Government of Paper

The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan

Matthew S. Hull

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Note on Translation and Transliteration

Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Urdu conversations and written materials are my own. For the sake of readability, I have employed a simple transliteration system for Urdu and Arabic words that does not use diacritics. This system does not distinguish between long and short vowels (e.g., *a* and *ā*, *i* and *ī*) or between dental and retroflex consonants (e.g. *t* and *ṭ*; *d* and *ḍ*). For proper names and Urdu and Arabic terms commonly used in English-language speech or writing (e.g., *purdah* and *mohalla*), I have adopted the most conventional English spelling. Urdu terms are pluralized in the English manner, by adding an *s*.

Introduction

In the electronic age, documents appear to have escaped their paper confinement. And yet, we continue to be surrounded and even controlled by a flow of paper whose materiality has vast consequences. What are the implications of such a thorough paper mediation of relations among people, things, places, and purposes? *Government of Paper* addresses this question by showing how the material forms of documentation and communication, the things I gather together under the term "graphic artifacts," shape the governance of the planned city of Islamabad.[1] Governing paper is central to governing the city. And paper is also the means by which residents acquiesce to, contest, or use this governance.

My research began as an exploration of how the Pakistani government shapes social life in Islamabad through its planning and regulatory control of the built environment. However, I gradually came to understand that the modernist program for shaping social order through built forms had expanded a material regime of another, equally significant sort: a regime of paper documents. My conversations with residents about their patches of the built environment of Islamabad quickly veered from family, architecture, and law into stories about the trials and tribulations of their documents and files. Some months after I had arrived, for example, I talked with Ahmed, a driver who was about to move to a small house he had built in a new area of the city. Sitting on the floor of his one-room apartment behind the office building where he

worked, he replied laconically to my questions about how he thought his life would be different in the new place, the design and construction of his house, and zoning and building codes. When the conversation lagged, he got up, went to a cupboard, and pulled out a thick gray file folder like those used in government offices. He had never been allowed to see the official file the government maintained on his house, but he had made himself an unofficial replica. As he opened the file, he became talkative, enthusiastically narrating his house as episodes of document acquisition: the transfer certificate giving him title to the land for which he had passed 5,000 rupees (Rs.) to an agent to save the Rs. 8,400 official fee; the form generated by the surveyor showing where the plot was (it had been an achievement to get the surveyor to show up); a possession certificate a friend of his, a fellow ethnic Gujar, had facilitated; the house plan that his architect had illegally copied from a house file maintained by the city government; the "No Objection Certificate" approving the house plan; and many others. As his story arrived at the end of his file, he smiled and tapped his finger triumphantly on the last document, recently obtained. He had finally negotiated with a city inspector for a "completion certificate" that allowed him to occupy the house legally—the paper crown of his undertaking.

Until this point, I had been focused on records at the other end of the documentary spectrum, namely maps. My initial encounter with Islamabad was through the mediation of a map showing a monumental national administrative area dominating a numbered and lettered grid of sectors (each 1¼ square miles) that extended boundlessly to the west—as far as the paper would allow anyway (fig. 0.1). Drawn in 1960, this map, the work of Costantinos Doxiadis, a Greek modernist architect and the planner of the city, was also the first vision of what was to become the highly planned national capital of Pakistan, established under martial law in 1959 and situated on agricultural land several miles north of the large existing city of Rawalpindi.

Over the last five decades, the sector-by-sector construction of the city has gradually transformed Doxiadis's map from utopia to ideology. Versions of it are now found on roadside billboards, on posters on office walls, and in newspaper advertisements. A translation of this map in poured concrete lines is the focus of the garden in Shakarparian Park to the south of the city. The carefully pruned rose bushes in sector squares iconically figure Islamabad as a giant, well-ordered garden. In contrast, Rawalpindi, the older city to the south, is represented by an unruly mass of unclipped bushes covering an irregular area in the midst of the grid.

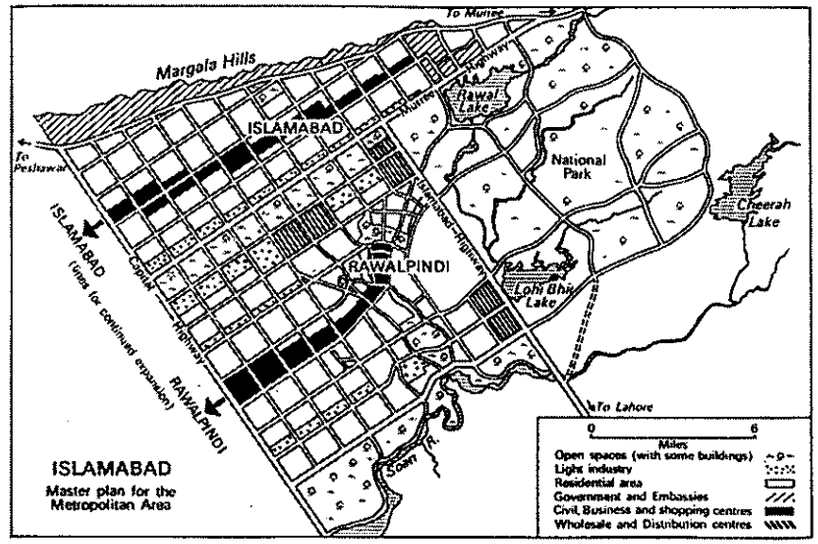

FIGURE 0.1. Constantinos Doxiadis's 1960 map of Islamabad.

Before the city was much more than a map, the Pakistani government established the Capital Development Authority (CDA), giving it complete administrative and judicial authority over the planning and development of the city. Given the comprehensive scope of planning and the clean, centralized command structure of the CDA, I had expected to find a wealth of official documentation on the city as a whole—reports on population, housing, roads, building regulation, and so forth. But what I found—or rather, didn't find—surprised me.

The once-celebrated Master Plan had no other comprehensive and unitary embodiment than the old reports of Doxiadis, reverently collected in a bookcase in a CDA library, away from the main CDA offices, and almost never consulted. I was told the last person to look at them before I came along was a curious British diplomat some years earlier. The official in charge of CDA employee housing had no comprehensive documentation on how many housing units were under CDA control and where they were, though he managed perhaps as many as twenty thousand. A former CDA chairman told me that "there is no one who can tell you what [the] CDA owns. . . . [P]ieces of land were acquired years ago and no one even knows we have them." CDA board decisions, the main policy of the authority, were dispersed in files and not available for reference since no one had compiled them. What general reports

had been produced in the 1970s were out of circulation and hard to find. Later, I sometimes found whole reports inserted in a file, localized as part of a particular case. The CDA did not even have a unitary set of representations of land areas. The department handling land acquisitions used the Urdu revenue record, generated with chains and pacing and calculated by *kanal* (one-eighth of an acre); in contrast, planners relied on maps produced by modern transit–stadia measurements in units of square kilometers. These two land reckoning systems are difficult to correlate. Aside from city maps, more often found displayed on walls than in the hands of planners, there seemed to be no representations of the city as a whole.

I spent several frustrating months trying to get hold of the sort of comprehensive documents I thought planners should use before I began to try to understand the genres they actually were using, like those Ahmed had shown me. What I discovered is that even synoptic maps and reports are most efficacious not as what Bruno Latour (2005:187) calls "panoramas," big pictures weakly connected to what they show, but rather as artifacts entangled in the prosaic documentary practices through which the city is constructed, regulated, and inhabited. Order and disorder on every scale in Islamabad are produced through the ceaseless circulation of millions of maps, forms, letters, and reports among bureaucrats, politicians, property owners, imams (prayer leaders), businessmen, and builders. The larger crisis and the persistent endurance of the Pakistan state are usually understood only through high politics and the broad institutional relationships among bureaucrats, elected politicians, the military, and more recently, militants. However, the stories of documents, from humble completion certificates to broad sector maps, help explain both crisis and stability in Pakistan.

In comparison with the modernist new city projects of Brasilia and Chandigarh, which James Scott (1998) has characterized as failures, Islamabad has been a success. The population has grown at a steady pace to nearly one million, and though there are perennial complaints about the city's lifelessness, many Pakistanis consider it to be the most beautiful and livable city in Pakistan. Picture books feature its architecture, and even poetry has been written about it. Nonetheless, all has not gone according to the Master Plan. In most neighborhoods, unauthorized mosques built by different sects abound. The planned correlation between state-owned dwellings and the government rank of their occupants is often weak or absent. Most dramatically, the boundless westward expansion envisioned by Doxiadis stalled, perhaps forever, in the

11-series of sectors, just six miles from the president's house. The ways the CDA governs its paper and governs through its paper has played an important role in these developments. Bureaucratic writing is commonly seen as a mechanism of state control over people, places, processes, and things. But the political function of documents is much more ambiguous. In Islamabad, a high-modernist planning project typical of the postcolonial world, paradoxically, has been partly undermined by the very semiotic technologies that made it so quintessentially modern: its documentation and communication practices.

This book tackles the epistemological and ontological problems of documents, problems raised by the recognition of the relative autonomy of objects. The producers of government documents, much like scientists, claim to represent, engage with, or constitute realities "in the world" independent from the processes that produce documents. And yet, recent scholarship has shown how bureaucratic texts are produced, used, and experienced through procedures, techniques, aesthetics, ideologies, cooperation, negotiation, and contestation. Most existing treatments of documents separate or even oppose these two aspects of documents. I argue that we need to address both. In addition to describing the logics, aesthetics, concepts, norms, and sociology of bureaucratic texts, scholars also need to account for how documents engage (or do not engage) with people, places, and things to make (other) bureaucratic objects: as Annemarie Mol (2002) puts it, how bureaucratic objects are "enacted" in practice. Practices of enacting bureaucratic objects are as complex, variable, and illuminating as more traditional anthropological subjects such as rituals and myths. Without adopting a naïve postsemiotic approach, we can confront an unproductive dichotomy between the constructed and the real. A planning map is not only an ideological projection of a bureaucratic vision of the city; this vision is embedded in the technical and procedural processes that link a map to roads, structures, streams, and documents.

WRITING OF THE BUREAUCRACY

Mohammad Waseem (1989) has aptly called the state of Pakistan a "bureaucratic polity." The central role of civilian bureaucratic state institutions in Pakistan is captured in the way Pakistanis refer to them simply as "the bureaucracy." The bureaucracy is recognized in both academic and popular discourse as a more or less independent political actor alongside the army, elected governments, and political parties. The

contemporary position of the civilian bureaucracy grew out of colonial history and the early decades following Partition in 1947, when the new Pakistan state was created in two territories, West and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), separated by over one thousand miles of Indian territory. The administrative system reassembled by the new state of Pakistan was well established compared to other political institutions in the country.[2] The advantage of this early institutional capacity gave the bureaucracy a central role in the political process of the new state.[3] Nationalist historiography portrays Pakistan independence as a transfer of power from the British colonial government to that of the leading political party, the Muslim League. It was equally, however, a transition between the British bureaucracy and the emergent Pakistani bureaucracy.

In portrayals of postcolonial governance, the continuities between the colonial and the postcolonial are often exaggerated, even as they are underspecified. The postcolonial is often figured as a "legacy" of the colonial; the colonial is seen to "haunt" the postcolonial. In contrast, much of this book is devoted to showing how colonial practices operate in new ways in the postcolonial era. However, the process of decolonization has perhaps proceeded most gradually in the area of civilian administration. The continuity of personnel and ethos within the early postcolonial Pakistani bureaucracy is obvious, especially at the senior ranks. Former members of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), the elite members of the professional class of Muslim bureaucrats that Hamza Alavi (1983) has termed the "salariat," led the establishment of the Pakistani bureaucracy alongside British nationals, some of whom were retained until as late as 1957.[4] One British former colonial officer signed the first of Pakistan's currency notes as finance minister and led the Reorganization Committee formed in 1947 to establish the Pakistani bureaucracy. Another British officer was appointed as the first head of the newly established Pakistan Civil Service Academy, tasked with training the elite civil servants of the Civil Service of Pakistan, modeled on the ICS. The Civil Service Academy emphasized Western dress and cultivated British social graces and manners. Shakespeare, Locke, and William Blackstone were part of the required curriculum, and English language was prescribed for all conversation during the training period. After completing the program, officers were sent abroad for a year of study in Oxford, Cambridge, or another Commonwealth country.[5]

The continuity of the colonial bureaucratic material infrastructure, much like that of roads and bridges, was more obvious, unquestioned,

and profound. If documentary writing has long been recognized as an essential element of modern governance, it has been seen as an especially central component of colonial government in South Asia.[6] The British colonial government came to be known as the "Kaghazi Raj" or Document Rule. In 1852, a Parliamentary Select Committee asked John Stuart Mill to explain the good government of the Indian territories. He replied:

> I conceive that there are several causes; probably the most important is, that the whole Government of India is carried on in writing. All the orders given, and all the acts of the executive officers, are reported in writing, and the whole of the original correspondence is sent to the Home Government; *so that there is no single act done in India, the whole of the reasons for which are not placed on record.* This appears to me a greater security for good government than exists in almost any other government in the world, because no other probably has a system of recordation so complete. (cited in Moir 1993:185, emphasis added)

This complete system of records developed from the documentation and communication practices of the English East India Company, the quasi-governmental trading corporation that eventually transformed into the government of colonial India. The most common explanation for the pervasiveness of writing within the colonial government is that practices of written accountability designed for the management of far-flung and unreliable commercial agents were carried over into the operations of territorial rule as the Company gradually assumed the form of the colonial government of India.[7] Accountability at a distance was certainly a major factor. The directors of the Company in London distrusted their faraway agents, who routinely served their own interests alongside or even through their work for the Company.[8] The centrality of writing in South Asian governance, however, has more to do with the fundamental problematics of the corporation as a social form than has been previously recognized.

Three decades before Thomas Hobbes famously argued that the lack of a final, absolute authority led inevitably to a war of all against all, the Company had worked out mechanisms for the accountability of all to all. The Company was constituted as a "body politick" by Letters Patent (or charter) of Elizabeth I in 1600, which laid out a structure of governance strikingly similar to today's modern corporations, with an elected governor, officers, and "committees," individuals who formed a body operating much like a contemporary corporate board. The charter specified who was a member of ("free of") the Company, what the

offices would be, and how individuals would be elected to them. Still, the problem of regulating day-to-day actions of officers and employees remained.

The Company solution was to create a social organization constituted by the movement of paper. According to the *Lawes or Standing Orders of the East India Company* written in 1621, an early ancestor of today's corporate bylaws, only through a connection with a piece of paper (a bill, warrant, note, book, and so forth) could an action be construed as an action of the Company. A cash payment made without a warrant was not a Company transaction, and an individual who made it was required to reimburse the Company. Goods transferred without a receipt were still considered to be in Company possession. Even cooks on Company ships had to produce accounts and receipts for the bursar or repay the funds extended to them. The *Lawes* expressed a thoroughgoing rejection of trust in people.

> And forasmuch as the affaires of the Company are so contrived, that there is now little or no trust imposed in any particular mans accompts: But that he hath also some checke by Warrants, Bils of parcels, or the accompts of other men. (East India Company 1621:70)

Vouching was done by artifacts, not people. The *Lawes* specified a kind of documentary buddy system in which every document was to "be vouched" by another, produced by a different person. The book recording the payments to workmen on the docks, for example, was "to be vouched by the Notes of the Committees" (East India Company 1621:79). Not only signatures but also autography was required to ensure the connection between a document and a particular individual. The accomptants general was instructed as follows: "you shall digest and enter all Accompts into the journal your self with your owne hand, For we will admit no diversity of hands" (78). This solution took form within the horizon of the empiricist metaphysics growing in Britain: a practical attack on the problem of words and things, an attempt to make discourse into actions definable through a trustworthy material order open to the witnessing of members of the Company.[9] It was precisely the materiality of graphic signs that made them useful as a palpable sedimentation of the real.

This method of defining Company business was the germ of the practices that by the late seventeenth century would come to distinguish Company business from the "private trade," business carried out by Company servants on their own accounts in India. As Miles Ogburn writes, an office manual published in 1675, *Regulating and New Methodizeing*, "sought to institute writing practices that, in their repeated performance and reinscription, were intended to constitute a distinction between the 'public' world of the Company's business and the 'private' actions of its servants" (2007:71). From the late seventeenth century, such reforms effectively reorganized the Company not by redefining duties and offices, but by instituting new forms of documentation.

Prosaic documents were central not only to the constitution of the Company but also to its infamous transformation into a territorial power. The "Revolution of Bengal" through which the Company became the de facto government of the region in 1765 was provoked by conflict over routine customs documents.[10] From the 1650s, in exchange for lump-sum yearly payments, the Company had been given an exemption from tolls and other duties on goods it transported for export from its port in Bengal. Even as the Company was using documents to distinguish between Company and private business, it was using them to blur the division between the Company and the Mughal imperial government. In 1717, the Company persuaded the Mughal emperor to grant the Company the authority to issue passes (*dastaks*) that could be presented to customs authorities to exempt particular shipments from the assessment of duty. It is likely that the emperor and the nawab of Bengal (the regional ruler) considered this new authority merely a new means of implementing the long-standing arrangement of duty-free export of Company goods.

But what might have been seen as relatively minor administrative change had far-reaching consequences. The imperial duty-free policy was gutted by the Company's ability to produce the documents used to implement it. Company officials soon began to issue passes to its officers for their private trade and to sell them to Asian merchants, depriving the government of tax revenue and undercutting many native merchants. Disputes over what the nawab considered an abuse of passes culminated in his military defeat in the Battle of Plassey in 1757. Subsequent nawabs installed by the Company proved equally intransigent on the matter of passes, and, following another decisive military victory for the Company, Robert Clive forced the weak Mughal emperor to grant the Company formal control of the area in 1765. Several years later, the Company tightened its control over customs revenue and its own officers by eliminating passes altogether.

As Company territorial rule expanded from the late eighteenth century, administrators recognized that Indian functionaries, like their

English counterparts, were often more committed to their own interests and social institutions than to the Company or government. Longstanding debates about the propriety of Company officials gradually transformed into a discourse about "native corruption." British officers in India were frequently transferred among different posts. They lacked knowledge of the locales they administered and of the permanently posted native functionaries on whom they helplessly depended. In response to these uncertain loyalties, the British, building on the elaborate written procedures of the Mughals, expanded their graphic regime of surveillance and control. Official discourse was anchored to people, places, times, and artifacts through an elaborate use of signatures, dates, and stamps. Like Mill, officials transferred from London often noted that the Indian colonial government used written documentation far more extensively than its metropolitan counterpart did.

The mid-nineteenth-century British colonial administration, as Smith (1985) argues, was not an organization simply employing various written genres (reports, records, and manuals) but rather an organization whose overall structure and practices were constituted in large measure by this "genre system" (Yates, Orlikowski, Rennecker 1997). Normative procedures were laid down in hundreds of manuals produced for every sphere of administration in the late nineteenth century. Manuals for village-level revenue staff (*patwaris*) instructed them on how to carry out field measurements and draw up records of rights. Office manuals, which I will discuss in chapter 3, stipulated the forms that office communications and records should take and specified in meticulous detail how they were to be stamped, registered, accessed, transported, stored, and destroyed. Positions within an organizational division were defined in relation to genres of papers. Rules prescribed what genres officers and staff of different ranks could read, draft, write, and even the means of inscription they were authorized to use. An office manual published in 1891, for example, required a senior clerk to write in pencil in the margin of a "paper to be dealt with" but in ink on the notes section of a file—red ink when referencing another file (Government of India 1891:42). Officers were required to use a full signature to approve some documents, initials for others. These manuals distributed influence within the office and articulated a paperwork ethics through the specification of the care and duties owed to different genres of documents. Rules prescribing what documents could be exchanged between organizational divisions and the protocols for doing so were a technique of social analysis that defined relations among divisions—even constituted

them as different divisions (Strathern 1999). Such manuals also engineered the hierarchical relations between district-level administration, staffed by Indian Civil Service officers working in English, and village-level administration, staffed by provincial and local cadres. Regulation of the subordinate staff through manuals allowed the district officer to remain aloof from the details of land revenue and "free to assume general charge" (Smith 1985:160). District officers prepared a variety of kinds of reports, censuses, surveys of land tenure ("settlement reports"), and "district gazetteers" that described the history, social composition, economy, and administration of a single district. The reports promoted the synoptic view of the district consonant with the district officer's remove from local knowledge that was enabled by the manuals. Discursive and material features of these different genres shaped knowledge of village society and participation in governmental processes.

Bureaucratic continuities from the Company and colonial to the postcolonial can be overstated. A contemporary Pakistani clerk would probably consider the colonial practice of attaching white, "emerald," "vermillion," and "sky" colored reference slips to papers to index their urgency to be as antiquated and impractical as donning a Victorian woolen waistcoat.[11] New kinds of documents—such as completion certificates, "Out of Turn Allotment of Accommodation" forms for government housing (chapter 1), and "demolition certificates" documenting the destruction of houses on expropriated land (chapter 4)—have been invented to implement the project of a new city and deal with its contradictions. However, though they are part of new projects and repurposed in novel ways, many of the bureaucratic inscriptional practices from the colonial period have remained vital in the contemporary period.

SIGNS OF PAPER

The centrality of writing to formal organizations has been recognized in Western social thought since long before the mid-eighteenth-century French political economist Jean Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay coined the derisive term *bureaucracy,* or rule by writing desk. Most works on writing and bureaucracy quote the same passage of Max Weber:

> The management of the modern office is based upon written documents (the "files"), which are preserved in their original or draught form. There is, therefore, a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts. The body of officials actively engaged in a "public" office, along with the respective apparatus of material implements and the files, makes up a bureau. (1978:957)

Writing and documents have long been of interest within sociology studies of the internal workings of formal organizations.[12] But Ben Kafka's observation regarding historians is equally true of anthropologists: until recently they have "discovered all sorts of interesting and important things looking *through* paperwork, but seldom paused to look *at* it" (2009:341). Documents have been out of the sight of anthropologists for a few reasons. The traditional social science division of labor left formal organizations to sociologists, political scientists, and economists, while anthropologists concentrated on nonmodern, small-scale societies that were seen to operate without or independent of formal organizations.[13] When anthropologists turned to the investigation of formal organizations in the 1920s and 1930s, they brought with them the analytic tools and empirical emphases developed through the study of lineages, clans, age-sets, chiefs, and big men. Lloyd Warner, as a student of Radcliffe-Brown, contributed to the extension of ethnographic methods to industrial organizations as well as to the discovery of "informal relations" in the famous Hawthorne Western Electric study in the 1920s and 1930s.[14] In the 1980s, ritual, informal relations, and more recent concerns like gender, anomalous classification, attitudes, and bureaucratic ideologies were bundled together within the concept of organizational culture.[15] As the main mechanism and dominant emblem of the formal dimension of bureaucracy, documents received little attention.

Another reason that anthropologists have overlooked bureaucratic paperwork is that we produce and use documents in much the way the people we study do.[16] It is easy to criticize Gerald M. Britan and Ronald Cohen's recommendation to depend on organizational records for ethnographic documentation: "Unlike traditional field subjects, formal organizations generate large quantities of written records-logs, calendars, memos, minutes, plans, reports. . . . This record is the observer's basic account of social life in the organization. Its analysis and comparison with other documentary records and interviews about organizational activity provide the basis for an ethnographic depiction" (1980:23). On the other hand, rare is the institutional ethnography that doesn't draw on reports or organizational charts for insight into the workings of bureaucratic organizations.

Documents have also been overlooked because it's easy to see them as simply standing between the things that really matter, giving immediate access to what they document. Although the denial of the mediating role of documents, what William Mazzarella calls the "politics of immediation" (2006), may be a tactic of power and authority, their invisibility is also a phenomenological quality of mediators. As Patrick Eisenlohr has written, there is a "tendency of media to disappear in the act of mediation. In fact, media can only function as such if in the act of conveying something they are also capable of drawing attention away from their own materiality and technicality in order to redirect attention to what is being mediated" (2011:44).

To analytically restore the visibility of documents, to look *at* rather than *through* them, is to treat them as mediators, things that "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry" (Latour 2005:39). Just as discourse has long been recognized as a dense mediator between subjects and the world, we need to see graphic artifacts not as neutral purveyors of discourse, but as mediators that shape the significance of the linguistic signs inscribed on them.

One of the most fruitful insights to emerge from the general rehabilitation of materiality in the social sciences and humanities is that representations are material. Anthropologists have long recognized that things are signs, but until recently they have often ignored that signs are things. Within anthropology, the problem of the materiality of signs has been constructively developed within a Peircean framework. In contrast to a Saussurean semiotics that spirits signs from the material world into systems of ideation, materiality is at the heart of Peirce's approach to signs.[17] He argued that a sign must have "qualities independent of its meaning" (Peirce 1986:62). As Keane observes, "representations exist as things and acts in the world. . . . A medium of representation is not only something that stands 'between' those things it mediates, it is also a 'thing' in its own right" (1997:8).

The material qualities of graphic artifacts are mobilized in signification, but they also allow them to mediate many other processes besides semiosis. In the next section, I discuss some of these other processes and their relation to communication, but in the rest of this section I concentrate on the role of the material properties of documents in their semiotic engagement with their users, that is, how their material qualities contribute to their meanings.

The insight that representations are material encourages a shift from semiotic structures (texts) abstracted or abstractable from their material vehicles to the relationships of material forms and texts. As Roger Chartier writes, "The significance, or better yet, the historically and socially distinct significations, of a text, whatever they may be, are inseparable from the material conditions and physical forms that make the text

available to readers" (1995:22). Even the concept of writing as inscribed signs, though a convenient shorthand, abstracts from the concrete material forms through which inscriptions reach our eyes and hands.[18] People don't read writing. They read (and do much else with) files, road signs, forms, computer screens, reports, and visiting cards.

Webb Keane (2003:419) poses the problem of the interpretation of signs in general terms, arguing that it is governed by what he calls—generalizing the concept of linguistic ideology (Silverstein 1979)—a "semiotic ideology," "assumptions about what signs are and how they function in the world." The semiotic functions and nondiscursive uses of graphic artifacts are partly shaped by semiotic ideologies specific to graphic artifacts, what we can call "graphic ideologies." Graphic ideologies are sets of conceptions about graphic artifacts held by their users, including about what material qualities of an artifact are to count as signs, what sorts of agents are (or should be) involved in them, and what the roles of human intentions and material causation are. Graphic ideologies are obviously tied closely to linguistic ideologies but include notions specific to graphic representation. At the most basic level, such ideologies include conventions for the interpretation of graphic forms, determining, for example, that a page is scanned from left to right or that the size of characters is iconic of importance. Graphic ideologies may also include views about how artifacts are or ought to be produced and circulated, such as those embedded in Euro-American copyright laws or Mughal sanctions on the production of the imperial calligraphic mark (*tughra*). Graphic ideologies also define the normative relations between discourse genres and graphic forms (for example, that an official communication should be presented on letterhead) and the sort of person associated with a particular graphic form (a citizen is embodied in a petition with a distinctive graphic organization).

Graphic ideologies may also include more general conceptions regarding the ontology and authority of graphic artifacts and their capacity (or incapacity) to represent or produce truth, spirit, presence, life, and so forth.[19] Mark Lewis describes early Chinese writers, for example, who conflated what we would consider sign and object, crediting lines, trigrams, and hexagrams of central texts with vitality and generative powers (1999:260–62). Brinkley Messick (1993) describes orthodox Muslim views of writing as a questionable, even dangerous, though indispensable medium; the truth and authority of a written text can only be ensured by its animation in an oral-aural chain of transmission through men of good and pious character. Graphic ideologies range

from widely held cultural assumptions to refined understandings elaborated in technical works such as exegetical guides and office manuals. Some of these ideologies may offer competing interpretations and enjoin different uses for the same graphic genre or artifact.

This book describes a great variety of graphic genres in use within the Pakistani bureaucratic arena: files, office registers, minutes, organizational charts, plans, elevations, maps, visiting cards, "chits," petitions, powers of attorney, memos, letters, revenue records, regulations, reports, policy statements, and office manuals. While there are some commonalities to the use and ideological constructs related to most genres within Pakistani bureaucracy, each genre has its own pattern of use, distinct formal discursive characteristics, graphic conventions, material form, and interpretive frameworks through which readers produce and make sense of it. As I describe in chapter 3, the interpretation and use of most of these formal genres is governed by an official graphic ideology, elaborated in office manuals, which regulates the production and circulation of official artifacts, views words as corresponding to things through acts of reference, and identifies autographic authorship with agency. More diffuse understandings of these genres, of course, diverge from this official ideology.

Graphic ideologies mediate the significance of a variety of material qualities of graphic artifacts, most prominently organizations of graphic space. The graphic organization (along with other material qualities), functioning as an interpretive frame, may be a basic determinant of what discourse genre the inscriptions are taken to represent. In the case of filling out forms, as Donald Brenneis (2006) has shown, graphic organization is especially important in shaping responses because it may remain below the level of consciousness, an aspect of material qualities that Daniel Miller highlights as the "humility of objects" (1987:85–108). As we'll see, most documents within the Pakistani bureaucracy have their own peculiar spatial organization. Conventions of graphic organization, however, may hold across different genres, and even languages and scripts. The common format of books in many different European languages is an obvious example of continuity across languages. The continuity across scripts can be seen in the Pakistani bureaucratic arena, where English-language genres provide the paradigms for their counterparts in Urdu. Business cards, letters, legal documents, and entries on file note sheets written in Urdu maintain the organization of graphic units of corresponding English-language genres, even though Urdu is written in the right-to-left Perso-Arabic script. This suggests a distinction

between a language community and a "writing community" analogous to the distinction between a language community, a group of people sharing a linguistic code, and a speech community, which shares pragmatic norms across two or more languages (for example, ways of greeting shared by speakers of French and Italian). The graphic norms of the Pakistani bureaucratic writing community, defined through English-language genres, are shared by functionaries and clients writing in different languages and scripts.[20]

Discourse genres tend to be associated with a particular graphic organization, but in practice they do not always coincide, which creates a bivalent significance. As I'll show in chapter 2, for example, petitioners enact an ambiguous political subject by combining the discourse of a supplicant with the graphic organization used by bureaucrats in their memos. In other cases, the graphic organization and discourse can be in outright contradiction, as in the unusual case when a printed form was allegedly used to inscribe the discourse of a unique personal recommendation (chapter 2).

The significance of a particular mode of inscription varies with any number of contextual factors. Within the Pakistani bureaucratic arena, typing usually indexes the importance of the artifact, though this varies with the genre and the position of the author. The typing of note sheet entries in files usually indexes the importance of the matter, though the informally known inscriptional habits of the particular officer may make this association stronger or weaker (some officers are known to have most entries typed). In contrast, a request from a senior official or politician handwritten on the back of his business card indexes his personal interest and may be dealt with more speedily than a typed letter from his office would be. The availability of instruments for different inscriptional modes is another important contextual factor. That is, the significance of any particular mode is shaped by the options presumed to be available to the principal, much as the significance of phoning has changed with the widespread use of text messages. Handwritten petitions index the low status of the petitioner and are therefore treated with less concern than typed petitions, since Roman-script typewriters and computers are widely available. In contrast, handwritten Urdu petitions, while generally not accorded the same importance as English-language ones owing to differences in the status of the two languages, are not as devalued since Urdu typewriters are not in common use.[21] Returning to the business card example, since a senior officer, with an office staff at his disposal, obviously could have had the request typed,

the handwriting is not seen as an index of lack of sophistication or economic inability, but of personal attention.

Photocopying is another important mode of inscription with indexical significance. Contrasting print and handwritten manuscript copies, Messick observes:

> As a "copy" [a manuscript] is virtually the same thing as the original, not because it "looks like" the original in the photo-identity sense accomplished by mechanical reproduction, . . . but because it has passed through an authoritative process of human reproduction and collation. Although they apparently accomplish the same task, manuscript and print copies work with differing technologies and epistemologies. (1993:240)

This is an important insight, though the relevance of actual photo-identity to the social determination of a photocopy as a copy is probably overstated.[22] Such a clear contrast cannot be drawn with respect to photocopies within the Pakistani bureaucratic arena at least, where copies must be authorized as copies to be given official status. Since the use of a copy implies the (at least local or temporary) absence of the original, making visual comparison between original and copy impossible, the practice of human authorization is fundamental in most practices. Even authorized photocopies, such as those of file note sheets, may not be given the official standing of the original, since the "original" signatures of numerous officials are inscribed on the original, but only that of the single authorizing official appear on the copy.

The surface of graphic artifacts can also serve a range of semiotic functions. The material qualities of the artifact surface such as size, color, shape, and basic material can index the discourse genre that its inscriptions represent. Colored foolscap paper (8.5" by 13"), for example, frames writing as internal "notes" of the Pakistani government. Costly surfaces can indicate the importance of the communication and the wealth or high status of the principal. Certain kinds of legal representations in Islamabad have no legal standing unless executed on stamp papers of various rupee denominations. The physical composition of artifacts, how the surfaces are ordered and physically linked to one another, may also shape the significance of the discourse they carry, for example, by determining which graphic forms can be seen together. Assistants sometimes dupe their own officers into signing a file note by placing the part of note the officer would object to on a different sheet folded over, and then presenting the rest to him for a perfunctory signature. The detachability of Post-Its, artifacts rarely used within

Pakistani bureaucracy, was allegedly used by Asif Ali Zardari when his wife, Benazir Bhutto, was prime minister, as I discuss in chapter 3.

ASSOCIATIONS OF PAPER

Thus far, I have discussed how graphic artifacts convey significance in encounters with individual users, how they form associations through semiosis. However, graphic artifacts are simultaneously constituted by and constitutive of broader associations (Latour 2005) of people, places, and other things. We can distinguish two related ways that documents build on semiosis in composing associations. First, the circulation of graphic artifacts creates associations among people that often differ from formal organizational structures and draw people outside the bureaucracy into bureaucratic practices. Second, as they participate in the enactment of bureaucratic objects, that is, of their "referents" (legal houses, deserving petitioners, expropriable plots), graphic artifacts draw these objects into the associations formed through document circulation.

I will return later to the question of the relation of documents to their referents, but now I'd like to consider circulation and the question of how documents relate to formal bureaucratic organization. Situating writing entirely within the dynamics of administrative control is an example of a tendency "to excessively sociologize transaction in things" (Appadurai 1986:5). Over the last decade, work in diverse fields, including the history of the book, material culture, and science studies, has criticized the view that artifacts are simply reified social relations, that the forms, uses, and meanings of objects are simply a function of "social relations" or expressions or reflections of social orders and processes.[23] Latour argues that this view "is unable to explain why artifacts enter the stream of our relations, why we so incessantly recruit and socialize nonhumans. It is not to mirror, congeal, crystallize, or hide social relations, but to remake these very relations through fresh and unexpected sources of action" (1999:197). Rather than trying to abstract relations among people, Latour argues that we should replace the study of social institutions with that of "associations" (2005) or "object institutions" (1999:192) composed of humans and nonhumans.

Max Weber came close to this conception of bureaucracy when he wrote, "The combination of written documents and a continuous operation by officials constitutes the 'office' (*Bureau*)" (1978:219). But Weber characterized documents as the passive instruments of bureaucratic organizations formed through norms and rules rather than as constitutive of bureaucratic activities and the social relations formed through them. Consider how he explained that bureaucratic institutions often remain stable despite, perhaps even especially, through changes of regime.[24] He identified the "system of files" as one source of this stability, but made the sociological argument that it was mainly the effect of norms inculcated in bureaucratic functionaries (Weber 1978:988). Weber rejected the view of the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who argued that the French Revolution ultimately failed because it focused on eliminating people rather than records. Weber dismissed this "naïve idea of Bakuninism" because it "overlooks that the settled orientation of *man* for observing accustomed rules and regulations will survive independently of the documents" (1978:988 emphasis in original). We don't need to follow Weber in distributing explanations of bureaucratic order to one side or the other of a divide between the sociological and the technological. The "orientation" of bureaucrats is in part a bundle of habits of documentation and communication shaped in relation to the material intransigence of bureaucratic records. To characterize government by association is to describe how graphic artifacts translate and displace social relations within government and how they do not simply reproduce them in another media.

The idea that artifacts are constitutive of forms of sociality has been most developed in the study of consumer goods and technical artifacts, but it has also been productive in recent reconceptualizations of publics. Chartier describes how earlier scholarship on the history of the book in Europe concentrated on the distribution of different genres of books among the various groups that made up the society of the ancien régime. The assumption behind this focus was that social divisions—classes, professions, religious affiliations, and so forth—determined the production, circulation, and reception of different genres of works, which were viewed as reflections or expressions of those social divisions. Chartier criticizes this assumption, arguing that "works and objects produce their own social area of reception much more than they are produced by crystallized and previously existent divisions" (1994:14). Chartier argues that an understanding of the book must reverse the previous perspective by beginning with objects rather than social groups and designating the "social areas in which each corpus of texts and each genre of printed matter circulates" (7). A new public was created in France when existing texts were published and circulated in the format of thin blue chapbooks (the Bibliotèque bleue). Similarly, Michael Warner conceives

of a "kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation," a "space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself" (2002:50). As an ideal-typical sociocultural form that is organized by discourse and no other "external framework" such as a state or kinship, a public is a form of sociality that is especially dependent on the circulation of the artifacts of discourse (52).[25]

These insights on publics and circulation can be extended to other graphic artifacts and broadened from forms of socialty to associations. The public is merely a theoretically specified limiting case where discourse mediated by graphic artifacts is postulated to be the *only* determinant of social form. But all forms of writing contribute to their own unique forms of association, though not with the same liberty from other social processes as Warner's theoretical public. Even in bureaucracies, which have organizational determinants that compete with those of written discourse (hierarchies, divisions of labor), a similar though less influential function of written materials can be seen. As I discuss in chapter 2, a visiting card with a note from a patron knits together a network of affect and influence. Thus, even "face-to-face" relationships, conventionally conceptualized as the most unmediated form of social relationship, are the product of associations mediated by visiting cards and chits. Likewise, a file draws particular bureaucrats into a matter or excludes them as the file moves across their desk or is routed around them (chapter 3). A list of names entitled to compensation for expropriated land engenders an alliance (in legal terms, a "conspiracy") between senior bureaucrats and villagers, crossing the antagonisms between the state and the village (chapter 4). Unlike a public, these associations are not easy to identify and generalize about, partly because, being irregular and often relatively short-lived, they are rarely culturally typified like more common or stable forms of sociality that have labels such as "directorate," "family," or "*biradari*" (kinfolk or community). They are often much more transient and always more particular, irreducibly dependent on the peculiar characteristics of the graphic artifacts around which they form and the milieu in which they are taken up. The significance *and* function of bureaucratic inscriptions are heterogeneous. A property document and a government file may inhabit the same world of bureaucratic inscription, but they circulate differently and gather around themselves different people and things.

In scholarship on bureaucracy, *writing* has remained the very image of a formal organizational practice, the central semiotic technology for the coordination and control of organizations. This portrayal follows

the instrumental orientation of practitioners of bureaucracy themselves. Weber, for example, was well schooled in the administrative sciences (*Polizeywissenschaften*) that developed in early-nineteenth-century German universities to train government functionaries. The organization and circulation of written materials is conceptualized as isomorphic with formally structured social organization and interaction. Cases in which this condition is not found are seen as dysfunctional and therefore not properly bureaucratic.[26]

Although forms of sociality that are gathered around artifacts in the Islamabad bureaucratic arena are shaped in part by institutional structures, kin, friendship, and financial relationships, they are not merely materializations, projections, or realizations of these relationships constituted by other means. In other words, graphic artifacts are not simply the instruments of already existing social organizations. Instead, their specific discourses and material forms precipitate the formation of shifting networks and groups of official and nonofficial people and things. A methodological focus on associations formed around and through documents (rather than socially defined organizations) helps us address a classic problem raised by scholarship on the state: the difficulty of defining a state in organizational or institutional terms presents challenges to ethnographic study.[27] Rather than trying to define an institution and a terrain of operations, I describe the heterogeneous relations that come into being through the use and circulation of the artifacts that mediate almost all bureaucratic activities. As Veena Das and Deborah Poole have observed, documents "bear the double sign of the state's distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday" (2004:15). As we've seen, even the most modest documents of the South Asian bureaucratic traditions similarly aimed to create a boundary between the corporation and its servants, the government and its subjects, the public and the private. In practice, such documents often become mediators that incorporate aspects of the people, things, and processes they were designed to control from a distance.

Attention to the associations emerging through the production and circulation of documents can help us understand the relations between activities inside the offices and those outside. The concept of association and a methodological focus on graphic artifacts are thus complementary. Tracing associations allows us to capture the social range of graphic artifacts, which don't confine themselves to offices. And tracing the careers (Harper 1998) of graphic artifacts is a way of getting a handle on the boundaries of this bureaucratic association, since almost all

bureaucratic activities are mediated at some point by graphic artifacts. One might say that if you want to understand bureaucratic activities, follow the paper, things like Ahmed's possession certificate and house plan. Although we should not lose sight of the ideological distinction between the state and the society it governs, the concept of the association can help gather people, things, and processes that come together across a fuzzy border between the state apparatus and its social surround and that indeed help to define that border. Ahmed's possession certificate joins him and his house to bureaucrats and offices even as it defines the boundary between them by excluding him from its authorized production.

This approach also helps us to address what is something of a paradox when viewed from the standpoint that bureaucratic writing is mainly about fixing the relation between words and things: In Islamabad, even though documents are known to be easily and frequently manipulated, they nevertheless remain an essential basis for action. How can this be? As I demonstrate, these documents often function less as instruments of documentation than as tools for building coalitions or oppositions among government functionaries, property owners, businessmen, and builders (see also Tarlo 2001). Artifacts precipitate and graphically represent (partially) the formation of shifting networks and groups of functionaries and clients. When these social organizations compete with rather than converge with formal bureaucratic divisions, such artifacts (rather than the formal organizational entities) are the effective agents of bureaucratic actions shaping the built environment. Every kind of graphic artifact has its own politics (Winner 1980). These may be large in scale, as when the maps and reports of the Master Plan of Islamabad help to constitute alliances and antagonisms among the army, bureaucracy, politicians, and business groups or Bengalis, Muhajirs, and Punjabis. Or they may be small in scale, as when Ahmed and the inspector came to terms over the issuance of an inspection certificate for his newly built house. Graphic artifacts themselves help constitute the scales at which they operate.

In addition to mediating semiosis, graphic artifacts as things are involved in nonsemiotic events and happenings. The study of writing must attend not only to communicative practices but to the social life of things (Appadurai 1986). The two are closely intertwined, but they are never identical. As I'll argue for files (chapter 3), lists (chapter 4), and maps (chapter 5), it is often precisely the disjuncture between communicative processes and the life of the artifact supporting them that

shapes the significance and consequences of the graphic artifact for its producers and audience. At different points in its social career, a graphic artifact may be duplicated, bound to other artifacts, supplemented, abridged through the removal of parts, displayed, transported, locked up, defaced, destroyed, stored, misplaced, lost, forgotten, stolen, and bought. Some of these actions, such as the circulation of files within an office, may be steps of relatively regimented practices. Others, such as the theft or "mislaying" of a file on a controversial matter, may be occasional events. Through such events, artifacts move through different sociocultural categories, becoming simultaneously or successively, for example, information bearers, ritual objects, commodities, and fuel.

Actions upon artifacts may be the direct result of the discourses mediated by an artifact, such as the order to transport a file written on the file itself. Actors' projections of the discourses an artifact might mediate can also shape the career of the artifact, as in the destruction of incriminating documents in the face of imminent investigations. In other cases, such as the loss of components of a file due to poor binding, the cause of artifactual events might have virtually nothing to do with the semiotic processes they mediate, though these events too shape discursive possibilities. The material and discursive aspects of bureaucratic representations provide different handles for connections with other people and things. The agents and tactics that engage with bureaucratic discourses (such as narratives, laws, and classification schemes) can be very different from those engaged with the artifactual vehicles of those discourses. Officers of the East India Company did not challenge Mughal tax policy; rather, they undermined the policy by producing and distributing duty-free passes. Similarly, the owners of expropriated land, as I show in chapter 4, failed to reshape expropriation laws and policies, but they virtually took control of the expropriation process by intervening in the production of required documents and determining matters of fact for courts to consider.

Attention to how artifacts perdure, circulate, change, and cease to exist takes us beyond notions of information "storage" to an understanding of how material artifacts shape the discourses they mediate. Practices of consulting records, for example, are often far more important to their function than the fact that they have been generated and maintained. The quiet return of a case file to the (perhaps temporary) oblivion of the record room can settle an issue as much as the signature on a decision. We have to understand processes of recontextualization, which are at once material and semiotic. In recent years, lin-

guistic anthropologists have emphasized the way the significance of texts is shaped by their relation to a theoretically unspecifiable variety of contextual factors. Since the significance of texts depends on contextualization, through recontexualization they are open to semiotic transformation in a number of dimensions. For orally mediated texts, Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman identify various dimensions of semiotic transformation: framing, form (from grammar to genre), function, indexical grounding, and translation (1990:75–6). All these dimensions of transformation are important for artifactually mediated discourse as well. But to this we can add that these transformations may be driven by nonsemiotic events involving the artifact itself. In this respect, the producer of graphic artifacts may have much less control over his or her text than a speaker. Accounts of writing often emphasize the greater fixity of meaning of artifactually mediated texts in relation to orally mediated ones because of the perduring character of graphic forms. Perdurance is an abstraction covering the widely varying durability of different graphic media. But more important, it is precisely this perdurance that affords more radical recontextualizations and allows them, in Latour's terms, to translate a wider array of interests than that allowed by speech.

The efficacy of graphic artifacts comes as much from how they circulate as from what they say. In a lively passage concerning writing in nineteenth-century West Africa, Jack Goody describes how peoples without writing tended to consider the written treaty "subject to exchange or capture like other material objects" (1986:100–1). When the Asante conquered a neighboring power, they took over its "books" (treaties). Such captures voided treaties for the British. By contrast, the Asante tried to assume the place of the conquered signatories to the treaty and expected the British to adhere to the original terms. Goody characterizes this as a misunderstanding of writing stemming from the equation of "the paper with its contents, the medium with the message" (1986:101). The Asante may have misunderstood the graphic genre of the treaty (or, more neutrally, may have simply been insisting on a different interpretation). But the example shows how radically circulation can recontextualize a document.

Many of the features of bureaucratic writing that have led to its characterization as decontextualized (impersonal voicing, minimal use of expressions referring to the writing context) come about precisely because the producers imagine that their writings might be radically recontextualized or drawn into a new association. As Briggs and Bauman observe, "the decontexualization and recontextualization of texts . . . [are] two aspects of the same process" (1990:75). An artifact is decontextualized, disconnected from some of the elements it was associated with, only by being recontextualized, that is, brought into association with other elements. The perdurance of the artifact, as Silverstein and Greg Urban (1996) note, belies the transformation effected through recontextualization, so that transformations are frequently taken as the original.

Let me now turn to the second way that documents build associations, that is, through involvement in the enactment of the objects they talk about, such as authorized mosques, expropriable plots, compensatable houses, and so forth. Weber observed, "Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through knowledge. This is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational" (1978:225). According to him, this knowledge takes two forms: technical knowledge and "knowledge of facts" (225). Writing here is seen as a means of materializing reference and predication to establish and communicate a stable relation between discourse and individuals, actions, objects, and environments. Writing establishes the stable relation between words and things necessary for bureaucracies to effectively implement regimes of control. In both the self-understanding of bureaucrats and classic accounts of bureaucracy, documents represent or engage with autonomous entities, realities "in the world" independent from the processes through which they are produced. Suzanne Briet, a pioneering theorist of documents, in answer to the question "What is documentation?" argued that a document must have been "preserved or recorded toward the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of proving a physical or intellectual phenomenon" (2006:10). And yet social scientists have grown increasingly skeptical where questions of evidence are concerned, highlighting the mediations that saturate the production of facts. Recent scholarship has shown how bureaucratic documents are produced, used, and experienced through procedures, techniques, aesthetics, ideologies, cooperation, negotiation, and contestation. To what extent and in what way is the efficacy of bureaucratic texts due to their capacity to represent, to stand for something else, to be, as Brian Cantwell Smith puts it, "*about* or *oriented toward* some other entity, structure, or patch of the world" (1996:13)?

Until revived in science and technology studies, the study of how words refer to and describe the world (denotation) had fallen on hard times within the social sciences. Much of linguistic anthropology has

been devoted to criticizing the folk wisdom of European language communities that see "reference or propositionality" as the "essence of language" (Woolard 1998:13). Cultural anthropologists have similarly emphasized how denotation is "overdetermined" by the sorts of "social" processes I have been describing, leaving the objects little role in their discursive definition. Anthropologists have observed that documents, like other forms of material culture, such as uniforms, cars, and official buildings, are central to the everyday representation and, thereby, the reproduction of states (Das 2004; Hansen and Stepputat 2001; Messick 1993; Poole 2004; Sharma and Gupta 2006). Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, for example, argue that "proceduralism"—routine, repetitive practices of rule following—and its violation are central to "how the state comes to be imagined, encountered, and reimagined by the population" (2006:12). Many other recent treatments of documents invoke a form-content distinction in emphasizing the greater social salience of form. Annelise Riles, for example, argues that aesthetics—"properly patterned language" (1998:387)—rather than the "meaning" of the document guided the process of negotiating an NGO document sponsored by the United Nations.

This emphasis on the aesthetics and broad significance of documents is a welcome corrective to an exclusive focus on the knowledge function of records. Using this perspective, I will show in chapter 3 that the powers of graphic artifacts depend on their place within a regime of authority and authentication. However, the focus on the normative commitment to following rules or on the aesthetics of form can lead to the view that the specificities of individual documents are secondary, even unimportant, beside their formulaic and pro forma aspects. What this emphasis obscures is the problematics of enacting objects at the center of bureaucratic practices. For Sharma and Gupta (2006:12), the importance of "observing the correct bureaucratic rule" is evidenced by the divergence of documentation from the reality it purports to represent, as in their example of a supervisor accusing a subordinate of cheating because the subordinate irregularly documented a meeting the supervisor must have known the subordinate actually attended. But, in accounting for the efficacy of documents, one does not have to choose between proceduralism and reference. Procedurally correct documents compel compliance not because the documents they generate supersede the realities they purport to represent, but because, much like scientific protocols, bureaucratic procedures normatively embed documents in those realities (Latour 1999:24–79). Particular utterances and referential processes, even when they are compromised, account for much of the efficacy of individual documents. Discursive logics, concepts, norms, and social relationships can often account for classification schemes, such as the criteria for a house to be eligible for expropriation compensation or the distinction between authorized and unauthorized mosques. Such accounts, however, break down in explaining how *this* came to be a compensatable house (chapter 4) or *this* an unauthorized mosque (chapter 5). To understand these latter processes, we need to account for how documents engage (or do not engage) with people, places, and things to make bureaucratic objects, for how bureaucratic objects are enacted in practice.

Graphic artifacts are a kind of semiotic technology. Semiotic technologies are material means for producing, interpreting, and regulating significance for particular ends. They include rituals, clay tablets, the telegraph, PowerPoint, cryptography, and email, to name just a few. The study of semiotic technologies has much to offer our broader understanding of artifacts and materiality. Semiotic technologies present us with an immediate challenge to come to terms with both their meaning and their material efficacy. Although both anthropology and science and technology studies are concerned with representation and materiality, they have had different emphases. Anthropology has tended to highlight how the material qualities of things shape what they mean to their users. In contrast, science and technology studies has stressed how the material qualities of artifacts shape what they do and what humans can do with them. This study of graphic artifacts encourages a comprehensive social theory of material artifacts by synthesizing these insights.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Like the government activities this book is about, my own ethnographic research was mediated to a great extent by paper. My visiting cards, bearing an unauthorized reproduction of my university's seal (which, the department administrator had told me with a wink, graduate students aren't allowed to use), were always an element of my initial meetings with government officials. One official preferred that I put my inquiries in written form, and in response to my signed list of numbered questions I received a detailed account of the workings of the office that handles mosque issues, generously prepared by a junior officer.

I had begun my research at the National Archives of Pakistan. I thought there would be a wealth of well-kept records on such a cele-

brated national urban planning project, only to find that the few records there that pertained to the early planning of Islamabad were still under seal. Not long after, I met a CDA officer with an interest in the history of the city who remembered hearing about some old records stored somewhere. He enthusiastically led me on a two-sector scavenger hunt, but we abandoned the search after hopefully opening several storage rooms filled with broken-down furniture. Later, one day while drinking tea with assistants in the record room of the Urban Planning Directorate, I looked up and spotted stacks of files snowed with years of brown dust on a high shelf set into the wall. None of the clerks knew what they were or how or when they got there. After climbing a ladder and browning myself in their retrieval (under the amused gaze of the clerks), I was elated to discover they included many files from the early 1960s for which I had been searching.[28]

As it turned out, it was much easier for me to read what are called "current files," that is, not archives, but active files and other documents that were currently in use within the two main governing bodies of Islamabad, the Capital Development Authority and the Islamabad Capital Territory Administration.[29] As in other South Asian states, these records are normally not open to researchers, the public, or individuals, which is why Ahmed couldn't see the official file on his house.[30] Active records were first made available to me by a planner whom I'd been talking with for a few weeks. One day, as his account of the development of a sector in western Islamabad grew more elaborate, he saw the confusion growing on my face. He broke off his explanation and told me I just really needed to read the files to understand what he was saying. I thought this meant the end of our discussion, but he got up and led me into the record room of his directorate and, to my surprise, asked one of the assistants to give me the files covering the matter. Before long, he invited me to look at any files that interested me. After seeing the richness of these materials, I started to pursue them in other offices.

On my first attempt to get access to other records, as I describe in chapter 2, I tried my own hand at submitting a written request for documents, which circulated through the bureaucratic hierarchy in an informal simulation of how regular petitions are handled. The mixed success of this petition led me to adopt a more informal method, trying to recreate the sort of relationship with other officers that had prompted the officer to grant me access in the first case. My efforts to get access to documents had another unexpected benefit: it gave me a clear reason to talk with busy officers who expect those who meet them to have a

matter to be dealt with, something more definite than talking with them about their work. In pursuing documents, albeit not my own, I was like most of those who meet with government officials, whose business is defined in the end by the acquisition of particular documents.

Initially, like many of those who engage the bureaucracy, I was frustrated by how slowly my efforts bore fruit. I managed to see the files of the ICTA (Islamabad Capital Territory Administration) regarding mosques only after nearly eight months of almost daily hours-long visits with the officer in charge of this division. However, I soon realized that these protracted efforts allowed me to witness office doings firsthand. The way that officers often see a number of people at once, which I discuss in chapter 2, was a great boon to my research, since I was usually welcome to sit (with varying degrees of obtrusiveness) among the other visitors as they discussed their business with officers.

In many offices, I was kindly given work space and delegated the authority to request files from the record rooms, much like a junior officer, or even to fetch them myself from their cabinets, like an assistant. While reviewing files and other documents, I had the opportunity to ask the officers and staff who had produced them about their contents as well as how they shaped bureaucratic processes and outcomes. Officers and staff within both the ICTA and the CDA were usually eager to discuss their work, including the records whose production and circulation consumes so much of their time. Over the course of my research, I was given broad access to files covering a wide range of matters from the early 1960s to 2007, including public relations, private houses, government housing, mosques, slum redevelopment, land expropriation, land revenue, mosques, urban planning, and new private housing societies.

Through my many visits to a printing firm to have my wedding invitations made (I returned to the United States briefly to get married in December 1996), I developed a strong friendship with the owner's son and soon found his office to be a congenial site to drop in for tea and talk with a wide variety of clients, including government officers, journalists, lawyers, calligraphers, and businessmen of all kinds. Through conversations with him and his staff and looking over the materials the firm printed (business cards, government reports, real estate brochures, and of course wedding invitations), I learned an immense amount about the production and aesthetics of printed materials. Here, I even got involved in the work when some developers learned of my interest in their promotional brochures and recruited me to rewrite the materials I had been analyzing.

In the Islamabad bureaucratic arena, I was much more observer than participant, but my troubles with car papers gave me a firsthand, if short-lived, experience of the absurdity and power of documents that Pakistanis commonly expressed to me. I had bought a Daihatsu Charade whose original engine had been replaced by a more economical diesel engine. The mechanical work was competent, though after a few months a mechanic told me the weight of the heavier diesel engine was causing the CV joints to break down. There were problems with the car's documentation too. When I tried to sell it, a buyer more careful than I scrutinized the car's "book," as the small bound packet of registration documents is known, and discovered that the engine number and chassis number had been reversed. The buyer immediately lost interest. My friends laughed but insisted with a graveness I did not yet understand that no one would buy it at any price until the error had been corrected.

Initially, I thought it would be no problem. It was an obvious clerical error—I would simply show the registration authorities that the two numbers actually matched the ones engraved on the two different parts of the car and have a new book made. Unfortunately, it was not that simple. After repeated visits to the office that handles car registration in Rawalpindi, where I was living at the time, I finally spoke with the director. The officer was very sympathetic but stated bluntly that the paper documents took precedence over the metal engravings and, while this was obviously a matter of transposition, from a legal standpoint the book might just as well have been the documentation of another car altogether. It didn't help that the car had been registered in Dera Ismael Khan, a town in the Kyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly the Northwest Frontier Province) that was known for the rehabilitation of the appearance and documentation of stolen vehicles. He told me that the problem could only be fixed by taking the car for a physical inspection by officials there. Friends I consulted were skeptical that even officials in Dera Ismael Khan would make the change. With a substantial portion of my research grant sunk in this car, what had seemed like a joke became very alarming. In the end, I paid someone who worked for a friend of a friend to go to Dera Ismael Khan and have the numbers put in their correct location. The man didn't want to say how he'd done it.

Ironically, the kind of document that conventionally plays a central role in ethnographic research, field notes (think of the pictures of Malinowski sitting among the Trobrianders, notebook on his lap), remained in the background of most of my interactions within offices.

Ethnographic note taking is always subject to local ways of viewing writing. Matthew Engelke writes about the challenges of ethnography among African Christians who reject the Bible as a worldly material obstacle to "live and direct faith" (2007:35). They would have seen his attempts to take notes in religious meetings in the same light, as an impediment to direct experience of the divine. As I show in the pages that follow, writing in the bureaucracy is a serious and fraught business. My own note taking during the early period of my research clearly made some bureaucrats uneasy. For this reason, with the exception of formal interviews, I rarely took notes during my conversations within offices but would hastily scribble my recollections at my first opportunity and flesh them out later.

Many of the government employees I met in the office became friends and welcomed me into their homes to meet their families over tea and meals. Beyond the office, I also talked with a broad range of Islamabad residents, including house owners, residents of informal settlements, imams, bankers, politicians, shopkeepers, architects, and real estate dealers. In a large number of cases, I managed to discuss a pending matter with both the residents and the "concerned" bureaucrats and to read the documents produced and maintained by participants inside and outside the bureaucracy, as in the vignette that opens this introduction.

To become familiar with different parts of the Islamabad, I lived for several months each in three neighborhoods of the city: in the oldest sector, G-6, dominated by government housing of low and middling rank; the elite area of E-7, with its wealthy population of generals, diplomats, and businessmen; and F-10, a newer neighborhood containing a variety of well-to-do business families, from chicken farmers to oil distributors. Watchmen (*chowkidars*) who guard the gates of many houses in these sectors were a source of immense insight into neighborhood goings-on, and we would occasionally crowd into a little guardhouse for tea made over an electric heater in humble replication of domestic hospitality. To understand the specificity of Islamabad within the Pakistani urban context, I lived in a neighborhood of small lanes in northern Rawalpindi for the year of my research.

Many readers will note the contrast between the great detail of my descriptions of documents and my indistinct portrayal of most people I discuss. With the exception of public figures, the names I use for all individuals are pseudonyms and most individuals in this work are described only by their rank and directorate, by their position within social settings outside the bureaucracy such as villages, neighborhoods,

and slums, or by their business. This is only partly an effect of the focus of the book on graphic artifacts. Beyond the usual concerns for the anonymity of informants, there are others particular to the Pakistani bureaucratic arena. This book will also be situated within the writing practices I describe, and so I must keep in mind the possibility that my writing will produce unforeseen results. Although most quotations are uncontroversial opinions or open secrets, such statements might expose the speaker when they take written form. The importance of maintaining such discretion was made clear to me in various ways. One condition of my access to active files in the Auqaf Directorate, which oversees mosques and shrines, was that I allow my notebook to be copied for review by the assistant director. While no pages were ever removed during this procedure, one of the office assistants meticulously whited out his own name, which I, forgetting to use a pseudonym, had scrawled above a note about some casual remarks he made concerning the administration of mosques. It is my intention to avoid reinscribing his or others' names here.

Similar concerns shape my identification of files. As I have noted, files are normatively confidential and inaccessible to anyone not part of a "concerned" division of the bureaucracy. However, I fit into the very networks of prohibited file circulation that I was studying. Like many things done by officials, passing files to me was not an official action. Additionally, the files I examined were overwhelmingly active files, written on by current officers and staff members. Identifying files too precisely would also identify both the officers who wrote on them and those who kindly gave me access to them, exposing them to potential charges of wrongdoing as their actions or writings are recontextualized in a public forum. While the lack of identification of these sources may lessen the scholarly authority of my account, such identification would in any case not serve the usual function of providing others with the possibility of evaluating my work in light of the actual sources. The active files I examined are never likely to find their way to "the archive," and many of the inactive files were, unfortunately, destroyed after I read them. The larger point, however, is that this book is less about documents as traces of what happened and more about their active role in the flow of bureaucratic process and the production of the city.

Just as paper artifacts mediated the government activities I observed and my own ethnographic research, they also organize this book. Each chapter is focused on the discussion of a particular graphic artifact or

set of graphic artifacts. The book can be roughly divided into two parts. Throughout this work, I emphasize the relations among place, people, and paper, but the first three chapters thematize each of these in turn. Chapter 1 charts the role of the Master Plan in formatting the space of Islamabad according to political and bureaucratic order, and the more routine documents that address its contradictions. Chapter 2 shows how visiting cards and *parchi*s (chits) on the one hand and petitions on the other differently shape the ways people engage the bureaucracy and enact different political subjects. Chapter 3 gives an overview of paperwork through an account of how files individualize and collectivize agency and facilitate the pursuit of private projects through the mechanisms of government. These three chapters contribute to an overall picture of how sociospatial organization, relations between citizens and bureaucrats, and paperwork constitute government in Islamabad.

The second part of the book traces the relations among place, people, and paper in the government of specific projects. Chapter 4 shows how lists of villagers to be compensated for expropriated land and other documents of the expropriation process have figured in a conflict that has brought the planned westward expansion of the city to a virtual halt. Chapter 5 describes the role of maps in the failing efforts of the government to control the unauthorized construction of mosques in the context of sectarian contestation of sites and officially sanctioned Islamic opinions on how land may be appropriated for prayer.

The conclusion traces the broad story of postcolonial paper in Islamabad and suggests ways that paperwork in Pakistan can illuminate the politics of documents more generally, including newer electronic forms.