction is where the returns lie. At the same time, such families are of more interest to the PNC and the party appears to be putting more effort into their subversion. The PNC policy thus exploits the economic differentiation within the village, and by virtue of the payoffs to supporters, the PNC should contribute to further differentiation.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to demonstrate a process of national-local interaction which has been labeled "incorporation" — the policy whereby a national arena protagonist attempts to infiltrate and subvert support in a local arena which is in opposition to it. Based on the concept of encapsulation, this problem, according to Bailey, requires an analysis of the similarities/dissimilarities between the two structures and an analysis of the adaptation of the local arena.

My field data indicated that incorporation can proceed logically if meshed with traditional factional politics via the use of faction leaders, village schisms, the categories of support generated by the factional game, and the traditional arenas in which factionalism occurred. The process will result in changes in traditional politics, but at the same time, it will reinforce these politics by redefining traditional arenas, categories, schisms, and leadership in such a way that factionalism will continue to organize the local political arena.

The concept of pluralism is generally utilized to characterize a society in which are found pronounced ethnic differences between the local and national arenas. The findings indicate, however, that where specific ends are being sought, so-called segments will interact and in fact will cross ethnic boundaries. Specifically, where economic scarcity can be alleviated by appeal to another segment, or when political gamesmanship suggests to the protagonists that the best strategy lies in utilizing the resources of the other segment, it can be said that the plural nature of the society becomes secondary to immediate needs and strategies.

In the Rajgahr context, national policy and implementation impinged on traditional village politics. The local arena protagonists adapted to this new situation by maximizing the possibilities contained in the encapsulation situation for the benefit of their factional position in the village. This is what enabled the incorporation process to take place and indicates that political ends and economic goals are more pertinent for interaction than are ethnic differences.

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