

## CONCEPTUAL NOTE - 2

- Academic Context of the Riggsian Idea
- Structure of Riggs' Model
- *Agraria, Industria* and *Transitia*

### **The Academic Context**

The Riggsian model of development administration was part of an academic *zeitgeist*. Focus on the developmental needs of the new emerging countries lead to theoretical exploration in different disciplines. And it was the interaction of these theoretical explorations, taking place across disciplines and regions, that the Riggsian model took shape. From a comparative perspective, Rigg's model bear closer resemblance to the Dependency School of thought on Underdevelopment. It was particularly closer to the structural<sup>1</sup> stream of the School. Structuralist like Celso Furtado argued that the underdeveloped economies of Latin America exhibited characteristics of economic dualism in their 'archaic structures'; and that an important feature of such archaic structures was that a subsistence sector co-existed with an export oriented and an industrial nuclei (Furtado 1967: 138). Rigg's prismatic or transitional societies, around which his work focuses, exhibits similar characteristics of economic dualism. At this point an inevitable question naturally creeps in, how these different areas of problem setting seems to be converging. The answer lie in the methodology adopted. Both Riggs and the Dependency scholars adopted socio-economic approaches for identifying and seeking solutions to administrative and societal problems.

Similarities apart, Riggs' socio-economic outlook for problematising administrative structures laid the grounds for comparative public administration. In his ecological approach, he argued that it is the location of a given administrative structure that determines its efficacy. In other words, the socio-economic nature of different societies determines the efficiency of their administrative structure. To explain the variation, he constructed a continuum of different societies, ranging from the least efficient to more the efficient ones. It is the construction of this continuum that forms the foundation of his theoretical structure.

### **Structure of Riggs' Model**

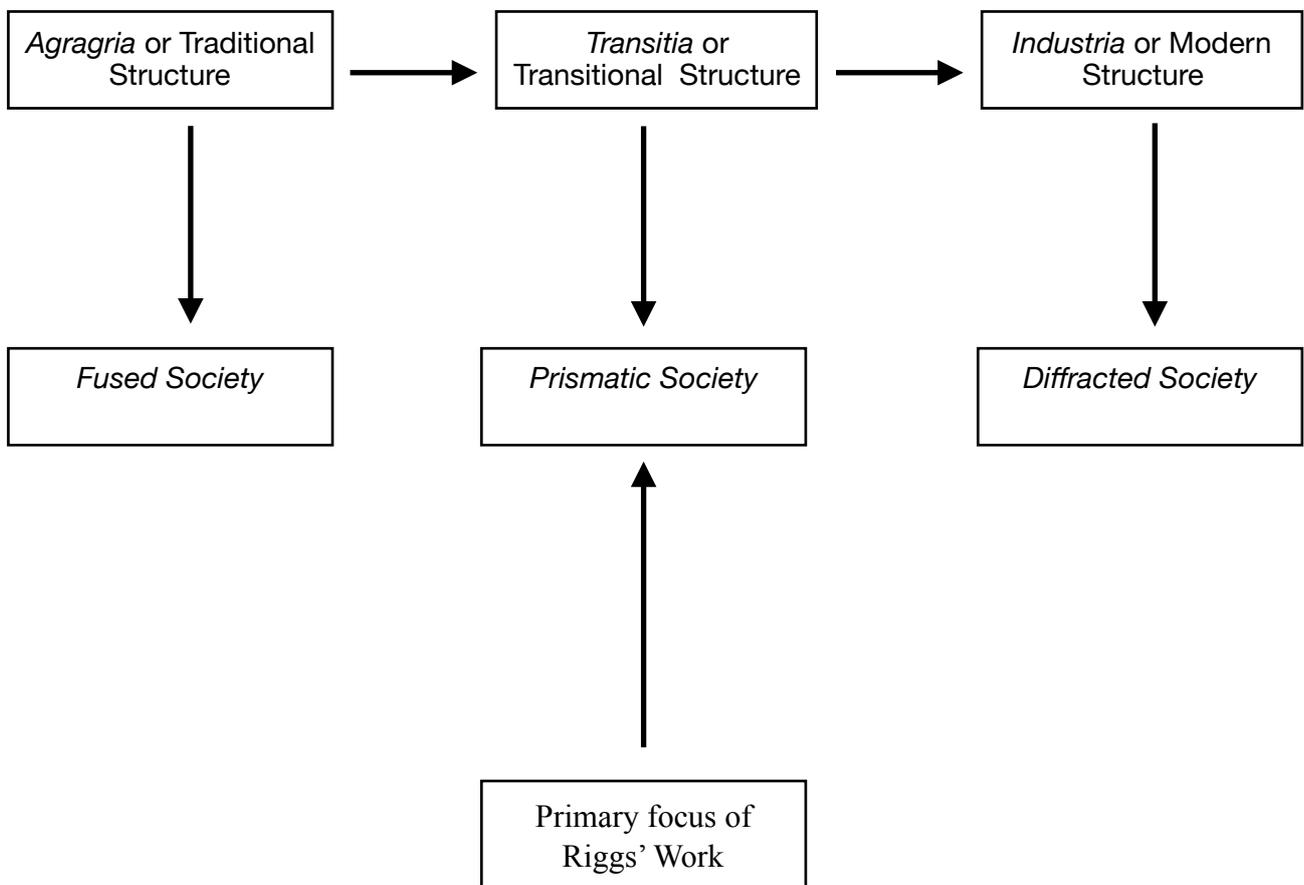
While constructing his range or continuum, Riggs had to solve a riddle. The riddle relates: a) first, to the selection of two societies which were polar opposite of each other, and b) second, then incorporate the new independent states (or what he terms as *transitia*) within these opposites. It was the first riddle which proved to be more daunting. Political theorists, while theorising, resorted to vague abstractions to build their arguments. Hobbs' "original position" or the Rawlsian "veil of ignorance" are examples of such abstraction. But as a contemporary of the behavioural revolution,

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<sup>1</sup> Students of structural approach lay emphasis on the influence of societal structures on the constituting agents.

Riggs could not afford to rely merely on abstract ideas, his model should also be empirically sound. To provide a sound empirical basis for his model, Fred Riggs closely studied the monarchical systems of Thailand and the period of Imperial China. They provided the basis for his traditional society, on the one side. And he choose the US as a model for modern society, on the other. The new emerging countries were placed as “in-betweens” among both these extremes. It was the functional role played by sectoral institutions which constituted the basis for the Riggsian argumentative structure.

**Riggsian Argumentative Structure**



**Functional Nature of Agraria**

Imperial structures are organised around: a) the principle of ‘divine origins’, and b) that agriculture constitute the sole source of wealth for the empire. Both these propositions play an important role in the reorganisation of the empire and society. Their implications are enormous. First, the combination of religious power along with that of political power makes the monarchy a sacrosanct institution whose authority cannot be questioned. This power is extended into the

economic field by providing the monarchy ownership over all productive and unproductive lands in the kingdom. Taxes are imposed and rents on land are collected in the name of the king. The concentration of social, economic, religious and political power leads to absolute authority for the monarchy. Second, social hierarchy is arranged on the basis of ownership of land, which is shared among the nobility and the clergy at the discretion of the king. As personal and group interest gets embedded to this hierarchical structure, a class of status quoits emerges who preserve and prevent the alteration of this structure. As a consequence, social status acquires a hereditary form. Third, socially detached from the monarchy and the nobility, the peasantry is organised around the unit of the family. Being more closely tied to their lands, societal values, ethics and mores are significantly determined by agricultural necessities. General illiteracy among the peasantry ensures the perpetuation of dogmatic and superstitious beliefs. Fourth, as occupations are inherited and guarded, there are fewer avenues for social mobility. Besides, existence of a single dominant occupation across the kingdom nullifies the need for large scale migrations, as pay structures remain relatively constant throughout. Fifth, the centrality of the monarchy (at the administrative level) and the family (the societal level) results in functional multi-tasking, with each performing overlapping functions.

### **Functional Nature of *industria***

The *industria* is a complex societal structure where both political power and economic activity is sufficiently diffused to enable multiple actors to compete against each other. Competition within this structures takes place through standardised rules and procedures which are protected by established institutions. The presence of these institutions ensures that 'efficiency' plays an important role in deciding outcomes. Among political and legal institutions, the legislature and the judiciary play important roles in moderating the behaviour of the executive. Thus, political power is not handed over to an heir who could enjoy unbroken rule, but is competed for among generational groups. Each generation replaces their previous ones only through some standardised rules and practices in their quest for power. Besides, state powers are so distributed among the various branches of the government that no single branch can claim absolute power. Therefore, access to political power lies in innovative organisation and efficient administration.

In the economic sphere, the presence of the 'market price' determines the rules of the economy. It is this price that shapes the actions and behaviours of producer, consumer and the autonomous sectors. Structural, organisational and technological innovations are regarded as keys to improved efficiency. The economy is sufficiently diverse which offers various goods and services in the market. This diversity offers various occupational choices to the constituting members, and as occupational positions are based on merit and efficiency, there are possibilities for rapid upward mobility through acquired skills.

Society, in *industria*, is structured on the primacy of the individual. Here, associations formed by individuals play an important role in community lives. Occupational diversity and scope of rapid social mobility draws large migration from outside. Large scale migration leads to loss of traditional values and structures and make habitations more heterogenous. Heterogeneity forces individuals and communities to rationalise rules, values and principles on the basis of universal norms rather than on narrow traditional norms. Economic and societal heterogeneity also gets manifested in the functional field, as specialist are entrusted to perform specific functions which do not overlap with each other.

### **Functional Nature of *transitia***

As mentioned above, *transitia*'s are in-between structures that exhibit characteristics of both *agraria* and *industria*. In his linear progression schedule (as depicted in the figure above), Riggs conceptualised that a semi-developed political system, excessively dependent on its bureaucracy for executing policies, creates a class of powerful state officials who engage in rent-seeking activities from the state exchequer at the expense of the general population. As functions of these officials overlap due to the multiplicity of socio-economic roles they are required to perform, it increases their authority and visibility within the structure. But being drawn primarily from the *agraria* sector, they incorporate traditional biases and values within the administrative structure, thereby reducing the efficiency of the overall structure.

### **References:**

- Furtado, Celso (1967), *Development and Underdevelopment*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mukhi, H. P (2004), *Comparative Public Administration*, Delhi: S B D Publishers.