Women, land and power in Bangladesh: Jhagrapur revisited

Arens, A.M.J.

Citation for published version (APA):
Acknowledgements

This book could never have been written without the warm friendship, generous hospitality and cooperation of the large number of women, men and children of Jhagrapur who welcomed me in their village and homes. They were my teachers by sharing their lives, experiences, happiness, worries, ideas and perceptions with me during the long process that this study has gone through. I am highly indebted and profoundly thankful to all of them first and foremost. Special thanks go to Lozena and Golzar, their son Uzzol, his wife Laki and grandchildren Suborna and Polash for their hospitality, friendship, patience and the numerous discussions we had on various issues. They shared their home and lives with me during the major part of my fieldwork. Special thanks also go to Daud and Jahanara who generously took me into their home during my last fieldwork visits. Their friendship and the experiences they shared with me also taught me many things.

I am extremely thankful to Willem van Schendel who supervised my work from the very beginning and gave countless constructive comments and suggestions. He patiently saw my work through to the end and never complained about the regular delays and interruptions due to other engagements that I was involved in. Ratna Saptari, who agreed to join as supervisor and co-promotor in 2004, shared her valuable insights and gave important comments and suggestions, in particular with regard to the gender and agency dimension. Her encouragement, especially in moments of doubt and lack of self-confidence, was a great support for me as well and I thank her for all that.

Many people - friends, colleagues and family members - have contributed to this study and I extend my gratefulness to them and thank them all. I am particularly grateful to my long time friend Shyamala Devi Rathore; she initially convinced me to take up this study and encouraged me throughout the years. She has heavily contributed to my understanding of issues from within through sharing her own lived experiences of rural life in India, combined with her in-depth knowledge as an economist. She and her family - Rohini, Siddarth, Madan and her mother Mariama - adopted me in their family and contributed by taking care of me during the periods that I stayed with them to do part of my writing. Miriam Wolters, my best friend since our psychology student days in the 1960s, has also been a strong and never failing support. She generously gave her time and patience to read, reread and comment on my chapters and was never bored with it. Her moral support and help to clear my often confused thoughts and restructure and rephrase chapters and sentences has been very important for me.

Many other friends have contributed through discussions and comments and by welcoming me in their homes in Dhaka before, in between and after my fieldwork in the village. First of all Rokeya Rahman Kabeer who invited me to stay with her in Dhaka and who inspired me with her stories about Saptagram. The news of her untimely death in 2000, which I read in an online Bangladesh daily, came as a great shock to me. Joke Muylwijk, a friend since my earlier Jhagrapur days, read some of my writings during the first years of this study and provided valuable input. My
friend Meghna Guhathakurta gave valuable comments and suggestions during the later years and she generously shared her home with me. Several other friends have given me a place to stay in Dhaka and were there for me at different points in time: Jan van der Laan, a friend since my earlier Jhagrapur days as well, and Lisbet Arn; Nila Matin, who had done a great job in translating the first Jhagrapur book in Bengali, and Anjan Datta; Anja Rudnick who gave me a great opportunity to share in her fieldwork in Malaysia among Bangladeshi female migrant garment workers in 2000 and help her with translating from Bengali. Syeda Farhana, Manosh Chowdhury, Hasna Hena, Korshed Alam, Khushi Kabir and Kamal Uddin need to be mentioned as well. I enjoyed the hospitality of all of them and the exchanges we had about my work and about Bangladesh. I also thoroughly enjoyed the luxury of a warm bath in their houses after coming from the village during cold winter days.

My colleagues at Clean Clothes Campaign in Amsterdam have since long encouraged me to persevere in my writing. I am extremely grateful to them for their understanding and collegiality. My friends Ruth Waterman, Jan Reynders, Loes Keizers, Anjana (Tang) Suvarnanonda, Claudia Theile, Peter Custers, Sumati Nair and my housemates Nienja Brouwer, Firouzeh Rad, Mojtaba Hazeri, Anita Vermeulen, Babs Gons, Leontine Wennekers and her sons Ish and Bo gave me opportunities to share my thoughts, emotions, insecurities and experiences and to discuss my ideas and findings in different ways and at different times. Sensei Wendi Dragonfire and my training mates were important for my physical and mental balance during all these years and my physiotherapist Rogier van Asdonck added to my physical wellbeing after too many long hours at the computer. I am also grateful to Miriam McCabe who did a great job editing the English text and to Rita Ramperti for the final editing of the Dutch summary.

Special thoughts go to my parents Coco (Josef Ferdinand) Arens and Corrie Arens Peperzak who taught us compassion and inclusion. I am grateful that they lived long, but sadly not long enough to see the final result. My sisters Kee, Josien, Paula, Maria, Liesbeth and Corien and my brothers Pedro, Hans, Koos, Vincent and Bas and their partners and children were always with me in my thoughts as well and added to my wellbeing throughout the years. I am particularly grateful to my brother Bas for making the three maps, to my brother Pedro for commenting on some of the chapters and editing the Dutch summary and to my niece Sietske Sips for designing the cover and doing the final lay-out.

Finally, I hope that all those whom I forgot here but who supported me in some way or other all the years, will forgive me for not mentioning their names.

Jenneke Arens
February 2011