

Persistence and Change in Occupational Groups among Muslims in Rural Bangladesh: A Case Study of *Sanaidar Jati* in Tangail District

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study examines persistence and change in an occupational group among Muslims in rural Bangladesh, focusing on a musician group, which is called *Sanaidar/Dholi*. As is often the case in other parts of South Asia, 'caste-like' stratification among Muslims has been reported in the area of present-day Bangladesh. In the nineteenth century, *Ashraf* and *Ajlaf/Atraf* strata were generally found among Muslims. While the *Ashraf* stratum had four distinct groups: *Syed*, *Shaikh*, *Mughal* and *Pathan*, the *Ajlaf/Atraf* stratum was divided broadly into upper and lower groups based on their occupation (Karim 1996: 174-5). Besides these two strata, the *Azral* stratum was added as the lowest category of all (Gait 1902: 439).¹ Researchers who dealt with such stratification in the area of present-day Bangladesh, whether it was their main concern or not, commonly noted the tendency that it had become less rigid, and 'caste-like' occupational groups had entered into 'mainstream' Muslim society [e.g., Karim (1996: 161-92), Ahmed (1996: 19-20) and Bertocci (1970: 48-52) for descriptions of the change from the nineteenth century, and Rahman (1990) for a contemporary ethnographic study]. Previous village studies in Bangladesh also explored various stratifications and occupational groups among Muslims, but most of them did not regard this issue as important (Arefeen 1982: 52; cf. Chowdhury 1978). The cases reported by such studies could be roughly divided into two types: (i) several strata, with each stratum consisting of different status or occupational groups, were identified (Bertocci 1972; Chowdhury 1978; Jahangir 1979; Arefeen 1986; Jansen 1987); or (ii) such strata were not identified, but one or several occupational groups were assigned a lower ranking or not allowed to intermarry by other Muslims (Mukherjee 1971; Aziz 1979; van Schendel 1981; Hartman and Boyce 1983; Abecassis 1990). Village studies in Bangladesh reported from the 1970s to the 1980s concentrated on

analyses of class, status and power relations. Most of the studies concluded that the influence of caste or a similar stratum hierarchy has decreased and emphasised the importance of class analysis particularly based on land ownership in order to understand crucial aspects of village society (Bertocci 1970, 1972; Islam 1974; Zaidi 1970; Jahangir 1979; cf. van Schendel 1981; Jansen 1987). At the root of such arguments, there is an assumption of modernization in that traditional caste or status systems have been disappearing along with the rise of capitalism.

However, as Adnan (1990: 195) asked, '[w]ill the existence of quasi-caste groups amongst Muslim villagers eventually disappear?' as one of the 'key questions' for further village studies in Bangladesh and West Bengal, there is still room to examine whether those groups have enhanced their status, or whether ideological bases of hierarchy have lost their significance, and if so, what has caused this.² Although it is difficult to find reports of detailed studies on the contemporary situation of such occupational groups, Rahman (1990) wrote an excellent ethnography of the *Shandar-bedays* community, which was said to have belonged to the *Azral* stratum, and described the process of its 'assimilation' into broader Muslim society and culture in Bangladesh. However, he just mentioned that the government forcibly implemented 'assimilation' without any policies to eliminate discrimination against them and did not pay attention to the local-level social pressure or background of 'assimilation'.

Caste-based discrimination is prohibited by the principle of equality under the law in Pakistan and Bangladesh, but this does not mean that discrimination has been eliminated in reality, and might even have contributed to hiding its continued existence. On the other hand, a reservation system has been introduced in India to reserve access to public services for members of the 'untouchables' who have been classified into administrative categories such as 'Scheduled Caste', 'Scheduled Tribe' or 'Other Backward Class'. Since reservations have been extended to some Muslim groups recently, other groups have attempted to obtain this as well (Mondal 2003). Such new movements associated with the reshuffling of religious, caste and class identity have drawn the attention of researchers (Mondal 2003: 4897). Studies of such cases in Bangladesh may not only contribute to exploration of the regional diversity of stratification among Muslims, but also benefit discussions on the influence of different state policies on stratification and the politics of identity among Muslims.³

A historical description of status in the nineteenth century pointed out the rejection of hereditary occupations and titles associated with them (Ahmed 1996: 19; Bertocci 1970: 48-52) and the widespread adherence to egalitarian principles in Islam by religious preachers as being among the reasons for leveling of the hierarchy (Karim 1962: 141-2; 1996: 176). Besides material wealth, educational qualifications and the adaptation

of Islamic practice (Jahangir1979: 86; Arefeen1986: 92; Rahman 1990), hypergamy and change of titles (Chowdhury 1978; Karim 1990) were reported as conditions for raising individuals or groups among Muslims to a higher status in contemporary studies in Bangladesh. Vreede de Stuers (1968: 5-6), who studied Muslims in Northern India, conceptualised attempts at social climbing by individuals or groups through hypergamy and the adoption of the way of life of higher classes as 'Ashrafization' and ridding themselves of so-called un-Islamic customs and practices in order to distinguish themselves from non-Muslim groups as 'Islamization.'⁴ Considering the definition by Vreede de Stuers (1968), the above cases, such as the adaptation of Islamic practices, hypergamy and change of titles, can be considered as 'Ashrafization,' as those authors themselves, who reported these practices among Muslims, mentioned this term. On the other hand, although I could not find such cases considered to involve the latter type of 'Islamization' in previous studies of Bangladesh, there were some descriptions about lower-ranked occupational groups that had 'semi-Hindu' characteristics (Aziz 1978; Chowdhury1978: 95; van Schendel 1981: 127). For example, Aziz (1978: 39) noted that Muslims justified their behaviour, such as reluctance to eat cooked food in the houses of such occupational groups, by saying that, 'in their everyday activities, there were various un-Islamic aspects. Thus, there is a complex or contrasting relationship between Islam and stratification among Muslims: the principle of egalitarianism contributes to leveling the hierarchy, while distinctions of Islamic or un-Islamic maintain it. However, previous studies tended to focus on economic inequality or occupation-based hierarchy and not to put emphasis on socio-cultural aspects (Mukherjee 1971; Chowdhury1978; Arefeen 1982; van Schendel 1981; cf. Rahman 1990).

The penetration of Islam and a collective identity as Muslims into the area of present-day Bangladesh from the time of British India has a parallel relationship with colonial policies and modernization. As was often the case in other parts of British India, the social difference between Hindus and Muslims was not so obvious at the level of the masses until the middle of the nineteenth century (Ahmed 1996: 4); thus, a Hindu-Muslim syncretistic culture developed in Bengal (Roy 1983). However, 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' were oppositely substantialised as political and social categories under colonial policies of divide and rule (Fujii 2003); in addition, the consciousness of Islamic solidarity, which eventually linked up with communalism, has been shared at the grassroots level through religious preachers' activities since the end of the nineteenth century (Ahmed 1996). Sen (2002: 350), arguing that colonial powers constructed and institutionalised differences and ambiguity within the narratives of *jati*, *samaj* and *sampraday* (see below for further details of these terms) by quoting Asad (1993), noted that '[b]y essentializing a

particular notion of “modern” religion and negating others, religious identity has been made the most important locus for constructing similarities and differences.’ In this process, wandering seekers, cross-religious occupational groups and nomadic groups of entertainers have faced problems concerning their social belonging and identity through being forced to self-define as ‘Hindu’ or ‘Muslim’ in the modern classification of religion (Togawa 2009: 16). While Islam and state politics have had a complex or close relationship since the founding of Pakistan, Takada (2006) discussed that the penetration of Islam at a grassroots level into Bangladesh has been brought about by education and the formation of a network with the Middle East countries by emigrants, that is to say, modernization and globalization. In this context, the following question arises: What influence has the spread of the modern conception of religion under colonialism and the penetration of Islam lasting until the present day had on stratification among Muslims?

This study focuses on *Dholi/Sanaidar*, a musician community among Muslims, which is one of the marginal groups from the point of view of the modern classification of religion, as Togawa (2009: 16) mentioned. I will initially describe the changes and consistencies of their occupation and titles associated with it, as well as marriage, segregation and patterns of migration from around the early twentieth century until my survey period, and then consider the ideological bases of hierarchy and restriction on social interaction through depicting the stories and practices concerning their religious attribution and social belonging. Although there is no doubt that *Sanaidars* were Muslims as they claimed, I use the term ‘*Sanaidars*’ to refer to those who were thought to belong to the occupational group by local people and ‘Muslims’ for the other Muslims for the sake of convenience in this article.

Incidentally, there is no consensus on whether stratification among Muslims is based on the Hindu caste system or the issue of adaptation of the term ‘caste’ to status or occupational groups among Muslims (Ahmad 1978: 2-4; Vatuk 1996: 227-8; Komaki 2000: 275). Previous researchers predominantly viewed these groups among Muslims as resulting from Hindu influence (Ansari 1960; Dumont 1970) and focused on the degree of similarities and distinctions between the Hindu caste system and stratification among Muslims (Karim 1996; Ahmad 1978). Mannan (2000: 247) criticised such a tendency in those studies and claimed that the construction of nobility of descent among Muslims must be understood as an integral part of a historical process. Although this study does not go any further on this issue, I use the term ‘*jati*’ in this study, not caste. The reason for this is that the people in the study area, including *Sanaidars* themselves, used the term when they mentioned *Sanaidars* or the other occupational groups among Muslims.⁵ As Inden (1976: 10) noted, various connotations or contexts of ‘*jati*’ referred to by local people cannot be understood if *jati* is interpreted as caste, which is

defined as a ranked, hereditary, endogamous occupational group. I will also analyse the connotations or contexts of '*jati*' as referred to by local people.

2. STUDY AREA AND SURVEY METHOD

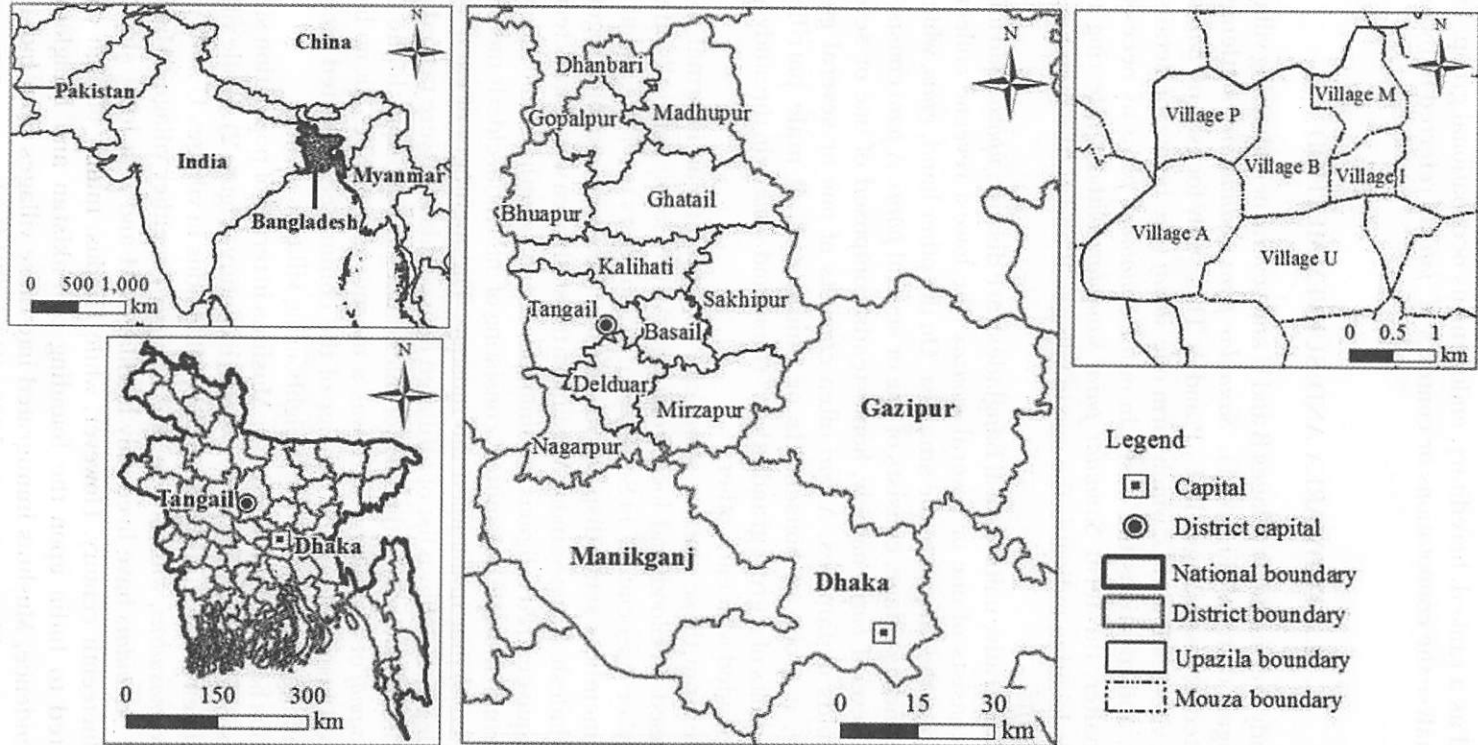
The study area includes villages B and U and several neighbouring villages in Tangail district (Figure 1). *Sanaidar para* (*Sanaidars'* settlement) is located across villages B, U, P and A. This study focuses on *Sanaidar para* in villages B and U, which form one *samaj* (see below for details on *samaj*), and mentions the cases in other *Sanaidar paras* as necessary (hereinafter, the term *Sanaidar para/Sanaidars* without referring to a specific location indicates the one in villages B and U/the members of the *samaj*).

Administrative units in rural Bangladesh are district, *upazila* and union, which consists of one or several *mouzas* (the lowest revenue collection unit), from the largest to the smallest. On the other hand, *gram*, which is a spontaneous village, consists of one or several *paras*. A *para* consists of one or several *baris*, namely, homesteads composed of one or several households or families. A *bari* often consists of one or several *gustis*, namely, a group of households or families of all male patrilineal descendants of a great grandfather.⁶ *Grams* and *mouzas* in the study area corresponded with each other.

Aside from these units, a *samaj* can be added as an informal social unit based on blood and local relations. While *samaj* generally means 'society' or 'association' in South Asia, it also refers to a local social unit whose members settle disputes and hold religious ceremonies together in Bangladesh. *Samajas* among Muslims in the study area were characterized as mosque-centred religious communities. Each *samaj* had a mosque with an informal 'mosque committee' consisting of influential elderly members of the *samaj* that maintained the mosque. The members of each *samaj* were clearly fixed by a list of affiliated households and were tasked with collecting fees to cover the cost of maintaining the mosque. In the case of the *samaj* of *Sanaidars*, there was a mosque committee, but no list of affiliated households. The cashier of the committee collected fees for maintaining the mosque from neighbouring villages as well.

Hindus had predominated over Muslims in terms of population size in villages B, U and A in the early twentieth century (Figure 2). While village B had been dominated by *Kayasthas*, all Hindus in villages U and A had been *Namasudras*, without one *Brahman gusti* in either village.⁷ Muslims except *Sanaidars* have lived only in villages M and P at least since the late nineteenth century. However, while Hindus, mainly of high caste, migrated to India upon the founding of Pakistan and Bangladeshi independence, Muslims immigrated into these villages from India and neighbouring villages since the 1960s (Sugie 2014).⁸ In my survey period,

FIG. 1. STUDY AREA



Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (hereinafter referred to as BBS), 1986, *Small Area Atlas of Bangladesh: Mauzas and Mahallahs of Tangail District*.

TABLE 1. POPULATION BY RELIGION IN THE STUDY AREA, 1981-2011

Year	1981		1991		2001		2011	
Religion	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu	Muslim	Hindu
Bangladesh	75,487	10,570	93,881	11,179	111,393	11,608	130,205	12,300
Tangail district	2,206	220	2,748	236	3,043	234	3,343	246
Village B	362	505	392	510	517	468	645	481
Village I	113	222	146	207	135	225	165	249
Village U	196	863	273	1,164	400	1,093	461	1,190
Village M	907	194	1,016	149	1,111	233	1,142	176
Village P	990	0	1,118	0	1,258	0	1,298	1
Village A	707	734	866	673	1,011	483	1,093	536

Notes: 1. The population of Bangladesh and Tangail is shown in thousands.

2. Muslim population include that of *Sanaidar*.

Source: BBS, 1984, *Bangladesh Population Census 1981 Analytical Findings and National Tables*, p. 76., BBS, 1986, *Bangladesh Population Census 1981 Zila Tangail*, p. 349., BBS, 1994, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 National Series Volume Analytical Report*, pp. 110-1., BBS, 1996, *Bangladesh Population Census 1991 Zila Tangail*, pp. 367-8., BBS, 2007, *Population Census 2001 National Series Vol.1 Analytical Report*, p. 93, 99., BBS, 2007, *Population Census Zila Series Tangail. 2001: National Series Vol.2 Union Statistics*, p. 399., BBS, *Population Census 2011 Zila Series* (<http://www.bbs.gov.bd/Home.aspx>, accessed on 15 February 2014).

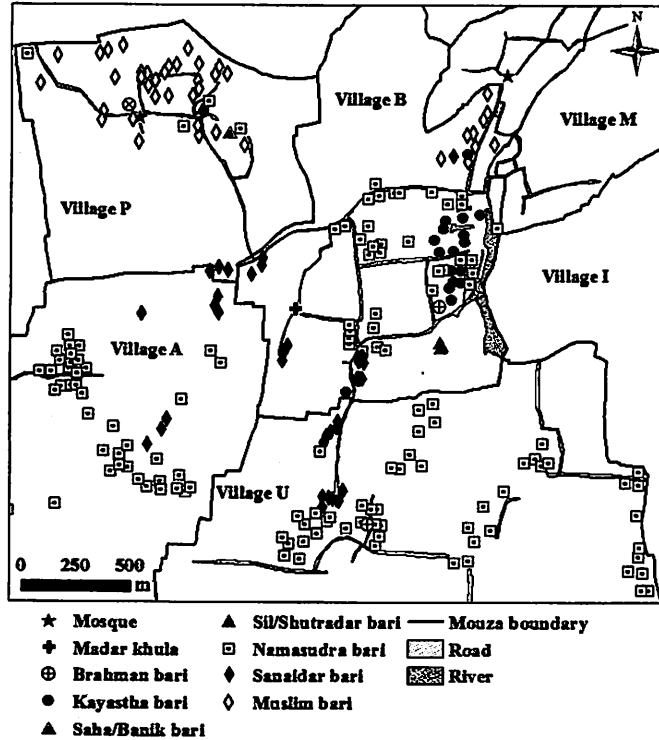
Namasudras and Muslims were the predominant groups in the study area (Table 1) and there was only one *Kayastha* household in village B (Figure 3).

The survey method involved participant observation and semi-structured interview. A Muslim man from another area in Tangail accompanied me during the survey in order to assist in the communication. When quoting the interviewees, their attributes are presented as follows: (village/age/sex: M or F/religion or *jati*). I also used data from *khatiyans* (documents of rights over land) by cadastral survey and state acquisition (hereinafter referred to as CS and SA) and cadastral maps in villages B, U, P and A. CS and SA in the study area were conducted in 1918 and 1962, respectively. The name of the landowner and the holder in tenure, area and category of each piece of land in each village are recorded in *khatiyans*. The survey was carried out for a year and nine months in total from 2011 to 2014.

3. PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE OF *JATI* TRAITS

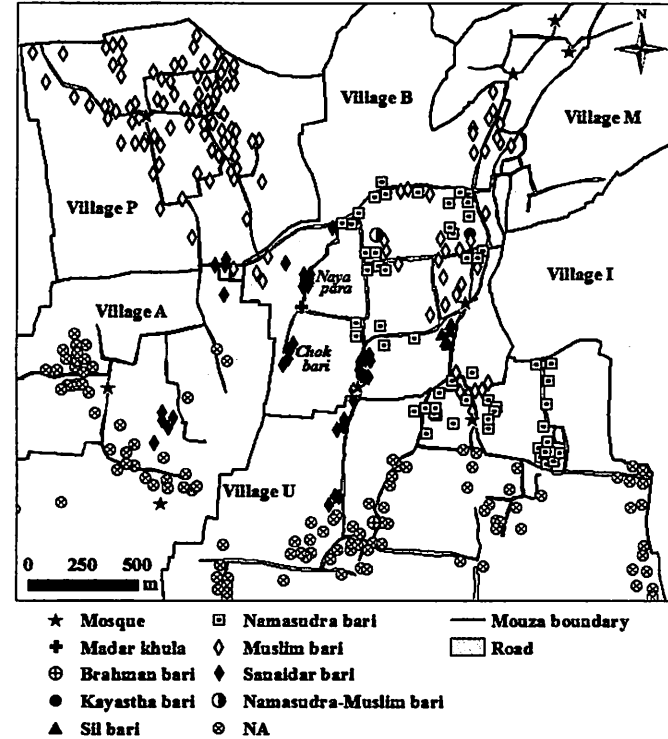
First of all, I will present previous descriptions of Muslim musicians in the area of present-day Bangladesh and mention the *jati* name and style of performance by *Sanaidar* musicians. Wise (1883: 34-5) noted that occupations were ranked by the distinction of foreign or indigenous origin and that the avocations of the musician, formerly pursued by outcast Hindus, specifically *Chamar* (skinner caste), were subsequently adopted

FIG. 2. DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND
BARIS BY RELIGION AND JATI IN THE STUDY AREA IN 1918



Source: CS *khatiyans* and cadastral maps in village B, U, P and A and field survey by the author.

FIG. 3. DISTRIBUTION OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND
BARIS BY RELIGION AND JATI IN THE STUDY AREA IN 2012



Source: Field survey by the author.

by poor Muslims, or by converts to that faith, and have consequently remained an inferior type of avocation. On the other hand, Hindu musicians were generally regarded as 'untouchables' because they were thought to be of the same caste as those who removed carcasses from dead animals and skinners (Risley 1981: 236-37). Thus, there seems to have been two ideological bases concerning the rank of musicians in East Bengal.

In the study area, *Dholi*, meaning drum beater, was used as a derogatory name, while *Sanaidar*, meaning wind-instrument player, was not. According to *Sanaidars* in the study area, settlements of the same *jati* are distributed in Dhaka, Gazipur, Manikganj and Tangail districts (Figure 1). These districts correspond to the locations where census reports from the period of British India reported the presence of '*Dholi*' and '*Sanaidar*' (O'Donnell 1893: 60-3; Porter 1933: 422-3). Thus, although there are similar characteristics with *Sanaidars* and others, such as '*Nagarchi*' or '*Nakarchi*' (Gait 1902: 445; Choudhury 1956: 136-9; Usuda 1990: 22) and '*Badyakor*' (Aziz 1979), they are different *jatis*.

Sanaidar musicians formed a 'band-party' composed of five to sixteen members.⁹ Each member played a clarinet, a saxophone, a *dhol* (a double drum played using a drumstick in the right hand and the left hand itself), a *saidam* (a side drum played using drumsticks in both hands) and a *jhanjh* (hand bell). *Sanaidars* did not usually make the drums, but instead bought them, and engaging in performance activities was restricted to men. A band-party was formed flexibly according to each performance, rather than having fixed and regular members, as Hindu musicians sometimes joined in.¹⁰ There were no set conditions for becoming a band leader; this role was usually taken by proficient performers. However, all of the instruments of a band-party were owned by band leaders in the cases that I surveyed. While both *Sanaidar* and Hindu musicians performed as a band party, the latter played a *dhak dhol*, a large spindle-shaped double drum. Playing the *dhak dhol* was indispensable to *pujas* (ceremonial worship among Hindus), but a performance by a band-party was not. The skills required for such performances were inherited not necessarily from father to son, but within the same *jati*, in the case of *Sanaidars*.

3.1. OCCUPATION

In this section, I will initially present the situations of *Sanaidars* one and two generations ago: around the end of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and in the period since then. The most common occupation of the male household heads one and two generations ago among *Sanaidars* was farmer and the others included musician, *kaviraj* (folk medicinal healer), trader and *chawkidar* (village police) (Table 2). The evidence indicates an occupational composition in which individuals

TABLE 2. MIGRATION AND CHANGE OF OCCUPATION, LANDHOLDINGS AND TITLE OF EACH *GUSTI* OF *SANAI*DARS

	No	The number of households	Occupation two generations ago previous generation	Relationship with <i>Kayasthas</i> and change of land holdings	The existence of <i>mattabors</i> and title in SA <i>khatiyans</i>	The year of immigration to <i>Sanaidar para</i>	The address before immigration
No migration since CS	1	7	Musician → Musician and farmer	Held farm land but sold all.	<i>Mattabors</i> in present and previous generation.		
	2	1	Unknown → Farmer	Held no farm land.			
	3	8	Farmer → Musician, farmer <i>rakhal</i> (live-in servant) and <i>chawkidar</i> (village police)	Worked under <i>Kayasthas</i> and bought land from them. Held farm land but sold all.	Had the title of <i>Miah</i> in SA <i>khatiyans</i> . <i>Mattabors</i> in present and former generations.		
	4	1	Farmer → Farmer	Bought land from <i>Kayasthas</i> . Held farm land but sold some.	Had the title of <i>Miah</i> in SA <i>khatiyans</i> . A <i>mattabor</i> in previous generation.		
	5	5	<i>Kaviraj</i> (folk medicinal healer) → Farmer	Worked under <i>Kayasthas</i> . Held farm land but sold all.			
	6	2	Musician? → Trader	Held no farm land.			
	7	5	Unknown → Farmer	Held no farm land.			
	8	5	Farmer → Farmer	Held farm land but at issue.	A <i>mattabor</i> in previous generation.		

	9	2	<i>Kaviraj/ pir</i> (saint) <i>Kaviraj/ pir</i> (saint)	Held farm land but sold all.	Had the title of <i>Miah</i> in SA <i>khatiyans</i> .	
	10	7	Unknown → Farmer	Held no farm land.		
	11	11	Trader → Trader and farmer	Bought land from <i>Kayasthas</i> . Held farm land but sold some.	Had the title of <i>Miah</i> in SA <i>khatiyans</i> . A <i>mattabor</i> in present generation.	
Migrants within <i>Sanaidar para</i>	12	1	<i>Kaviraj</i> → Farmer	Held no farm land.	After 1971	Village U
	13	3	Farmer → Farmer	Held farm land but sold all.	2000-2001	A site at village B near village P
	14	3	Farmer → Farmer	Held no farm land.	1991	A site at village B near village P
	15	4	Farmer → Farmer	Worked under <i>Kayasthas</i> and aquired land from them. Held farm land but sold all.	Around 1960s	Village B
	16	3	Unknown → <i>chawkidar</i>	Held farm land but sold all.	Around before 1971	Village B

Contd...

TABLE 2. Contd.

	No	The number of house-holds	Occupation two generations ago previous generation	Relationship with <i>Kayasthas</i> and change of land holdings	The existence of <i>mattabors</i> and title in SA <i>khatiyans</i>	The year of immigration to <i>Sanaidar para</i>	The address before immigration
Immigrants from <i>Sanaidar paras</i> in other <i>samajs</i> or areas	17	5	Farmer → <i>chawkidar</i>	Held farm land		Around 1920	Village Y in Gazipur district
	18	6	Unknown → Farmer	Held no farm land.		1995-1996	Village K in Tangail district
	19	4	<i>Chawkidar</i> → Farmer	Held no farm land.		2002	Village A
	20	1	Unknown → Musician	Held no farm land.		2003-2004	Village P
	21	3	Unknwon → Non-agricultural labour	Held no farm land.		2005	Village P
						2011	Village P → Dhaka city
	22	2	Farmer → Farmer	Held farm land but sold some.		2003-2004	Village A → Dhaka city
						2011	Village A → A site at village B near village P
	23	2	Unknown → Unknown	Held no farm land.		2011	Village L in Tangail district → A site at village B near village P
	24	2	Musician → Musician	Held farm land but sold all.		Around 1910	Village K in Tangail district
	25	1	Musician → Farmer	Held farm land but sold all.		Around 1930	Village J in Gazipur district

Immigrants from other areas without <i>Sanaidar paras</i>	26	4	Unknown → Farmer and <i>rakhal</i>	Worked under <i>Kayasthas</i> . Held farm land but sold all.		Around 1930	Faridpur district
	27	3	Farmer → Farmer	Held farm land but sold all.	A <i>mattabor</i> in former generations.	1940s-1950s	A site at village B near village M
	28	1	Trader → Farmer	Held no farm land.		2002-2003	Village S in Tangail district

Notes:

1. I set *gusti* as a basic unit of analysis here because some households in my survey period were not divided from their parents' households at the time of former generations.
2. The *gustis* of the two muslim men who took *sanaidar* woman as his second wife are not included here (See Section 3.3 for Further Details About Them).
3. Here, *kayasthas* are those who lived in village B and *mattabors* are those who were acknowledged as *mattabors* by more than ten persons among *sanaidars*.

Source: CS and SS *Khatiyans* and field survey by the author (mainly November 2011-February 2012).

running small and medium-sized farms constituted more than 70 per cent of the landholders in tenure among *Sanaidars* registered in CS *khatiyans* of villages B and U (Table 3). Thus, not all *Sanaidars* had worked as musicians. *Sanaidar* musicians used to have patrons mainly consisting of high-caste Hindus. They performed at *pujas*, rites of passage and *jattras* (folk dramas) held by them. Muslims had also hired band-parties of *Sanaidars* for marriage and circumcision ceremonies, at least until around the independence of Bangladesh. It was relayed that the members of four *gustis* in the present and former generations among *Sanaidars* (*gustis* 3, 5, 15 and 26 in Table 2; hereinafter referred to as specific *gustis*, as indicated in Table 2) had worked as not only musicians but also *rakhals* (live-in servants) and *bargadars* (sharecroppers) under *Kayasthas* in village B.¹¹ The members of *gustis* 3, 4, 11 and 15 in present and/or former generations had acquired land tenure by service to the *Kayasthas* or bought land from them. Thus, there seems to have been an arrangement of the *Kayasthas* and *Sanaidars* as patrons and clients, respectively, although not all *Sanaidars* worked under the *Kayasthas* and not all of the land held by *Sanaidars* was brought from them.¹²

Next, I will turn to the situation of the *Sanaidars* in the survey period. Most of the *gustis* whose members had lived in *Sanaidar para* since the early twentieth century had sold almost all of their farmland (Table 2). According to the members of those *gustis*, the land was sold to members of neighbouring villages by the present and previous generations, perhaps from the founding of Pakistan to the independence of Bangladesh, because of wasting money and gambling (*gustis* 3 and 4), as well as crises such as famine, natural disasters and war (*gustis* 5, 24 and 26). Some also claimed that they had been cheated into selling their land (*gusti* 8). As a result of this, the households whose landholdings were classified as small and medium-sized farms constituted less than 4 per cent of the households of *Sanaidars* (Table 4). More than 60 per cent of the households had to buy unhulled or hulled rice throughout the year; hence, about 30 per cent of the total endeavoured to obtain crops by *barga* and almost all of the landowners were Hindus or Muslims in villages B, M and P in the winter of 2011-2012. Most of the members of the working population among *Sanaidars* were drivers of *vans* (i.e. a bicycle-drawn carts) (Table 5). Among *Sanaidars*, the rate of physical labour was higher and the rates of salaried workers and those working overseas were much lower than those of Muslims in village B. Almost all service work done by *Sanaidars* needed only primary-level education to engage in it, such as *chawkidars* and garment factory workers. This can be considered to be a result of the lack of sufficient education among *Sanaidars* (Table 6).

There were 17 individuals who had learned to play musical instruments among the *Sanaidars*. Among them, eight engaged in performance activities in 2014. Six of these eight had main work that did not involve performing. *Sanaidar* musicians did not train successors actively and

TABLE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONS BY SIZE CLASS OF LAND OF VILLAGES B AND U HELD IN TENURE BY SANAIKARS IN 1918

	Size of land (in acre)	Holder (Person)	(Per cent)
Marginal	0.01-0.049	1	2.70
	0.05-0.49	9	24.32
Small farms	0.5-0.99	16	43.24
	1-2.49	9	24.32
Medium farms	2.5-7.49	2	5.41
Large farms	7.5*		
Total		37	100.00

Notes: 1. It's not clear about those who had no land in tenure or land holdings outside of village B and U because those were not registered in the CS *khatiyans*.

2. The land holdings classification is based on the agricultural census by BBS.

Source: CS *khatiyans* in village B and U.

TABLE 4: DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS BY SIZE CLASS OF LANDHOLDINGS IN THE STUDY AREA AND BANGLADESH AS A WHOLE IN THE SURVEY PERIOD

Size of land (in acre)	Bangla- desh (Per cent)	<i>Sanaidars</i> (Household) (Per cent)	Hindus in village B (Household) (Per cent)	Muslims in village B (Household) (Per cent)
No land	0	14.03	10	9.71
Marginal	0.01-0.049	32.40	49	47.57
	0.05-0.49	20.69	37	35.92
Small farms	0.5-0.99	26.71	1	0.97
	1-2.49		3	2.91
Medium farms	2.5-7.49	5.54	18	15.65
			5	4.35
Large farms	7.5*	0.63		
At issue	-			
Unknown		3	2.91	
			5	4.35
Total	100.00	103	100.00	115
				100.00
				55
				100.00

Source: BBS, 2005, *Agriculture Sample Survey of Bangladesh 2005*, p. 175 and field survey by the author (November 2011-February 2012).

mentioned the spread of education and *chakri* (salaried work), a dislike of performing and health problems as the reasons why engagement in performance activities was showing a tendency to taper off. It was also commonly asserted by *Sanaidar* musicians in other areas that the occupation of musician was for the uneducated; therefore, they had no desire to teach others how to play the instruments, particularly their sons.

Looking at those who had never learned to play instruments among the

TABLE 5. OCCUPATIONAL COMPOSITION OF THE
WORKING POPULATION IN THE STUDY AREA

Occupation	(per cent)		
	<i>Sanaidars</i>	Hindus in village B	Muslims in village B
Farm operation	15.3	32.3	25.9
Agricultural labour	7.6	0.5	0.9
Non-Agricultural labour	5.3	2.7	0.0
Cottage industry and Weaving	4.1	15.6	0.9
Buisiness, skilled trade and hawking	14.7	14.0	8.9
Transport and communication	25.9	2.2	2.7
Religious service	1.2	0.0	
Salary work	9.4	15.6	23.2
Overseas work	1.8	12.4	25.9
Others	9.4	2.7	8.9
Unknown	5.3	2.2	2.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: 1. Working population means the population ten years and above except students, housewives and the jobless.

2. The occupational classification is made by the author referring the population census by BBS.

Source: Field survey by the author (November 2011-February 2012).

TABLE 6. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF THE POPULATION AGED
FIVE YEARS AND ABOVE IN THE STUDY AREA AND BANGLADESH AS A WHOLE

		(per cent)			
Educational qualification		Bangladesh	<i>Sanaidars</i>	Hindus in village B	Muslims in village B
No schooling		42.1	67.6	36.6	16.5
Attending/	Nursery	—	2.0	2.4	2.5
Attended	Class 1-5	31.7	20.5	21.0	17.9
school	Class 6-8	12.1	5.8	12.8	16.8
	Class 9-10	4.7	1.8	11.8	14.7
	SSC	5.6		6.6	15.8
	HSC	2.2	0.2	3.0	7.5
	Diploma	—		0.4	
	Degree	1.2		2.0	3.2
	Masters and above	0.4		0.4	1.1
	Madrasa	—		—	1.1
	Unknown	—	2.0	3.0	2.9
Total		100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: The data of Bangladesh is from the 2001 census.

Source: BBS, 2007, *Population Census 2001 National Series, Volume-1 Analytical Report*, p. xv. and field survey by the author (November 2011-February 2012).

Sanaidars, although there was no consensus among them, more than half of the households showed neutral perceptions of the performance activities and the rest were divided into positive and negative perceptions, the households with positive perceptions being in the minority. Some *Sanaidars*, mainly those engaged in performance activities, claimed that their occupation originated from a story, which might be called a 'myth,' on the Battle of Karbala in which Imam Hussein was defeated by the Umayyad caliph; when Imam Hussein was killed, an individual, Ajom Shah, and other followers defeated the enemy by beating drums. Along with this story, one person also said, 'Though Muslims dislike *Dholi*... We are a high *jati* among Muslims' (village B/30s/F/*Sanaidar*). This story and idea were, however, shared only by some *Sanaidars*. On the other hand, not a few *Sanaidars* apparently had negative attitudes towards performance activities and said that such performance work was done by others. In particular, one person said, 'the *jati*, everyone who engaged in performance activities, is dead. We are different (from the *jati*). (The *jati*) were engaged in that for a long time. It was just a business, like buying and selling cows... (Performance activities were) valuable once. Everyone has abandoned them now' (village B/70s/M/*Sanaidar*). *Sanaidar* musicians in other areas also said that their performances had fallen into disrepute with the passing of time; the upper class, dominated by high-caste Hindus, used to be the main patrons, but most of them have gone to India; in addition, many mosques have been built with the increase of the Muslim population. In the survey period, most of the occasions on which band-parties were hired were wedding ceremonies by neighbouring Hindus; almost all of the hirers were *Namasudras*. The occasions on which Muslims hired band-parties were limited only to sports events or rites at a *Mazar* (a tomb of a saint).

3.2. TITLES

Discarding titles associated with the occupation of musician has been recorded among *Sanaidars*.¹³ Even though the most common occupation of previous generations was farmer, all of the titles of those who were registered in CS *khatiyans* were *Sanaidar* or *Dholi*. In SA *khatiyans*, however, the members of *gustis* 3, 4, 9 and 11 in the present and/or former generations were registered with the title of *Miah*, which is one of the titles generally used among Muslims. The members of *gustis* 3, 4 and 11 had bought land from *Kayasthas* in village B, as mentioned above, and were acknowledged as *mattabors* (informal leaders of *samaj*) (Table 2).¹⁴ Hence, it can be considered that they changed their titles with the rise of their economic and social status, which might have occurred through their relationship with the *Kayasthas*.

In the survey period, every *gusti* had the title of *Miah*. Only two people told me that their ancestors' titles had been *Sanaidar* or *Dholi*; the others did not mention the title or gave other titles, such as *Chawkidar*, *Mattabor*, *Fakir* and *Bepari*.¹⁵ The person who mentioned his ancestor's title to be *Dholi* also said that such titles were given by *Kayasthas*, who used to be *zamindars* (landlords) and seized control of the country; then, the name *Dholi para* was also established (village U/50s/M/*Sanaidar*). Indeed, the name of the settlement of '*Sanaidar/Dholi para*' was informal and only known to local people and *Sanaidars* in other areas. Even the existence of *Sanaidar jati* was not known among people in the region but slightly further away, for example, in villages in the next *upazila*. However, there was no evidence to support what he had said about the origin of the title and the settlement's name. Suppose that the titles of *Sanaidar* and *Dholi* were coined by *Kayasthas*, *Miah* was a self-proclaimed title against the appellation. Considering that there were some people who hesitated to use the term '*Dholi*,' connoted contempt when they mentioned the *Sanaidars*, such titles might be gradually abandoned in the local society as well.

3.3. MARRIAGE PATTERNS

Although there were no data available about the marriage patterns in earlier generations, it was asserted by neighbouring Muslims that they had not married *Sanaidars* throughout the ages, besides a few rare exceptions. In the present generation, the women who married within *Sanaidar jati* constituted nearly 90 per cent of all of the immigrant women and more than 70 per cent of all of the emigrant women to/from *Sanaidar para* through marriage. On the other hand, there were some women who came from or married into villages without *Sanaidar para*. This means that there were not a few marriages between *Sanaidars* and Muslims. While the geographic range within which Hindus find marriage partners tends to be wider because of rigid marital restrictions, Muslims prefer cross-cousin marriage and tend to marry relatively nearby (Bertocci 1970: 83-4). In the case of *Sanaidars*, there were some cross-cousin marriages, but few marriages with neighbouring Muslims; there was one example of a Muslim woman who had married a *Sanaidar* man and two examples of *Sanaidar* women marrying Muslim men as second wives. The Muslim men in the latter examples had never lived in *Sanaidar para*, while the wives had lived there, and were not regarded as *Sanaidars* by their neighbours. This situation can be considered to have resulted from the fact that Muslims in the area avoided marrying *Sanaidars* rather than that *Sanaidars* tried to maintain endogamy within the *jati*. Only one person, who was a band leader, told me that he should look for marriage partners among *Sanaidars*, while the others answered that they would have no problem if

their partners were Muslims.¹⁶ On the other hand, neighbouring Muslims said that they would never have a marital relationship with *Sanaidars*. One of the women who migrated into *Sanaidar para* through marriage also said, 'Though I have grown up in a Muslim family, the family into which I have married is *Sanaidar*, so I do not like this *samaj*' (village B/30s/F/*Sanaidar*). Thus, a loose rather than rigid tendency for endogamy within the *jati* was observed.

3.4. SEGREGATION AND MIGRATION PATTERNS

Here, I will initially consider those who immigrated into *Sanaidar para*. It is clear that there was a tendency for segregation by not only religion but also caste/*jati* among Hindus and Muslims in 1918 (Figure 2). In the period of the present survey, however, Muslims who had immigrated since the 1960s and Hindus were living side-by-side, even in the same *bari* (Figure 3). In contrast, no Muslims had immigrated into *Sanaidar para*, except through marriage. Most of those who had immigrated into *Sanaidar para* in villages B and U were from *Sanaidar paras* in other areas (Table 2). The immigrants from other areas without a *Sanaidar para* were two members of *gustis* who had married *Sanaidar* women (*gustis* 26 and 28) and one member of a *gusti* whose members' titles were *Sanaidar* in CS *khatiyans* (*gusti* 27). The members of those immigrant *gustis* were regarded as *Sanaidars* by neighbouring villagers.

Some of the immigrant members of *gustis* from nearby sites had experiences of spatial exclusion by some neighbouring villagers. The members of *gustis* 19 and 20, who had immigrated from *Sanaidar para* in villages A and P, respectively, had the ownership of their land taken by other villagers. The members of *gustis* 13, 22 and 23, who had lived at a site at village B near village P, had left their *baris* because of torture by some Muslims who had immigrated from neighbouring villages relatively recently. The members of those *gustis* had belonged to *samaj* of village P, but then belonged to *samaj* of *Sanaidars* in villages B and U via migration. For these incidents, no *salish* (informal adjudication) was held or, even if it was held, the members of those *gustis* stated that justice was not done, except for those of *gusti* 23. A *naya para* (new settlement) in village B, as the name indicates, was formed by immigrants who had experiences of spatial exclusion since the beginning of the 2000s (Figure 3). Thus, the segregation of *Sanaidars* has continued.

Next, I will turn to the emigrants from *Sanaidar para*. Here, I have to deal with only the case of the present generation because it was impossible to trace all emigrants including those in earlier generations. There were 38 households that had emigrated in the present generation. More than 70 per cent of them had emigrated to *Sanaidar paras* in other areas, particularly village Y in Gazipur district. Village Y is located in an

industrial area, mainly featuring garment factories, as well as educational institutions. *Sanaidars* in village Y said that immigrants from *Sanaidar paras* in other areas had become the majority, replacing those who had originally lived there. Thus, *Sanaidars* tended to select other *Sanaidar paras*, particularly in suburban areas, for emigration. This means that *Sanaidars* had a distant migration pattern based on the distribution of *Sanaidar paras* in other areas. Thus, the tendency for segregation between *Sanaidars* and Muslims was also retained with regard to the pattern of migration.

4. IDEOLOGICAL BASES OF HIERARCHY AND RESTRICTION ON SOCIAL INTERACTION

It was asserted that high-caste Hindus living in the study area once behaved according to the ideology of purity/pollution. In the period of the present survey, however, behaviour based on this could not be observed and nor were terms meaning polluted heard when local people mentioned *Sanaidars*. When neighbouring villagers mentioned *Sanaidars*, terms such as '*nissha-manosh*' (inferior person) or '*nimno*' (low) and '*bhalo na*' (not good) were used. The consideration that *Sanaidars* were of a lower rank seemed to be based on their lower economic and educational status, as mentioned above. On the other hand, when people said '*bhalo na*,' it was based on religious creeds and *Sanaidars* were simply being differentiated from Muslims, rather than ranked with a lower status. Differentiation based on religious creeds often became apparent in the process of *samaj* formation and division and accounts of it by the people involved. In the following, I will describe the stories and practices concerning religious attribution and social belonging of *Sanaidars*.

Sanaidars have continued the saint-worship of Zinda Shah, called 'Madar' or 'Dom' among them, for generations, as the *mazar* called 'Madar *khula*' has been in *Sanaidar para* (Figure 2 and 3). Madar was the *pir* who came to South Asia to propagate Islam. *Madariya Sufi Silsila*, which was established in the middle of the fifteenth century in northern India, spread into Bengal in the fifteenth or sixteenth century and contributed to the development of Hindu-Muslim syncretistic folk culture until the beginning of the twentieth century (Bhattacharya 2006). Even today, the devotees hold festivals and dedicate *sirni* (offerings), marching with Madar *jur bash* (two-forked bamboo) to collect donations on the anniversary of Madar's death (Ahmed 2001). *Sanaidars* also held the festival of Madar *khula* for three days from the middle of October until the middle of December. They marched with Madar *jur bash* to collect donations from their *samaj* and neighbouring villagers and dedicated *sirni* on the last day of the festival. They also put *sindoor* (red powder generally worn by married Hindu women) on Madar *jur bash* and hired Hindu musicians to play the

dhak dhol when dedicating *sirni*. Besides this festival, neighbouring villagers and *Sanaidars* themselves also pointed out many similarities with Hindus in the past daily practice of *Sanaidars*; for example, their ancestors wore *dhoti* (a long loincloth generally worn by Hindu men), they celebrated *pujas*, women wore *shankhas* (bracelets made of conch shells generally worn by married Hindu women) and 'their behaviour was like that of Hindus' (village B/80s/M/Hindu).¹⁷ However, no one stated that the ancestors of *Sanaidars* were Hindus. CS *khatiyans* also showed that their ancestors' names included Muslim ones, such as 'Hosen' and 'Uddin.' Looking at cases in India, saint-worship was rooted among some lower-ranked groups of Muslims and was an opportunity to convert to Islam for their ancestors (Saheb 2003; Mondal 2003). The worship of Madar and dedicating *sirni* were commonly found in *Sanaidar paras* in other areas in the period of this survey or in the past. Hence, the worship of Madar might have a close relationship with the origin of *Sanaidar jati*.

Saint-worship can be found widely in the Islamic world, but has tended to be deemed as heresy since the eighteenth century. In the case of the study area, some joined in the *sirni*, while others criticised its Hindu-Muslim syncretistic aspects, for example, '(I) want to make them abandon *pujas* like Hindus such as *sirni* at Madar *khula* and holding *sabha* (speech meeting about Islamic beliefs and creeds)' (village M/50s/M/Muslim). On the other hand, some Hindus had an affinity with *Sanaidars* due to their similarities with them, while other Hindus viewed their obscure religious attribution critically, for example, '*Dholis* have been neither Muslim nor Hindu since the period of British India' (village B/30s/F/Hindu).

It was also heard that *Sanaidars* had built mosques, started to pray *namaz* and become 'more Muslim-like' relatively recently. Indeed, while mosques have been built in villages P and M at least since the early twentieth century, the first mosque in *Sanaidar para* was built in the 1960s. That mosque was jerry-built and sometimes parts of it collapsed; hence, congregational prayers on Fridays were not held there regularly. This means that the characteristic of being a mosque-centred religious community was very weak in their *samaj* at that time. A *samaj* of Muslims in village B was formed when a new mosque was built by a rich immigrant in 1985. This *samaj* was based on the territorial relationship of village B and included *Sanaidars* in the village at that time. However, *Sanaidars* in village B built another mosque in 1996 with *Sanaidars* in villages U and A along with the help of *mattabors* in village M.¹⁸ Building another mosque strengthened their separation from the *samaj* of village B. There was no consensus about the period when *Sanaidars* had belonged to the *samaj* of village B and the reason for their separation among either Muslims or *Sanaidars*. However, no one considered *Sanaidars* to belong to the *samaj* of village B after another mosque had been built. The opinions on the

reasons for their separation were roughly divided; namely, it had been caused (i) by the Muslim side as some Muslims in village B or a *maulana* (Islamic intellectual) who was involved in mosque maintenance had separated them due to their poverty or bad/irreligious behaviour; or (ii) by the *Sanaidars* themselves, as they had desired such separation.

On the other hand, the asserted reasons for not accepting *Sanaidars* into *samajes* of Muslims in village B and neighbouring villages were relatively common in the period of the present survey. Although some of the Muslims mentioned their images of them as being beggars or lazy or did not give specific reasons, most of them refused to accept *Sanaidars* due to them being in a different *jati*, their similarities or close relationship with Hindus, their failure to perform religious duties such as prayers and fasting, and that their activities were regarded as forbidden in Islam, such as playing musical instruments and gambling. Conversely, a Muslim in village B stated that he would accept them if they prayed and followed *pardha* (the norm of veiling women) properly. In their stories, the term '*jati*' implied a religious difference and they would not accept *Sanaidars* into their *samajes* due to this difference; that is, the '*(Sanaidars)* *jati* is a little bit different. They are similar to Hindus as well as Muslims' (village A/50s/M/Muslim). On the other hand, some Muslims said that they might become the same *jati* with *Sanaidars* by belonging to the same *samaj*. Thus, *jati* and *samaj* were closely linked and interrelated.

A *samaj* division based on religious differences was also occurring within the *Sanaidars*. On *Eid ul-Fitr* (celebration by Muslims that marks the end of Ramadan) in August 2012, *Sanaidars* in *Chok bari* and *Naya para* (Figure 3) criticised a member of *gusti* 3 for sacrificing an animal not by *Jabai* (the Islamic way) but by *bolidan* (the Hindu one). In particular, the person who talked about the death of the *jati* as mentioned above criticised the adaptation to Hindu ways as follows: 'I am a child of Muslims' (village B/70s/M/*Sanaidar*). Some *sanaidars* in *Chok bari* and *Naya para* refused to pray *namaz* for *Eid* together with *gusti* 3. *Sanaidars* had usually prayed *namaz* for *Eid* together in front of *Madar khula*, but it took place separately then. Although it was heard that a person in *Naya para* was to register a part of his land as *waqf* (religious endowments in Islam) in order to build another mosque and form a new *samaj*, in the end, the conflict was settled and the *samaj* was not divided.

5. CONCLUSION

There used to be a patron-client relationship between *Kayasthas* in village B and some *gustis* among *Sanaidars*. However, as high-caste Hindus have moved to India and the Muslim population has increased, *Sanaidars* have lost their significant patrons and their performance activities have fallen into disrepute. Muslims started to regard the playing of musical

instruments as being forbidden in Islam and now rarely hire band-parties. The *Sanaidar* musicians did not train successors actively and not a few *Sanaidars* expressed negative perceptions of performance activities. Moreover, all *Sanaidars* have changed their titles associated with their occupation to one that is generally used among Muslims. For most of the *Sanaidars*, the occupation of musician was difficult to use as a basis for their socio-cultural identity because of the dishonour associated with it and the lack of an essential role in rites. The changing of titles, which was done before the time in which SA was conducted, seems to have accompanied the rise of this group's economic and social status, perhaps through the relationship with the *Kayasthas*, but in other cases, it was not necessarily accompanied by a rise of status. Indeed, most of the *Sanaidars* had not benefited economically, even though economic improvements have been observed in rural Bangladesh since the late 1980s at macro and micro levels, along with the spread of education. Intriguingly, similar situations, particularly becoming landless, were reported among *Khulu* (an occupational group of oil-pressers among Muslims) and the Hindu musician caste (see note 10) in Bangladesh (van Schendel 1981: 164-8; Zene 2002: 54). It is difficult to identify the main causes of becoming landless and being reduced to poverty, but considering that the impoverishment of rural areas was broadly reported until the early 1980s, it can be said that the tendency for impoverishment was significant among such occupational groups and lower castes.

A tendency for endogamy within *Sanaidars* was observed, but they were not a strictly closed endogamous group because there were more than a few marriages between them and Muslims in other areas. However, neighbouring Muslims refused to intermarry with them. Moreover, the tendency for segregation between *Sanaidars* and the others remained, considering the spatial exclusion of some *Sanaidars* by neighbouring villagers and their distant migration patterns being biased towards places where *Sanaidar paras* were located. Those whose occupations and names did not reveal their membership of the *Sanaidar jati* were in the majority among *Sanaidars*; nevertheless, particular people were identified as *Sanaidars*, which owed a great deal to the context of village society, where one's bloodlines were well known. However, to take into consideration the fact that those who immigrated into *Sanaidar para* through marriage were regarded as *Sanaidars*, but those who did not live in *Sanaidar para* despite marriage with *Sanaidar* women were not, being identified as a *Sanaidar* seemed to be based not on having a marital relationship with them, but rather on living in *Sanaidar para*. In addition, it might also be based on belonging to the same *samaj*, as some Muslims in village B asserted. The informal name and the existence of *Sanaidar para* were known only to local people and *Sanaidars* in other areas. As Prosad (1957: 11) noted that '[m]igration to a new settlement always means change in

caste or subcaste,' emigration may enable them to free themselves from being identified as belonging to a particular *jati*. However, *Sanaidars* often emigrated to areas where their relatives lived; in most cases, they were also *Sanaidars*, because of the tendency for endogamy. Their distant migration patterns and the concentration of immigrants in *Sanaidar paras* in suburban areas resulted from the tendency for endogamy and reproduction among relatives within *Sanaidars*.

Behaviour based on the ideology of purity/pollution could not be seen in the period of the present survey.¹⁹ To regard *Sanaidars* as being of a lower rank seemed to be based on their lower economic and educational status, but there is a possibility of other ideological bases. The reason why '*Dholi*' connoted contempt while the term '*Sanaidar*' was relatively neutral could not be identified in this survey, but it implies that the origin of their stigma was based on the occupation of drum-beating. Although Bertocci (1972: 32) did not regard caste as being significant as an organizing principle of rural society in Bangladesh, he noted that, given the persistence of certain low-ranked, endogamous Muslim occupational groups, '*jati* thinking,' which is what Gould (1969) called the conception of social species and their unassimilability, being naturalised among Indians, certainly formed part and parcel of the ideology of social relations.²⁰ The case in this study indicates the persistence of '*jati* thinking,' but the term '*jati*' as used by neighbouring villagers when mentioning the *Sanaidars* connoted a religious difference based on the dichotomy of 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' and 'good' or 'not good' based on religious creeds rather than ranking. *Jati* was a frame of reference for forming *samaj* and its membership was associated with being a 'good Muslim' based on the dichotomy; then, *Sanaidars* were regarded as 'neither Hindu nor Muslim' or 'not good Muslim.' The criticism of similarities with Hindus and saint-worship among *Sanaidars* arose from the way of thinking of classifying a *jati* into a specific religion, namely, 'Hindu' or 'Muslim', which is what Sen (2002: 350) called 'religious identity,' as mentioned above. Thus, '*jati* thinking' was articulated as a way of thinking based on the modern classification of religion. On the other hand, the desire to be more Islamic, although differing in its intensity, is commonly found among Muslims because Islam contains a movement of always returning to the ideals indicated in the Quran and the Hadith, along with revised interpretations of those texts (Kosugi 2006). The tendency for criticism of saint-worship and music among Muslims since the eighteenth century has been widely reported (Otsuka 2000). In the case of the grassroots level in Bangladesh, religious creeds or the ideals indicated in holy texts, that is to say, the guidelines for classifying daily practice into Islamic and un-Islamic acts, have penetrated along with modernization and globalization relatively recently (Takada 2006).

Considering that Muslims had once hired band-parties, it is obvious that the tendency to regard playing musical instruments as forbidden in Islam has arisen recently in the study area.

However, the differentiation of *Sanaidars* cannot be reduced to a religious basis. It must be noted that *Sanaidars* were ranked lower due to their economic and educational status and that Muslims have continued to refuse to marry *Sanaidars* for generations, since the time before playing musical instruments was regarded as forbidden by their religion. This situation might be considered to indicate that the discourse of differentiating *Sanaidars* based on religious attribution or creed was used to rationalise the practice based on '*jati* thinking,' as Ahmad (1978: 11) pointed out. Although the specific ideological bases for ranking or differentiating the *jati* have apparently not been shared or have been 'naturalised' (Gould 1969: 293), practices based on '*jati* thinking' to restrict intermarriage and social interaction have been reinforced and reproduced by the spread of the modern conception of religion and (interpretatively revised) Islamic creeds or ideals. This dynamic is related to what Vreede de Stuers (1968: 5-6) called 'Islamization,' as mentioned above. 'Islamization' was observed among some *Sanaidars* who had attempted to deny their membership of *Sanaidar jati* and to identify themselves as 'good Muslim' by representing 'others' or earlier generations as musicians or *Sanaidar jati* and criticizing for animal sacrifice by the Hindu way. Their attempt had the same structure as the differentiation by Muslims to distinguish themselves from *Sanaidars*. On the other hand, those who claimed that the origin of the occupation of musician came from a story on the Battle of Karbala attempted to make the occupation consistent with Islam by articulating its origins in Islamic history. Thus, the issue of the religious attribution and social belonging of *Sanaidars* has been involved in the process of 'Islamization' in terms of both the population in the local society and the consciousness of the people. Orientating people to be more Islamic has not eliminated '*jati* thinking,' but rather has articulated it and given bases to rationalise practices based on it.

This study has shown an example that contrasts with some other cases in India; elsewhere, status or occupational groups among Muslims have been more comfortable with a discourse of difference than with one of inequality, which linked up with the principle of egalitarianism, along with socio-political changes and the resolution of issues of economic and educational disparity (Vatuk 1996; Komaki 2000). It must be emphasised, however, that the persistence of '*jati* thinking' and practices based on it were seen only in some aspects of daily life, such as marriage and *samaj* formation and division. While the politics of identity was seen among some *Sanaidars*, it needs to be explored by further research what kinds

of relationship and interaction with neighbouring villagers each *Sanaidar* has and whether '*jati* thinking' is relativised or weakened by such relationships.

Moreover, this study reconfirmed the necessity of considering stratification among Muslims in South Asia in connection with broader discussions about 'Islamization.' It can be considered that, in the post-colonial situation in South Asia, the orientation to be more Islamic among Muslims tends to be linked to intentions to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims. However, 'Islamization' among Muslims today cannot be reduced to simplistic assertions about the colonial construction of a separate Muslim identity (Fuller 1996: 19). To consider 'Islamization' among Muslims in South Asia in connection with the worldwide Islamic revival movements is an important issue (Komaki 2000: 307-8; Kanetani 2007: 237). Although this study, particularly findings on the spread of negative perceptions of music, suggests that the penetration of Islamic creeds into rural Bangladesh today might have a close relationship with the worldwide Islamic revival movements, how this tendency has been brought about and its spread are not clear. Dealing with this issue can lead to a deeper exploration of the dynamism of stratification or occupational groups among Muslims.

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NOTES

1. Here, it must be noted that the classification and such contemptuous terms as *Ajlaf/Atraf* and *Azral* were imposed by *Ashraf* (Karim 1996: 176; Mannan 2000: 250-1) and that it was pointed out that stratification differed depending on the region (Gait 1902: 439).
2. In previous studies or descriptions, the reason why those who changed their occupation still remained as *jolahas* or *kulus* is not clear (Karim 1962: 141-2; Ahmed 1996: 20; Gait 1902: 400).
3. Karim (1996: 187-92) pointed out that the Muslim upper class was impoverished and the newly educated middle class created under British rule became powerful in East Bengal, while the upper class continued to dominate political life in Northern India and Pakistan.
4. Regarding some arguments on the term 'Ashrafization', see Komaki (2000).
5. The term '*jati*' was also used to mention religious communities, for example,

'Hindu *jati*.' The term '*bangsa*' was also sometimes used with the same meaning as *jati* (cf. Mannan 2000). In addition, '*sampraday*' was often used for Hindu caste, but '*sampraday*' and '*jati*' were used interchangeably.

6. In this study, household refers to *khana*, a unit of eating.
7. *Kayastha* is the writer caste, namely, the landowning and ruling class in Bengal. *Namasudra* is a caste that had been regarded as 'low-born' in Bengal. Many of them were tenant farmers or sharecroppers in the early twentieth century, but developed various movements for improving their position (Bandyopadhyaya 1994).
8. High-caste Hindu refers to *Brahmans* and *Kayasthas* in this study.
9. The name 'band-party' was generally used in the study area.
10. Hindu musicians in the study area proclaimed themselves as '*Badyakor*,' while they were called '*Rishi*' in a derogatory sense. See Zene (2002) for the details of this caste.
11. Musical instruments such as a saxophone used to be provided to *Sanaidars* by the *Kayasthas*.
12. In earlier generations, the members of *gusti* 24, whose householders were musicians and migrated from village K in Tangail district, got land from *Sahas* (trader caste) in that village, according to CS *khatiyans*. Thus, the *Sahas* might have been patrons for them.
13. Title is the surname shared among *gustis* and '*bangsa*' in Bengali. Some titles suggest membership of a particular *jati* (see also note 5).
14. Previous studies have reported that several *mattabors* were generally found in a *samaj* and that the conditions for acknowledging one as a *mattabor* have changed from a lineage to an economic status, the ability to settle conflicts and so on (Bertocci 1970; Karim 1990).
15. *Fakir* refers to person who has supernatural powers and *Bepari* means petty trader.
16. Some *Sanaidars* mentioned that they do not get married with *karigors*, an occupational group of weavers among Muslims.
17. However, such practice was not necessarily seen only among Hindus. Aziz (1979: 16) notes that many Muslims had worn *dhoti* before the founding of Pakistan. What is important here is that the subjects considered such practice to be a Hindu one.
18. At that time, *Sanaidars* in village A were included in the *samaj* of *Sanaidars*, but were subsequently separated.
19. The views among researchers about the issue of whether Muslims share the ideology of purity/pollution are divided. However, considering that the studies that support the view that they do share it deal with cases in West Bengal and the western part of Bangladesh (e.g. Siddiqui 1979; Zene 2002), the differentiation of views might have been caused not by differences of the understanding of the researchers, but by regional differences.
20. Gould (1969) articulated the concept of '*jati* thinking' in modern social life in India.

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