TELUGU ETHNIC IDENTITY
IN MAURITIUS

ANANDA DEVI NIRSIMLOO-ANENDEN

ProQuest Number: 10672740

ProQuest 10672740

A B S T R A C T

The thesis deals with different aspects of ethnicity in the multi-racial society of Mauritius. It considers the significance of ethnic identity for the sub-groups of the Indian community, both in a village situation and at the global social level in the country. Further, it attempts to elucidate the ways in which ethnic identity can be used as a resource, which each group can consciously manipulate in order to obtain specific privileges in the wider social context.

Part One of the thesis deals with the village situation. Two adjacent villages are compared and the different configurations of ethnicity in each are identified and related to specific economic and social conditions in the villages as well as to the make-up of the groups themselves. It is suggested that there is a correlation between the bounded, restrictive context of the 'plantation-village' — which one of the village closely approximates — and a less overt configuration of ethnic differentiation; whereas in the other village studied, a more open-ended social and economic situation, creating avenues of social mobility and economic entrepreneurship, allows overt ethnic rivalries and separation to emerge. It is not however solely a matter of context, but also one of content that allows ethnic identity to assume different guises in the society. Identity seems to spring from a deeply imbedded notion of substance, akin to the idea of 'genus' and blood, which is an immutable part of the individual's social and psychological personality.

Part Two of the thesis focuses on one group of Mauritian society, the Telugu-speaking group, which is defined as a regional and linguistic sub-group of the Indian community, but which adheres to a more distinctly ethnic self-definition. In a substantial sense, the group's identity hinges on institutional features of kinship and marriage. In fact, kinship as a real order of relation and as a symbolical link is the underlying fabric that holds the group together and gives it a sense of its own identity.

In order to validate its identity vis-à-vis other, more cogently organised groups, however, it has to use other parameters of identity. This is done by emphasising its distinctiveness in terms of religion, language and cultural norms, which represent overt, surface boundaries demarcating the group's specificity. This is seen in terms of a structuralisation of ethnicity, or ethnicisation, whereby the group's substantial identity is translated into a consciously manipulative one. In this way, ethnicity as an order of being becomes transformed into ethnicity as a resource in the plural society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF CHARTS

LIST OF MAPS

To my parents,

and my little son Ashwin

who was born while this

thesis was being written

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

INTRODUCTION

I. THEORETICAL PREMISES

The subject of this thesis is one which is of both heuristic import and emotional appeal: the concept of identity is inherent in the development and survival of all kinds of human conglomerations, as well as one which is intensely concerned with the individual; for this reason, the social scientist may find it a useful, if frustratingly elusive tool with which to study certain social groupings, but in dealing with identity, he also finds himself confronted with emotional responses from the groupings he is studying, which treaten to colour and distort his data rather than help elucidate it. The study of identity, in particular ethnic identity, is thus fraught with difficulties, since one has to handle data which can become psychologically as well as politically explosive.

Yet, it is one which is becoming increasingly central in the study of complex societies, where one finds oneself amidst distinct groups that are interacting, permutating, and competing with each other. Most societies now foster the ethnic problem, since homogeneity is no longer the norm, and migration and improved communications have allowed most to acquire, at least partly and temporarily, conditions of heterogeneity. In particular, countries of the third world which have had a history of colonisation tend to retain, after the acquisition of independence, such a heterogeneity, and find themselves obliged to accommodate it as best they can within the constitutional and social framework. This frequently leads to problems both in the human dimension and in the political dimension, problems that are not necessarily as blatant as the South African one, but that can be discerned even beneath the superficial harmony that may exist between the groups; and even this harmony is at best a precarious one, swaying on a fragile equilibrium of sorts, sustained by the ever-constant surveillance of the governments in order that no appearance of injustice should emerge on the surface and lay the ground open for ethnic-based prevarications.

The former sugar colonies provide us with perfect examples of
societies grappling with the problem: their history of pluralism
dates back to the nineteenth century, and this young history lays
out all the complexities of achieving the appropriate balance between
the different groups composing the society without a subsequent loss
of identity and without the complete hegemony of one group upon the
others.

Of course, this hegemony does frequently exist, even if it is not
immediately discernible. In Mauritius, the colonial rulers formerly
sanctioned the sole authority of the white Franco-Mauritian planters
over the affairs of the island, and no other group was allowed to
have a say until the coloured group movement in 1838. But in the
permutation of groups gaining access to power in the course of the
island's history, the one fact that remained constant until now is that
this has always been seen in terms of ethnic identity and in terms of
the accession of one particular group to the power structure. Ethnic
identity and the plural situation are in this sense closely linked,
since the exacerbation of identity happens mainly in the plural
context and in contexts where the dominating-dominated opposition
obtains.

The study of such societies has in fact rendered more imperative the
need for significant terminologies to describe the different orders
of compartmentalisation existing in these societies. One cannot see
them any more as a unified whole with a monolithic structure, as
traditional anthropological material used to be seen. Theories of
pluralism, ethnicity, networks, transactionalism all express, in
different ways, this diversity, laying a stress on different features
of compartmentalisation, whether political, economic, or cultural.

Pluralism is the most explicitly group-oriented of these theories,
since it describes by definition a society made up of several groups --
classified, in different theories of pluralism, as racial groups,
ethnic groups, or cultural groups. The first theories of pluralism
were mainly applicable to societies with immigrant populations, where
several racial group interacted in one common economic or political
sphere. In fact, most theories of pluralism go back to Furnivall's
writings on the subject in the context of Netherlands India

(Furnivall 1939). Furnivall's distinction between culturally
homogeneous and culturally diverse societies provided social
scientists with a useful analytical tool with which to analyse these
different social types. But it is probable that Furnivall stated,
in theoretical terms, what had already been a concern of political
order for many West-European governments. The link between
colonialism and pluralism was an inevitable one in so far as one could
not avoid seeing certain societies classified as plural as being a
direct consequence of colonialism, and therefore as constituting a
political problem over and above a socio-cultural one. These societies
were in fact 'created' by the colonial situation – importation and
implantation of labour, the control of economic resources by a small
dominant group, the settling down of merchants and traders on the
fringes of the budding society, and the actual demographical growth
of the population around the nucleus of an economic enterprise. In
areas where there lived already a native people, colonisation meant
imposing a new social order upon an already existing one, as in Fiji.
In others, like Mauritius, the population was brought together through
successive waves of colonisation, where a haphasard agglomeration of
cultural groups was welded together to form a society.

Furnivall thought that the two salient features of 'plural' societies
as he conceived them,were the lack of a common social *will* and *want*
among the groups, and the restriction of interaction to the economic
sphere. The absence of consensus prevented the groups from integrating
and cohering on a social level, and reinforced the cleavages and
rivalries between them, and the fact that in many cases, each ethnic
group occupied one occupational sphere meant that in spite of economic
cooperation, the groups remained separated and distinct even on the
economic level (Furnivall 1939; 1948).

Even though Furnivall's definition of pluralism restricted the term
to colonial tropical societies at one point in time and did not go
further, the two features that he stressed as being important were
indeed essential to the formulation of subsequent theories of
pluralism. He isolated a basis of interaction and a basis of
separation. Subsequent theories all built upon the two processes
of integration and separation involved in plural societies as the

pivots regulating social systems and social interaction as well as
political equilibrium or conflict.

Conflict was held to be a latent feature of plural societies by those
theorists who thought that separation was a stronger force than
integration. M.G. Smith in particular described the typical plural
society as being held together solely by political forces and as being
composed of institutionally separate groups (Smith 1960). In fact, his
early theories of pluralism were largely based on Furnivall's own
framework, although Smith tried to draw a model that was more widely
applicable than Furnivall's. The colonial tropical society was thus,
according to Smith, the most extreme and politically significant form
of pluralism, with the society being constituted of internally
autonomous and institutionally differentiated units, which were only
held together by the power exerted by one dominant numerical minority.
Conflict was thus impending in such societies, since any change in the
political structure would immediately create an imbalance that would
lead to violence and disintegration.

This approach has been strongly criticised on several grounds, but
mainly on Smith's definition of the term 'institution' and on the
static nature of his model. He saw the term 'institution' as meaning
all the cultural, religious, kinship systems exhibited by the groups,
as well as their property rights and economic systems. He excluded
the political systems for the obvious reason that he believed that
the only unifying element in the society was the political system
(Smith 1960). Rex, (1971), argued that one could not describe the
groups as having diverse institutions of property and economy at a
time when Carribean (and other colonial tropical) societies rested
upon the plantation and slavery, and that further, the exclusion of
the political system from the institutional system was unjustified.
The institutional approach further implies that the groups are total
systems within themselves, autonomous and rigidly bounded units that
are not open to change or fluctuations of identities. In fact, the
whole issue of ethnicity does not come at all within the compass of
Smith's approach. This seems surprising, for the type of pluralism
Smith was mainly concerned with, i.e. the colonial plural society

was very strongly shaped by ethnic allegiances and conflicts. But
the fact that his approach did not go beyond the conflict incumbent
upon political changes and the state of chaos that was supposed to
result from it meant that he did not take into consideration the other
factors that could either prevent conflict, or resolve it, such as
cross-cutting cleavages, fluctuating allegiances and the general
dynamism of ethnicity which allowed it to be cohesive as well as
divisive. This is the point that Cross makes in his criticism of
Smith's approach, namely, that it does not tell us anything about
"the process of acculturation or the way that ethnic identity may
"soften" (or "harden") by contact with other ethnic groups within the
society" (Cross 1971:485).

Smith later abandoned the emphasis of his theory on institutions to
adopt a theory based on political incorporation as being determinant of
the type of pluralism exhibited by a society. Incorporation is the
means by which one fits into a specific niche, either by direct
membership, or by linkage to a particular polity through sectional
membership, or by membership to an exclusive, corporate group. These
types of incorporation create different types of pluralism, which Smith
classifies as cultural, social, and structural pluralism. The third
type of incorporation results in a combination of both cultural and
social pluralism, which creates the state of structural pluralism as
exemplified by the colonial plural societies. He did not however
change his definition of the latter: they were still characterised by
lack of consensus and integration, and held together by one politically
dominant group, and he did not believe that interpersonal relationships could
transform or affect the social divisions: his theory was group-oriented,
and conflict oriented. If one took away the power of the dominant group,
there remained nothing to keep the groups together (Smith 1965; 1974).

The key elements in M.G. Smith's model are thus:

(1) differential incorporation into exclusive groups, bringing about
     structural pluralism

(2) lack of shared values and social consensus

(3) unity brought about by regulation

(4) domination by one minority cultural group

(5) change in the political and social structure accompanied
     by violence and conflict

Although these conditions do **describe** satisfactorily the situation in
the colonial tropical societies which Furnivall considered to be the
phenotypes of plural societies, it is not a satisfactory *theory* of
pluralism as such. It is descriptive of one particular type of
pluralism at one particular moment in time. It however fails to capture
a diachronic dimension which seems to be essential in understanding
such societies. It fails to capture the essence of dynamism that
characterises ethnic relations and the power of individual networks in
creating an inter-weaving of interests in the society. In short, what
Smith calls the structural type of pluralism is a super imposed
condition on the society, and it does not include variables of change,
time, and choice as factors influencing the development of the society.
It does not have any generative or predictive power, and in a way, its
explanatory power is also limited in the sense that, although it is a
'conflict' model, it does not, in Cross' terms, "analyse the
circumstances that create conflict" (Cross 1971: 481).

The isolates that Smith based his model upon do however have an implicit
heuristic value which cannot be overlooked. As they become subjected to
changing patterns and trends, they permute, are strengthened or weakened,
and finally form another configuration. Smith's model is based on
separation, avoidance of contact, and a coercive force exerted by one
dominant group. Once the political head is removed, or changed, one can
logically assume that all the groups will start moving towards a more
equal status, and will interact in several spheres, probably on competitive
terms. A subsequent, · idealistic state is when equality is more or less
achieved -- or rather, inequality does not have an ethnic basis any more --
and social interaction is characterised by consensus. Alternatively, it
can so happen that in the course of competition, the ethnic allegiances
become exarcerbated and polarise even more strongly, so that instead of
consensus, a state of partial or total segregation is reached. It is in
the course of such changing trends that ethnicity becomes significant,
and changes in value or intensity.

The above hypothesis is based on a continuum model of pluralism
which expresses the concept of pluralism as a condition of heterogeneity
influenced by processes of integration and separation between the
ethnic groups constituting the society. This approach is adhered to
mainly by Kuper and Van den Berghe, who see pluralism as existing in
degrees in societies that are compartmentalised in various ways and
segmented into corporate groups (Van den Berghe 1967). The continuum
approach incorporates both the conflict model of pluralism and what
has been called the 'equilibrium' model of pluralism (Kuper 1971: 8).

Before we go into the advantages of the continuum approach, we should
look more closely at the equilibrium model. This model, in so far as
it is consistent with Raymond Smith's approach, is not explicitly a
'plural' model. In fact, it denies, by its very definition, the
existence of pluralism as a social type, for it sees society as being
the primordial unit of study, and cultural groups as elements of this
unit. The model is thus in direct contrast with the conflict model,
since it is opposed to the concept of cultural sections as self-
sufficient systems forming an integral whole. It does not deny their
existence within the encompassing social reality, it only refuses to give
them the status of total systems because of the diffusing forces at work
in the society, and holds that the global social system is more
structurally significant than its subdivisions. It is also held that
the circumstances of emigration have so modified the internal structure
of the cultural groups, especially in the subsequent process of
adaptation to new social conditions, that they no longer retain a
significantly independent identity (R. Smith 1956).

The view that cultural identities have become blurred in the process of
modification and adaptation may well be questioned; but one cannot deny
the fact that a certain measure of integration must have taken place in
order that the society should still subsist beyond the restrictive
influence of colonial rule. The degree to which the global social
system is more significant, on a conceptual level, than its component
groups is also questionable, for it may be, as far as the people are
concerned, only a symbolical notion of remote patriotism undermined by
deep-felt hostilities. But that the groups within it are closely
linked by cross-cutting lines of cooperation and cohesion cannot be

denied. This model does not necessarily postulate social consensus
between the groups: one of the equilibrium-proponents, Kornhauser
(1960), describes the plural society as exhibiting a fluidity and
diversity of value standards which make difficult the achievement of
consensus (quoted in Kuper & Smith 1971: 8). R. Smith himself
observes that political tension does tend to exacerbate racial
differences (R. Smith 1971: 415). In Guyana, he says, "there has been
an increasing involvement of all races in all phases of one social
system, and it is precisely this increased societal integration that
has produced an increased awareness of primordial identities"
(R. Smith 1971: 424). He does not go on to clarify this statement or
analyse the causes for this intensification of ethnic awareness, which
seems to indicate that his model also lacks an explanatory element in
terms of ethnicity. The fact that ethnic relations become exacerbated
in situations of political tension in fact indicates that in spite of
the cross-cutting cleavages, ethnicity remains a relevant idiom of
differentiation, and this in turn can possibly be explained by the
fact that its affective dimension gives it a stronger organisational
power than other orders of differentiation.

On the political level the equilibrium model postulates that the struggle
for power by the various political parties and leaders can be seen as
the political counterpart of the heterogeneity characterising the
competing groups, but on the economic level, the accession of a cross-
section of each ethnic group to various economic spheres creates
integrative spheres of interaction within emergent class strata. In
this sense, the equilibrium model starts out not from the group level,
but from the total social level and moves inwards towards the individual,
as the central element in social interaction: thus, the multiplex ties
binding the individual to several social spheres prevents any allegiance
from solidifying into exclusive, bounded solidary groups. In R. Smith's
terms, the racial groupings in the society have *reticulated* across a
class grid that creates alliances between members of several racial
groups, and this reticulated system is bound to lead the society to a
state of unity which would be able to contain the social and cultural
diversity that exists within it (R. Smith 1956; 1961).

However Despres observes, in the context of Guyana, that, although
common structures do exist at lower levels of integration between
Africans and East Indians, the two groups do however remain separate
in villages, whether they are in a majority/minority situation or
equally represented. "Participation of the **minority** in village
activities, including local government, was either nonexistent or
limited to token representation. In some villages where the two groups
were represented in equal numbers, the Department of Local Government
has had to segment the village into two separate and independent local
authorities in order to preserve local government institutions"
(Despres 1964: 1062). Interaction remains instrumental, each group
patronizes its own members and participation in games is competitive
(ibid). This situation reflects very much that obtaining in Plaine
Magnien village, described in Chapter four below, although separation
into two local government institutions has not occurred yet and is
expressed in strict factionalism. The equilibrium model is thus also
limited in its application, since it fails to account for such situations.
Its main advantage, then, is in considering 'plural' societies where the
rigidity of colonialism has been removed and access to different economic
strata and political levels has been opened.

The equilibrium model thus classifies heterogeneous societies in terms
of competition and interdependence of interest groups, some organised
along ethnic lines, and others not; but on another dimension, we have
societies that move from one type of pluralism to another in a temporal
dimension as a result of historical factors, adaptive trends and
organisational patterns. This temporal dimension, in keeping with a
continuum model of pluralism, incorporates both the conflict and the
equilibrium approaches as stages in the development of these societies,
subjected to the patterns of integration and segregation exhibited by
ethnic groups. The continuum approach advocated by Kuper and Van den
Berghe does not explicitly include this temporal dimension. But it
seems to lead towards such a formulation, since one of their main
objection to M.G. Smith's conflict model is that it does not apply to
post-colonial lplural societies and does not include the possibility
of evolutionary change. In Kuper's terms, M.G. Smith's model of
revolutionary change takes into account the "social forces conducive

to racial and ethnic conflict, but there is also the potentiality, under certain conditions, for progressive evolutionary change, thus offering the possibility for political choice" (Kuper 1974: 251).

The progression from a conflict state of pluralism to an equilibrium state is represented by the movement from unity through coercion and political force to unity through a striving for equality of status in spheres open to competition. The schema is thus one where the cultural groups are incorporated in a stratificational system which corresponds to the class stratification as well; and the subsequent motion of the groups towards a reticulated position across the class stratification, with certain groups still occupying higher positions than others, but with the lower groups now having access to higher positions as well. The next stage is either the total and ideal state of 'equality' where all the ethnic groups have access to all the classes: in such a state, the ethnic divisions are bound to become more diffuse and less emphasised, and the class groups more pronounced. However, it may so happen that, instead of becoming more diffuse, the ethnic groupings become more significant in the processes of change. This may be due to a political system organised on ethnic lines; and this is often determined by the accession of one ethnic group to power and using ethnicity as a political idiom and as a means of rallying political allegiance. Further, the use of ethnicity as a resource is generally underlined by an increased awareness of the psychological dimension or 'raison d'être' of ethnicity. One way of preventing conflict in this case would be by a rigid segregation of roles, a kind of moral apartheid without the basic inequality involved. The idea of proportionate representation of minorities in Parliament is based on a similar notion of conscious separation and acknowledgement of differential values and interests. But such a system would be as difficult to establish as it would be to sustain.

Although all these theories of pluralism succeed in capturing important aspects of the societies they describe, it would seem that apart from its use as a general term of classification, the term "plural society" is not really adequate any more in describing the former tropical colonial societies: most societies exhibit, as these theoreticians

admit, conditions of heterogeneity, and the plurality of societies containing several distinct groups cannot be questioned. What differentiates the heterogeneous societies is the role and significance of the groups composing them. Societies such as Mauritius are more fully 'pluralistic' than others, since the different groups have access to all the different spheres of society, economic as well as political, and their interplay is based on their significance as *groups*, so that the latter become important structural elements of the society. The important elements in heterogeneous societies lie in the separation/integration opposition. While models of pluralism based on either of these constructs can only be static, in reality, pluralist societies **sway** from one to the other and have bases for both imbedded in the mechanism of the social system itself. One cannot have a theory of pluralism without showing both disjunctive and integrative forces, and without identifying the nature of the groups composing the society. As I point out in Chapter seven, M.G. Smith later reformulated his definition of institutions to include all the differeniating features existing between the groups composing the society, and I believe that this comes closer to the concept of a pluralist society, since it starts out from the *level of the group*, and tries to identify the institutional diversity present in the society; R.T. Smith, on the other hand, starts at the level of the society and classes together all the differentiating elements in the society.

If one disregards the potential of conflict which M.G. Smith (1974), sees as an inherent feature of the plural society, then his theory can perhaps describe, more adequately than R.T. Smith's the **emergence of the** plural society under colonialism. The term "plural society" is in fact better suited to describe the Furnivall-type situation under colonial rule, characterised by rigidity and separation of groups which exhibit institutional diversity. Before the acquisition of independence, the former 'sugar colonies' were thus all plural societies contained within the restrictive bounds of colonialism. After accession to independence, the subsequent trends of development which have taken place in these societies have significantly altered this configuration, and it seems that to classify them under a single, rigidly defined term would be conceptually misleading, for the different models of pluralism cannot be made to account for the developmental patterns of all these societies

such as Mauritius, Guyana, the Caribbean and Fiji which have come to represent today different trends. The continuum approach mentioned above does try to incorporate these variations, but only between different *types* of heterogeneous asocieties with different origins, not between societies with the same history and basis of heterogeneity. An adequate model of pluralism should follow the historical pattern and political development of each of these former plural societies and account for the differences that have arisen in the course of time in each.

Since the aim of this thesis does not include the formulation of a model of pluralism, I am not going to attempt to do so here; for this, a study of each of the former sugar colonies and of the plural societies which have had a similar genesis will be needed on a comparative basis, and this thesis can only at best be one of the stepping-stones towards the formulation of such a model. For the purposes of this thesis, I am considering Mauritius as a former plural society which has now become *pluralist* in the sense that it has moved away from the rigid type described by Furnivall and Smith. I believe that the group-oriented theory, such as the one formulated by the latter, is better suited for the analysis of the typical plural society than the more holistic perspective advocated by R.T. Smith. The pluralist society is then one where the groups composing the society are structurally significant both in the social, interactional sphere, and in the political sphere. By using the group as the focal point around which to build a description of such a society, one can consequently come nearer to the understanding of the nature of the society itself, i.e. by identifying the fundamental bases of its heterogeneity. So far, the theories of pluralism have used mainly objectively defined terms with which to qualify the groupings, i.e. cultural groups, racial groups etc. M.G. Smith's accent upon institutional diversity tries at least to incorporate the notion of internally, subjectively differentiated groups, since the term 'institutions' is meant to include modes of thought and behavioural trends within each group (1974). In using ethnicity as the main significant basis of inter-group relations in Mauritius, one can try and define the groups by subjectively defined criteria and start out from an analysis of the nature of the groups themselves, in order to

build eventually a more holistic picture of the society. One is then moving from the particularistic to the holistic, rather than the reverse. In fact, recent theories of ethnicity have tended to become more and more individual-oriented, thus moving to the very core of society, the human element constituting it.

Three main approaches to the study of ethnicity can be isolated: one is the approach advocated by Abner Cohen, that ethnicity is the basis of interaction between ethnic groups acting as interest groups in the same competitive sphere. He sees ethnic groups as coming into being only when they interact in the same social system, and their ethnicity is then 'politicised' to account for certain types of non-formal interest groups. Ethnic groups thus exist in so far as the members share certain norms, beliefs and values, in other words adhere to a normative behaviour that is the collective representation of the group. But these norms are only significant in the sense that they can be used as a symbolical idiom in identifying informal organisations and associations. "The concept of ethnicity throws into relief, or rather, dramatises the processes by which the symbolic patterns of behaviour implicit in the style of life, or the sub-culture, of a group develop in order to articulate organisational functions that cannot be formally institutionalised". (Cohen 1974: xxi).

For Cohen, then, it is not the individual manipulation of ethnicity as a a strategy, but the group utilisation of it that is the focal element of ethnicity. It is not a psychologically derived notion of identity, but a pattern of normative behaviour that is consciously politicised in order to justify the existence of the group as an interest group. It is dynamic in essence, a variable in the principle of organisation, a cultural mechanism (Cohen 1974).

Further, Cohen sees the phenomenon of ethnicity as arising in non-formal rather than formal spheres. The interest-groups formed by a common ethnic identity cannot articulate their needs in the formal political sphere since they cannot validate their political *raison-d'être*. They thus remain informal groupings protecting their rights and validating their needs through informal channels and networks present in the society.

Although this theory holds in the case of some heterogeneous societies where the structure of the society is not based on the existence of groups, it does not apply fully to pluralist societies where the ethnic groups are part of the very framework of the society. The political validity of these groups may be expressed in covert ways, as is sometimes the case in Mauritius, but this does not prevent such a validity from being sought and established in the society. Cohen's recent study of the Sierra-Leone Creoles and their utilisation of ethnicity brilliantly describes a situation where the interest-group -- in this case a minority elite group -- preserves informally its identity and its rights (1981); but again, Sierra-Leone exhibits a certain amount of heterogeneity without being pluralist in the sense I intend. The differentiation between the Creoles and the indigenous population is made on the basis of the outsider/insider opposition, and the *ethnic* difference is not overtly expressed. The situation is very different from that existing in Mauritius, where the ethnic differences are primordial in the organisation of the society.

Another criticism that one may level against Cohen's approach to ethnicity is that he looks at ethnic groups only in terms of interest-groups, i.e. at the level where they exhibit some form of organisation. He thus *assumes* the existence of the groups in the society and does not try to identify the basis of their emergence and the components making-up their identity. This was mainly so in his earlier approach, but, in his latest works, he has tried to incorporate another dimension to his approach. Thus, in the aforementioned study of Creoles, he tries to bring out the equation of culture/power, and identity/organisation (Cohen 1981:15). The bases of their identity are not objective but subjective, built on notions commonness, similarity of values, demeanour and ideas. They subsume all this under the encompassing term "culture" which also conveys an idea of moral superiority over other Sierra-Leonians (ibid.:14). Cohen has thus progressed to a more inclusive definition of ethnicity which is not solely interactional and objective, but also affective and subjective, using emic terms as well as etic ones. The 'cultural' commonness of the Creoles provides the symbolic forms upon which the group bases the articulation of its rights and privileges as an elite group in the society. Thus, although Cohen's approach is still mainly interactional and organisational in

the sense that he is still mainly concerned with the mechanism of
power in the society, and how cultural and ethnic identity are used
in order to build up this power, he does not overlook the internal
nature of the group any more.

A second approach to ethnicity is the Barthian one, which is more
geared towards cognition and identity than Cohen's, although it is
also partly interactional. Barth, (1969), sees ethnic groups not as
being differentiated by overt institutional forms or cultural
differences, but by those differences that people themselves see as
significantly separating them from others. There is thus not a
one-to-one correspondence between cultural group and ethnic group,
for ethnic groups may choose to interpret certain cultural features
as significant factors of differentiation while ignoring other
features. However, the important facet of ethnicity, for Barth, is
not the cultural features that distinguish an ethnic group, but the
boundary that separates it from others. He sees ethnicity as being
essentially a 'vessel' that encloses a group partly differentiated
by overt cultural traits, and partly by basic value orientations.
The boundary that separates two ethnic groups may become politically
significant when the groups occupy two ecological niches and have to
compete for resources, and it can become charged with value judgements
of status and hierarchy if there is a relationship of inequality and
stratification between two groups. Barth's concern is mainly with the
transactional aspect of ethnicity. The boundary between the groups is
the 'frontier' where relations can become conflicting and potentially
disruptive. He is not preoccupied with identity as such, since he does
not deem the enclosed to be as important as the enclosing, and, like
Cohen, sees ethnicity as acquiring importance only when it becomes
organisational and exacerbated by a competitive situation between two
groups. The affective dimension is then partly disregarded in favour
of the transactional one, and the emphasis is placed upon ethnicity
as a *resource*.

The third approach which I have chosen to isolate is a more recent
one, a kind of synthesis between the interactional approach and the
identity approach. S. Wallman recognises both the resource aspect
of ethnicity and the cognitive aspect as being complementary and as

contributing to the understanding of the concept. Like Barth, she stresses the *sense* of difference between groups as being the fundamental cause for ethnic differentiation, i.e. a subjective notion of identity that separates 'them' from 'us'. This identity is the result of some 'meaningful contrast' in which the classified stands vis-a-vis the classifier (Wallman 1979: 5). The boundary this contrast creates between two groups is therefore meaningful both in an objective, structural and organisational sense, and in a subjective sense of identity and separation. The objective meaning of boundaries, as demarcating an interface element between two groups, may operate both in the political sphere and in the economic sphere as a resource. The boundary process is therefore, in Wallman's terms, 'reactive' not independent. "It may be happening in response to several different kinds of variable, and on a number of different levels" (ibid.: 5). It is very much dependent on external, ecological and social conditions obtaining in the immediate environment of the groups, and is basically the area where manipulation of identity is most frequent. The boundary separates a group, but the basis of separation, the cultural content of the group is not fixed and static; it is the consequence of trends of adaptation to the sociological constraints of the environment, and to the configuration created by other groups.

Whereas Wallman recognises the dual aspect of ethnicity, and chooses to emphasise its importance as a resource, A. Epstein also recognises the same duality, but chooses to emphasise the 'identity' aspect of ethnicity. Epstein identifies the duality and ambivalence of ethnicity as originating from the differences and inconsistencies between the 'actor's' perception and the 'observer's' perception of the same phenomenon, and the conceptual antimony created by the view from within and the view from without. It is necessary, therfore, to incorporate both the subjective and the objective in one's examination of the phenomenon, in a sense, the 'emic' and the 'etic', so as not to lose out on one essential aspect either for the sake of understanding, or for the sake of scientific objectivity (Epstein 1978: 14). The basis of identity and identification to a group is founded on the process of socialisation of the individual, and his building, from childhood onwards, perceptions of himself and others. Identity therefore has to do with cognitive processes, but these are also subjected to social constraints that involve an element of

choice in the use of identity. The notion of ethnic identity thus pertains to the 'psycho-social', and is "a function of the interplay of internal and external variables as these operate within a given dimension" (Epstein 1978: xiii). The affective dimension is a primordial one in the understanding of ethnicity, and Epstein believes that the anthropologist's hesitation in bringing psychological explanations in a social study should not be made to obscure the importance - and inevitability - of psychological processes in socialisation and the formation of a social identity (Epstein 1978: xi).

The duality in the phenomenon of ethnicity should not really act as a deterrent from seeing it as a unified concept: like many other social and cognitive processes it 'is', and it 'works'. Language has both a communicative and a symbolic function and meaning; caste is both ascriptive and organisational; religion has a philosophical meaning and a sociological meaning; all these dualities are more complementary than contradictory; a cognitive interpretation and an interactional interpretation of ethnicity are not incompatible *per se*, unless one makes them to be so. Cohen sees the psychological explanation as obscuring the operational function of ethnicity, and Barth's 'vessel' analogy as being static and failing to account for the existence of 'degrees' in ethnicity. Barth's and Wallman's stress on the importance of boundary and the resource aspect of ethnicity partly leads us away from the analysis of what exactly contributes to the sense of difference and to the cultural 'stuff' enclosed within the vessel or the boundary. Epstein's outlook is more realistic in that he is willing not only to observe the duality, but to analyse both aspects in conjunction with each other. In fact, all the above approaches to ethnicity isolate one or several aspects that are essential to the understanding of the concept. Therefore, they should be included in any theory of ethnicity as being either variables - as in the case of boundaries -, or operational contexts - as in the case of informal organisations and associations -, or bases of ascription - as in the case of identification processes.

Ethnicity may then be seen as the process which operationalises ethnic identity. In the sequence of events leading to such an

operationalisation, the formation and preservation of identity precedes the emergence of ethnicity as a structural force in the society. It is therefore important to try and see what is the basis of identity, and how it can be defined. Unlike other types of linkages such as those arising from a common occupation or class group, identity is an emotional bond, endowed with a "powerful emotional charge" (Epstein 1979: xi). The "ethnic group" itself is not a given: one cannot define it objectively solely through such concepts as religion, language or nationality, since separate identities can emerge within the groupings defined by these concepts, or cross-cut two or several of these groupings. The ethnic group has to be defined partly through emic parameters incorporating the people's own self-definition. It is this essential construct which provides an impulse to the mechanism of ethnicity in society. In a dynamic context, ethnic identity lends itself to manipulation and transformations which bring into focus different boundaries between the groups and different elements of organisation for each group. The transformation of identity from passive into active, from affective into manipulative, from subjective into objective is part and parcel of the workings of ethnicity as a phenomenon. Cohen and Barth are more concerned with the ways in which identity emerges on a surface level and becomes part of the organisational structure of the society, even if this organisation remains informal. Wallman, too, is concerned with its surface manifestation in the boundary-forming process in which it is involved. Epstein (1978), has tried to incorporate the affective dimension in his study of tribalism on the Copperbelt and of how it persists in an environment which is not really conducive to it and becomes a means of identification and categorisation of self and others in a psycho-social process.

From this concern with identity as an essential component of heterogeneous societies, in particular pluralist ones, one becomes confronted with a major aspect of the behaviour of the individual within his social environment: since tribal identity can become an ethnicised identity within the urban context and be strengthened rather than weakened by the change in environment, it means that this identity goes deeper, and is more fundamental than one created solely by a specific environment. It is an identity that reaches the root of the individual, and that moves with him, changing as he

himself changes, superficially, but not fundamentally. In the same way, ethnic identity was thought to be weakened by the changes from plural societies to more open-ended, class-based societies, but instead of this, identities can be sharpened by the changes taking place around them, moulding themselves to their new environments.

In the human dimension, identity is essential to the integration of each individual to his social environment: in the villages of Mauritius, this identity embodies itself in the *société*, or socio-religious association set up for each group. Membership to the whole village society is axiomatic upon membership to one of the *sociétés* composing it. In the Copperbelt, identity is a means of classification as well as the basis of organisations within which new migrants can insert themselves. It seems, then, that identity, whether pertaining to tribalism **or** ethnicity, is concerned with order in its most fundamental sense, not a material order but a moral one.

In fact, all human relations seem to belong to two types, or two orders: these may be seen in terms of organic and mechanical, **ascribed** and achieved, or moral and transactional. Thus, the individual in society inherits certain social and psychological qualities which predispose him to certain types of relationships, while in the course of his existence, he enters by choice into other forms of relationships. The inherited part of his social personality includes the acknowledgement of kinship relations which are part of the framework in which his life is deeply inserted. Whereas many sociologists and anthropologists have followed in a marxian tradition of looking at the mechanical rather than at the organic, at the surface manifestations of human relationships rather than at the moral and psychological impulses that create them, it is becoming increasingly important nowadays to **probe for** deeper causalities rather than their perceivable effect, and in the realm of *meaning*, search for universals that underlie the particularistic actions and reactions of the human being. Epstein formulates precisely this concern when he says that "we need to ask (...) how the sense of ethnic identity is generated and transmitted, how it persists and how it is transformed or disappears, yielding

to other forms of identity" (1978: 96). He also states that identity "is the expression of a degree of affect all the more powerful because it is deeply rooted in the unconscious" (ibid.: 94). Although this means moving towards the field of psychology and even psycho-analysis, such a movement can only be profitable if used alongside anthropological methods that have been tested and tried. In fact, anthropology's traditional concern with kinship comes much too close to the realm of 'affect' and psycho-biological relations to prevent one from going further and trying to find the psychological basis behind kinship relations.

In fact, such ascribed, 'born into' categories of human relations as kinship, caste, ethnicity and tribalism are generally expressed and justified, by the people themselves, in terms of biological bonds. This is becoming more visible today, as western social concepts and ideologies have acquired a wider sphere of influence in the world, and the basic inequality of race, caste and ethnic identity have been transposed into a western egalitarian ideology where they have to be expressed in terms of differences. Thus, Dumont observes that "the recognition of a cultural difference can no longer ethnocentrically justify inequality. But it is observed that in certain circumstances, (...), a hierarchical difference continues to be posited, which is this time attached to somatic characteristics, physiognomy, colour of skin, 'blood'" (1972: 304).

This biological justification of ascribed categories is partly symbolical and partly couched in realistic terms in the various exegeses. It is part of what Cohen (1981) would call the "mystique" of the group, while having its basis in a real, natural order of relations. Caste identity has come, more and more, to be seen in terms of an organic ideology, in keeping with the Indian mode of thought, and it has come to be analysed within a wider order of Indian identity, as is evidenced by the papers submitted at a symposium on South Asia held in 1977 (David 1977). Thus Mariott and Inden propone the use of the South Asian mode of thought as well as the exegesis contained within philosophical scriptures and vernacular writings in order to develop what they call an "ethnosociology" of South Asian caste system (1977: 227). They see caste as emerging from the inheritance of bodily

substances which govern and alter the people's moral qualities. This is why the laws of pollution and purity and those governing food consumption and exchanges are so stringent, since they pertain to the most fundamental and most vulnerable part of human nature. This belief in the substantial nature of caste immediately draws two kinds of boundaries: those boundaries which are inside the system, and which are 'transitive' in the sense that they are characterised by ordered exchanges that serve to reaffirm and strengthen hierarchical differences between the castes, and the boundary enclosing those who are within the system separating them from those who are outside it. The basis of an Indian identity is thus found within this boundary which excludes those who do not possess caste substance. This substance and the codes for conduct it entails are not only applicable to caste identity and to the way in which Indians order their moral and physical universe but can be seen in other kinds of relations, such as kinship relations. In fact, the theory of substance **derives** from **Schneider's** (1968) analysis of American kinship, where he finds that kinship relations fall within two categories, "blood" and "law". Blood relations are relations of substance governed by specific codes for conduct, whereas law relations do not fall within the compass of substance. The analogy between caste and kinship derives from the fact that membership to a caste and to a kin-group are both perceived as pertaining to natural substance: blood, in the caste of American kin members, and specific physical properties, in the case of castes. Both are characterised by ascription and permanence. Tribal identity can perhaps also be seen in the light of substance theory, since it exhibits, outside the sphere where it is the predominant form of organisation, features of persistence and survival that cannot be explained without reference to a deep-rooted notion of kind, and could be seen in terms of a "biogenetic" (Schneider's term) idiom. The biogenetic concept which lies behind American kinship may be seen as the product of an objective, scientific perspective, but within the modes of thought of the different peoples ascribing to such permanent identities, there may not be a differentiating barrier between the objective scientific and the subjective non-scientific. As Marriott and Inden observe, "South Asian thought does not oppose 'matter' to 'spirit' or separate 'nature' from 'morality' or 'law'. South Asians think that human genera (including occupational castes) are at once the 'natural' and the 'moral' units of society" (1977: 231). There is

thus a common thought-process between the way Americans conceive of substantial - 'blood' - links, and the way in which South Asians conceive of castes, as well as - as I aim at pointing out in this thesis - ethnic groups conceive of identity.

In fact, as one probes into the elements that go towards the formation and preservation of any of these different groupings, one finds that there is a direct link between kinship and the other orders of identity. The kin-group is the one which is most immediately and immutably linked by blood and substance. From it, relationships radiate outwards, linking other people, and providing the basis and symbolical idioms for wider identities. Kinship gives rise to the concept of *genus*, and from this, caste and tribe, race and ethnic groups derive their deep identities. The study of such identities, which are inherited and transmitted genetically should show the conceptual link between them, as well as differentiate from other orders of groupings, such as class, occupation, space, etc. The 'organic' nature of these identities can be opposed to instrumental and mechanical relations that arise in the sphere of politics or economy, for, although they are part of culture, in the sense that they are an intrinsic part of a cultural system and a mode of thought, they represent, within this cultural system, the natural order, borrowing their ideology from nature itself.

It is in this light, then, that I will be looking at ethnic identity in Mauritius, without, at the same time, losing the perspective of ethnicity as a form of organisation.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

In choosing to analyse ethnic identity in the pluralist society of Mauritius today, I had two main objectives: one was to discover the roots of identity in a group and find out how it is preserved, organised and expressed in the society. The other was to try and show the multiplicity of manifestations which identity has in the society, emerging both at the village level and at the national level. In this, my aim is to present selected aspects of ethnicity in Mauritius with reference to a particular group, so that the fragments

of the whole picture which I would be showing would be sufficient to provide an idea of the whole. Rather than choose a single aspect to study and describe, I have chosen to focus on several aspects which are interrelated and which shed lights on each other. Thus, a single group cannot be fully understood without being also situated in a multi-group context; ethnic separation cannot be understood without considering factors of integration. The use of ethnicity at the global level cannot be explained without reference to its use at the micro-level. Further, it is to be hoped that similar studies will be made in the future, where other fragments of the picture will be presented, for instance ethnicity in an urban context, and detailed studies of the other groups composing the society in the same way as I have focused on the Telugus for the detailed description of a group. I could not on my own — and therefore have not tried to — attempt a wider scale of analysis which would have included all the groups of the society, because of their complexity.

I have chosen to proceed upwards and outwards, so to speak, from village-level to group-level, and from group-level to national-level. At village-level, I have juxtaposed and contrasted two villages in order to bring out the sharp divergences exhibited by inter-group ethnic relations in a small geographical area, illustrating the opposition between integration and separation in an interesting way. At group level, I have delved into the realm of kinship in order to discover both the mechanical way in which kinship organises and holds the group together from the inside, and the symbolical way in which it creates and nurtures the notion of kind and *genus* and, ultimately, leads to the formation of a distinct ethnic identity. At national-level, I have attempted to show the organisation of ethnic identity, using different identity-markers and symbols of the group, as well as the political use of ethnicity in the multi-group context.

Although the different levels may at first sight seem to be disjuncted, they are meant, in fact, to follow a distinct pattern. I have tried to bring out in both parts of the thesis — one concerned with the village situation and the other with Telugu identity *per se* — the opposition between "hard" and "soft" ethnicity (to employ Cross' terms (1971: 485); i.e. ethnicity which only appears as an underlying aspect

of village organisation and ethnicity which is a major organisational
feature of the village society, at one level, and the unaggressive
expression and maintenance of identity within each group and an
aggressively validated identity in national-level politics at another
level. Thus, both the affective and the organisational aspects are
shown, in keeping with what Glazer and Moynihan (1974) have termed
the 'primordialist' and the 'circumstantialist' approaches: in fact,
both these approaches, one dealing with the psychological basis of
identity and the other with the ways in which it emerges in the society
through specific social circumstances, can and should be applied to
ethnicity in order to being out its duality, and, at times, its
ambiguity as both a psychological and a political phenomenon, as I
hope to show in this thesis.

In Erikson's terms, "one can only explore it (identity), by establishing
its indispensability in various contexts" (quoted in Epstein 1978:8).
The thesis thus moves from the micro-level to the macro-level, and from
inter-group to intra-group relations. At village level, I have taken
into consideration those features of village organisation which cross-
cut ethnic delineations and those which intensify and sharpen them.
Thus, Chapters two, three and four, which present the village social
structure in relation to ethnicity, do not aim at giving a full,
monographic account of the villages: restrictions of relevance have
precluded such a picture, and I have left out fuller accounts of
economy, social interaction and religious organisation which did not
shed a light on ethnicity and identity. On the other hand, where
non-ethnic phenomena seem to have an impact upon ethnic relations,
I have expanded upon them, such as the preoccupation with mobility
in Plaine Magnien (Chapter four), which is conducive to the emergence
of separatist values. In Chapter three, I have spent the first part
of the chapter discussing non-ethnic solidarities in order to bring
out the fundamental difference between moral and mechanical groupings
as well as the factors of integration at work in the pluralist society.
Although work and neighbourhood solidarities seem to be important in
the network of relations of the villagers, one in fact only has to look
beneath the veneer of these solidarities in order to reach the level
of core identities expressed within the concept of *propre-qualité*
(or 'one's own kind') ascribed to by the villagers. The opposition

between the two kinds of village solidarity - which I have also called 'moral' and 'non-moral' - is significant in the global social order, since non-moral solidarities of space and occupation do not transcend the boundaries of the village and do not survive outside the sphere of immediate relations, whereas the moral solidarity of identity transcends these boundaries in order to 'harden' as a structural force in the society. Thus, although the central part of the thesis deals with Telugu identity, I have tried to set it within a composite picture of Mauritian society where the workings of ethnicity could be analysed. The paradigm in which the analysis of ethnicity and identity is set is that of substance theory, which captures both the affective component - substance, blood, *qualité* -, and the organisational component - **active** and passive codes for conduct, boundaries, power relations. From the notion of substance which sustains identity at the affective level, there derive codes for conduct which determine inter- and intra-group relations in the same way as caste substance-coding determine relations and prestations within the caste and between the castes. Kinship, among the Telugus, is the idiom which governs identity substance. The coding of substance prescribes endogamy and relations of affinity and *alliance* as well as interaction between the different groups.

Substance and codes for conduct provide the unifying link for the expression and manifestation of ethnicity at different levels of the society, since ethnicity stems from the same basic substantive notions in the individual. This thesis explores these different dimensions in relation to meaning and behaviour, and applies the same paradigm to Telugu identity, which progresses from a concern with the biogenetic relations of kinship to a concern with the behavioural codes regulating inter-group relations.

I have found, in Epstein's approach to the study of identity, an echo of my own, although the latter was evolved independently. In his study of ethnic identity in the Copperbelt, in New Guinea and among the American Jews, he writes that "the concern throughout (...) has not been to highlight the differences between the three situations, but to present them as variations around a theme, varying expressions of ethnicity and identity, amenable to analysis in terms of the same body of concepts and ideas" (1978: 92). This comment reflects the

approach contained in this thesis, with the added element that the varying themes can be found in the same society.

My concern with identity in Mauritius society, and in particular with Telugu ethnic identity stems from the fact that I come from this society and this group, and have attempted to define antropologically what is part of my social environment's affective complexity. In trying to describe this situation, I have used my own perceptions as well as my understanding of the society from the inside, while applying an objective framework and analysis. In this, I have perhaps used both emic and etic concepts; but identity lends itself to such a treatment precisely because of the subjective and objective qualities it exhibits.

I spent fourteen months conducting fieldwork in Mauritius. I started out at village-level, in Trois Boutiques village where ethnicity remains a 'soft' phenomenon, at the substantive level. My choice of Trois Boutiques was guided by the fact that there is a Telugu community which is in a situation that is more complex than is evidenced at first sight by the surface, apparent solidarities. I also had previous contacts there which facilitated my insertion in the society and my relations with the villagers. Further, the neighbouring village of Plaine Magnien offered a number of immediate contrasts which set into relief the ethnic situation in Trois Boutiques, and which exhibited an ethnic separation that effectively illustrated the organisational power of ethnicity given the appropriate contextual and contentual variables. It became possible to show, in a small geographical area, the variations of ethnicity.

The methods of investigation used in the villages consisted of a period of residence in Plaine Magnien, from where I commuted everyday to Trois Boutiques (Plaine Magnien being a better 'base' than Trois Boutiques because of its easy accessibility), and the conducting of elaborate and informal conversations with the villagers, whom I visited on a door-to-door basis at first. Later, as I established friendlier relations with some of the villagers, it became possible to visit them frequently for more conversations. I attended social events in the villages, and also went along with the social workers on their visits to villagers with

specific problems. I did not attempt to 'integrate' with the
villagers on an equal level, since, in such a small society as
Mauritius, a person could be immediately classified through his/her
name in a specific socio-economic stratum and ethnic group.
Integration would then only be possible in a similar stratum and group,
which would defeat the purpose of establishing relations with all
the villagers equally. They knew who I was, where I came from, and
what I was doing; and, having satisfied themselves that my purpose
was non-political, they were quite willing to accept my presence in
the villages and to respond to my inquiries and questions. It was
not easy to bring the conversation around ethnic identity and
interrelations across ethnic groups, as this tends to be a 'taboo'
subject in Mauritius, but in Trois Boutiques, people were willing to
talk about *qualité* and the morality of identity, while in Plaine
Magnien ethnic relations were so tangible in the social sphere that
I could derive a clear picture of the uses of ethnicity in the village
through observation of social events and Village Council meetings.
Further, a number of informants, in particular those who introduced
me, in each village, to a large number of people, proved capable and
willing of giving objective accounts of the situation. It was thus
possible to gain an insight into their way of thinking, added to my
previous knowledge of the society as a Mauritian.

I spent six months in the villages, keeping extensive notes of my
conversations and the events I attended. The remaining eight months
were spent researching Telugu identity. I used several networks
available to me for my research. For instance, I used a large network
of blood and *alliance* relations to investigate Telugu kinship, and
drew several genealogical diagrams in order to understand the relations
between them. Since kinship is not as explosive a subject as ethnicity,
the people I talked to, in particular the Telugu women, were most
willing to expound largely on the subject. Apart from these families,
which were interrelated, and which the people interviewed set into
position in the larger framework of Telugu kinship, I also interviewed
Telugus in different parts of the island in order to check my findings
and discover regional and class differences where they existed. This
meant travelling around the island and meeting people who could retrace
their specific marriage and blood networks. They also gave their views
about the moral significance of kinship and identity and the codes of
conduct these entail.

The organisational aspect of Telugu identity was researched mainly through the Andhra Maha Sabha, the main Telugu association of the island, and its affiliated branches, as well as through leading members of the community. Their cultural and religious associations were also investigated on a comparative basis.

We will now move on to Part One of the thesis, which deals with ethnicity at village level. Chapter one gives a historical account of Mauritius as a pluralist society, Chapter two provides a general survey of the two villages, describing the main aspects of the village structures; Chapter three goes into the orders of solidarity in Trois Boutiques, comparing and contrasting non-moral solidarity and moral solidarity in relation to labouring work and neighbourhood groups; Chapter four looks at the polarisation of ethnic groups on the basis of middle-class, privacy values, and at the emergence of village factionalism; Chapter five is meant to provide a conclusion to Part One, drawing out the main analytical conclusions from the descriptions contained in Chapters three and four. Part Two deals with Telugu identity: Chapter six is an exposition of Telugu kinship and marriage regulations in the light of Dravidian kinship in South India, and the resistance of traditional patterns to assimilation; it also deals with the emergence of a deep identity on the basis of kinship; Chapter seven looks at Telugu religion and goes on to describe and analyse the way religion and language are used by the formal associations to symbolise the presence of the group in the society and validate its claim to a separate identity. Chapter eight, finally, is the general conclusion which tries to recapitulate the hypotheses contained in the thesis and analyse the manifestation of ethnicity in the society in terms of substance theory.

PART ONE

ETHNICITY AT VILLAGE-LEVEL

"Identity! that was the word! that was the key to the whole human problem. Unless a man understood, however dimly, what he was and how he was linked with his fellows and with the cosmos, he could not survive."

Morris West, The Ambassador

CHAPTER ONE
GENESIS OF THE PLURAL SOCIETY

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

In order to understand Mauritian society as it is today, it is
necessary to look at the historical background of the island and the
way in which it was peopled. Unlike most countries with immigrant
populations, there was no host society in Mauritius, since all the
groups had, in turn, emigrated to the island. For this reason, no
single group could claim more rights and privileges on the basis of
being more 'Mauritian' than the others, and such claims have had to be
phrased in terms of each group's contribution to the country's
prosperity or of the position of each group in the numerical
composition of the island's population. This can still be seen today
in the mechanics of Mauritian politics, as we shall see in Chapter
Seven, and in the ways in which the different groups articulate their
needs and rights at all levels of the society.

Furthermore, the configuration of heterogeneity goes much deeper than
the four main groupings used in the official classification of the
island's population, i.e. Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Mauritian and General
Population. Each immigrant group, whether the African or Malagasy
slaves, the French colonisers, the Chinese traders or the Indian
indentured labourers, had within itself conditions of heterogeneity
which has led to the deeper fragmentation of the population into
distinct groups with an identity of their own. French and Creole
partly merged to create the separate Coloured group; Chinese and Creole
have also come to make up an intermediary grouping called
"Creole-Chinois"; and the Indians themselves, who were perhaps the
most heterogeneous of all these groups, nowadays form a composite of
completely distinct ethnic groups, starkly concerned with the
preservation of an identity of their own. (Tables 1 and 2 show the
composition of the Mauritian population in numbers and the languages
of origin).

It is in relation with these two main factors contributing to the present-day structure of Mauritian society that I will be sketching, in this chapter, the main features of the history of the island. Section One will deal with the broad account of the formation of the plural society, and set out the position of the different groups in what was originally a phenotype of the colonial tropical plural society in the sense intended by Furnivall and later on by M.G. Smith (Furnivall 1945; Smith 1960). Section Two will look at the Indian group from the time of its arrival in the country as indentured labourers, delineating its composition and origins, and its position in the society in relation to the other groups composing the society. Finally, Section Three will deal with mobility of the Indians in Mauritius and the route followed in their acquisition of political power. Some of the themes of the thesis will emerge in this first chapter, and will be dealt with more profoundly in later chapters.

1972 POPULATION CENSUS

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
HINDU	215,698	212,468	423,167
MUSLIM	68,802	68,279	137,081
SINO-MAURITIAN	12,849	11,235	24,084
GENERAL POPULATION	116,299	120,568	236,367
			825,699

Table 1

(Source: Central Statistical Office)

LANGUAGES OF ORIGIN

CHINESE	...	20,608
CREOLE	...	272,075
ENGLISH	...	2,402
FRENCH	...	36,729
GUJRATI	...	2,028
HINDI	...	320,831
MARATHI	...	16,553
TAMIL	...	56,757
TELUGU	...	24,233
URDU	...	71,668
OTHER	...	1,134
NOT STATED	...	1,131

Table 2

(Source: Central Statistical Office, 1972 Population Census)

SECTION ONE: DISCOVERY AND PEOPLING OF MAURITIUS

This section retraces the discovery of Mauritius and its gradual peopling through subsequent waves of immigration due to various economic factors. In this, its history follows a pattern set by many of the former sugar colonies, including Fiji, Jamaica, Guyana. The social structure, in the early years of British rule, displayed a rigidity which could be found in all these countries; however, once the different groups began to strive for freedom and for power, the pattern changed, and each society acquired its specific, if related, structure.

(1) Social structure in the early Mauritian society

Mauritius, a geographically isolated island lying in the Indian Ocean, 20° south of the Equator, and about 500 miles east of Madagascar, has had a short, but eventful history as a heterogeneous society. The island was uninhabited for a long time, although visited by stray sea-farers from the Middle East and Portugal, until it was re-discovered in 1598 and occupied by the Dutch. Apart from giving Mauritius its name, after their crown prince Mauritz von Nassau, the Dutch did not leave much of an imprint on the Mauritian soil. They exterminated the Dodo, were in turn ravaged by sundry diseases, and finally left the island around the beginning of the eighteenth century, after which it was taken over by the French. The French brought about considerable changes in the island, especially under governor Mahé de la Bourdonnais, who started the sugar industry and developed the harbour of Mauritius. He brought in slaves from Africa and the Malagasy republic, whose decendants' soon formed a 'creole' community. The mixture of French and African blood and French and Creole gave rise to a mixed, coloured community. A few Indians were also brought in from Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast, to help on the road-sites and in the harbour. However, the British, who were beset by naval attacks from the French on their route to India decided to lead an attack on the island in an attempt to conquer it. They succeeded in their second attempt, and took over the island in 1820, from which date it became a British colony (Toussaint 1971). It was a known problem of the British that the acquisition of foreign territories by conquest often brought under

the British administration a host of alien, often rebellious subjects. The group which chiefly influenced the running of the colonies was generally the white group, and it was imperative for the British administrators to win the allegiance of this group to be able to run the colonies efficiently. This was achieved mainly by a policy of "laissez-faire", so that the former French colonials were allowed to preserve their language, culture and administrative methods without more interference from the British (Hunt 1974).

The abolition of slavery brought to the forefront the problem of labour in the colony. The emancipated slaves were refusing to work any longer in the plantations, at a moment when the sugar industry was flourishing and expanding and needed all the hands that were available (Mathieson 1967). The French plantation owners suggested to the colonial government that labourers could be brought in from India under terms of indentureship, and, as this proved to be the most viable solution, Indian immigrants started to be brought in, at first in small numbers, and later in larger groups. From 1834 onwards, large numbers of Indians were recruited by appointed agents, whose jobs it was to paint a golden picture of the land they were being sent to. The first batch of immigrants came from North India, and later, as from 1850, they were also recruited from South India. Together with the indentured Indians there also came some free immigrants, mainly Muslim traders and businessmen from parts of western India and from China. Steadily, the number of Indians outgrew that of the free slaves and the handful of plantation-owners, settling down into a stratum of low-status people whose culture was unintelligible to the other cultural groups, but who were internally extremely complex and dynamically organised (Mookherjhi 1962; Tinker 1974).

At the end of the immigration process, there thus existed the following patterns in the society: subsumed under the over-arching control and decision-making power of the colonial government was a rigid stratificational system that was ordered along racial and economic lines. Under this encompassing control there lay the topmost stratum occupied solely by the French and Franco-Mauritian planters and businessmen, who wielded economic power, and had complete control over the sugar plantations and factories. Further, they were the only nominated members of Parliament until the Coloured community obtained

the same prerogative in 1838, and this conferred upon them a power that effectively secured their position in the social system. Beneath this topmost stratum came the Coloured community, which comprised the population of mixed African and French descent. In an attempt to obtain the same privileges as the Franco-Mauritians, they fought for political representation as well as for access to economic spheres restricted to the whites, but, although they did succeed in gaining access to Parliament, they only managed to slot into a middle class of white-collar workers in the civil service and professional sphere (Toussaint 1971).

The 'trading class' which formed the next stratum comprised an eclectic mixture of Muslims from Gujrat, Tamil-speaking Hindus and the majority of the Chinese community. They had links principally with their own ethnic communities rather than among themselves. The Chinese not only set up commercial ventures in Port-Louis as the two other groups, but they also set up affiliated shops in villages as extensions of their familial enterprises (Benedict 1964).

The Creole community occupied one of the lowest strata of the social hierarchy. The Mauritian-born descendants of slaves had always been encouraged to look down upon African culture mainly because the French colonials wanted to eradicate in the former any feeling of identity with the latter (Chaudenson 1974). They are thus profoundly 'creolized', so that few features of African culture have survived today. After emancipation, they left the plantation camps and settled in villages on the coast, where they became predominantly fishermen. The similarity in economic status between Creoles and Indians has seldom led to consensus between the two groups, except at the beginning of the political movement of the working-class, when they cohered for a short while. The Creoles' allegiance has in fact always been with the whites and Coloured, with whom they are now classified as the General Population.

At the lowest level of the society came the Indian labourers, circumscribed within the 'coolie' stereotype and considered by the other groups of the society as cultureless barbarians (Tinker 1974; Hazareesingh 1973). They are dealt with in greater detail in the next Section.

Thus, at the time of indenture, the society was stratified in terms of class and status and ethnic groups: there was a broad one-to-one correspondence between the economic position of the groups - except for the trading class - and the ethnic delineation in the social structure of the island, so that the society exhibited the rigid configuration of plurality described by Furnivall.

(ii)   Sources of change

From the beginning of the twentieth century, two parallel trends of change started to take place: one was the slow breaking out of the lower classes into spheres of competition in the society, the other was the emergence of a political awareness among them and of a desire to obtain more privileges than they were given.

The opening of the Suez Canal, the competition of beetroot sugar against sugar cane and the severe climatic conditions prevailing in the island led the plantation-owners to relinquish some of their land-monopoly and to start renting land out on a 'metayer' scheme, which meant letting a person assume all the costs of cultivation and take the profits against payment in kind of part of the harvest *(Mauritius Legislative Council* Sessional Paper 1951). It was mainly the Indians who benefited from the 'metayage', which enabled them to buy land in small plots. This created a class of Indian small planters who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, already owned 30% of cultivated land in Mauritius. This represented the first major breakthrough of the Indians from the indentured labourer status. On the political level, the representatives of the Coloured community, who called themselves the Democrats, neither succeeded in weakening the power of the white 'oligarchy', nor attempted to fight for the lower classes. The latter had to set up their own political party, and the Labour Party, created in 1937, was made up of an alliance between Creoles and Indians. This political movement was concurrent with the social and economic awakening of the 'working classes'. The Indian labourers in particular realised the extent of the exploitation they were subjected to on the estates, and, galvanised by the Labour Party, they went on general strikes which occasioned several serious riots *(Commission of Enquiry* 1943). The Labour Party appealed to both Creoles and Indians on grounds of class but they were

particularly successful with Indians because of the Indian politicians'
appeals to their sense of identity and communal pride (Tinker 1976).

The Labour Party then canvassed for, and obtained, the extension of
voting rights to a larger section of the population on the basis of
a simple literacy test in any language. This secured the vote of the
majority of the Creole and Indian populations, which was at the root
of the Labour Party's success at the next elections. However, from
then on, the Party acquired an Indian leadership under Sir Seewoosagur
Ramgoolam, and this marked the beginning of the opposition of Creoles
and Indians after a short alliance (Hazareesingh 1973).

With the opening out of avenues of economic mobility, whereby the
Indians were able to acquire land and the Creoles to move up partially
into lower clerical and civil service jobs, and the parallel emergence
of these two groups into the political arena, ethnic group allegiances
and consciousness began to be sharpened: the people realised that
they were now able to compete as *groups*, and this led to the
polarisation of the society into ethnic groups that competed as interest
groups on an equal level, although they had different assets and
resources. As the population focussed on ethnic based competition on
the political level, this reflected itself on the social level as well,
creating hostilities and the appearance of 'communalisme'.

The straightforward, unilinear stratification system of the early
colonial period was thus gradually changing under the force of self-
realisation of the Mauritians as a people, but this self-realisation
was a fragmented and compartmentalised one, with each group following
its own paths of mobility and adaptation to the plural environment,
as we shall see in the next Section in relation to the Indians.

SECTION TWO: THE INDENTURED INDIANS

We have already described the conditions leading to the emigration
of Indians to Mauritius. We will see now in detail their position in
Mauritian society, the conditions in which they lived and the general
structure and organisation of the community. They seemed to constitute
a microcosm in the general social setting, reflecting, in their
internal structure, the configuration of pluralism, with its ethnic
allegiances and conflicts, caste and class systems and religious
differentiation.

(i) Composition of the group

The indentured Indians were an uprooted community, an amalgamation of
several groups and cultures within the definition of an Indian
nationality, hussled together in depots and ships and later on sent
to the sugar estates where everyday was a renewal of their ·fight for
survival (Tinker 1974). For the white community and the Creole
liberated slaves, they were a mass of illiterate coolies with a pagan
religion and culture, and only deserved to fit into the lowest stratum
of society (De Sornay 1953). The Indians themselves had come from
several regions of India, and spoke a number of languages, which did
not ease communication. The first batch of Indians had come from the
Bihar region in North India as well as from the eastern parts of Uttar
Pradesh, while the later immigrants were recruited from Madras and
Andhra (Mookherjhi 1962). The main language spoken thus included
Hindi, Bhojpuri, Tamil and Telugu, with a variety of intermediary
languages and dialects spoken by small numbers in between. Furthermore,
each linguistic group was subdivided into different castes which did
not have the same customs, eating and marriage habits, and which placed
them all in a suspicious position vis-a-vis each other. The laws of
ritual pollution seemed to be constantly flouted by this mixture of
castes, and the differences in religious rituals and religious faiths
made the internal integration of the community even more difficult
(Benedict 1961). All these features characterizing the Indian
community were not however actively disintegrative -- in other words,
although it was never a homogeneous group, it did show an amount of
coherence in its activities, since under the restrictive bridle of
colonialism, there was neither the opportunity, nor the need for the

Indians to express or harbour any dissension in their midst.
Differences were felt, but not acted out, since they all shared the
same situation, occupied the same niche, fought for the same
privileges. It is perhaps, then, not so much of an idealization on
the part of historians who have described this period, in particular
Hazareesingh (1973) and Beejadhur (1935), to stress the harmony and
fraternity that existed at the time among all the Indians, but the
reasons for this harmony were multiple, and perhaps more complex than
is allowed by these historians - in surface and retrospect, it may
be possible to see unity and fraternity, but if one went deeper, it
is certain that cohesion may be seen as imposed from above by the
colonial and plural situation and used as a strategy by the indentured
labourers. Indeed, when the historians mention the fact that all the
Indians celebrated such religious festivals as the Muharram - which
is a Muslim rite - and Durga Puja or Holi - which are Hindu festivals -
they are certainly making a point that unity prevailed among these
two religious communities, but they are at the same time unwittingly
placing an emphasis upon the religious consciousness that existed at
the time, and ignoring the historical records of religious disorders
that occasionally occurred, such as the one which occurred in 1877
between Muslims and Tamils (*Colonial Gazette* 1877).

The policy of the colonial rulers towards the Indians was very
different from that of the French towards the African and Malagasy
slaves. The policy of the British government was one of non-
interference with the languages and cultures of the population, and
because of its links with India, it did not actively repress the
culture of the Indians. The amount of freedom left to the Indians to
practise their original way of life was also connected with the wish
of the government to induce them to settle in the island (Saha 1970).
This policy, which left some latitude to the Indians to reconstruct,
in their new surroundings, the conditions of life that existed in
India, not only permitted their religion and culture to be preserved,
but also allowed for a parallel resilience of differences and divisions
within the group.

The Muslim group in the Indian community was perhaps the most strongly
differentiated because of its separate religion. It was not itself

devoid of caste-like and sectarian divisions, for its members belonged to Sunnee, Shia, Bhoraa and various other sects. Although they have tended to be more cohesive than Hindus, there were moments in time when the segmentation existing in the community did lead to dissension and conflict. In 1907 such a conflict arose between the Sunnee Muslims and the other sects over the management of their major mosque, the Jummah Mosque situated in the capital, Port-Louis. The case was brought to court and created a rather lengthy palaver, but the conflict was subsequently resolved. This involved the urban-dwelling Muslims mainly, but as they were the focus of the rural Muslims, the conflict pervaded the whole Muslim community as an issue. Much later in time, a conflict of another kind arose when the Sunnee Muslims formally declared that the Ahmadiya sect was not to be recognized as Muslim. This conflict became very intense, but was kept within the bounds of the community itself, and was resolved by the Ahmadiyas opening separate mosques for themselves. In general, however, such conflicts have been few and far between, and have never been allowed to transgress the group-confines (Emrith 1967; *Association des Ahmadis* 1951).

There were Muslim merchants in the island when it was still a French colony, and in 1798, they had petitioned for and obtained a parcel of land to build their first mosque. This encouraged those who came later to build more mosques and to celebrate their religious festivals with some of the pomp and grandeur that characterized them in India (Emrith 1967).

At a very early stage, 'vernacular' schools teaching Indian languages were set up in the villages, for Hindustani and Tamil speaking children mainly. Hindustani was spoken by Muslims and Hindus from North India, but there is evidence, from the reports submitted to the Legislative Council on the subject in 1878, that the Muslims attended the school in fairly large numbers while very few Hindus did. For this reason, the Muslim children were given holidays for their religious observances, such as on the occasion of the Tayijah festival, and the Eid festival *(Minutes of Council 1890)*.

Apart from the religious divisions, the Indian community was further divided according to language and region of origin, caste and customs, and in the informal aspect of village life, these factors played an important part in the organisation of the villagers' existence. Their customs reflected, as far as possible, those that they observed in India, and they assembled regularly to listen to and chant hymns from the Ramayana and other religious scriptures (Roy 1960). In 1867 the first Shiva temple was built by the North Indians in a village called Gokula. The Tamils had separate places of worship, and, whereas all the villagers would partake in the celebration of the Durga Puja, Holi, Divali and Shivratri, the Tamils were the only ones who celebrated the Cavadee and performed the fire-walking rite (Hazareesingh 1965). They also had their own new year, the Pongal (Frère & Williamson 1875). It is said that, in spite of the language barriers, in the course of time all the Indians communicated in the Bihari dialect and later on in Creole, so that Bhojpuri became in time a singular mixture of the original dialect and a large number of Creole words (Hindustani 1909). However, the original languages of the Hindus were still preserved through oral transmission and partly through the vernacular schools. The Hindi-speaking people did not send their children to school as willingly as the Tamil-speaking or Muslims ones did, because the work the children did in the fields was valuable, but it is probable that the Brahmin priests did a lot to preserve the tradition of Hindi through the institution of the 'Baitka', and later on, the emergence of education as a positive means of mobility gave them an incentive to send their children to school (Minutes of Council 1890). There is evidence from colonial records that the people, although they acquired Bhojpuri as a means of communication outside the groups, still spoke their own languages inside the group. In 1884, a petition was made by a group of Indians to the Stipendiary Magistrate asking for interpreters in different Indian languages to be assigned to the district courts, because the Indians who could only speak their particular regional dialect or language faced considerable difficulties. A few district magistrates had some knowledge of Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, but they often had to seek the help of uneducated messengers in translating the statements of Indians involved in a case. There were thus still, in 1884, a large number

of Indians who spoke only their own language and found it hard to communicate in the lingua franca of the island *(Minutes of Council 1884; 1885)*.

The South Indians were further differentiated from the North Indians through cultural features such as their marriage customs. The marriage rites were different from group to group, and the orthodox 'puranic' system of marriage tended to stress these differences (Hazareesingh 1973). It is probable that inter-marriages were very few, precisely because of those distinctions in rituals and customs, and the language differences made integration and communication more difficult beyond a superficial level.

The distinction of caste has also been at the basis of many conflicts and hostilities in the history of the Hindus up to the present day. When the labourers arrived from India, they were requested to give their names, religion and caste to the emigration officers for record purposes (Benedict 1961). But the whole structure of caste was inevitably thrown into complete disorder from the very start of the journey to Mauritius, since the regulations of proximity, commensality, pollution etc. were disregarded. The people hussled together in the dépots and on the ships may at first have tried to keep their distances and only eat food cooked by Brahmans, but later on the regulations became looser and looser, since most of them had been flouted already. Furthermore, the well-known rigidity of caste was for once undermined by the conditions prevailing over the voyage, and in the course of emigration, a number of people changed their names and caste, thus making it impossible for anyone to ascertain whether the others were telling the truth when they said they belonged to such or such a caste (Tinker 1974). Slowly, then, as the people settled into their village life, the caste classification polarized into 'Varna' categories, which were the only pan-Indian means of classification that could safely be adhered to, the prerogatives of the Brahmins as priests and teachers were once more assumed by them, and the rest of the community probably tried to regulate itself as best it could from the somewhat dubious and equivocal means of classification and ranking that it possessed (Benedict 1961; 1962). The strongest measures they took were against

the 'Chamars' or leather-worker caste. Some of the untouchable castes ate pork and performed religious sacrifices with pigs. This placed them at the very bottom of the social ladder, and any prohibitions of pollution and any segregation that were practised were directed against them. The Arya Samaj, a reformist Hindu association, took a stand against all the caste practices that were held at the time: in the 1920s there were still restrictions on inter-dining and inter-marriage among sub-sections of the leading castes in the Hindu community (*Arya Patrika* 1925). Among the Brahmans, the most highly regarded sub-section was the 'Maraz' (i.e. Maharaj) caste, and among Kshatriyas, the 'Babujis' held a very high status. They performed the investiture of the sacred thread, 'Janeo', and limited their social interaction to members of high castes only. Marriage was as far as possible endogamous, or else took place between close castes (Roy 1960).

Later on, the pork-eating practice died out almost completely. The Arya Samaj paper, the *Arya Patrika*, mentions in 1925 that, whereas the lower castes were acquiring habits of temperance and vegetarianism, the higher castes on the contrary were getting more and more into drinking and meat-eating habits. In Mauritius, there was more latitude for mobility because of the ambiguous nature of caste classification in the changed conditions of life.

The configuration that appears is thus an ambiguous one, where, on the one hand, the Indians were trying to hold on to the caste habits they used to adhere to in India, and on the other, they were changing under the influence of westernization, and of the wider society. The drinking habits, which to a large extent still affects the villagers today, was held by the *Ayra Patrika* (1925) to be a consequence of the Indians trying to imitate the Creole manual workers. This theory is consistent with the fact that the Creole workers held a slightly higher status in the society than the India Indians, and could thus be used as a focus for emulation. The first generations of Mauritian-born Indians spoke a 'pidgin Hindustani interlarded with French creole words' (*Hindustani* 1909). Yet, the gradual changes occurring in the community were counter-balanced by the seclusion of women, strong prejudices against the lower castes, and the growth of superstitious beliefs, in part nurtured by the

Brahmin priests themselves *(Hindustani* 1909*).*

The indentured Indian community was thus placed in a situation where it was both economically and socially at the bottom of the stratification system. It did not however lose all those cultural traits that seemed to strengthen even further the coolie stereotype, such as its religious rituals and languages and it did not seek mobility by denying the essential features of 'Indianness'. When it did achieve mobility, it was within the confines of its ethnic identity,resisting all impulses of assimilation. It thus remained a separate community, and grew into what was called an 'Indian menace' *(Mauritius Indian Times* 1920*).*

The religion of the Hindus was classified as the orthodox Sanatan Dharm religion until the reform movement of the Arya Samaj started in Mauritius in the early 1920s. The advent of the Arya Samaj was meant to bring in its wake a wind of reform and renewal in the values of the Hindu group. In the end, in spite of the good intentions of its founders, it only succeeded in dividing the community further into separate sects, and the movement itself divided into several Arya Samaj Associations.

The Sanathan Dharm, on the other hand, was more a denomination than a formal religious association with a congregation. Before the advent of the Arya Samaj, most Hindus were more or less implicitly Sanatanists, although this hardly contributed to their unity, Hinduism itself was only a focus of unity when interaction with the wider society was involved: then, any member of the community who lifted his voice would do so on behalf of all Hindus, and not on behalf of his caste, linguistic group or sect *(Mauritius Indian Times* 1921*).* In fact even the Muslims were said to be part of the same community although this is hardly admitted to be true today: the allegiances have undergone many changes since the upward mobility of the Indians. It is also an important aspect of Hinduism that it offers within itself, a number of alternatives according to which the Hindus can classify themselves, instead of offering a global and unified religious system. This is not peculiar to Mauritius, but is a syndrome often observed in overseas Indian communities. Barton Schwartz noted that in a village

in Trinidad, in response to a question about their religious
affiliation, the villagers tended to give the alternatives within
Hinduism rather than a simple response as Hindu, Christian or Muslim
(Schwartz 1967). Hinduism can in fact hardly be seen as a syncretic
term to denote the religion of the Hindus. The Hindi-speaking,
Tamil-speaking or Telugu-speaking Hindus might have thought of each
other as belonging to the same religion, but they still practised
their religious rites separately, and clung to their separate
identities with a persistence that is visible even today. The
ambiguity with which the Hindus view their religious denomination
is evident in the fact that the 1972 population census contains no
less than 23 different denominations under the 'Hindu' category.
Thus, all Sanatanists and Arya Samajists were divided into
linguistic groups. Some listed their religion as straight 'Tamil-
speaking', 'Gujrati-speaking' etc; others, as 'Rajput', 'Vaish',
'Puranic' or 'Vedic'. This means that the Hindus have a much
narrower field of reference for self-classification, and it can be
sectarian, linguistic, regional, or even pertaining to caste.

The regional and linguistic differences between North and South
Indians has acquired over the years a profound structural
significance. It involves different but superimposed bases of
differentiation such as marriage or religious rites, intellectual or
economic achievements and cultural traits such as the Aryan/
Dravidian opposition and the linguistic heritage, as we shall see in
the following chapters. If the sense of separateness between these
groups had not been present from the very beginning of indenture,
integration might have occurred and there would not have been, in
the Hindu community, several minority groups in opposition to the
Hindi-speaking majority group. The Tamils in particular have always
been thought as being extremely conscious of their cultural and
religious separateness, and they have been the most active in
resisting assimilation into the North Indian section. There were
Tamil traders in the island even during French occupation, and a
number of Tamils had been brought in from Pondicherry to work on
the roads, and later settled in the island and were allotted parcels
of land by the French administration or given posts as civil servants
(Sooryamoorthy 1979). Although most of them were either already

Christians before they were brought in from India, or had been
baptized after they arrived, a number of them still practised their
Hindu rites and built Tamil temples in the suburb of Port-Louis
(Roy 1960). They perhaps served as focuses for the identity of the
Tamil people that came as indentured labourers, as terms of reference
for the possible ways of achieving social mobility. This is perhaps
at the root of the paradox that seems to be present in the Tamil
community: it resisted the possibility of assimilation into the
North Indian group, but it did not resist as strongly missionary
proselytization. In fact, a precedent had already been set by the
Tamil businessmen and civil servants, and South India had already had
a long tradition of conversion to Christianity even before that.
It was possible for the colonial government to bring in missionaries
from South India with a working knowledge of Tamil and who could
make the task of conversion easier (Roy 1960). The material
advantages that went with conversion also played a large part in the
proselytization of the South Indians. It was in fact the swiftest
way of opting out of the coolie status, and for some, it only meant
a change of name and going through the religious ceremonies without
involving a fundamental change of identity. Some Tamils however
adopted their new religion so completely that they merged into the
Creole group and have now become undifferentiated from them. Others
reverted back to their Tamil identities. A third group have chosen
to remain in an ambivalent position, neither assimilating with the
Creoles nor with the Hindu-Tamils. They go under the informal
denomination of *Tamil-baptisé* and seem to have chosen to retain
a separate identity.

Those that remained Hindus hung on, as far as possible, to their
language and customs. Even at a later stage, after the end of the
indenture period, the formation of baitkas, or village socio-
religious associations, divided the Indian community along socio-
linguistic lines, and separate temples were used by the Tamils for
worship (Benedict 1958). Village factionalism also brought this
division to the forefront, and intermarriage between North and
South Indians was severely frowned upon. The difference existing
between the two cultures seemed to be more effective in separating
them than the sense of belonging to the same community was in

bringing them together. The religious observances of the Tamils were not only very different from those of the other groups, but they were also strict, involving periods of fasting especially during the months of January/February and September/October (Frère & Williamson 1875). Religion has, in fact, created for them a separate system that has given them an identity of their own, and the formation of a Tamil Association in the 1950s stressed this religious differentiation by stipulating that the members should adhere to the Tamil religion and believe in the Tamil prophet Tirruvalluvar and in the Tamil 'Bible' (*Statutes of Tamil Association* 1954). The political stand they later took, in opposition to the North Indian group, perhaps goes to show how the concurrence of linguistic, cultural, and religious differences can assume structural significances and contribute to the emergence of ethnic feelings within a wider group.

The other group from South India, the Telugus from Andhra Pradesh, did not come in large numbers, but still form a small community that possesses its associations, social clubs and language schools. It is with this community that this thesis is mainly concerned. The fact that emigration from South India is thought to have taken place from the port of Corringhee in Madras by many Indians, afforded them the nickname of 'cooringhee' (Roy 1960). A number of them came from Vishakapatnam, others from Vijayanagram and other places of Andhra.

The Telugus were never a strongly united and organized group. No special Telugu festivals are mentioned in colonial records, and at the time of indenture, Telugu was not taught in the vernacular schools, probably because of their small numbers. They still spoke the language within the group, practised their own marriage rites and kept certain traditions such as wearing the sari on the right shoulder, but they celebrated religious festivals along with the Tamils, and sometimes with the North Indians. They have in general found themselves in a curiously balanced situation created by their small numbers and their split allegiances: being from South India, they have tended to side with the Tamils in their endeavours for social mobility, and have allowed more intermarriages to take place with Tamils than with other sub-groups of the Indian community. However, the Tamils have always formed such a strong block that the Telugus could not - and

probably did not want to -- integrate completely with them. They thus have hung alongside the group, cohering with it in a few religious and social activities, but kept resolutely separate when it came to the actual identity of the group. They could not themselves form a similarly strong and close-knit community because their small numbers emphasized the disparateness of the material and social statuses of their members, and in fact, their mobility after indenture was not achieved as a group, for each family and individual fought their own way out of their social conditions. Some acquired land and became rich by going into sugarcane cultivation, others became teachers or interpreters in Courts of Justice. They were neither strong in numbers as the North Indians, nor strong in co-operation and mutual help as the Tamils. They therefore collaborated with the North Indian group as well as with the Tamil group, and took neither a strong political nor a strong religious stand. They were a loose-knit community, celebrating their new year, the Ūgadi, and, later on, after the setting up of Andhra Pradesh as a separate state, they also celebrated the Andhra Day as a reminiscence of freedom and of the martyrdom of Shri Potishri Ramulu; but they performed their religious activities without much pomp in Telugu temples or at individual homes, and organised Ram Bhajans as a social and religious event. Very few of those who consider Telugu as their mother tongue actually speak it, and in the main, after the creation of Andhra state, Telugu revivalism has taken the shape of youth organisations and language teaching, as we shall see in Chapters six and seven.

This is not a characteristic of the Telugu community only, but of all the ethnic groups present in the Indian community. The Marathi and Gujrati groups, although extremely small in numbers, have exhibited a strong resistance to cultural assimilation, and are closely endogamous. Language is preserved among them and cultural habits, such as song, dance -- the 'collatom' or stick dance and 'garba' dance among the Marathi and the Gujrati respectively, are seen as characteristics of these groups -- seem to enhance group cohesion more than separate religious habits.

This separateness was not apparent at the time of indenture, although, as I pointed out above, the seed had already been sown when the

community was brought together within the confines of the tiny Mauritian society. The infrastructure was there, and only needed certain external factors to emerge as surface conflicts and dissension. It is often believed that intra-group unity is a corollary of extra-group hostility in a plural setting. In this case, however, although the Indian group did act cohesively on a political level, the internal differentiation seems to have been exacerbated in the course of time on a social and religious level. It is probably indeed a consequence of the heterogeneous nature of the society that the latent conflicts have in fact only been acted out in the open when they involved two separate religious groups, such as Creoles and Muslims, Indians and Creoles, or Muslims and Tamils. The pressure coming from the wider society, the potential threat that arises between ethnic groups has prevented dissension within the groups composing one communal group to degenerate into riots. But the dissension did express itself in several other ways, mainly informal, on the level of every day life, and in village factionalism, so that breaches of unity were never of a permanent nature. There was thus an implicit social sanction of the ways in which hostility could be enacted so as not to endanger the total social structure, as we shall see in Chapters three and four. The complex cleavages in the society as a whole created **multiplex ties** for each person which did not allow him to give vent to any antagonisms in a way that would sever one or several of those ties. The system allowed the groups to cohere when it was in their interest to do so, even when they harboured internal hostilities, but as soon as cohesion was no longer needed, the dissension would be expressed again, and chanelled into various informal means of exteriorisation.

The mobility of the Indians was however partly achieved - at least in the political sphere - through such a cohesion. We shall now look at the elements which were conducive to the group's mobility.

When the Indians came to the end of their term of indentureship, they
had the choice of either going back to India or of staying in
Mauritius and settling down there permanently. Many did in fact
choose to go back, and had their passages paid by the government,
while others had saved enough to pay for their return passage.
However, it was difficult for those who went back to India to reinsert
themselves into the social conditions there: their social status had
become ambiguous, and the crossing of the ocean was an irreversible
step which had made them into strangers in their own land. Too many
spiritual and social principles had been flouted for them to be able
to slot back into their old social niches. A large number therefore
came back to the island after a while, and settled down with those
who had chosen to do so in the first place (Tinker 1974;
Sooryamoorthy 1979). For them now, the outlook onto the future was
fraught with difficulties, but prospects were not few either. It
is thought in Mauritius that it was an intrinsic aspect of the
personality of the 'Bihari' people that they are able to subsist on
a plateful of 'dhal' and rice a day, and work the rest of the time.
Their stringent way of life is certainly one of the factors that
led to the economic rise of the Indians, for they were indeed able
to work and save so that they could acquire land and break away
from the serfdom and low status they had lived with all these years.
Further, as I described earlier, the 'metayage' system, which was a
system of land-tenure, allowed a number of them to start buying land
as soon as the sugar prices rose. The class of small planters that
emerged started to move steadily away from the low status of
agricultural work (*Mauritius Legislative Council* 1951).

Parallel to economic mobility, social mobility among the Indians was
partly due to the rise in economic status, and partly to their
realisation of the importance of education in Mauritian society.
Burton Benedict made in his article 'Education without Opportunity'
(1958), an analysis of the meaning of education for the Indian
community. Its significance was an inherent part of the process of
change that was taking place at the time, and cannot be understood
without this perspective. As I mentioned above, while they were

working as indentured labourers, the Indians encouraged their
children to work alongside them in the fields. The Hindi-speaking
people in particular did not seem interested in sending their
children to the vernacular schools set up by the government, and
subsistence seemed more important than education for its own sake.
It is noted in the Minutes of Council in 1890 that attempts made since
1867 to establish schools in proximity of the sugar estates had proved
abortive because of the early age at which the Indian children were
engaged in field-work. However in 1890 the government took the step
to open schools near the villages and to conduct classes on a half-
time basis, i.e. by having separate shifts in the morning and in the
afternoon so that the children could work for half of the day and
study for half of the day (*Minutes of Council* 1890). This was
probably the first step taken to encourage education among the Indians.
At the end of indentureship, the people still needed their children to
work in the fields, but they also realised that agricultural work was
only a stepping-stone to better jobs and a higher status in the society:
it was not an end in itself, it held neither prestige nor material
advantages. While the Indians knew they might achieve an improvement
of their economic conditions by sheer hard work, improvement of their
social conditions really rested in the hands of their children, and
education became a focal element for social mobility. It was therefore
this element that helped the Indians to become aware of their rights
and of the possibilities of progress in the society. The handful of
Indo-Mauritians who had obtained 'matriculation' or - rarer still -
university degrees, not only instilled in the community a sense of
pride, but also tried to achieve some form of organisation within it
by opening newspapers and forming cultural associations (Benedict 1958).

Before the community could exhibit some kind of collective behaviour,
however, it really needed a push-factor from outside. This factor
came in the shape of a visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Mauritius, which
was to trigger off a sequence of events leading to the ultimate
political organisation of the Indians. Gandhi came to the island in
1901, when he found the Indian community to be, in Tinker's terms,
'apathetic, ill-organised and segmented' (Tinker 1974;228). He had become
aware, in South Africa, of the way in which overseas Indians were
being treated, and he tried to awaken in them a sense of dynamism,

and in India a sense of responsibility for what was happening to
Indians abroad. However, the Indo-Mauritians did not react
immediately to Gandhi's movement. In 1907, one of his followers,
Manilall Mangalall Doctor, who had been with Gandhi in South Africa,
landed in Mauritius with the intent to fight the cause of the Indians.
He stayed in the island for three years during which period he worked
as a barrister - the only non white or coloured barrister in the
country - and as a legal adviser for the Indians. He built a
reputation as a leader among the Indians, and as a mere agitator
among the Franco-Mauritians (De Sornay 1953). He started a paper in
English and Gujrati, called *The Hindustani*, in which he took an
explicit stand against the 'white oligarchy', and which aimed at
bringing about political reforms in Mauritian society, and social
reforms in the Indian community (Roy 1960). The description
Professor Tinker (1974) gives of him may be both unsentimental and
accurate, painting him as an inefficient, complex-ridden but
ambitious little man, but it is far removed from the image the Indo-
Mauritians have kept of him: they all see him as a kind of moral
guide who awakened in them a consciousness of their rights and their
pride to belong to 'Mother India'. He filled, at the time, a vacuum
much in need of filling in the community, as a figure of leadership
striving for social redress and communal pride. Objectively, he may
not have achieved much, and he did not impress the Royal Commission
of 1909 when it was investigating the condition of the Indian
immigrants, but he will be remembered very differently by the Indians
in Mauritius (Emrith 1967; Roy 1960).

The coming of Doctor, the opening of *The Hindustani*, the investigations
of the Royal Commission were all elements that contributed to the
shaping of the Indian community into a politically aware one. They had
also occurred at a time when India was becoming aware of the
vicissitudes the life of the indentured labourers had harboured and
was taking some interest in the condition of the overseas Indians
(Tinker 1974). Within the community itself, a few people were acquiring
higher education and better economic conditions: slowly, the barriers
that had surrounded the community so far and kept it resolutely within
the bounds of its socio-economic conditions, were breaking down.

Unity was more important at the time than anything else, and, superficially at least, they did show some amount of cohesion. The period between 1920 and 1930 was an important one in terms of the political awareness of the Indians. In 1926, two Indians were elected for the first time in Parliament. The Indian newspapers contributed largely to this success, which the Indians saw as a group victory (*Arya Patrika* 1925).

They showed their capacity for concerted action during the 1937 and 1943 strikes; although these were also partly class-struggles, the labourers agreed to act only because they were led by the leaders of the Labour Party, which had at its head, among others, one of the Indian political leaders, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. During that period, the separation between Muslims and Hindus was muted, and they acted together for political privileges. It was only in the 1948 elections that the Labour Party obtained an appreciable number of seats in Parliament (Hazareesingh 1973). The voting system had been changed to a simple literacy test, and this allowed the Indians to vote for the first time. They did so with a blatant communal bias that elected nearly all the Hindus that had been candidates for the election (Leblanc 1969). This was probably the beginning of the open competition between Muslims and Hindus, for, as no Muslim had been elected, the Muslims afterwards formed a separate political party that went to the polls on its own, and only cohered with the Hindus when an explicit stand had to be taken against other communities (Mannick 1979). Eventually, the political parties polarised into ethnic based parties, so that loyalties were first and foremost to the ethnic group as it was represented by a particular party (Leblanc 1969). This is why the access of the Labour Party to government was interpreted by all as the access of the Hindu group to political power. This exacerbated to a considerable extent ethnic relations, especially around the time when elections were taking place, but it was an almost inevitable syndrome of the power/number relation and the universal suffrage that the Indians would eventually accede to power. This triggered off an emigration wave among the Coloured and the whites, but the latter soon realised that as long as economic power was in their hands, they had nothing to fear from the present government. The old balance between political and economic power could be created again without

difficulty, since the government's socialist streak did not include nationalisation of the sugar estates as it was feared, and in fact was soon to be replaced by capitalistic policies.

The interesting reversal of political roles in the society since the beginning of Indian emigration had a profound impact on the internal relations between the various sub-groups in the Indian community. We have already seen what type of distinctions existed at the time of indenture, and how they were informally apparent in the religious and cultural aspects of their daily lives. On the social level, even after indentureship, each sub-group retained its traditions and language as far as it was possible, although the trend of westernisation did weaken a little the need to speak and learn these languages. Schooling was conducted entirely in English and French, every day conversation was carried in Creole. Language, then, for the sub-groups, acquired a more symbolic than communicative use, and the preservation of identity through the preservation of language beyond its communicative significance became an important aspect of the interrelations between the sub-groups (Baker 1968). Although on the political level, the trend was towards unity, on the social level several factors did contribute towards preserving the separation between the sub-groups. The partition of India and Pakistan, for instance, strongly affected Hindu-Muslim relations in Mauritius, to the extent that Muslims nowadays prefer to be morally linked to Pakistan rather than to India, although they originally came from India. The rivalries existing between the two religious communities had been brought to a head on several occasions in the course of time, mainly on religious matters, but they now acquired political significances as well.

The differentiation between those groups had become 'ethnicised', and as such could take many forms, whether political or social. This is why the difference was not a static one in the first place: religion was the basis on which it was built, but as an ethnic difference, it could be muted in certain cases, and emphasised in others. The political scene illustrates this openly and explicitly, in the sense that the groups would cooperate at a certain time or on a certain level, but at others, would become rigidly antagonistic. The

political sphere also exacerbated the difference between the Hindu groups, just as it did between the broad ethnic categories in the society. The salience of the distinctions within the Indian community can no longer be denied; unity is a matter of cooperation on a transitory scale, not of cohesion as a long-term aim. From a diffuse and loose means of categorisation, these identities have now become terms of reference within themselves, relevant in all spheres of interaction between the various sub-groups, and self-explanatory The two processes of reaffirmation of sub-group identity and of differentiation across the sub-groups are closely linked and mutually influencing. As opposed to integration and the gradual fading out of such 'minority' cultural groups, the opposite trend seems to have taken place. The state of heterogeneity of the society has thus intensified in the course of Mauritian history, and the society has come to be organised around this configuration as its main structural feature.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have described the formation of the society in
relation to its present state of heterogeneity, and have given an
outline of the different groups composing it. I have also described
the Indian community as it was before and after indentureship, and
isolated some of the factors that have led to its social and political
mobility after the abolition of indentureship, and which concurrently
contributed to the sharpening of the sub-delineations within the
group itself.

The historical factors of emigration would seem to have been conducive
to a merging of these sub-identities; instead of this, however, in the
process of change taking place in the society, they became more salient
and suffused with a new significance. The basis of identity was thus
historical, originating from already existing distinctions in Indian
society, in the same way that tribes were an important element of
social organisation in rural parts of Africa, and survived in an
ethnicised form in urban areas (Epstein 1978). But in the new social
context, identity acquired a new meaning in **relation to other**
orders of segmentation in the society. The pluralistic situation
provided a set configuration of groups and a social order into which
the Indian group came to fit; its own subdivisions became operational
within this already compartmentalised sphere, thus creating yet another
configuration of groupings that had different significances in different
interactional contexts.

The thesis will now go on to explore these identities and allegiances,
first in a village context, and later on in a group-specific context.
In the next chapter, I will provide a broad outline of the two villages
in which part of my fieldwork was conducted, before going into the
actual description of interrelations between the groups composing them.
This analysis of groups interacting in a village context is meant to
present the nature of heterogeneity as it is in Mauritius today –
i.e. how identity has come to be expressed in different ways according
to the social context, and which aspects of social relations play an
integrative role between the different groups.

CHAPTER TWO
DESCRIPTION OF THE TWO SETTLEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

In Chapter one, we saw the genesis of Mauritian society, how it acquired its heterogeneous composition and what was the place of each group in the global social framework. We also described the indentured Indians and delineated the different groups contained in the Indian community.

This community which is now divided into two distinct religious communities, Hindus and Muslims, composes 60% of the Mauritian population (see Table 1, Chapter one). Consequently, most of the agricultural villages in the island, inhabited by agricultural labourers, have a population composed of a majority of Indians. These agricultural villages are usually situated on the fringes of a sugar estate from which the villagers draw their livelihood. They were formed during the *morcellement* processes which enabled the employees of the sugar estates to buy small plots of land both to inhabit and to cultivate. The *morcellement* enabled the indentured Indians to break through the labouring status and emerge into a stratum of small planters, and also to own small plots of land on which they built houses and which expanded into villages. Ever since the first *morcellements*, there have been periodic sales of land, both by the sugar estates and by large land-owners which allowed these villages to spread out in order to accommodate the increasing number of people. The villages with which I am concerned here, Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien, have both had this kind of development, but Trois Boutiques is also made up of hamlets which have not been created by the *morcellement* process but as small 'camps' in which cyclone refugees having lost their houses were settled.

In this chapter, I will be giving a brief survey of both villages, both to convey an idea of the ethnographic background and to provide a setting for some of the major aspects of the village societies that I will be dealing with.

Section One will contain a description of Trois Boutiques, Section
Two will deal with Plaine Magnien, and Section Three will describe
briefly the structure of the sugar estate, since the lives of the
villagers of both settlements, in particular Trois Boutiques, revolve
around the estate.

GRAND PORT DISTRICT

Rose Belle

Mahébourg

Plaisance
Airport

1
5
2 3
4
6
12
7 9
8 11
10

1 : Plaine Magnien
2 : Beau Fond
3 : Carreau Lapaille
4 : Trois Boutiques
5 : Camp Esnouf
6 : Malakoff
7 : Plein Bois
8 : Sauveterre
9 : Carreau Accacia
10 : Le Bouchon
11 : Virginia
12 : Camp Carole
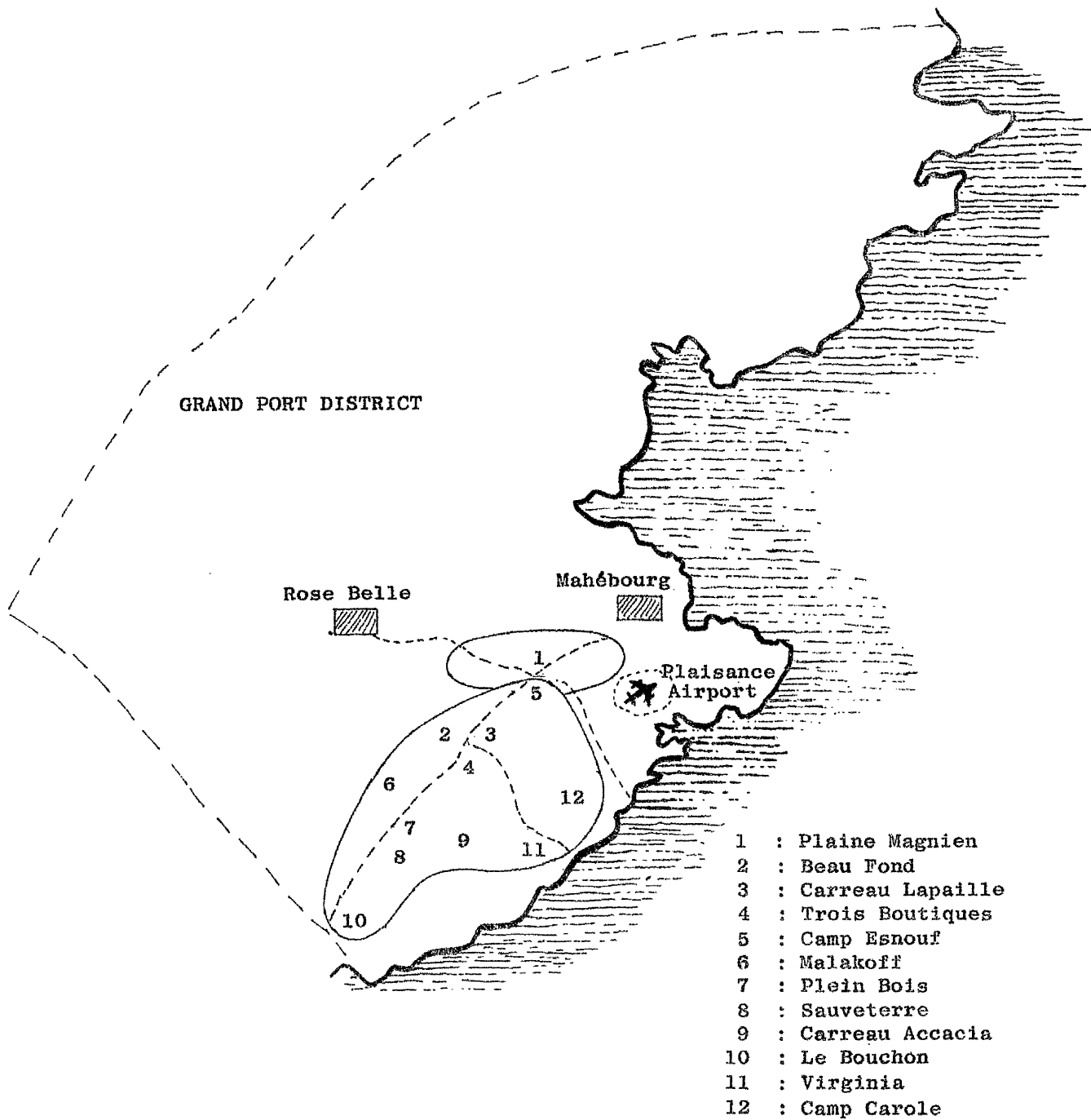
MAP No. 1

MAP OF GRAND PORT DISTRICT
SHOWING PLAINE MAGNIEN AND TROIS BOUTIQUES VILLAGE COUNCIL AREAS

TO MALAKOFF
AND L'ESCALIER

TROIS BOUTIQUES

Lakshman's House

Phone Booth

Cité

UPPER TROIS BOUTIQUES

Arya Samaj   Shop

Ram's House

Village Market

CARREAU LAPAILLE

Bus Stop

Village Hall

Post Office

Telugu Temple

BEAU FOND

LOWER TROIS BOUTIQUES

Shop

FOOTBALL PITCH

Community
Centre

FROM PLAINE MAGNIEN
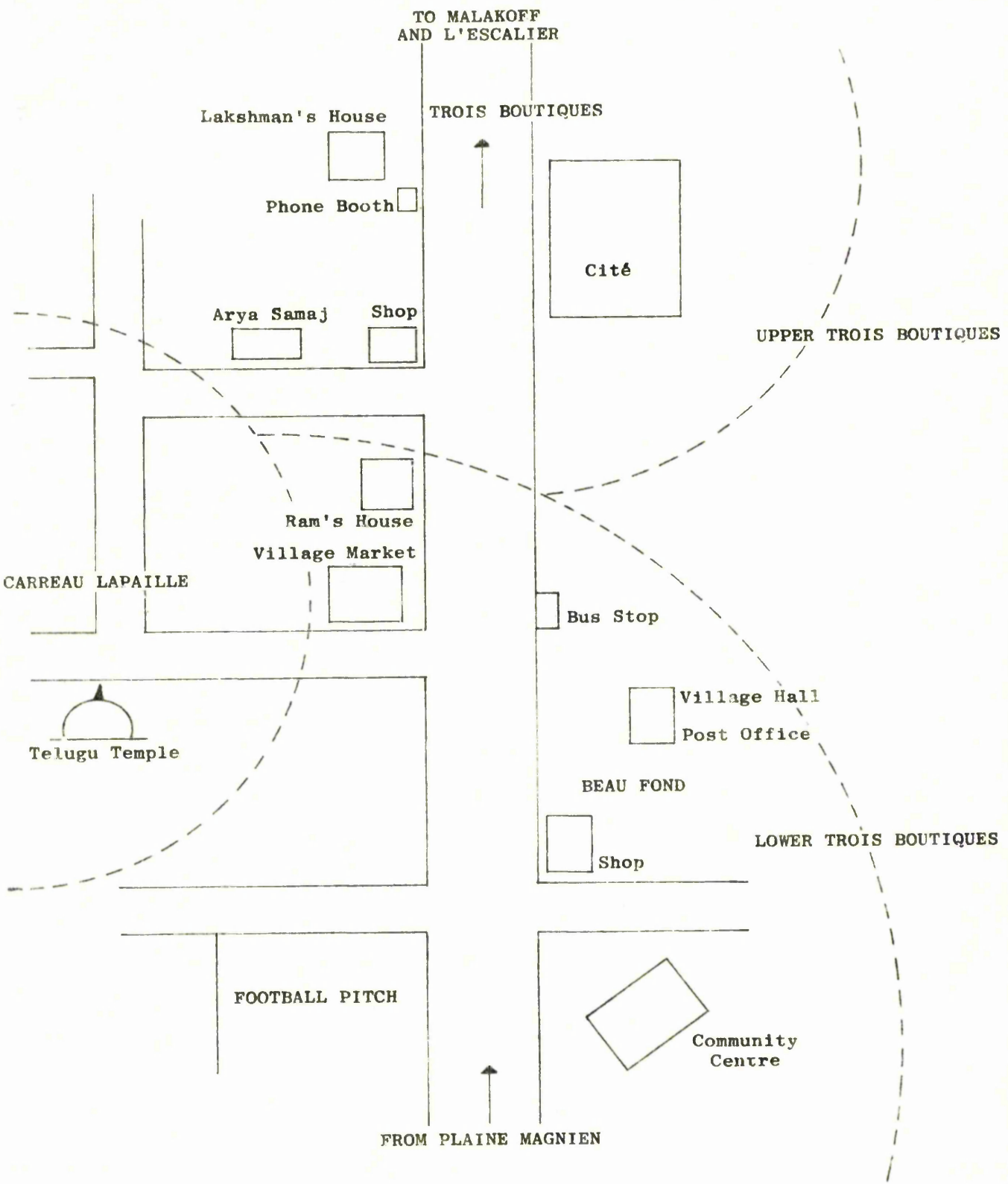
MAP No. 2

MAP OF TROIS BOUTIQUES SHOWING DIVISION INTO HAMLETS

SECTION ONE: TROIS BOUTIQUES

Trois Boutiques, the first village in which I conducted fieldwork, is characterised first and foremost by its specific lay-out, in several small and distant hamlets, and secondly by its geographically isolated position. It lies alongside a main road and spreads out deep into the countryside, half-way between two major villages: Plaine Magnien, further north, and L'Escalier, further south. These two villages being larger and more accessible by public transport routes, have benefited from most of the essential social services, while Trois Boutiques, in between, has been left peculiarly bereft, on the grounds that its inhabitants could make use of the social amenities of either of the two neighbouring villages. This has created a large discrepancy in the state of development of Plaine Magnien and Trois Boutiques, giving rise to many contrasts with which we shall be concerned in following chapters.

(i) The Village Council Area

Trois Boutiques is a fairly expansive village that covers a wide radius -- 5 square miles -- of the Southern countryside. This is so because it is made up of several small hamlets that were too sparsely populated to be considered as villages in their own right, and that were rather haphasardly regrouped into what is now called Trois Boutiques Village. These hamlets are: (1) Trois Boutiques, (2) Beau Fond, (3) Sauveterre, (4) Camp Carole, (5) Malakoff, (6) Le Bouchon, (7) Virginia, (8) Carreau Esnouf, (9) Carreau Accacia, (10) Carreau Lapaille and (11) Plein Bois (see Map No.1). All these hamlets add up to a population of around 4,000.

It has been difficult to obtain precise figures for the population of Trois Boutiques, because there is a high degree of internal mobility between the hamlets, in particular the less developed ones. People find it easy and sometimes convenient to move from one hamlet to another, partly because of marriage and kinship links, partly because of differing opportunities and lack of facilities in some of the hamlets. Disputes with neighbours can also be one reason for mobility. When one of the hamlets is chosen in the rural development programme of the Government, it tends to suddenly attract people from other hamlets.

There are no 'mass' migratory movements as such, internal migration taking place mainly on an individual level using different networks such as affinal, agnatic or economic ones. There are both push and pull factors which tend to alter periodically, so that the direction of migration remains hard to predict (*Economic Planning Unit Report* 1979).

The main factors to go against migration are fixed property in one area and strong kinship or neighbourly bonds, which ensure that there is a certain amount of overall stability in the hamlets. The ethnic make-up of each hamlet also has an influence on the choice of people who wish to migrate. Trois Boutiques is made up of a majority of Hindus, including North Indians and Telugus, of Creoles and of about twelve Muslims households.

The Economic Planning Unit census gives the following figures in the breakdown of population per hamlet:

	Households	Population	Ethnic groups
Beau Fond	36	241	Hindu
Carreau Accacia	64	314	Hindu
Camp Esnouf	53	223	Creole
Carreau Lapaille	120	959	Hindu
Le Bouchon	46	205	Creole
Malakoff	12	61	Creole
Plein Bois	52	382	Creole/Hindu
Sauveterre	52	269	Hindu/Creole
Trois Boutiques	128	662	Hindu/Muslim
Virginia	20	112	Creole
Camp Carol	85	401	Hindu/Creole
Total	668	3,829	

<u>Table III</u>

Population and number of households in Trois Boutiques

The two main groups in Trois Boutiques village area are thus Hindus and Creoles. Within Trois Boutiques hamlet, there is a small area called Camp Macaw which is occupied by a few Muslim households, and

there are a few scattered Muslims households in other hamlets, but they do not constitute a group as such. (In the table on page 68 where there are two groups listed under the *ethnic group* column, the left-hand side group is the dominant one in numbers, while the right-hand side one is the minority one).

The remoteness of some of these hamlets makes a pan-village attitude or a common village-feeling almost impossible to nurture. For this reason, people's territorial solidarity goes first to the hamlet they live in. Each hamlet is, in fact, a small unit in itself. The central part of the village, composed of a grouping of hamlets called Trois Boutiques, Beau Fond and Carreau Lapaille is effectively what people call Trois Boutiques: it has some 1,800 of the total population, and 280 of its households. This is the part that is situated alongside the main road, and where all the main amenities can be found. There are three shops in Trois Boutiques hamlet and Beau Fond, a barber's shop, and a local pub. Further, the Village Hall, where the Village Council convenes, and the Community Centre, are both found in Beau Fond. There is a public phone-booth in Trois Boutiques and an unused village-market. The Telugu temple is found in Carreau Lapaille. For convenience purposes, I will be referring to this central node of hamlets as Trois Boutiques in the course of the study, since it constituted the main area of my research there. If I wish to speak specifically about the hamlets, I will mention them by name.

As it can be seen from the above, most of the development that has taken place in Trois Boutiques has been concentrated in its central part. Beau Fond is the most prosperous area of the village, and most of the better houses, as well as a fairly new concrete shop can be found there. The Hindus of Beau Fond are North Indians.

Carreau Lapaille - which had been given this name because there used to be only thatch houses there formerly - had been one of the ill-famed areas of Trois Boutiques because of the people's reputation for being violence-prone. This negative reputation was probably due to the fact that the poorest people of the village lived there, which influenced other people's outlook on them. Now, there are a few concrete houses being built in the hamlet, and all the other houses are corrugated-iron

ones, so that this reputation is slowly changing. The people of
Carreau Lapaille tended to move away from it whenever they had the
means to do so, but recent *morcellements* undertaken by two fairly
large cane-land owners in the area have started to attract people from
the other hamlets.

The majority of the people of Carreau Lapaille are Telugus, while
those of Trois Boutiques hamlet are equally divided between North
Indians and Telugus. Relations between the two groups are on the whole
amicable, although members of each group prefer to have neighbours of
their own group. The North Indians of Carreau Lapaille and Trois
Boutiques who are of orthodox (Sanathan) faith use the Telugu temple,
while those belonging to the reformist Arya Samaj faith use the Arya
Samaj ·centre in Trois Boutiques hamlet. Those of Beau Fond, however,
prefer to go to Plaine Magnien village nearby, to the Shivala, or North
Indian orthodox centre, a fact which is ascribed by people of Carreau
Lapaille to hamlet separation - i.e. Beau Fond people not wishing to go
to a Carreau Lapaille temple - rather than ethnic separation. There
is however an increasing amount of ethnic-based separation between the
two hamlets, although it is in keeping with the values of Trois Boutiques
people, (which we shall deal with in Chapter three), that this tendency
is phrased as hamlet separation. The socio-religious associations, or
"sociétés" existing in the village also remain separate for each group.
There is thus a Telugu société and a North Indian société. There are
however cases of Telugus joining the Arya Samaj société even though they
may not be of Arya Samaj faith, in order to use the social facilities
provided by the société. This aspect will be discussed in Chapter three,
Section four, and a description of the functions of the société will also
be given.

The other hamlets constituting the Village Council area are scattered at
a distance of several miles from the central node of hamlets. They have
their own characteristics and idiosyncracies which do not fall within the
compass of this thesis. The problems affecting them are very different
from those affecting Trois Boutiques; although they are all subsumed
under the control of the same Village Council, the more distant hamlets
tend to be neglected by it and to remain more or less cut off, both
communication-wise and interaction-wise from central Trois Boutiques.

This isolation is further enhanced by the fact that a certain amount of ethnic segregation exists between Hindus and Creoles since the 1965 riots - described in sub-section (iii) below -, and that the two groups tend to occupy different hamlets. This also has repercussions on the politics of the Village Council, as we shall see in Chapter three. These hamlets will then be mentioned only in so far as they are relevant to the description of Trois Boutiques, and, for this reason, a full description is not felt to be necessary.

We will now go on to look at the occupational structure of Trois Boutiques.

(ii) Employment

Trois Boutiques lies in the vicinity of Mon Trésor Mon Désert Sugar Estate, which employs most of its working people. As the mechanism of the estate is dealt with in Section Three below, we will not describe labouring work, which is the principal form of occupation of the villagers, in this section.

Apart from the sugar estate, which is the main source of employment for people of Trois Boutiques, there are not many independent sources of employment in the village itself. There are three shops in central Trois Boutiques, but these are run by their owners, and do not provide any outside employment, and there are no amenities that could help channel some of the increasingly numerous unemployed in the village. All look towards the estate for jobs, and labourers who are already employed by the estate try to obtain jobs for their sons in their own work-sphere before trying any other alternatives. A large number of young people who have finished schooling now have to rely on part-time employment during the crop season or engage in day labouring for independent planters.

The restrictions on employment in the village are making the villagers more and more conscious of the threat of unemployment. The educated youths look towards outer spheres for jobs, and those who do obtain jobs in the civil service or teaching, tend to move out of the village altogether, for they see their village as a dead-end one. They see no future prospects emerging within the village itself, and that,

coupled with its remoteness, makes migration the best available choice. However the fact that there is a kin-member or a caste member or simply an ethnic-group member with access to higher level resources provides the people with an entry into these levels, even if it is a back-door entry. Ethnic manipulation has very much opened up the paths of mobility for some villagers, and all see its potential in specific areas such as employment.

For the Creoles, the main form of livelihood is employment on the estate as manual workers, or fishing. In some of the Trois Boutiques hamlets, it is possible for them to take up fishing as an occupation, since such hamlets as Camp Carole and Le Bouchon are on the coast. A few unemployed Hindus from Camp Carole have also taken this up. Fishing can be quite an organised occupation in villages where fishermen set up their own cooperatives and acquire their own boats, but in the Trois Boutiques hamlets, it is mainly a lone enterprise, often illegal where the people use unlawful methods such as dynamite. It is basically a form of subsistence occupation, for the fishermen rarely catch enough fish or sea-food to sell in large quantities. For them, there is no great profit to be derived from fishing, because of the precarious nature of the job itself. The weather is the main deterrent, as well as government bans on certain forms of fishing which are detrimental to the reproduction of fish. The people from Camp Carole and Le Bouchon who engage in this occupation lead a hand-to-mouth existence most of the time, except when they manage to obtain a secondary form of employment such as partial employment on the sugar estate which provides an alternative income.

The women in Le Bouchon hamlet have in fact managed to find such an alternative employment. There had been a casual tradition of basket-weaving in Le Bouchon which people had never thought of exploiting in terms of money. They used to make baskets for children or sell baskets in a local market for a few rupees, but this was as far as they would go. Then, about two years ago, the wife of an estate-manager saw the baskets and thought that they would sell well in Réunion Island. She started ordering small quantities from the Le Bouchon women, which she took to Réunion. The business slowly flourished, and she started selling more, and eventually decided to

have a small export business towards Europe as well. More and more
women from Le Bouchon became involved in basket-making, even though
they might not have had the skill previously. They have in other
words found an outlet for their skills without having to move out of
their homes and to leave their children by themselves. They tend to
group in one or two households during the day, mainly with the women
who first started to make baskets and who now 'direct' the chain.
Where they would not have tried by themselves to set up such an
enterprise and find a market for their wares in Mauritius, they are
now quite happy to make a small profit on their baskets and to leave
the marketing to the lady. This is an attitude often found among the
villagers, who generally rely on middle-men to sell their products
and complain that they are being exploited, but who rarely try to find
an alternative to the procedure.

Most of the Hindu women of Trois Boutiques, however, try to find work
on the sugar estate as far as possible. Younger women might learn to
sew and take on work at home as seamstresses, but the number of
seamstresses required in a small village is not large enough to
accommodate all the young women who wish to find work in this field.
There used to be a lot of cattle-rearing in Trois Boutiques, which was
an exclusively female occupation. Each household would have one cow
and several goats as well as poultry, and the women would be in charge
of their upkeep. This was an important supplement to the limited
labouring income. However, in recent years, there has been a sharp
decline in cattle-rearing for a number of reasons. First, cattle is
expensive to buy, and secondly, fodder has become extremely scarce.
The cane-fields used to be the main source of fodder, mainly in the
form of grass and weeds that grew in abundance between the canes and
around the fields, and which had to be uprooted regularly. There were
also extensive pasturing lands near the sea, grown with bushes and
grass, that belonged to the estate but on which villagers were allowed
to let their cattle graze. It was easy for women to go and collect
fodder near the village every day in order to feed the cows. However,
the sugar estates started using chemical weed-killers in the fields,
in order to save time and money and because they got rid of weeds more
efficiently than uprooting by hand. Not only did they spray the fields,
but also the by-roads where weeds used to grow in abundance, sometimes
making them impracticable. This restricted severely the sources of

fodder for the cows, and the women then had to go to the pasturing
lands to let the cattle feed there, or bring fodder for them from
distant places. Later on, even this source became closed, because
the estate had decided to propagate its deer for hunting purposes,
and began to expand the reserved land for deer well into the pasturing
lands. Thus, it became impossible to obtain fodder from there or to
let cattle graze there, and unless one was prepared to walk several
miles in order to obtain fodder, there was no other nearby source
available. The villagers thus feel that it is because of the estate's
attitude that it has become difficult to rear cattle. The Government
has tried to revive cattle rearing by giving cows to a few families
in the village and asking them for three calves back as a form of
payment, but again, the same problems have arisen, and moreover, some
of the imported cows did not prove as productive as expected. The
revival has thus not met with the expected success. In Camp Carole,
some couples have been able to go on raising goats successfully
because of the availability of pasture quite near, and nowadays ,they
can sell one goat for up to Rs 300/400 (£15/20).

Cane and vegetable cultivation is another side-occupation which is
available to the villagers. Few labourers actually own land and when
they do, the plots are so small that they rarely make big profits.
Table IV (page 75) shows the number of 'people owning land under cane
cultivation in Trois Boutiques. They may rent periodically from the
estate to cultivate vegetables. However, set against the demanding
schedule of labouring work, it is seen as a side-occupation only, and
one that is so risky that people can incur heavy losses one year after
having made good profits the previous year. One woman-labourer who had
been planting cabbage had to leave all the field's yield unharvested
because of the low prices of cabbage at that time which did not justify
paying extra hands for harvesting or transport to carry them to the
market. Another man had a roomful of gourds which he was keeping until
the prices rose, but there was a time limit within which he had to sell
them because of the risk of the gourds drying. These sorts of risk,
which people are aware of all the time, prevents them from engaging in
full-time vegetable cultivation or even from investing large sums into
the entreprise. They use it mainly as an extra-income during the
hard-up times between crops, relying on family-labour exclusively except

ACREAGE	LOCALITY							
	TROIS BOUTIQUES	CAREAU ACCACIA (Union Vale)	BEAU FOND	CAMP CAROL (Trois Boutiques)	CAREAU LAPAILLE (Trois Boutiques)	UNION VALE S.E.	LE BOUCHON	TOTAL
0.01 - 0.50	7	11	2	1	6	3	12	
0.51 - 1.00	1	6	2	-	-	1	6	
1.01 - 2.00	8	1	-	-	1	-	-	
2.01 - 4.00	1	-	2	-	1	-	2	
4.00 - 6.00	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	
6.01 - 8.00								
8.01 - 10.00								
10.00 - 15.00								
TOTAL	18	18	6	1	9	4	21	77

Table IV: Cane-land ownership in Trois Boutiques

sometimes for the harvesting when they will get friends or neighbours
to help them against payment. There are thus very rare break-throughs
in their economic situation through vegetable farming. In many cases,
bad management or lack of foresight in the choice of the vegetable
cultivated compells the cultivator to leave the vegetable unharvested
because of low prices.

The scope for entrepreneurial ventures is thus very limited in Trois
Boutiques, not only because of extraneous economic factors, but also
because of internal social factors which we shall deal with in Chapter
three. In the next section, we shall look at this environment, which
is an important factor in the social structure of the village, as we
shall see in later chapters.

(iii) Racial disputes

The division of the village into hamlets has in a way affected directly
the nature of ethnic relations in Trois Boutiques. As can be seen from
the population table in sub-section (i), each hamlet is made up either
exclusively or predominantly of one ethnic group, either Hindu or Creole,
so that, except in the case of a few hamlets like Camp Carole and Plein
Bois, these two groups do not come into close daily interpersonal contact.
This separation, which is in part due to the peculiar layout of the
village, in fact reflects a deep felt hostility on the part of each group
towards the other, which has prevented to a large extent the settlement
of members of one group in a hamlet that is predominantly occupied by the
other group. This feeling of hostility has been occasioned by a serious
riot that occurred in 1965 between Hindus and Creoles in Trois Boutiques
and which is remembered even today by the people as one of the crucial
moments in the history of the village.

This dispute was in fact generated outside the village. In 1965, the
movement towards Independence was well under way, and the opposition
between the Labour Party, fighting for Independence, and the Parti
Mauricien, fighting against it, was at its fiercest, pitting Hindus
and Creoles against each other in most parts of the island. Upheavals
were taking place in various areas, and in Trois Boutiques, where there
was both an important Hindu and Creole population, the antagonism

between the two groups seemed bound to reach a peak. The Creoles
in particular felt that they were in a strong position because the
white managers on the sugar estates were on the side of the Parti
Mauricien. There had been several acts of provocation on both sides,
but matters worsened when a Hindu man called Popoo was attacked by a
Creole man and injured. This took place immediately after a "peace
conference" had been held in Plein Bois in an attempt to restore
amicable relations between the two groups, with leaders from each
side stating that there would be no more acts of provocation on their
part. The attack on Popoo incensed the Hindus considerably and both
Popoo and Ballysingh, a sardar of the Kshattriya caste, rallied the
Hindus of Trois Boutiques in order to fight back. They stopped and
attacked a police car, and a police officer was killed. Ballysingh
was arrested under the charge of man-slaughter (*Advance* 1965). After
this, there were more and more mutual attacks, and Hindus from several
surrounding villages allied with the Trois Boutiques ones in order to
fight the Creoles. Another man was killed, this time a Creole overseer
from a nearby sugar estate. The Riot Unit eventually had to intervene
to restore peace in the area. Several people were arrested and tried,
but none obtained very long sentences.

After these riots, a large number of people, both Hindus and Creoles
moved out of the village. Relations between the two groups had been
so strained that no deep-felt resolution could be found. Most of the
Creoles from the central part of Trois Boutiques moved to other hamlets
or out of the village altogether, and even nowadays, Creoles are
reluctant to live in Trois Boutiques, and Hindus still nurture the same
mistrust of Creoles. The existence of separate hamlets within the
Village Council area made physical separation easier than if the
village had been a more compact one, and after the preliminary
separation, a semblance of friendly relations between people of
different groups was restored without these people having to be involved
in close interpersonal relations.

A similar type of situation occurred between Hindus and Muslims in
Trois Boutiques thirty years ago, but it was an internal dispute,
i.e. not externally generated as in the case of the 1965 riot, so that
it did not prove as disruptive as the latter. In 1954, there were more

Muslims in Trois Boutiques than there are now, and the quarrel, as
far as I could gather from the memories of the old Hindu men, arose
because a Hindu boy had eloped with a Muslim girl. This was a frequent
occurrence, but usually some sort of resolution was found, generally
with the boy converting to Islam. When the reverse happened, i.e.
when a Muslim boy eloped with a Hindu girl, no dispute would occur
because the girl would already have agreed to convert to Islam, and
the Muslims accepted this, as opposed to Hindus, for whom a person who
is from a different group remains different whether he converts or not.
In the case mentioned above, the Muslims grouped to take action against
the boy and his family. This happened around the time when the sardar
mentioned above, Ballysingh, had started engaging in social action in
the village 'panchayat' and among labourers, and was emerging as a
leader in the Hindu community. It was an occasion for him to show his
rallying powers, and he successfully contrived to rally a group of
Hindu men in order to retaliate against the Muslims. A minor riot
occurred between the two groups, but I have unfortunately been unable
to find out how it ended, since my informants seemed to differ over the
consequences of the dispute. When the Muslims did move away, it was
because of the attraction of Plaine Magnien, where their community was
larger and better organised and the hostile attitudes of the Hindus,
around them, who were in majority. Thus, although the original quarrel
did not prove as disruptive as the one which occurred between Hindus
and Creoles, it affected relations so that a certain amount of hostility
did persist in later years, and eventually the number of Muslims in
Trois Boutiques dwindled to the present dozen households.

Ethnic relations have thus suffered from such disputes in Trois Boutiques,
except between the two Hindu groups, the North Indians and Telugus. In
Chapter three, we are going to see how solidarity is maintained between
the two in the context of work relations and in the village environment
itself, and, conversely, how identity is expressed and maintained within
the group. This has to do both with the nature of the two groups
themselves and with the values characterising Trois Boutiques as a
village encompassed by a specific socio-economic boundary created by
labouring work and the vicinity of the sugar estate.

In this Section, I have described briefly the Village Council area with
a particular emphasis upon the node of three hamlets in which I conducted

fieldwork, and which I have called Trois Boutiques, as do the people themselves. I have also mentioned those aspects which I will deal with in depth in the next Chapter. I will now provide a similar description of Plaine Magnien village, in which I also conducted fieldwork.

PETROL STATION — Retail shop — TO MAHEBOURG AND PLAISANCE AIRPORT — Cité — Mosque — Arya Samaj — Supermarket — Village market — Chemist — Cité — CEMETERY LANE — Shop — L'ESCALIER ROAD — TO TROIS BOUTIQUES — Taxi rank — Petrol Station — Chemist — Bakery — SHOP — Supermarket — Mosque — Church — Shop — Govt. school — SHIVALA ROAD — Retail shop — Hardware shop — Shivala — Village Hall — Dispensary — Police Station — DISPENSARY LANE — Centre Social — FROM CUREPIPE — FOOTBALL PITCH

MAP No. 3

MAP OF PLAINE MAGNIEN SHOWING MAIN SOCIAL AND COMMERCIAL AMENITIES

SECTION TWO: PLAINE MAGNIEN

Plaine Magnien, the second village in which I conducted fieldwork, opposes to Trois Boutiques a completely different structure. The contrasts that emerge between the two villages are all the more striking because of the small distance that separates them: not only do they exhibit differences in the physical lay-out and in the amenities available in each village, but there is also a contrast in the *weltanschauung* of the villagers. Several factors, demographic, economic, and social, are responsible for this difference. We shall look at those in Chapters three and four, but first, in this Section, we describe briefly the general structure of the village before going into detailed aspects.

(i) Geographical situation

Plaine Magnien is situated in the district of Grand Port, one of the southernmost districts of the island. The main road that goes right through its midst is an important one linking Plaisance Airport, further south, to the nearest town in the centre of the island, Curepipe (see Map No. 3).

Plaine Magnien is thus situated in the mainstream of communication between the Airport and the rest of the island. Further, it also acts as a mid-way link between two important 'villages' (which are in fact small townships of the South), Mahébourg, on the south-eastern coastal fringe, and Rose-Belle, to the north east of Plaine Magnien. Between them, Mahébourg and Rose-Belle provide all the commercial, social and bureaucratic facilities needed by the people of the South, and Plaine Magnien, being situated in the middle, also attracts the latter by its own increasing amenities.

This convenient geographical situation has thus made of Plaine Magnien a favourable area for development, and an attractive place of settlement and migration. Over the past few years it has attracted several small commercial enterprises as well as many social developments: it now has four retail shops, two chemists, two hardware shops, several food shops and two 'supermarkets'. It also has a dispensary, a police station, and a civil status office which can be used by the inhabitants of

surrounding villages such as Trois Boutiques, New Grove, Mare d'Albert etc. It is thus in a way a centre of its own, with the villages in the vicinity acting partly as satellite villages around it.

The nearest sugar factory to Plaine Magnien is Mon Trésor Mon Désert, and this is the factory that employs most of the labourers from the village. The other factory areas are Rose-Belle, Sauveterre and La Baraque. The village as a whole occupies an area of three square miles approximately, divided into three main sectors: one is the village itself, and the other two are 'cités' or housing estates built by the Central Housing Authority and the Sugar Industry for homeless people and cyclone-refugees. The cités are built on the fringes of Plaine Magnien and are inhabited exclusively by labourers and manual workers. The cité 'Balance' has 90 houses and the cité 'L'Escalier Road' has 64 houses.

(ii) Demography - population, religious groups

Plaine Magnien has a population of approximately 5,000 people. The exact amount is difficult to assess, since most censuses tend to differ by a margin of 400 - 1,000, partly because of population mobility, partly because of inadequate updating of previous censuses. The 1972 census lists the population as numbering 5,421. The Central Statistical Office states the numbers as being 5,800, while the electoral list has it down to 4,565. The electoral list, which has a breakdown of the population according to religious denomination, states the number of Hindus as 3,090, that of Muslims as being 943, and that of Christians or Creoles as 532. There are also two Chinese families who own large commercial centres.

The Hindus are subdivided into two linguistic groups, North Indians, numbering approximately 3,000 and Telugus, whose numbers do not exceed a hundred. The North Indians belong to two religious sects, the orthodox Sanathan Dharm and reformist Arya Samaj. Each of these religious sects runs its own société around separate religious centres, the Shivala for the Sanathanists and the Arya Samaj centre for the Arya Samajis. The Telugus have a nominal société which does not function very efficiently because of their small numbers in Plaine Magnien.

The Muslims are subdivided into two religious sects as well, the
orthodox Sunnis and the non-orthodox Ahmadiyas. The Sunnis run two
separate sociétés which are in charge of the two mosques that can be
found in the village. The presence of two mosques is due to a factional
dispute which will be described in Chapter four. The Ahmadiyas,
although very few in numbers, also have their société and place of
worship. These various subdivisions may be represented as follows:

```
         HINDU                                      MUSLIM
         /   \                                      /    \
        /     \                                    /      \
  NORTH INDIAN    TELUGU                   SUNNI              AHMADIYA
    /    \          |                      /    \                |
   /      \         |                     /      \               |
  /        \        |                    /        \              |
SANATHAN  ARYA    TELUGU             SUNNI        SHANE        AHMADIYA
          SAMAJ   SOCIETE         MASJID SOC.  TOWHEED SOC.     SOC.
```
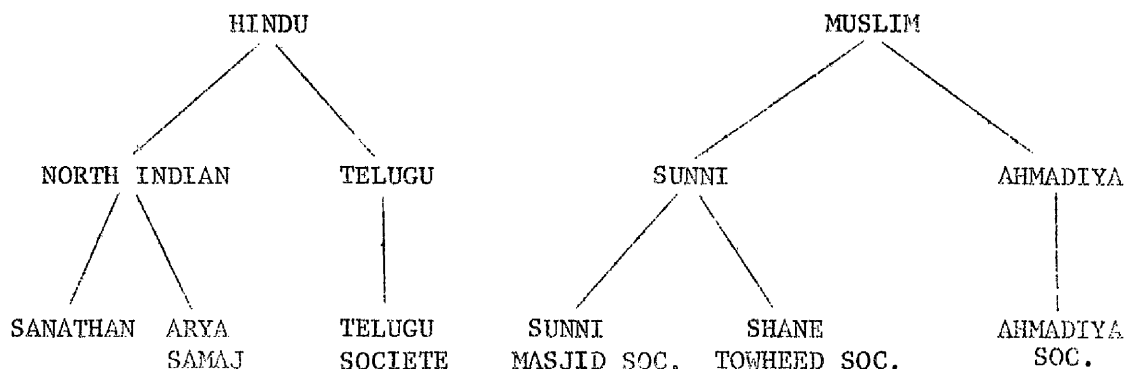
Diagram 1: Sects and societés in Plaine Magnien

The société is an important form of group organisation, being the
vehicle through which group consensus is reached and needs articulated.
All religious events are also organised through the medium of the
societé. (Some of these will be described in Chapter four in relation
to group identity).

The village further possesses a social centre run by social workers of
the Ministry of Social Security and partly financed by the Sugar Industry
Labour Welfare Fund, which is the social welfare division of the sugar
industry. This social centre serves as a meeting-place for several
local associations such as the Old People's Association, the Women's
Association and the large number of youth clubs that exist in the
village. Village fêtes also take place in the centre, bringing together
members of all the communities of the village. The maternity centre,
housed in the same building as the social centre, and the dispensary
provide all the health care that is needed by the villagers.

As a village, Plaine Magnien shows signs of prosperity which are not to be seen in the surrounding villages. This has affected the ways in which people conduct their social relations, changing them from the overtly 'egalitarian' outlook of villagers who belong to the lower socio-economic stratum, such as labourers and manual workers, into a non-egalitarian, more individualistic attitude, as we shall see in later chapters. This prosperity can be most immediately seen in the type of houses the people live in. The Indians in particular set a special value on the house they live in and on other overt status symbols such as refrigerators, ovens, stereo cassettes etc., which more often than not serve a decorative purpose rather than a utilitarian one. They use such symbols in order to make overt statements about their social position in the village. For this reason, anyone who is striving for mobility and who has the financial means, will start out by building a concrete house or converting a corrugated-iron one to concrete. Thus, of the 875 households in Plaine Magnien -- excluding the two 'cités' -, 350 are of concrete, 254 are built on foundation and are partly of corrugated iron, 247 are entirely of corrugated-iron and 24 are thatch houses (*Economic Planning Unit Report* 1979). The owners of the three storeyed houses in Plaine Magnien belong to the upper échelon of Plaine Magnien society, and provide a constant model for emulation by the financially lower-placed people. This kind of overt expression of wealth and status has led to the emergence of separate socio-economic strata in the village which we shall describe in Chapter four

Because of these specific attitudes to housing as a sign of status, the more 'prosperous' areas of Plaine Magnien and the poorer areas offer a striking contrast. This is not immediately perceptible because the poorer areas are situated further from the village centre -- where the commercial area is -- and tend to cluster deeper inside the plantations. The two poorest parts of the village are the two 'cités'. These cités are occupied mainly by Creoles, who do not have the same ideals of privately-owned houses as Indians do, and who occupy the lowest rung of the social and economic ladder. Thus, even the handful of Hindus and Muslims who live in cité houses are usually completely cut off from the rest of their communities because they are socially on a par with the Creoles. They therefore tend to socialise more with their Creole neighbours than with members of their own group.

Plaine Magnien is thus clearly divided into a prosperous area where
the commercial entreprises and the newly built concrete houses can be
found, and a poor area where members of the lowest socio-economic
stratum, in particular Creoles can be found. This sort of division
allows for a stronger form of differentiation between the different
economic brackets to emerge, and provides a clearer basis for class
delineations.

(iii) Economy and employment

Mauritian village economies generally revolve around the most prominent
source and form of employment available to them; the two most frequent
sources are the plantation sphere,for agricultural villages, and
fishing for coastal villages.

Plaine Magnien,as an agricultural village, is no exception to the rule
in the sense that the majority of its population is employed on the
sugar estates or has an agricultural occupation. The Creoles are
occupied in skilled or semi-skilled areas of work, either on the sugar
estates or as self-employed carpenters, builders, bicycle-menders,
garage pump-operators etc. In other words, they slot into the manual
spheres of occupation in the village itself, while the Indians are
generally employed in unskilled agricultural work. There is thus
perhaps a complementarity between Indians and Creoles in the sense that
they do not compete for the same jobs. Creoles stay away -- and have
done so ever since emancipation -- from agricultural labouring work, to
the extent that even gardeners in private urban homes are exclusively
Indian.· There are, of course, other bases of rivalry and hostility
between those groups, but these do not include job-competition at
village-level.

People engaged in agricultural occupations can be classified as:

(a)   labourers employed full-time by the sugar estate,

(b)   labourers employed during the crop-season only by the estate and
      at other times by independent planters for weeding, surface-
      clearing, spraying etc.

(c)   sardars who may be employed either by the estate or by
      independent planters,

(d)   self-employed people who own a little land and cultivate land
      rented out by the estate,

(e)   self-employed people who own enough land to be predominantly
      occupied in their own plantations, and who can be classified
      as small planters with land-acreage ranging from one to
      fifteen acres.

Table V gives the breakdown of land-acreage under cane cultivation.
The estate thus offers both direct and indirect employment, in the
sense that independent cultivators also rely on the acres that
it makes available for renting after every crop-season. Sardars and
labourers who have worked a long time with the estate can benefit from
this land, and most sardars do in fact engage in vegetable cultivation
in intercrop season when their work is less demanding. The small
planters who own a plot of land on which they cultivate cane number
approximately 900 in the whole of Mon Trésor Mon Désert factory area
(see Section three of this Chapter for a description of the sugar
estate).

Most small planters owning a plot of land have ancillary occupations
to supplement the cultivation income, if the land acreage is below five
acres. In some cases, the cultivation benefits may be seen as supplement to
a regular income earned from a full-time job. The difference between
small planters who see cultivation as their primary occupation and those
who see it as a secondary one is the fact that the former will tend to
have more defined cultivation strategies and invest their secondary
incomes into the cultivation, whereas the latter, on the contrary, will
use the plantation income to supplement their regular salary and use
it in household expenditures. This creates delineations even within
the category of small planters which can perhaps be seen as economic
sub-categories (S. Gayan, personal communication).

The other sources of employment in Plaine Magnien are the Airport, the
shops and the taxi-service. The Airport recruits nearby villagers

Table V: Cane-land ownership in Plaine Magnien and neighbouring areas

ACREAGE	PLAINE MAGNIEN	CHUTGAON (Plaine Magnien)	CARREAU ESNOUF	SOLITUDE (Plaine Magnien)	MON DESERT	MON TRESOR	MORCELLEMENT KOTAPAH (Plaine Magnien)	GRENADE LANE (Plaine Magnien)	BOIS D'OISEAUX (Plaine Magnien)	RUISSEAU COPEAUX (Plaine Magnien)	TOTAL
0.01- 0.50	52	1	8	2	5	2	-	1	1	1	
0.51- 1.00	47	-	3	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	
1.01- 2.00	36	1	1	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	
2.01- 4.00	17	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
4.01- 6.00	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
6.01- 8.00	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
8.01-10.00	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
10.00-15.00	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
TOTAL	164	2	13	2	11	2	1	2	2	1	190

mainly for portering and cleaning as well as for mechanical and various
other jobs. I know of at least one customs-officer living in Plaine
Magnien, although they tend to be recruited from all over the island.
The Airport also provides marginal occupations for sweet and trinket-
sellers (generally small boys and adolescents), and peanut-sellers
(old men and women). The taxi-drivers are also very much involved in
the Airport, since it is both a highly competitive and a lucrative
work-base for them. Most taxi-drivers are owners of their car, which
means that they are self-employed and not taxable. Other taxi-drivers
work from the village itself, and cover a wide area of the countryside,
especially those hamlets which are not accessible by public transport.
In cases of emergency, the people from these hamlets are forced to make
use of the taxi-service and pay large sums such as Rs 50 or Rs 60
(£3.00 - £4.00) just to go to Mahébourg, a few miles away. The young
unemployed men of Plaine Magnien in fact see taxi-driving as one of
the most advantageous potential occupations available to them.

The important commercial amenities constitute another area of employment,
although working in a shop is not a high-prestige form of employment,
especially for educated youths. There are restrictions in this area
however, in the sense that shop-owners tend to employ family labour as
far as possible, and such employment also tends to be ethnic-based.

Compared to other villages, however, there is a fairly wide range of
occupational spheres in Plaine Magnien, which have each their prestige
connotations. Even in a restricted job-market, people strive for
certain jobs rather than others, and most young people would rather
stay away from the agricultural sphere altogether. Urban mentalities
and values have had an impact on the young people of the village by
conjuring in front of them a vision of well-paid white-collar jobs
that should be striven for through certificates -- and perhaps some
manipulation of influential links -- instead of inciting them to look for
more accessible agricultural work. This form of employment is one of
the means of mobility which villagers attempt to use, but the fact
that white-collar jobs too are severely restricted and tend to be given
to urban dwellers at any rate will ensure that in the near future there
will be a return towards agricultural work, perhaps with more

entrepreneurial factors involved as the young people go into it with fresh ideas and innovative trends. At the moment, the young who work with their elders on plantations tend to do so only because there are no immediate alternatives, not out of any particular attachment to the soil.

In this Section, I have described Plaine Magnien Village and mentioned some contrastive features that it exhibits in relation to Trois Boutiques, namely, ethnic composition, existence of social and commercial amenities and overt symbols of mobility in the types of housing of the villagers. I will now go on to a description of the sugar estate which employs labourers from both villages and towards which the lives of the people of Trois Boutiques are oriented as the main source of livelihood and subsistence.

SECTION THREE: THE SUGAR ESTATE

Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien both fall within the vicinity of
the sugar estate called Mon Trésor Mon Désert, and are comprised within
the same "factory area"; this means that cultivators from both these
villages have to send their canes to this factory for crushing, and
that they are surrounded by large sectors of land belonging to the sugar
estate. Trois Boutiques in particular is physically encompassed by the
estate, as well as being socially and occupationally dependent upon it.
We shall see in Chapter Three how human relations in Trois Boutiques
are affected by the proximity of the estate and by labouring work
itself, but in this Section, we shall describe the mechanics of the
estate and of cane growing.

(1) Cane cultivation

There are 21 sugar estates in Mauritius, owning and cultivating 55%
of cultivated land. Of those, twenty are owned by local companies,
and one by the international Lonrho company. In all, they employ
70,000 people. The other 45% of cultivated land are cultivated by
31,000 odd farmers, called planters. In 1976, Mon Trésor Mon Désert
cultivated 6,759 arpents (1 arpent:1.04 acres) and produced 212,320
metric tonnes of cane, while the planters in the factory area produced
43,209 metric tonnes from 1,498 arpents of land (PROSI 1977).

There is one yearly yield of sugarcane. The young plants can be seen
sprouting from July onwards, and the cane reaches maturity about ten
months later. Cane needs little water in its early growth, but if rains
fail between December and February, the growth can be severely stunted.
Cyclones can also cause great damage to leaves and roots, and heavy
rainfall in the last months can reduce significantly the sugar
concentration. Thus the weather is a crucial factor in determining the
yield each year. A record year will yield 700,000 tons of sugar for
the whole country, and in bad years, less than the average 500,000 tons
may be produced.

A variety of tasks are performed in the preparation of the field for
the next harvest. These are shared by men and women, though some
tasks are specifically performed by men and others by women. These

tasks are spread over the year, so that demand for labour fluctuates, reaching a peak during the crop season.

The harvest starts from June and usually finishes in November. This constitutes the peak period of activity in the factory, which works twenty-four hours a day during the harvest time. Apart from full-time labourers, who can earn extra money by working overtime during the crop season, a large number of daily workers are also employed during that period. The harvesting is done by men only in gangs of twenty-five under the supervision of one *sardar*, or Indian overseer. These are assigned sectors in each area under cultivation. A sector or field, ranges from five to ten arpents (5.2 to 10.4 acres). Labourers from one area are not necessarily assigned to the same area, and sometimes have to travel several miles to the sector they are assigned to cut. There are two types of gangs, the *grande bande*, or big gang, and the *petite bande*, or small gang. Harvesting is usually done by the *grande bande* which consists of taller and stronger men, while the *petite bande* is made up of older and weaker men. Until two years ago, all harvesting and loading was done by hand. Recently, because of labour shortages at peak period, the sugar estates have resorted to mechanical cutting and loading. The small scale of use of machinery indicates that it is not meant to replace human labour but to supplement it, but the labourers see these machines as a threat to their future employment, especially now that the economic crisis has caused a drying up of employment opportunities outside agriculture.

The sugar estates dig up the cane tops every five years after the harvest in order to plant new ones. They do this in rotation from field to field, and during the three months interval between digging up and planting new ones the land is rented out for vegetable cultivation.

(ii) The estate staff

The factory itself operates on the basis of a rigidly hierarchical staff. The levels of the hierarchy can be seen in the opposition of whites and coloured, Creoles, and Indians. The head of the hierarchy is the white manager, or *Administrateur*. The manager is seconded by the managing corpus, or *Etat Major*. These consist of assistant managers, field

managers, accountants, etc. There are also two types of supervisors, one called in Creole the *grand colom* (from the French, *Colon*), and the other *ti colom* (little colon). The latter is a trainee supervisor working in the field and obtaining his training from sardars mainly, although his job is to supervise the sardars. The higher levels of the hierarchy consist of whites, while the lower levels of the *Etat Major* consists of coloured.

The corpus of workers is divided in two ways between the Creoles and the Indians, and between the higher level workers and the lower level workers.

The *Marqueur* (which can be literally translated as "writer" or "scribe"), keeps a register of labourers who report to work and is assigned the task of paying their wages weekly or fortnightly. The *Marqueur* is generally a Hindu. He is an important person in the community because he has a 'writing' (or intellectual) job, and because he can act as an intermediary between workers and management to whom he has access more easily than sardars. In this sense, he is higher than a sardar, although he will try to keep relations on a level of cordiality with the lower level workers.

The sardar is the overseer of the labourers. His work depends mainly on his capacity to manage the field work and control the gangs of labourers without being too obviously in favour of either labourers or management. He is thus in a precarious position which he has to manoeuvre rather carefully in order to maintain his authority as well as his credibility.

There is another category of sardars called *entrepreneurs* which existed until a few years ago, but are no longer needed today. The entrepreneurs were independent subcontrators who were given whole jobs to complete, like harvesting ten arpents of land within a certain time period. They recruited their labourers and paid them from the lump-sum which was given to them by the estate. Theirs was thus a real 'managing' job, with perhaps more lee-way for profit-making than the ordinary sardar. We will discuss in more detail these two categories of workers in the next chapter.

Among the manual workers, there are the Creole 'artisans', skilled and semi-skilled workers employed in the factory itself. Being skilled, they are classified higher than the labourers and are entitled to better housing in estate-funded housing. This creates an internal distinction which prevents any solidarity between the two categories of manual workers, who adhere to different work unions and tend to feel mutually antagonistic.

Labourers are divided into "grandes bandes" and "petites bandes". Being unskilled, they form the lowest stratum of the plantation hierarchy. Women are also employed as full-time labourers, and, although they are paid less than the men and are meant to do lighter jobs, (they are paid Rs 17.50 a day while men are paid Rs 22.50), in fact they do have strenuous jobs such as putting fertilisers in the field when they have to carry very heavy bags of fertilisers through several arpents of land to complete a day's task.

The work force of the sugar estate can be represented as follows:

Franco-Mauritian	Administrative staff General Manager (Administration) Field Manager Assistant Field Manager
Coloured	Lower *Etat Major*
Creoles	Artisans
Indians	*Marqueur* Sardar Labourers

Diagram 2: Estate staff – hierarchical levels

(iii) <u>Changes within the plantation sphere</u>

Within this work hierarchy, the labourers, being on the lowest level,
have to profess their respect and acknowledge the authority of all the
other levels, except perhaps that of the Creole artisans. This creates
a conflict in their own minds, since on the one hand they do adhere to
this attitude in interpersonal relations with the managers or supervisors,
and on the other derive hostile feelings towards them from the sense of
exploitation and injustice that they nurture inside. The attitudes and
actions proponed by the Unions and some isolated leaders in particular
seem to create this ambivalence of respect and hostility. The
transition from the old managerial system of 'paternalistic' relations
between employers and employees to a modern contractual one is still in
process in places like Trois Boutiques, and allows for this ambivalence
to remain until there is a clear break from the old system.

Until this break happens, there will still be many areas where the work-
environment and hierarchy will heavily influence social relations in
the village itself. This also persists to a certain extent because the
older generations still conceive of the plantation as a provider of
employment and livelihood, while the younger generations' attitude has
already undergone considerable change.

Perhaps the biggest change that has taken place since the existence of
typical plantation societies is the fact that agricultural villages
today can no longer be seen as an intrinsic part of the sugar estate any
more. If one compares the situation in Mauritius today and that
described in 1959 by Jayawardena and Smith in a Guyanese plantation, the
differences that emerge may not be wholly ascribable to a difference of
place, but perhaps even more to one of time. The image conjured by the
memories of the older people from Trois Boutiques is strikingly similar
to the Guyanese situation. A comparison between the two may be useful
if one identifies the Guyanese situation with the original "environment
into which Indian immigrants first came" (Jayawardena & Smith 1959: 328).

The local unit in Blairmont is the plantation itself, with labourers'
settlements incorporated within this unit, so that in fact, the
plantation can be seen as a total socio-geographical system, with its
residential **unit,** its school, hospital and factory. The whole population

of Blairmont is organised as a labour force employed by the plantation (Jayawardena 1963). Like the Mauritian estate hierarchy described above, Blairmont also has graded occupational-cum-social strata. But, apart from the very restricted areas of mobility within this hierarchy, there are no avenues of upward social mobility available to the people. The manager exercises his power outside the factory sphere by holding an "unofficial court" to settle disputes among the residents; in Blairmont, he did not allow the Arya Samaj movement to be organised because it was in a way a "dissident" movement (Jayawardena & Smith 1959: 328). Therefore, not only does the plantation appear as the focus of the people's lives, but it actually encompasses these lives. In Mauritius, too, the managers were invited to weddings and religious ceremonies, and provided the necessary materials for the preparation of these feasts. Here too, they were not circumscribed by the occupational sphere, but also intervened in the social sphere. Although this kind of interference was welcomed when it brought positive advantages to the villagers, it was also seen as a restrictive form of intervention in many cases, and the manager was seen as the outsider who exercised control over the insiders. This in itself acted as a rallying force from within, preventing dissension and disputes from disrupting the forces of solidarity in the village. Solidarity from within was one of the ways in which the villagers could face the encompassing control of the plantation. Further, the lack of means of mobility in this sphere prevented the villagers from airing any feelings of mistrust towards each other and from vying for individual mobility. Even group feelings were articulated in terms of being Indian rather than being Hindu or Muslim or North Indian and Telugu. As in Guyana, both secular and religious feasts were occasions for all the groups to gather and participate in extensive feasting. This created an appearance of village-unity and inter-group cooperation which was not necessarily deep, but which the Trois Boutiques people still think of as an ideal state, a "hallowed past". This concord in a way seems to have been extraneously created by circumstances, so that, even if they wanted to, the villagers could not go back to this way of life again. For today, in spite of the mechanisms of solidarity that exist in the village and which we shall discuss in Chapter Three, ethnic differentiation and division still manages to surface in specific situations.

In Guyana, plantation solidarity as well as the fact that all the traditional aspects of Indian culture were looked down upon as part of "coolie culture" have been, in Jayawardena and Smith's terms, "powerful agents for changing old customs and imposing new modes of conformity" (1959: 322). The upwardly mobile Indians were bent upon creolisation or adhered to reformist movements, and the bases of traditional Indian culture were undermined to a large extent except where they could be internalised in a useful and adaptive way to the prevalent order. Participation in the wider Guyanese context involved a weakening of ethnic allegiance, although the consciousness of being Indian did not die out and seemed to sharpen later on in a way that is not entirely predicted or explained by the authors' approach. In the light of Mauritian historical material, (such as for instance the newspapers of the time, *Mauritius Indian Times; Zamana* etc. and reports of the Royal Commissioners of 1909 and 1937), it becomes evident that the same bases of diffusion were present in the plantations, the same inferiority ascribed to Indians and their cultural practices, and cross-cutting allegiances did exist in the Indian community. However, far from becoming an integrated whole, the group still has undergone its fission processes as will be exemplified by the micro-level study. Its participation in the wider social context is also decisively and resolutely Indian, and perhaps because of this fact, the internal subdivisions were also allowed to surface at various levels. In the following chapters, we will be trying to find out why the cross-cutting allegiances at plantation or village level do not resist mobility or emerge at other levels of the society as well.

The visible changes in Trois Boutiques today show that the estate can no longer be seen as a total system or as a single unit incorporating the village or hamlets. These are now juxtaposed units, the estate providing employment and a few social and material amenities for the villagers without controlling or regulating in any way their lives. There is thus both mutual dependence and mutual exclusivity between the estate sphere and the village sphere. There are now other sources of mobility available to the people which allow for a movement outside the plantation sphere, for instance, although these sources are more numerous and accessible in certain villages than in others as is exemplified by the contrasts between Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien. Ethnic separation

and subdivision is allowed to take place in spite of the past
cohesiveness and the present interdependence of the labouring community,
which seems to indicate that such interdependence is purely temporary
and mechanical, and perhaps the approach adopted by Jayawardena and
Smith weakens precisely in the sense that they do not differentiate
between the various orders of allegiance available to the villagers
and see one type of allegiance as displacing another - e.g. work-solidarity
and ethnic solidarity - whereas in fact one may remain underlying until
favourable circumstances arise in which it can become predominant. This
is the main theme adopted in the next chapter.

In this Section, I have looked at the **sugar estate** and described the
life-cycle of sugarcane and the structure of employment, since the lives
of the villagers, in particular those of Trois Boutiques, are closely
influenced by it. Because of the greater proximity of Trois Boutiques
to the **estate**, it exhibits, today still, remnants of the former
plantation-settlement which was subsumed under the overarching control
of the **estate**. This affects social relations in the village itself,
and is partly responsible for the difference in values present between
Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien.

CONCLUSION

This Chapter has served mainly as an introduction to the three chapters
that follow. It has provided briefly an overview of the two villages
which have been the object of study, and introduced some of the main
themes of the analysis which follows,and described the sugar estate
which also influences the lives of the villages.

These villages are meant to provide a contextual and situational
dimension to the analysis of interface and intergroup relations in
Mauritius, and to show the areas where allegiances occur that cross-cut
the configuration of groups, as well as those where a polarisation of
groups occurs. This I have felt to be necessary in order to understand
the different dimensions of identity in Mauritius, as an operational
and an affective principle. I will then move on to the corpus of the
analysis, dealing first with orders of solidarity in Trois Boutiques,
where labouring work provides a model of social relations that is
reflected in the relations arising in the spatial contiguity of the
villages. How identity emerges in this context will be the concern
of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

NON-MORAL AND MORAL SOLIDARITIES IN TROIS BOUTIQUES

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I will be looking at interrelations between different
categories of people in Trois Boutiques village and try to bring out the
various orders of solidarity, in the sense of bond-establishing to a group,
that exist at the micro-level of Mauritian society. In a multi-group
situation, both allegiances and antagonisms are bound to occur, and I will
attempt to analyse the way in which village solidarity is maintained, and
the way in which ethnic identity manifests itself without disrupting this
solidarity. My aim in this chapter is to show that the external solidarity
that obtains in the village, both in the occupational sphere and between
members of a neighbourhood group are non-moral and non-'enduring' in the
sense intended by Schneider when describing American kinship as a moral
and enduring order of relation. The superficial solidarity that thus
emerges between labourers as a work force, between sardars and labourers
in tactical work relations, and between neighbours who are bound by the
same codes and by the need to express and preserve an ideal of
egalitarianism, cannot thus displace the stronger solidarity pertaining
to ethnic identity. The non-formal solidarities are enforced by the village
environment and by the socio-economic boundary drawn by labouring work
within the compass of the plantation; moral solidarity, as enjoined by
ethnic identity, is an intrinsic part of the individual's social
personality and thus contains the deeply binding elements of duty and
relations of kind.

Section One looks at relations within the labouring spheres between
labourers and between sardars and labourers and analyses the significance
of comradeship and drinking partnerships.

Section Two moves on to the neighbouhood group and the codes and values
governing relations between neighbours, how they affect the 'sociability'
of the individual and enforce an overall, perfunctory equality. Restricted
mobility partly explains this need for egalitarianism, since villagers
seem to ascribe to the image of "limited good" on an individual rather
than group basis.

These two sections are important in considering not only the
significance of solidarity, but the significance of mobility in village
environments. Although they are essentially restrictive forms of
solidarity which partly aim at preventing mobility of the individual in
his occupational or social spheres, in fact the roots of mobility can
be found at this level, when the labourer or villager tries to achieve
it without incurring the sanctions of the collectivity. Often, when
the opportunities arise, the person will move out of the village
altogether, to an environment more conducive to his new social status,
and where different allegiances will arise, as we shall see in the
Plaine Magnien chapter; but in fact, the striving for mobility starts
at this level, as I try to bring out in this chapter.

Section Three then goes on to look at ethnicity and its expression in
the village as a feeling of kind within a group, or "qualité", and how
this becomes an informal network that acts at an underlying level of
village organisation.

Section Four, finally, deals with formal organisation in the village,
namely, socio-religious associations called "sociétés", and the
functioning of the Village Council as an areas for the emergence of
factional conflict.

SECTION ONE: COMRADESHIP AND MANIPULATION IN THE LABOURING SPHERE

The labouring sphere is bounded in several ways externally: first in the plantation hierarchy, labourers are placed at the bottom of the ladder; they are thus bounded by the low status-ascription of labouring work. Secondly, they are all Indians; there is thus an ethnic element involved in the external boundaries, and this further brings sardars into the same category, as Indians, which is why I have included them in the labouring sphere together with labourers. Third, the work itself creates an external boundary which tends to be seen as a rigid one on account of the restrictions on promotion or mobility within the plantation itself. All these boundaries serve to delineate the labouring sphere very precisely from other levels of the plantation workers, as well as from other types of occupation. And, since the majority of the work force in Trois Boutiques – in fact, 90% of it – is engaged in labouring work, this means that values and codes of conduct peculiar to this sphere are very much present in the village. In this section, I will be looking at these values, and also at how status is expressed in spite of the strong external boundaries that are meant to preserve the solidarity of this group, mainly because some of the internal orders of differentiation are as strong as the external force of cohesion.

(i) Sardars and labourers

In his study of conflict and solidarity, Jayawardena identifies the bases of solidarity among labourers as stemming from the structure of the plantation itself, namely in the fact that there were no avenues for social mobility available to the villagers, and in the fact that the opposition between management and labourers was so strong that the labourers were compelled to form a strictly bounded, strictly cooperating entity through which ran the equalising principle of "mati". Mati was the expression of the ideal of duty, equality and cooperation that was meant to identify the labourers both at work and in their social environment. For Jayawardena, unity of the group was possible through "an informal process of self-identification (created by) (a) the isolation of the coolies and their deviant culture (which) enhanced the cohesion of the group, and (b) the organisation of the

labour force (which) ironed out traditional social distinctions and emphasised their equality" (1963: 57). He goes on to say that "the social equivalence of all coolies was the organisational principle of social solidarity in the bargaining purposes" (namely with management during work disputes) (ibid.: 57)..

Jayawardena then ascribed the separate identity ("self-identification process") of the Indians to their low social status and to the bonds implicit in labouring work. This view may however be questioned, since, given the historical development of the pluralistic societies, neither the 'coolie' status nor the 'equality' created by labouring work prevented the Indians from seeking and achieving mobility, and class strata from forming in the society. This does not however imply that *cohesion* did not exist and that identity was not preserved: preservation of identity belonged to the sphere of *moral* solidarity, while labouring, or class solidarity was merely of an instrumental, *non-moral* nature, enforced by the restrictions of the labouring sphere. This opposition can in fact be seen in the types of relationships arising in labouring and neighbourhood contexts, which are underlined by manipulations and transactions while those pertaining to kinship and identity are underlined by considerations of duty and morality.

The main distinction that arises, then, between the Mauritian situation and that described by Jayawardena, is in the perception of the underlying motivations of the labourers' ideals and actions. Jayawardena seems to be looking at the society from the point of view of the external observer, and in this sense, although he is also concerned with what actors say and think, he does not point out that there may exist, behind the professions of equality and mati, an underlying motivation of self-interest and self-preservation that prompts these professions. When he analyses accusations of "eye-pass", which are directed towards people who try to achieve mobility or to express some kind of superiority over others, he sees this as a measure to restore equality when individual action threatens to undermine it. He uses as a basis of analysis the ideology of equality and solidarity among labourers, and sees "eye-pass" as a corrective sanction against a breach in this ideology, but in fact they do not seem to operate on the same conceptual level at all, and mati is

perhaps more an idiom than a real guiding principle, whereas "eye-pass" does have an effective role in the process of social relations. The presence of such corrective sanctions as "eye-pass" accusations in the society indicates that equality has to be enforced, and does not derive naturally from the principle of mati. The equality of status inherent in the bounded labouring stratum does not then represent a deep-felt, moral acquiescence to the ideology of mati, but springs from the very boundaries of the socio-economic stratum, embodied in the physical confines of the plantation.

In fact, each labourer does aim at achieving his own mobility and at working towards an improvement of his conditions even if this goes against the ideology. The ideology of equality, which can also be observed in the Mauritian situation, is articulated in terms of an altruistic motivation of cooperation and help towards other members of the community. But the actors' underlying motives seem to be more ego-centred than community-centred, and it would seem more realistic in Jayawardena's case, to see "eye-pass" as the real organisational principle of the labouring sphere. In this sense, there is perhaps not so much identification with the labouring sphere as a socio-economic community, but an imposed order of cohesion which is maintained by internal forces ensuring solidarity and an overall equality, while each member will do his best to break out of the boundaries, as Jayawardena himself rightly points out. The difference lies in the priority, or primordiality in certain areas of their existence, of self-interest over altruistic community-oriented behaviour, and it is of utmost importance to identify and distinguish between the various bases of solidarity at work in the village. Jayawardena does point out that there are many cross-cutting links in the community, but he does not differentiate between them as being imposed or ascriptive, relations of duty or relations of manipulation. Where he sees the different orders of solidarity as cross-cutting each other, so that the opposition between the parts serves to maintain the cohesion and order of the whole, I believe that in fact, these orders of solidarity exist at different *levels* of the society, the non-moral ones maintaining the overall cohesion, while the moral ones sustain internal identity at an underlying level.

In Trois Boutiques, labouring relations extend to the social sphere in two ways, one through the drinking relationships that link the labourers together outside work, and the other through the extension of the egalitarian ideal to all the members of the village community who are of a labouring background. The work background thus becomes a determinant of the social background to the people, and any connection with it becomes an equalising principle, so that even sardars are bound in their social environment by the rules which govern relations between labourers. The village society also acts as a source of pressure on each member in order to prevent social distance from arising. The sardar, although he in fact belongs to a higher level of the plantation hierarchy than labourers, is subjected to the same social rules because of his membership of the village community as well as of the ethnic community and because of the social links that operate within the social environment, which bind him to labourers. This does not mean, however, that he is not conscious of a difference in status, and that he does not try to articulate his higher status through different strategies available to him.

The sardar can achieve a position of leadership in the village, not simply through his being a sardar, but through the manipulation of ties as well as through his overtly accepting the ties of equality and reciprocity that bind members of the labouring sphere. He has no intrinsic claim to leadership: in fact, people in the village mistrust anybody who claims a position of authority without having earned it. Even in the work sphere, the sardar has to manage his position very carefully if he wants to be obeyed by the labourers, for the latter do not feel bound by any moral duty to obey the sardar, and have, in one sardar's terms "to be bought" in order to work.

Until a few years ago, there were two types of sardars: one was the overseer who controlled and supervised the work of labourers in the fields, and the other was the *entrepreneur* who was given a field to harvest by the sugar estate and who was paid globally for the completed work. He was thus free to recruit his own teams of workers and pay them according to a private agreement with them. He was selected among sardars already employed by the estate, but who had a certain number of years of service, and who had gained the trust of the management.

It was, in a sense, a promotion given to sardars, since there was more scope for profit-making in the work of the entrepreneur than in that of the sardar, who was paid a fixed amount. The entrepreneur was however in a more dangerous position, since he depended heavily on the cooperation of the labourers, and had to be very careful in his dealings with them.

Relations between labourers were, and still are, conducted on the basis of "comradeship", i.e. friendship and cooperation. In Trois Boutiques, sardars and entrepreneurs also have to express such a relationship with labourers occasionally as part of their work strategy, and they call this measure *rentre camarade*, i.e. "make friends with" the labourers, which implies that it is not an intrinsic aspect of their relations with labourers to be friends with them, but a deliberate move. The people themselves make a conceptual separation between the work sphere and the social sphere: "travail reste travail, la caze ène lotte", i.e. work remains work, home is a different matter. For the entrepreneur, to become friends with the labourers was an important aspect of work relations, since he depended on their attendance for the completion of his work. When he recruited labourers, he generally had to pay them small sums in advance, to supply them with hoes and cutting tools etc. But this was by no means an assurance of their attendance, for many labourers would collect advance payments from several entrepreneurs and then choose only one to work for. There was no formal binding contract, and the entrepreneur had to rely on verbal agreements which hardly had any binding power at all. The importance of entering personal relations with the labourers was thus increased by this fact, and the comradeship which they entered into with the labourers was seen as a more effective binding contract than the cash advances. Comradeship was established by conviviality - a fact brought out by Jayawardena, who saw this as binding labourers among themselves, but not different levels of the plantation hierarchy - and not only did the entrepreneur have to treat the labourers to food and drink, he also had, more importantly, to eat with them. Giving food and drink was thus not enough to establish comradeship, and could be seen as another advance payment, whereas sharing the food meant that the relationship had been brought onto another level, and that the entrepreneur was asserting equality rather than authority with the labourers. Since commensality was an important

aspect of social relations in a moral sense -- as we shall see in the next section --, by being transferred to the work sphere, it lent to the latter a 'pseudo-morality'. The labourers saw the gesture as an admission, on the part of the entrepreneur, of an obligation towards them because they had accepted to work for him. It thus did not involve immediate reciprocity and the labourers did not have to return the gesture as they would have had to if they had been dealing with fellow-labourers. Their part of the exchange was in the work they were contributing, i.e. their labour. This form of comradeship was thus (a) an acknowledgement of obligation and (b) an affirmation of equality on the part of the entrepreneur. In return, it ensured that the labourers would provide their labour as part of the transaction. The *moral* solidarity asserted by comradeship between entrepreneurs and labourers was thus contradicted by the fact that in effect, it consisted of a form of *exchange* between food and labour; but for the bond to be established, the expression of equality had to be clear, so that the exchange was conducted between equals. This was important, because the entrepreneur, who was partly his own boss -- although he was being paid by the estate --, held a position of authority which placed him even higher than sardars. For the labourers to accept to work for him, he had to deny this authority and make repeated assertions of equality and solidarity with them. There was thus a parallel 'statics" transaction being conducted alongside the material transaction.

The overseer sardars, who are the only ones remaining today, as there are no entrepreneurs any more, also have to establish comradeship with the labourers but for different reasons. The sardar's job is a supervisory one, and he also has to keep the work running smoothly. For this to be achieved, he has to have a certain amount of control over the labourers so that they should not suddenly decide to ignore his instructions or contest his authority. By managing his work smoothly, he can also be in a position to manage his own situation in the estate so as to be given fringe benefits provided by the estate such as land on which to cultivate vegetables. The main danger in his job is that the labourers should become difficult and follow their own leaders as opposed to the sardar. The way in which the latter can prevent this is by undermining the solidarity of the labourers. He will thus choose two or three labourers who work under him and, by

establishing comradeship with them, he will ensure that they will take his side in the event of a dispute and will go on working even if their leaders tell them not to. The way in which he can establish comradeship with them is mainly by treating them to drinks in the local pub. This is a different kind of comradeship to that established by entrepreneurs, since in this case, the sardar is placing the labourers in a position of debt and obligation towards him rather than the other way round. The sardar does not have a debt towards labourers for working, since the labourers are employed by the estate just as he is. The labourers are placed in a position where immediate repayment is not possible - since the sardar will not expect them to offer him drinks in return -- and when the occasion comes, i.e. when they have to choose sides, the obligation of repayment induces them to side with the sardars rather than with the labourers. The motivation for repayment is also prompted by the fact that the labourers involved can also expect certain forms of 'protection' (i.e. exercising his brockerage capacity) from the sardar whom they are siding with. Thus, in this case too, equality is overtly expressed, but in fact the transactional aspect of the relationship of comradeship is of prime importance.

Comradeship between sardars/entrepreneurs and labourers is thus articulated in terms of the labourers' expressions of solidarity; it remains in accordance with the norms and systems of values adhered to by the labourers, but in effect, it has several meanings and functions attached to it. On the surface, it establishes a bond between the partners, and is an assertion of equal status with the labourers on the part of the sardar or the entrepreneur. Its real function, however, is as part of a deliberate transaction between the partners, where one recognises an obligation to the other and expresses it by means of conviviality, or where one of the partners is placed in a position of obligation through the act of drinking itself, and has to repay when the opportunity arises or when the "obligee" exacts repayment. Its underlying meaning can be seen as a manoeuvre on the part of the sardars and entrepreneurs to enhance their position of authority without contradicting the overall ideal of solidarity within which labour relationships are set; they assert equality with the labourers, thereby gaining their support so that they can be seen as appropriate leaders on a social or political level, and at the same time, they themselves

perceive the act of establishing comradeship with labourers as a
means of "buying" their labour or their support in the work sphere,
in their own words, as a "work-strategy", *tactique travail,* so that
in their eyes there is no loss of status through such conviviality.

The equilibrium between those different facets of comradeship is
difficult to achieve, and some entrepreneurs and sardars never managed
to achieve it.

> One such case is Indra Sardar, who is always cited as a
> case when people talk about sardars. He was an entrepreneur
> who had worked with the estate about thirty years ago, and
> who had been given several entrepreneurial jobs .by the
> estate. He is however still very poor today, and people
> in the village ascribe this to different reasons: some
> people say that he was too proud, *(vantard),* and he insisted
> on being called 'sir' *(grand moussé)* or *captan.* His
> situation today is then ascribed to the fact that he aimed
> too high for his condition and that he went against the
> values of the society. Others say that he used to treat
> too many people to drinks, he tried to make too many
> comrades, and because of this, he could not save any of the
> money he was making. In both ways, it seems that it was
> his work strategy that was at fault, since on one hand he
> showed a proud attitude when he should have been expressing
> equality, and on the other he ruined himself by aiming for
> too extensive a following in offering drinks to too many
> people.
>
> Another sardar who had a successful career and is still working
> as a sardar with the estate said that one had to be ready to
> flout some of one's social rules in the establishment of a
> work strategy. Thus, he went as far as eating in a Creole's
> house in order to obtain his allegiance. Since there were
> very few Creoles working in the fields, it was important for
> the sardar to maintain good relations with this one, as he
> was less likely to have strong solidarity links with other
> labourers. The sardar was a high caste Hindu, very highly
> conscious of restrictions on commensality even with lower
> caste Hindus. He said, for instance, that he did not eat
> in his neighbour's house because the latter was a low caste
> Hindu. Eating in a Creole's house went against all his
> principles of commensality, but the fact that he did it in
> spite of those restrictions goes to show that it was purely
> a transactional act, and involved no moral bonds between
> them, whereas 'social' commensality in other contexts retained
> all its bond-forming meanings, as we shall see in a latter
> section.

The ties formed by sardars and labourers within the work sphere and in
the drinking partnerships are thus of an instrumental and transactional
nature, although they are expressed in an idiom of friendship and
solidarity. The sardars have to be careful not to bring in relationships
of a different kind in the work sphere, for instance those linking them
with kin members or members of their ethnic group, for this will be
interpreted by the labourers as endangering their own rights, in
particular if the sardars show some form of 'favouritism' for the former.
Such kinship or ethnic patronage does occasionally arise, and the
labourers of Trois Boutiques in fact often complain that
sardars protect their own kin at work - "zotte protèze zotte propre
fami" but they cannot do this openly. Thus, within the work sphere,
kinship or ethnic patronage are seen as a threat to the overt equality
existing between labourers, and contradict the idiom of 'comradeship'
within which relations between sardars and labourers are set. It is
on this basis that R.T. Smith and Jayawardena (1959) have been able
to assert that class strata weaken ethnic boundaries, especially since
the labouring sphere is mainly composed of Indians, among whom internal
boundaries can easily be weakened. However, this is not the case, for,
if ethnicity does not arise in the labouring sphere, it nonetheless
remains present in the consciousness of the people, and arises at other
levels of the society, as we shall see in Section Three.

(ii) Labourers and labourers

Comradeship among labourers is an overt denial of competition in a
situation where one person's gain is felt to be at the expense of others.
One of the characteristics of villagers' attitudes to their environment
is in the evaluation of their resources as being strictly limited.
Most small communities that are bound by certain environmental or social
factors tend to perceive boundaries very clearly and to evaluate each
person's style of life against this strictly bounded environment. An
individual's advancement can thus seem to be detrimental to the
community as a whole (Foster 1965). The labouring sphere in Trois
Boutiques and the village itself can both be seen as closed-in, limited

environments, and the egalitarian attitudes, which are expressed less
by an emphasis upon sharing and more by an attempt to restrict the
individual's advancement, can be seen as stemming from this sort of
outlook on the society. It seems significant that in villages which
can be seen as more open-ended and in other loosely-bounded situations
there is far less emphasis upon equality and more lee-way for individual
mobility and the expression of competition.

The prototype of peasant society which ascribes, according to Foster
(1965) to the "Image of Limited Good", is not necessarily a permanent
one. Where the environment *is* closed by specific extraneous factors,
the villagers do tend to perceive the goods as limited and to resent a
fellow-villager's advancement, but this does not prevent mobility from
being sought and different values from arising in a different situation.
The "Limited Good" model is thus restricted in the sense that it applies
only to a specific situation. It applies, for instance, in the labouring
sphere because of the restrictions on mobility operating in the plantation,
and, if any of the labourers benefits from overtime work, for instance, it
is said that he has received the "protection" of the sardar. The asserted
comradeship of the labouring sphere is a direct consequence of the
perception of their limited *access* to resources (Kaplan and Saler 1966:204),
and if one of them does gain access to these resources, it is felt that he
has been helped by the sardar and has thus betrayed comradeship.

Labouring comradeship is thus perhaps a form of social control rather than
stemming from a deep-felt sense of solidarity, as Jayawardena seems to
think it does. Within the sphere of work itself, although labourers work
in gangs, the gangs are not territorial units because each labourer may
come from a different, although fairly closely-situated village. Gangs
are set up by *coloms* or field inspectors, and do not form permanent
groupings as such. They may act cohesively when there is a general order
to strike, but otherwise, the links between labourers coming from different
villages are quite loose and do not extend to the social sphere, whereas
labourers in the same village do form a social grouping as well. Each
labourer is assigned a task to complete by the end of his working day,
and some labourers may prove to be slower than others or less efficient.
However, it is very rare as the labourers themselves admit, except when
there are extraneous links between two labourers, that one will help

another to complete his task. Usually, it is the sardar who assigns
a labourer to help another complete his task if the latter is very much
behind. Spontaneous cooperation at work is thus very infrequent,
although comradeship would seem to prescribe such a form of interpersonal
assistance. There is also a term currently used in labouring work,
which is *travail matelot*, or work as mates. This would seem to be a
convenient expression of comradeship at work, but again, it is not a
form of cooperation between labourers, but a type of work where the
sardar assigns a group of labourers to a common task instead of each
one being assigned his own task. This may involve weeding or clearing
two or three acres of land in one day, and the labourers then work as
a team. One day-labourer told me that during the crop season, day-
labourers like himself tried to make the work last for more days than
it should by leaving a little undone at the end of the day. They call
it *barre travail*, which means to reserve work, and which is mainly a
way of ensuring that there will be work left on the next day. This is
a highly individual practice, and shows both the instability of and
limitations on labouring work, and the personal motivation that lies
behind such work. The labourer admitted to this individuality by saying
that one cannot expect help from others, and one has to fend for oneself
in the labouring sphere.

Whereas they tend to act cohesively in opposition to other levels of
the plantation hierarchy, and their image of their socio-economic
environment stresses the need for a lack of competition and the expression
of solidarity, in their interpersonal relations labourers tend to be both
mistrustful and uncompromising towards each other. Comradeship is
expressed mainly in the pub, and drinking is an area of social relations
where both the cohesion and the manipulation can be seen. It is one of
the prerequisites of comradeship, and after work and mostly on pay-days,
labourers meet in the pub in the local shop to drink. They do so in
small groups, each one taking turns to pay the rounds, but if one labourer
has just received his pay, or has obtained an extra amount, he is
implicitly expected to pay more than everybody else. It is very rare
that all the labourers are in a similar financial situation, so that the
types of drinking transactions that take place are both complex and varied.
Drinking can thus be expressive of:

(a)   an immediate form of exchange between two people, where each one
      takes turns to pay

(b)   a more lasting form of reciprocity where several people drink
      together and are thus involved in a cycle of exchange which can
      take a few days to complete

(c)   a form of manipulation where one or several people may get one
      labourer with more money to pay for all the others

(d)   a temporary, but stronger form of bond-establishing where the
      people are involved in a relationship which is not solely a
      drinking one, but uses drinking as a means of expression.

This last aspect of drinking is often political in nature, and in this
sense does not really fall into the same category of reciprocity and
exchange as the other do. It is generally used when a group of workers
are planning a concerted action either at the level of village politics
or in the sphere of work. Thus, during Village Council elections, most
of the 'canvassing' is done in the pub, with people winning allegiances
through the number of rounds of drink they offer. One man told me that
he had dissuaded a labourer from running for elections by offering him
a few drinks. In this aspect, the drinking context places the
transactions on a level of comradeship which disguises their other
motives. Thus, conviviality offers an appropriate arena within which
a transaction can be articulated or a bond sealed without threatening to
disrupt the general order of things.

The other forms of drinking partnerships seem to be either deliberately
manipulative or in some measure "adjustive". The cycles of drinking are
a means of ensuring that everyone is involved in drinking relations and
is thus financially equal to the others within the cycle itself. On
the other hand, if one person is better off than the others, then he is
made to feel in some way under the obligation to pay more than others,
so that he ends up also being equal in the drinking partnerships. The
framework of equality within which comradeship is expressed is thus preserved
in all these drinking relationships, whether they involve immediate
reciprocity, cycles of reciprocity or unequal reciprocity. In principle,
the transactional aspect of drinking is not stressed, but in effect,
it is a strictly controlled form of exchange.

From the individual's point of view, as opposed to the collective
point of view, drinking can be seen as essentially manipulative: the
individual who has worked to earn more money sees himself under the
obligation to pay for drinks for people who have earned less; and
someone who would like to save some extra money finds himself involved
in a cycle from which it is difficult to come out without attracting
gossip and verbal sanctions; and drinking is so closely linked with
the social status of each person in the labouring sphere that everyone
is involved even against his own wishes. From the collectivity's
point of view the relationship is meant to be a binding and equalising
one, but it may in fact be seen as a repressive one from which it is
only possible to move if one moves out of the labouring sphere
altogether.

Labourers who do not drink and do not get involved in drinking relations
are seen by those who do as "faiseur d'esprit" or smart-acting, and as
self-interested people who will do anything for their own advancement
rather than for that of the community. They will in fact risk
alienating themselves from the rest of the community, but the motivation
of mobility may be stronger than the need to preserve their social
status within the labouring sphere. Moreover, labourers do not depend
entirely on the labouring sphere for their social relations, and can
rely on the other net-works available in the village in many ways. They
do not find themselves entirely isolated if they choose to restrict
their membership in the labouring community to the work sphere only,
although it is a difficult step to take, since it means actually going
against the norms of the community.

The accusation of smart-acting is also directed towards people who try
to improve their standard of living by building a better house, giving
up drinking etc. In this sense, it ressembles the eye-pass accusations
described by Jayawardena, but here it remains a form of gossip rather
than a source of violent conflict. In a family composed of two near-
retirement-age labourers with five sons, (two of whom were married),
the only bread-winners in the family were the parents, all the sons
being unemployed at the time of field-work. They were consequently
one of the poorest families in Trois Boutiques, and the sons felt very
embittered about their situation. However, when I talked to other

labourers about this family, thinking that they would express concern and commiseration, I was surprised to hear them accuse the two eldest sons of smart-acting, and the poverty of the family was ascribed to them. This was because the two sons had been employed by the estate, but had left their job to go to France in order to try and obtain jobs there. They stayed there illegally for a few months, but did not succeed in finding work, so that eventually they had to come back to Mauritius and found themselves jobless here as well. People said that they thought they could obtain better jobs and make more money abroad, and now they were back to square one and had only got what they deserved. There was hardly any help offered to this family from non-kin members.

There is also another significance to drinking which has to do with status. The labouring work has very low status in the society, along with other forms of manual work. Drinking itself has a negative attribute, since it is socially lowering, and morally condemned by most people not involved in it. Yet, the very basis of the collectivity's ideology, comradeship, is sustained through drinking. There is perhaps a preservative element involved in drinking which aims at maintaining all the labourers within the same status boundary through the sharing of a low social and moral attribute. When a person is involved in drinking relationships, he can neither achieve financial mobility nor social mobility. He is thus enclosed on all sides by the internal forces of control that seem to be built into the labouring community.

However, this has not prevented some individuals from moving out of drinking relationships or of the labouring sphere itself. Most labourers have ideas for improving their standard of living, and, although they might not have the means to do so, they at least consider the possibility of it. In spite of the accusations of being "protected" that might meet them, they still accept the protection of the sardar when it is offered and during the crop season, they all try to make a little more money by working extra hours, which is the only opportunity they have of improving their financial situation. Their attitude to self thus contradicts their attitude to others, but it is the only way in which they can strive for mobility within the strict bounds of the labouring community.

The overt egalitarian norms of the labouring sphere is thus a form of social control exerted by the collectivity on the individual, aiming at preventing the disruption of the existing order through competition and attempts at individual mobility. It stems from the fact that labourers tend to see their environment as strictly bounded, so that an individual's progress is detrimental to the collectivity. However, status differences and individual mobility are still made possible because the individual's perception of his environment differs from the outlook prescribed by the collectivity, and in fact, striving for mobility *is* part of the individual's strategy even at this level, helped by the fact that there are other social networks that he can rely on in the process. Because of this possibility of a movement outside the labouring sphere, labouring solidarity remains a non-enduring form of solidarity, operating only in so far as the individual remains within the bounds of the labouring sphere.

I have tried to show, in this section, that the work sphere itself does not have any elements that induce or maintain cooperation between labourers; *travail matelot* is a form of cooperation that is prescribed by the sardar, not by the labourers themselves, and there are individual attempts to reserve work for themselves or to obtain the protection of the sardar in order to get more hours of work. Comradeship is thus maintained essentially by the drinking relations between labourers, and we have seen that these are manipulative and financially adjustive; but more vitally, they are socially restrictive and the drinking act itself serves in a way to define the person who is involved in it. The relation between status and drinking is further emphasised by the relations between sardars and labourers: these are contractual transactions mainly, which involve unequal reciprocity between the partners, since the sardars will pay for the labourer's drinks and drink with him, but not accept drinks from him. The obligation of repayment must be fulfilled outside the drinking sphere. The act of drinking here does not constitute a closed cycle of transactions, since it leads to a contract that operates outside the drinking sphere, i.e. in the work sphere. It can thus be seen only as a transactional vector leading to reciprocity outside the drinking relationship. This is why there is no loss of status for the sardar to be involved in drinking, for, although he is overtly asserting comradeship with the

labourer, he is not involved in a **transaction** of status in a deeper sense, and he can in fact use the obligation he creates among the labourers to acquire a position of authority in the village as well.

The transactional aspect of comradeship does not involve a deep moral bond between the partners, so that in fact, the individual's choice is also allowed to operate, even if in a limited way, and he can choose to break the link and make use of other orders of affiliation available to him, such as the neighbourhood network, which we are going to look at in the next section.

SECTION TWO: THE NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP

The solidarity expressed in the neighbourhood sphere is in some way
of the same nature as that expressed in the labouring sphere, since
it also stems from the villager's perception of his environment as
being a bounded universe, in which all members must maintain an equal
status. The forms of gossip and conflict that occur here are a means
of ensuring an overall equality and preventing status mobility.
However, as a territorial unit the neighbourhood group is more stable
than the labouring community, and its solidarity can be expressed in
several different areas of everyday life. It can in this sense be seen
as a quasi-group that may even be factionalised in the local political
sphere. In Trois Boutiques, the importance of the neighbourhood group
stems partly from the physical lay-out of the village, which is
divided into hamlets. Each hamlet makes up a territorial entity which
is intent upon obtaining as many privileges as the others in terms of
developmental assistance from the Government or from the Village Council.
This fosters internal cohesion because the neighbourhood group is then
acting as an interest group which can be seen as having a political
nature as well as a social nature.

(i) The social aspect of neighbourliness

Each family in the village visualises its position in terms of the
households in its immediate vicinity, and each family's social standing
is gauged in terms of the relations it has with the neighbouring families.
If their relations are strained, then the blame will fall on any one of
the families constituting the neighbourhood set, depending on the amount
of friends, kin and political allies each one has. The neighbourhood
group, which is a larger grouping classified on the basis of a hamlet, a
street or a section of the village, solidifies as soon as it is in
opposition to other neighbourhood groups. In this sense, the potential
of forming a faction is always present, despite the internal conflict
that may be rife within it. If other orders of solidarity are involved,
however, the basis of grouping of the faction need not be the
neighbourhood group. In this sense, it is not a permanent group, but
can be seen as an order of allegiance that can undergo diffusion, can
be subjected to conflicting orders of allegiance, and can be moved out
of simply through physical mobility. The boundaries of the neighbourhood

group are spatial, and membership is thus based on the physical presence of the individual and does not endure if the person moves away. The villagers of Trois Boutiques live in close contiguity with each other. Telugus and North Indians tend to be mixed, although there are several clusters of Telugu households in which live members of the same kin-groups. Ostensibly, the two ethnic groups do not make a difference between their relationships with neighbours of the same group and those of a different group, because of the principle of neighbourliness that operates in the society. Implictly, however, they *do* make a difference and show a preference for neighbours of their own group, as we shall see in Section Three

The main expression of neighbourliness is the adherence to what I have called *non-personnel* behaviour, in opposition to what the villagers term *personnel* behaviour. *Personnel* behaviour is the epitomy of behaviour that goes against village ideals, and is described as 'aloof' 'selfish', 'proud' etc. The opposition between non-personnel and personnel behaviour is that between community-centred and ego-centred behaviour.

In Trois Boutiques, people express their feeling of solidarity with neighbours in terms of pseudo-kinship. The analogy with kinship lies in the 'moral' allegiance that is meant to exist between neighbours, i.e. non-interested, altruistic behaviour. Kinship provides a model for the expression of neighbourly relations much in the same way as comradeship does for labouring relations. It transfers neighbourliness onto a level of altruism that the latter does not really possess, again idiomatically based on a principle of equality. It also prescribes a set of specific duties and obligations which are meant to bind the neighbours together, and that are expressed in terms of interpersonal help and cooperation.

The main purpose of non-personnel behaviour is thus to ensure the help of neighbours when one needs it, but it also stems from an older ideal of village solidarity, when people had no other channels through which to obtain such help, and the villagers, as immigrant Indians, had seen cohesion as a means of survival in the plural society. In Trois

Boutiques, therefore, this form of behaviour, and the duties that go with it, have acquired a great importance as a model of behaviour, although they conflict with other values that are slowly emerging in the village. The depth of tradition that qualifies non-personnel behaviour makes the change to personnel behaviour, which is in a way inevitable, difficult to achieve.

Non-personnel behaviour between neighbours is expressed mainly through participation in each other's lives, for instance looking after each other's children, looking after the house when the neighbour is away, helping out when there are religious ceremonies or a social event. The other way in which non-personnel and pseudo-kin behaviour is meant to be expressed is through commensality, which used to be a very important expression of commonness between villagers.

Sharing of food is an important area of inter-personnal relations: in principle, a person shares food only with those closest to him, i.e. his kin-members and, by extension, members of his ethnic group. This revolves around an idea of consubstantiality (cf. Pitt Rivers 1969) similar to that held by Tamils of Jaffna when they say that the people with whom they share substance are those who sit and eat with them (David 1973). Not only is the eating of food cooked in somebody else's house, but also eating with his/her crockery, an act involving a deep moral bond so that the link that it symbolises between oneself and the person with whom one eats is a highly charged one. Thus, if one eats with a non-kin member, in particular one who does not belong to one's ethnic group: one establishes a bond of the strongest order, identifying the person as a "kin". Formerly such expressions of a deep bond between neighbours were frequent; however, over the years, relations between Telugus and North Indians (and Muslims when these were still in Trois Boutiques) became less close, and the neighbourly bonds weakened. For this reason, commensality has decreased sharply, although it is still invoked as a bond, and is used to express closeness and validate pseudo-kin relations between neighbours. In this sense, kinship and the relations between members of an ethnic group lend their codes of conduct to neighbourliness on a surface level, but the codes for the latter appear mainly as verbal ones, or else they involve reciprocity, where codes for substantial relations do not. With real kin, there is no need for verbal assertions of solidarity, with pseudo-kin, they are vital because the

relation is a reactive one, dependent upon the interplay of words, gestures and actions between the neighbours in order to be kept on the level of solidarity. This interplay, which also involves a measured amount of reciprocity, is perhaps a parallel form to drinking partnerships. However, drinking relationships do not pertain to the same conceptual set as commensality: first, they take place outside the house; secondly, they are set in a commercial sphere; thirdly, they are negatively evaluated (except among the labourers, themselves). The *assertion* of commensality, which is part of the reciprocity of neighbourly relations, can be said to correspond to the transactional bond established by drinking partnerships. The former is evidently less material and contractual in nature, since words and abstract gestures are sometimes more important than concrete actions in the establishment of a bond. Being set in close proximity in their daily lives, neighbours have the opportunity of expressing reciprocity and the mutuality of their needs in many ways, provided the equilibrium and equivalence of reciprocity is also maintained. If a person has taken care of a child in his parents' absence, the parents will have to reciprocate fairly immediately, either in a similar manner, or, as is more frequently the case, in some other way which is felt to be equivalent, such as lending a bicycle or a tool which is needed by the neighbours. In no case do such informal transactions involve monetary prestations or prestations which can be evaluated in terms of money. In this sense, they are *gestures*, geared towards the preservation of constant relations and which can be seen as part of the flow of day-to-day interaction. Such a form of gesture can be seen for instance when a neighbour is asked to participate in a ceremony, not in terms of assistance, but on a ritual or ceremonial level. For instance when there is a meeting of the two alliance families for a wedding, a neighbour may be asked to join the party in the same way as a kin-member is asked; this is an instance when the neighbour is really treated as kin.

On the other hand, stronger forms of cooperation and help do take on a significance of debt and obligation which are more binding in the long term than in the short term. In many important events that take place in the villager's life, there will be a need for either financial assistance or other forms of effective assistance. When a child is

getting married, for instance, a person may suddenly find himself in need of immediate cash and not have any means of obtaining it except from a neighbour. This involves an actual debt, but it is also a moral debt in that it will not be fulfilled merely by repaying the money, but by an equivalent transaction when the need arises. The obligation involved is far stronger and deeper than that which is involved in a similar debt towards real kin, who are bound by duty to assist each other, whatever the cost. The neighbourliness duty is only verbally expressed as a duty that involves no obligation, but in fact, there is a strong transactional element involved in long-term debts. There is thus more reluctance on the part of people to become involved in financial transactions with neighbours, whereas milder forms of participation are seen as a positive expression of solidarity.

Neighbourly relations are strongly dependent upon the preservation of the relationship through constant interaction and transactions. There is in fact no great dept of morality in these relations which are based, as I have mentioned above, (a) on verbal professions of kinship, (b) on gestures that involve informal prestations preservative of daily relations, and (c) on actions and transactions that involve short or long term reciprocity and deep obligations to repay in kind and with "moral interest" the debt incurred. These expressions of solidarity thus form a web spreading out over time, and informally binding in the process of day-to-day interaction. The web is however constantly reassessed in the light of new attitudes and changes in each neighbour's pattern of relations, so that it is by no means a constant and stable bond, as we shall see in the next sub-section.

(ii) Neighbourliness as a form of social control

If pseudo-kinship serves as a model within which to articulate neighbourly cooperation and solidarity, non-personnel behaviour is in a way a 'personality' model against which each villager is set by his neighbours and fellow villagers as a means of evaluation and control. The close contiguity of the neighbourhood set leads to constant contact and interference in each other's lives, and this in itself can lead to conflict, expressed through gossip, accusations of jealousy, pride, méchanceté etc. Each person tries to justify his position by describing the other as having acted against the non-personnel norms.

This happens most frequently when a person shows attempts at mobility or acquires prestige in some form or another, which triggers off the mistrust of the neighbours. In this sense, conflicts in the village are very reminiscent of Jayawardena's eye-pass disputes, and again they are a corrective measure against individual attempts at mobility. However, these conflicts themselves can also be expressive of the implantation of personnel values in the village, if the person accused of being 'personnel' can justify his position by accusing his neighbours of *méchanceté*.

However, on a global village level, individuals have to be more careful of the ways in which the express their mobility, since their general sociability is dependent on a non-personnel behaviour, much in the way sardars' and entrepreneurs' authority and efficiency are based on an egalitarian mode of behaviour. In particular, those people who are slightly better-off or in a more favourable position than others must be careful of their situation, since they are more vulnerable to gossip. Eventually, however, it will be seen that non-personnel behaviour is based on appearance and preservation of certain external features in a person's style of life, while mobility can still be an internal drive.

Between them, the restrictive function of gossip, and the 'management' of their position by certain people who have access to a certain form of mobility but express it under the guise of an overall adherence to non-personnel norms, represent the traditional forces of control at work in the village, and the way progressiveness may be internalised within the traditional framework without disrupting it.

The neighbourhood set, although it is constantly engaged in a flow of prestations and reciprocity,-is bound by those as long as they are satisfactory to the people involved. When there is a flaw in the pattern of reciprocity, or a failure to make the appropriate gesture, conflict occurs. This involves a temporary break in neighbourly relations, and sometimes the break can be resolved through a mediating gesture, but often, such conflict indicates a change of relations between the neighbours and can sometimes be interpreted as a deliberate means of transforming the pattern of relations into a more distant, less reciprocal one. This may happen when the advantages of prolonged

reciprocity between neighbours may no longer be apparent, and here too, conflict may be seen both as a means of bringing back an individual into the orderly flow of relations, or a means of breaking from this flow and setting up a new order. Again, tradition and change can be articulated within the same 'mode', simply by changing the order or direction of the transactions involved, so that the bonds created by those transactions are weakened or strengthened.

The contiguity of neighbours itself provides an endless source of conflict of a petty and generally temporary nature. The absence of enclosures around the houses, although it is seen by the villagers as an expression of pseudo-kin relations, is a constant cause of conflict. During my fieldwork, several such conflicts occurred which were expressed mainly through gossip to a third person, but often loud enough for the person to hear. One person's tree-branches grew into his neighbour's yard, and she complained that it incommodated her. The person did not feel that there was any real cause for incommodation and refused to cut down his tree-branches. There were subsequent complaints on both sides which eventually died out, as nobody was prepared to do anything about it, and after a temporary cooling off of relations between the two neighbours, things became normal again. Constant quarrels occurred between two people, one of whom was using water from the other's outdoor tap, because whenever the water bill came up, the owner of the tap would accuse the other of using too much water. People no longer took any notice of these quarrels because they were so recurrent that every three months when the water bill arrived, one would expect to hear shouting and quarrelling going on between these two neighbours. The quarrels were never of a permanent or lasting nature either. Such quarrels are minor ones and only involve temporary suspending of relations until some gesture is made to restore the initial harmony or to make peace.

Quarrels may however take on a much graver significance than they warrant initially, when one of the neighbours has obtained something, has had a financial improvement in his situation, or if his son or daughter has passed an important exam or obtained a good job. Any quarrel that occurs in such a situation will either be interpreted by the person as a gesture of ill-will or jealousy, or, if he has originated the offence, the neighbour will interpret this as a show of pride or over-confidence

on his part. In the latter case, the offence is more serious because the offender, being in a better position, should be more considerate about others who are not as lucky as he has been. The gravity of the offence is thus very much dependent upon the particular position of each party, and how they stand vis-à-vis each other.

This conflict situation is most often seen when a person is building a house or converting his house to concrete. As we have seen in Chapter two, housing is the first external expression of status mobility, and people will do everything they can to build a concrete house even if it means converting their house wall by wall. It is thus a frequent occurrence, nowadays, that in one neighbourhood set one family may already be living in a concrete house, while another is in the process of converting and yet another is still living in a corrugated-iron house. The interplay of relations in these cases hinges on an emphasis upon non-personnel behaviour by the family that is better-off than the others, and the level of reciprocity is consequently changed, since more is expected of this family in order to reach the balance required in relations between neighbours.

Thus, it is not the fact that the person has built a concrete house that is overtly condemned, although it is the primary cause of ill-feeling, but the behaviour of the family subsequent to having built it. There may be no 'real' cause for a dispute to occur, it being created by the resentment of the neighbours on one part, and the fear of the person who is conscious of mobility on the other hand. The types of dispute that occur between neighbours may be schematized as follows:

SITUATION I: Equality between A and B - temporary break in
relations, resolved by gestures

Type (a)

Type (a) second diagram
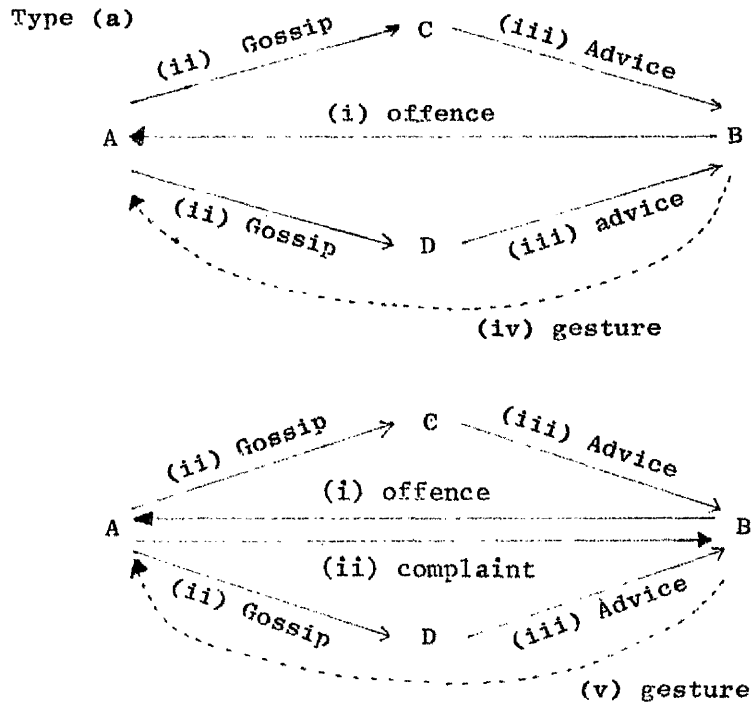
SITUATION II: Inequality between A and B, dispute aggravates, with
neighbours taking sides

Type (a)
(B 'superior to A)
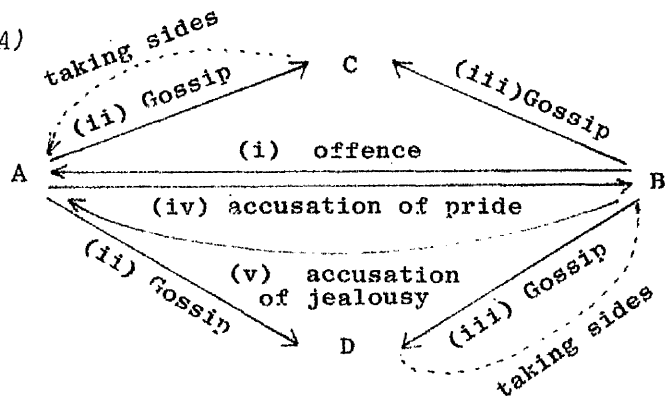
Type (b)
(A 'superior' to B)
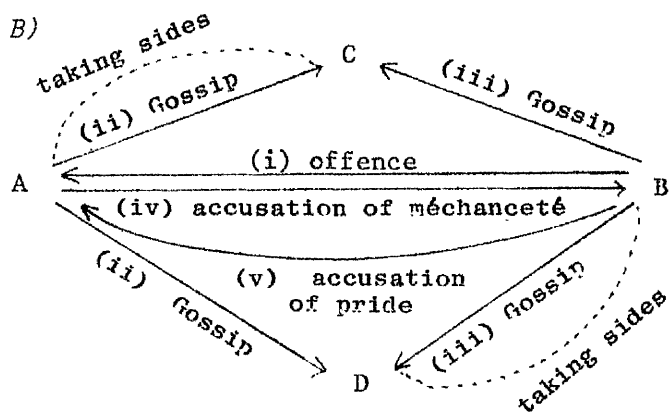
Diagram 3 (a-d): Types of neighbourly conflict

Situation II case histories:

Type (b)

One long-drawn dispute which has been going on for several years
opposed two Telugus, T and E. Both came from extremely poor
families with numerous children, but it should be borne in mind,
in connection with this dispute, that E has remained poor mainly
because of his drinking habits, whereas T has worked hard to
raise his standard of living, has had his children educated up
to Senior Cambridge level, and has recently built a concrete house
to which he is adding a storey.

The land on which their houses are built originally belonged to
a single owner, another Telugu who moved from the village. One
house had already been built on it, which occupied a slanting
position across the piece of land. The house, and half the
piece of land was bought by E's aunt who bequeathed it to E upon
her death. The other half of the land had a very small and
dilapidated house upon it, which was rented by T from the first
owner of the land. The two families had good relations with
each other until a cyclone destroyed T's house. T then decided
to buy the piece of land on which the rented house had been
from the original owner, and to build a new house on it. He did
succeed in buying the land, but it was when he began to build
the house that trouble started.

The problem was that E's house encroached on T's land. The land
had been divided equally into two and sold that way, but through
lack of proper surveying, there had been no arrangement made
over the fact that the main house overlapped onto T's land. When
T started to build his house, E sent the police to tell him that
he was building on E's land. In fact, when T investigated the
matter, he found that it was the contrary, and that he legally
had a right to ask E to pull down one wall of his house. It is
significant to note here that it was E who originated the dispute.
But E's version of the story is that T started acting in an
unfriendly and proud way when he began to build his new house,
and he asked E to pull down a wall of his house and prevented
him from making repairs to his kitchen, although it was E who
had encouraged T to rent the house in the first place. E thus
accused T of being a traitor and relations between them deteriorated
very rapidly.

T's version of the dispute was even more complicated. He holds
that the cause for E's starting the dispute was that he was
jealous of T's progress and wanted to impede it, i.e. to do a
méchanceté. Further he had a mistress in the neighbourhood, and
he wanted to buy the annexing piece of land - i.e. the one which
T bought - for her. When he saw that T had bought the land, he
gave him trouble over building, thinking that T would eventually
sell the land back to him. However, because of the dispute that
was going on over the land, T lost his loan for building the
house. Eventually, they went to court, but T won the case, and
claimed money from E for impeding the building of his house and
for encroaching upon his land. Now, both do everything they can

to prevent each other's progress, and social relations are
completely broken, to the extent that T did not invite the Es
to his son's wedding. He also prevented them from repairing
their kitchen wall, which falls on his land, so that they had to
build a separate kitchen on the other side of the house. T
ascribes the whole dispute to E's loose moral and drinking habits.
E ascribes it to T's pride. T is in fact far more prosperous
than E, and his family is respected in the village because he
keeps good relations with everyone. Since most neighbours knew
of E's propensity to drinking and behaving in a quarrelsome way,
they all sided with T in the dispute, and all the neighbourhood
was invited to and attended T's son's wedding. Both continue to
gossip about each other to neighbours, and neighbours gossip
about their situation – in particular about E –, but in this
particular case, the neighbours did not want to interfere between
the two as mediators because they are both Telugus, and this
makes the dispute a matter for Telugus to settle. The "qualité"
factor prevails here over the mediating role of neighbours.

Type (a)

A North Indian woman of Trois Boutiques decided to sell her
house and a piece of land which belonged to her in order to
settle down with her daughter in town. She sold the house to
her immediate neighbour, a Telugu man, but, although he had
already paid her, they did not sign any contract. After she had
left, the man pulled down his own house and started building a
house overriding the two annexed pieces of land.

However, after a few months, the woman and her daughter quarrelled,
and she decided to come back to the village. When she arrived,
she told the man she would give him back the money if he gave her
back her piece of land. The man refused to pull down the house
which he had started to build, and the woman said she would take
him to court because the land was still legally hers. She did
not however do so, because the other neighbours sided with the
man: they said that she had wanted to become a *grand madame*
("big shot") and live in the town, and now that she had come back,
she still wanted to behave in the same way. She in turn said that
all the others were jealous of her and the Telugu man did not want
to let her live peacefully. She rented a house in the village,
but is still trying to obtain the help of social and village
development workers to get back the land.

Type (b)

In yet another dispute over land, the two parties involved are both
North Indians, and one lives behind the other, so that they both
use a common lane to gain access to their house. When the one
living at the back wanted to convert his house into concrete, the
trucks bringing cement and bricks could not reach his land because
of the narrowness of the lane. He then asked the neighbour to
let him widen the lane – which would then encroach into the
neighbour's land – so that the trucks would be able to pass. The
neighbour refused adamantly; since he was in his right, nothing
could induce him to change his mind. The other man said that
he was doing a méchanceté on purpose, because he could not bear

to see a neighbour improving his situation, while the front
neighbour said that he was acting in this way because he had
been "provoked" by the other's pride *(vantardise)*.

In the overall village situation, the pressure exerted by the non-
personnel values on indivuduals is far greater. The social status
of a person is directly involved, especially if he is in a situation
where he depends on the villagers for specific interests.

In the case of one shop-owning family in Trois Boutiques which
is very prosperous and has recently built a concrete house, the
whole family has to be doubly careful about its social position
in terms of non-personnel behaviour. The shop itself is the
only concrete one in the village, and sells a variety of goods,
and thus has a numerous clientèle. The house which accommodates
the whole family is a big concrete one which covers the whole
plot on which it is built, the only one of its kind in the
village. One of the sons runs several taxi-cars, another one
is a policeman, and the family further owns a few acres of land
planted with banana trees. In comparison with the rest of the
villagers, this family is a particularly prosperous and 'lucky'
one, and the size of the house and the number of cars its members
own emphasise their wealth in a concrete way. They would thus
be the ideal target for gossip and accusations of pride if they were
not careful to preserve a non-personnel mode of behaviour in
spite of their financial situation. For instance, the son who runs
the taxis will often run free errands for people in urgent need of
medicine or who are sick and have to get to a hospital, and the
other sons help actively when there is a wedding or a ceremony in
a villager's house. The mother in particular is extremely careful
about preserving social relations with other villagers, and
dresses like the poorer village-women - in a mid-length skirt and
loose blouse and *horni* - and wears saris only when she is going
out. She looks after the banana plantations herself, although
her sons often tell her not to do so, since they can afford to
employ people to look after the plantation, but she insists on
doing it herself. She washes their clothes in the open, and also
cooks in the open in spite of modern kitchen amenities in the
house, which her daughters-in-law generally use.

It is significant that all these aspects of the woman's life-style
which contradict her prosperity are *outwardly visible* ones, since people
can actually see her cooking and washing outside like any other village
woman. Her behaviour, and that of her sons, seems to achieve what
Goffman has termed "impression management", and Barth has described
as "over- and under-communication" (1967). In order to restore the
balance between financial mobility and non-personnel behaviour,
there . must be conscious and careful impression management on the part

of those people who are in certain ways dependent on the impression
they make on the rest of the villagers. The transition from one set
of norms to another is dependent upon those people who are capable of
achieving mobility, but who are still linked to the village norms and
values. They must thus find the appropriate mid-way attitude by over-
communicating certain aspects of their social personality (such as
simplicity, willingness to help others), while under-communicating
other aspects (such as possessing more goods and material possessions
than others). In this way, it is still possible for them to engage
in money-making activities and to enhance or preserve their social
position in the village at the same time.

> A case of bad impression-management is that of the President of
> the Cane Cooperative in Trois Boutiques. He has been President
> of the cooperative for a long time because people recognise his
> basic honesty and trustworthiness, but in spite of this, he does
> not enjoy real popularity and can be seen as neither a good
> leader nor an efficient innovator. He himself feels unwanted and
> somehow ill-used in the village, describing the villagers of
> Trois Boutiques as dishonest and unhelpful people who harbour
> ill feelings towards him. He feels that, because he is soft-
> spoken and not quarrelsome, people tend to take advantage of
> him. His son has just come back from India where he took a
> language degree but since he could not find a job, he started
> giving private tuition to local villagers. However, most of the
> people who were having tuition failed to pay him, because they
> knew him personally and did not feel under pressure to repay him.
> Eventually, he had to stop giving tuition and took a job with
> the manual workers employed by the Government in road repairs
> and other types of manual work. The villagers then started to
> gossip about him, saying that it had been a waste of time and
> money for him to go to India to study, when finally he had had
> to come back to manual work.

Attempts at mobility which end up in failure attract more sanctions than
those which are successful, and in this case, the reputation of the man's
father, the President of the Cane Cooperative also influenced the people's
attitude to him. The President's way of life may be described as a
personnel one: he does not drink, does not like to stop on the road to
talk to people, prefers to go back straight home after work, leads a
quiet and private way of life. In particular because he *is* involved in
group activities amidst the Cooperative, it is felt that he should make
special efforts to behave in a non-personnel way in order to justify
the position that has been given to him by the rest of the villagers.

His attitude nurtures resentment because it seems to stem from pride
rather than from a quiet personality. Recently, two of his cane-
fields were burnt down, and he ascribes the fire to *méchanceté* on
the part of the villagers.

Another villager commented on the President's character by saying that
he would be happier if he lived in an area where people were all
personnel. To be able to live in the village he said, one should not
be proud, one should act in the same manner towards everybody, and
not choose to talk to some and to be proud with others.

Through this kind of attitude, the President has separated himself
more and more from the rest of the village, without attempting to do
anything and make any gesture that would rectify their opinion of him.
In his capacity as President of the Cooperative, the owes something to
the villagers who elected him, but he does not feel bound by any debt
or obligation. His assessment of self and the villagers' assessment
of him are thus widely discrepant, and neither side will make any
attempt to modify it, so that the gap can only widen.

The assessment of each individual is based on specific elements that
make up the individual's social personality. Finances, job, level of
education of children, caste, contacts with higher-level people
(ministers, MPs etc.), are all aspects which the individual can
manipulate for his own benefit, and for this reason, those who possess
a number of these assets are subjected to closer scrutiny than those
who do not. The individual's management of these assets, both for
his own benefit and so that they do not become a liability within the
village norms, is an important aspect of mobility in Trois Boutiques.
Solidarity and egalitarian norms can thus be seen to validate overtly
traditional values while certain forms of mobility are allowed to be
expressed within the overall framework. Thus, financial and
educational advancement are not opposed as long as the person makes
up for it through appropriate gestures and entering more informal
transactions with other villagers. The man who owns taxis has to
give free rides to people who are in urgent need of them; the shop-owner
has to keep more informal relations with people in his environment than
others; and the person who has just obtained a degree is expected not

to take - or at least not to ask for - money when he gives tuition to fellow-villagers. Non-personnel behaviour thus becomes another form of transaction for prestige, since by adhering to it a person can manipulate his financial and social mobility so that it fits in with the norms of the village. At the same time it prevents the person from changing the overall order by his mobility, and it is in this sense a form of control on the individual for the benefit of the collectivity. The hostility shown to the President of the Cooperative shows that people are not prepared to accept personnel behaviour even if it comes from someone who is basically trusted over financial matters. He is thus restricted in the role he is allowed to play in the affairs of the village, and is not an adequate innovator.

Any form of leadership is in fact highly suspicious to the villagers, and the leaders in the village are very much aware of the need to manipulate allegiances in order to be successful as leaders.

One former leader, B, whom I mentioned in Chapter two, had been successful in his time in acquiring different types of allegiances by using his own assets and through careful manipulation of his position. He was a Hindu entrepreneur of the "babuji" (kshatriya) caste, who became head of the Panchayat when it still existed, and President of the Village Council when the latter was set up. He led the Hindus during the disputes with the Creoles and was generally thought of as a leader and a fighter. He stressed the fact that, when he was an entrepreneur, he used to interact very closely with the labourers in order to obtain their cooperation, which also ensured that he was not qualified as a proud person. As a Hindu, he was very active in religious areas, attending "sat sangs" (or religious meetings), and joining the Arya Samaj, which was tantamount to a denial of caste affiliation. His religious habits and his assumption of leadership during periods of crisis, when such a leadership was needed by the Hindus, led to his acquiring a more permanent position of authority in the Panchayat and among Hindus in general. This in turn led to his acquiring the Chairmanship of the Village Council. When he had reached this level, it became possible for him to use the political contacts available to him, for instance with ministers or leaders of higher-level associations, in order to establish a firm arena of patronage and brokerage in the village, which allowed him to make his position of authority even more secure. He further established links with high-placed members of his caste and thus extended his social and political network. While he started out by denying authority or superiority as an entrepreneur and as an Arya Samaji, he eventually secured authority in the village and succeeded in using both his sectarian affiliation and his caste affiliation to enhance his popularity, as well as the non-personnel attribute that he had acquired as an entrepreneur.

The pattern followed is thus (a) denial of authority, (b) securing allegiances and enhancing of reputation on the basis of leadership capabilities and (c) asserting authority. There is thus a clearly manipulative aspect in leadership in the village, and this is mainly due to the fact that there are so many different orders of affiliation available to the people that one had to be able to satisfy most of these different orders to become an accepted leader. It also shows that at this level, where the expression of identity tends to remain muted, the individual can in fact make use of his different orders of identification such as religion, sect, caste etc., in his strategies. But identity in itself is not strongly divisive or separative, so that day-to-day interaction and conflict are not articulated in terms of being Telugus and North Indians.

What I have dealt with so far are the bases of solidarity in the village which operate at the surface level, over and above ethnic affiliation. The two main forms of solidarity are that of the labouring sphere and that of the neighbourhood group, which are both articulated in terms of an overt egalitarian ideology. I have however tried to show that in fact these forms of solidarity tend to be transactional in essence, with each person transacting comradeship, commensality and cooperation in order to maintain or improve his status within the collectivity. Both forms can be seen as nurturing transactions of prestige whereby mobility is expressed and achieved without contradicting village norms. They use the moral bases of cohesion i.e. equality, amity and kinship and borrow their codes for conduct in order to achieve a manipulative type of relation with other members of the collectivity. For this reason, I would be inclined to classify both labouring and neighbourhood solidarity as non-moral forms of solidarity, in opposition to ethnic solidarity, which is a moral one, as we shall see in the next section.

At the micro-level of society, it is possible to see, from an
individual point of view, how human coalitions are formed and become
an effective, integral element of the total society. Some forms of
cohesion, such as the neighbourhood one, do not emerge as organisational
elements on any other level of society, and thus remain significant only
within the confines of the village. They are thus only loosely
integrative, i.e. they allow for an informal network to emerge which
operates above ethnic allegiances, but they do not prevent these
allegiances from crystalising at other levels of society. They do not
have the power to weaken or diffuse ethnic ties. Thus, even if
ethnicity does not appear in certain village societies as an organi-
sational element on a formal level, it is still part of the individual's
mode of identification and affiliation, and thus finds its expression
in different ways depending upon the specific village context. The
sociétés, for instance, which are socio-religious associations, do not
have the same cohesive force in all the villages. In some, like
Plaine Magnien, they have an overtly organisational function, and are
active in expressing the importance of the 'group' in the society.
In Trois Boutiques, as we shall see in a later section, they do not
validate the existence of the group as such, but merely offer forms
of social and financial help on an individual level. What then, are
the ways in which ethnic identity finds its expression in such villages
as Trois Boutiques, where any overt assertion of one's identity is
negatively assessed as contradicting the communal village feeling?

(i) Marriage

The relationship between Telugus and North Indians, which is maintained
on a basis of cordiality and friendship, and the reiteration that there
are not many differences between the religious and cultural features
of each group, does not however create a foundation for inter-marriage.
Inter-marriage does occur occasionally, just as it does between Muslims
and Hindus, but, if it is better tolerated than the latter, it is still
not looked upon favourably, and in general, the respective parents will
do anything they can to prevent the marriage from going through until
its inevitability is clearly demonstrated by the couple itself. When

- 133 -

faced with a choice between the different types of inter-marriage,
people will admit that it is better for Telugus and North Indian to
marry than any other combination, because the two groups are more
rapproché (closer) and similar. The main argument in this case is
that they eat the same things, that Telugus in villages speak
bhojpuri, and that their religious rites are not very different.
The food restriction is the strongest aspect involved in the
prohibition of intermarriage between Hindus and Muslims, and it is
more frequently given as a reason than the religious difference.

The arguments against inter-marriage between Telugus and North
Indians are based on incompatibility or lack of understanding of each
other's cultural features. For instance, it is said that they will
not be able to understand each other's prayers, and a daughter-in-law
who is of a different *qualité* will not be able to hold a ceremony
in her household if she does not understand it.

Thus, if it is a matter of choice between several negatively evaluated
exogamous marriages, it is better to choose the closer one, on the
basis of degrees of differentiation between the two groups – the North
Indians and the Tamils for instance feel more strongly differentiated
and such a marriage is strongly condemned – and on the basis of
similarity of food habits. The groups are thus classified on a
conceptual grid according to the *distance* between them, and this
distance is assessed upon the features mentioned above, i.e. food,
religion, language spoken etc., or the "codes for conduct" which characterize
each group. The ranking is not necessarily mutual, and one group may
rank another closer to itself while the latter may have the former
further away on its ranking system. In fact, this is the case between
North Indians and Telugus, for the former tend to rank the latter
closest to them, while the Telugus rank North Indians further from them
than Tamils. This stems from two main reasons: one is that, as a
'minority group', the Telugus have to put stronger restrictions on inter-
marriage because the group is more vulnerable to diffusion, and they see
North Indians as a majority-group which threatens their unity; secondly,
North Indians see their eating-habits as being broadly similar to those
of the Telugus, whereas the latter see them as "dal" and "brède" (which
are a pulse and a green vegetable) eaters, i.e. a people who are stingy

about food and make money by subsisting on the simplest kind of food.
This creates a discrepancy in the mutual evaluation of the groups.

The degree of distancing between the groups is thus closely linked
with assessments of differences that are partly stereotypes - e.g.
"dal and brède eaters" - and partly based on actual contrasts.
However, the assessment of each group is not expressed so much in
terms of separate constructs of religion, language and cultural habits
as in terms of a mixture of all those subsumed under the idea of mutual
"understanding", "similarity". A man will say, "I cannot give my
daughter into a household where they eat beef and pork" or "I cannot
take a daughter-in-law who is not my qualité, and who will not
understand my way of thinking, into my house". This seems to indicate
that *qualité*, as a notion, goes deeper than more overt aspects of
ethnicity such as religion, language etc. Food is closely linked with
people's qualité, and similarity and understanding are both related
to the sense of commonness within a qualité. Differences between groups
can thus be seen more in terms of *qualitative* differences, which allow
for degrees in distancing to appear, than in terms of empirical
differences. Inter-marriage is not just a matter of difficulty of
integration, but it is a threat to the internal quality of the group.
Marriage is the primary means of perpetuating the group, and the most
important link between its members. Therefore, when we are looking at
the expression of ethnicity at this level, we must look in terms of moral
solidarity and ascription rather than at other external forms of cohesion.

In Trois Boutiques, there are two forms of marriage selection based on
'place': one is recruitment from the nearest possible radius of villages,
and from the village itself, and the other is from villages further away
that have a large number of the qualité group. Marriage is in this sense
a kind of ethnic recruitment to the village, perhaps in a way that is
parallel to economic recruitment of kin and ethnic members in Plaine
Magnien. The Telugus' pattern of choice seems fairly equally divided
between village-endogamy and the villages where their qualité group is
numerous, whereas the North Indians' choice is more oriented towards the
radius of nearby villages than within the village itself. The choice
of marriage for each group is dependent on several variables: village-
endogamy for the Telugus is based on the pattern of intra-kingroup

marriage and on the repetition of ties with the same affinal group, as we shall see in Chapter six. The need to know the family also acts as an incentive to choose within the village or from a nearby village. One thus has an intensification of qualité ties through the establishing and repeating of marriage links between them. The second type of marriage recruitment, which is oriented towards villages where the qualité group is numerous and sometimes dominant, is peculiar to the minority groups of the Indian community, because of their limitations in numbers. There is a need to establish ties and contacts with areas where the group is well-organised and numerous, so that the marriage-partner who is moving into the village does not find him/herself isolated in an unfamiliar environment. There are thus marriage ties between people of Trois Boutiques, in the South, and those of, say, Rivière-du-Rempart in the North, because there is a numerous Telugu population in both these villages. This finally achieves a kind of concentration of the qualité group in certain villages, and also serves to establish effective ties far outside the village on the basis of qualité links.

Among the North Indians, the choice is subjected to a different set of variables. Village endogamy is not frequent, although it is not explicitly attributed to a prohibition, but merely to a *preference* for village-exogamy. When it happens, it is mainly because the couple has chosen the marriage by themselves, i.e. it is a love-marriage, or when there are corresponding caste groups in the village which allow people to inter-marry. Three of the love-marriages recorded in the village during fieldwork were in fact between largely discrepant castes, so that the marriages were severely condemned. There is only one Maraz (Brahmin) family S., in Trois Boutiques. S has two sons and a daughter and is a retired sardar. The two sons married low-caste chamar girls from the village. This caused an uproar in the family, and I was told that there had been disputes when the families found out that their children wanted to get married. One of the chamar girls comes from an extremely poor family, and this did not make things easier for her. Further, both sons only had partial employment as day labourers, which meant that they had to go on living with the father, but the daughter stressed the fact that they kept separate kitchens, and she and her mother never attended the temple with the sons' wives.

In another case where a Babuji (Kshatriya) man's son married
a Chamar girl, the father, being an Arya Samaji, and having
been involved in the case above as a mediator, had to accept
his son's decision without too much protest, but in the
course of time, there was increasing friction between the
son's wife and her mother-in-law, who was the son's step-
mother (i.e. his father's second wife). First, the mother-
in-law bought the wife a complete set of kitchen utensils
to use in the kitchen, which was explained by the father as
being a gift, but the son and his wife took the gesture as
meaning that the latter could not use the household utensils
because of her caste. Later on, the father himself was
overheard by the son's wife saying "Chamars will always be
Chamars and keep their dirty habits!" She the provoked a
discussion and, according to the father, induced the son
to break away from the family and to settle in town. Both
the son and his wife were educated, and he had a good job
which allowed him to be financially and socially mobile
once he had moved to town. This further led to distancing
between him and his family, and the rift is now so complete
that the father told me that he would not even recognise
his grand-children if he saw them.

In the above cases, the discrepancy of caste was too great for marriage
to take place without dispute. However, in general, North Indians from
Trois Boutiques are not too highly conscious of caste in their marriage
choices, as long as they are broadly equal. The main caste names used
by people in qualifying themselves are Maraz, Babuji and Vaish, or
sub-caste names such as Kurmi, Ahir etc. The varna categories thus
serve only for the three higher varnas, and nobody will qualify him or
herself, if asked, as a Shudra or a low-caste. The sub-caste names are
thus in a way a means of avoiding classifying oneself unequivocally as
a low caste, since in general, people are not very much aware of what
varna category a sub-caste name corresponds to. Low caste
classification then serves only in classifying others, and in fact
those who belong to a low caste are very unwilling to specify their
caste or to talk about it. They tend to dismiss it as a thing of
the past, and see caste mainly as a means for Brahmans to obtain
prerogatives that they could not obtain. Caste consciousness is thus
preserved almost entirely by the higher castes, and by their exclusion
of specific family-names from the *grand-nation* (high caste) category

Thus, within the *grand nation* boundary, people fall into Maraz and
Babuji castes; below it, people are classified as Vaish; and, below
the Vaish come the *ti nation* (low-caste). The Vaish thus fall into
a middle category between grand and ti nation. The ti nation category
includes all the people who cannot classify themselves or who use sub-
caste names, and at the lowest level of this category come the Chamars,
who are recognised as such and can thus not conceal their caste.

GRAND NATION	MID-CATEGORY	TI NATION
Maraz	Vaish	Unspecified
Babuji		Chamar

Chart No.1: Caste categories among North Indians

The Vaish fall into a middle category because there have been many
intermarriages between them and grand nation members, especially
Babujis, so that they cannot be unequivocally classified as low
castes. Some families are in fact still classified as half-Babuji
half-Vaish. The original incorporative aspect of caste, where the
male's caste prevailed in both hyper and hypogamous unions has not
survived in Mauritius, and one finds families who claim high status
through a male's union to a high caste female. In Trois Boutiques,
however, there are not many high caste people, and the low castes
tend to be satisfied with broadly similar caste or status groups
from which to select spouses. The wider radius of villages around
the village provide them with an adequate selection from which to
choose, while at the same time providing the advantage of knowing the
situation of the family from which one is choosing. In villages, one
finds that social ranking broadly correlates status and caste, and
the "unspecified" ti-nation category offers the widest choice, since
people cannot arrange marriages into higher castes, and prefer not to
arrange marriages with Chamars. This is probably why actual caste
names have become so diffuse in this category, since repeated marriages
have blurred divisions considerably.

For North Indians, the need to marry from or into villages where their
group is predominant does not arise, since they are far more numerous

than any other group and are dominant in a large number of villages.
Choice within the group of villages in the vicinity thus serves to
establish links between the villages, with caste, occupation or social
status being the main criteria of choice. Among the grand nation, in
particular the Maraz, choice tends to move away from the village because
the caste affiliation gives them more bargaining power in their marriage
preferences, and especially when looking for spouses for their daughters,
they are not entirely restricted by the occupational status of the
father. For instance, a Babuji sardar's daughter got married, during
my fieldwork, to a Babuji minister's son. The caste affiliation was
considered to be more important in the match than the occupational
status, and the consideration that they were both "good families" was
several times reiterated. The grand nation attribute thus largely
enhances the status of the family over and above occupational and
financial status. The grand nation are not as much bound as the Vaish
and ti nation categories are by their occupational status in the latitude
of choice. In the latter's case, it is on the contrary finance and
occupation that allow them a better bargaining power. In Trois Boutiques,
since the families are fairly similar in status with members of the same
caste categories in other villages, choice is fairly straight-forward
and is largely based on previous acquaintance.

In Trois Boutiques, therefore, caste does not act as a strongly
differentiating factor within the North Indian group because most of the
villagers belong to the ti-nation category or to the Vaish category.
Their adherence to the Arya Samaj has also served to diffuse caste
differences, except in the case of the few grand nation in the village.
In fact, people who are aware of the specific caste they belong to tend
to see the relationship with other members of the same caste as "fami"
relations. They thus see it as a notion of relatedness rather than as a
means of differentiation, in particular because caste boundaries are at
best vague and undefined. This again corresponds to the classification
used by the Jaffna Tamils described by David (1973) where kinship and
caste belong to the same order of substantial identity, and both kin-
members and caste members are "sharers" of substance, but to a different
degree. For the North Indians, this can perhaps be expressed in the
following terms: kin-members are those with whom we eat, caste-members
are those with whom we marry, and qualité-identity incorporates both
kin and caste identity. For this reason, caste endogamy is not

extremely important as long as qualité endogamy is preserved. Strong caste boundaries, such as those the grand nation have, tend to lead marriage choices away from the village because of the restricted possibilities and of the wish to use caste for manipulative purposes, whereas looser boundaries, as those within the unspecified ti nation category, allow choice to operate within a narrower radius, thus strengthening the links between qualité members in these villages.

Marriage choices among Telugus and North Indians can thus be summarised as follows:

	VILLAGE	CONTIGUOUS VILLAGE	FAR AWAY VILLAGE
Telugus	– Intra familial marriages – Close affinal bonds	– Previous acquaintance ease of communication and access	– Numerical predominance strong organisation of qualité
North Indians	– 'Love marriages' – Exactly corresponding castes	– Similarity of caste and status – Previous acquaintance	– Similarity of caste for grand nation – Mobility

Chart No.2: Marriage choices among Telugus and North Indians

Although the bases of choice are different for each group, they tend to establish links with qualité members both within and outside the village, thus serving to maintain internal cohesion and to widen the sphere of ethnic relations across village boundaries. Marriage is thus the principal way of crossing the closed-in village context and creates a network of qualité relations that transcends its bounds.

(ii) The internal network of qualité

In the village, although the neighbourhood set is meant to fulfill duties of cooperation and assistance towards each of its members, in fact those duties very often fall back onto qualité or kin members. They form part of the'codes for conduct' pertaining to ascriptive identities, and which are borrowed in the context of non-moral solidarities; but the involvement between people of the same qualité is far deeper than between non-qualité neighbours. In fact, the importance of the qualité bond can be seen precisely in moments of

crisis; in general, serious conflict within a family is too private
to be expressed to non-qualité members and is solved within the qualité
group.

One Telugu woman had a son who had been a dutiful and hard
working one until he became involved with a Tamil woman
staying at the time in the village. The woman was single
and lived with her mother, and she tried, according to the
Telugu woman, to induce her son to move in with her. He
started to neglect his own home, stopped giving money to
his mother, and spent more and more time with the Tamil
woman. The Telugu woman is convinced that the Tamil one had
used some kind of witchcraft to change her son. One day,
the son did not come back home, and a neighbour of the Tamil
woman came to warn the Telugu woman that something had
happened to her son. They both ran to the Tamil woman's
place and discovered that the son was dead, having apparently
been poisoned. The Telugu woman became convinced that the
Tamil woman and her mother had poisoned her son. She first
went to see a Telugu man called Kisna, who had a car, and
both went to elicit the help of her brother's father-in-law,
Renga. All three went to the Plaine Magnien police station
where there was a Telugu policeman called Gopal, whom they
called upon to investigate the case. Gopal came straight
away and made the necessary inquiries, but when the case
went to court, the Tamil woman was not indicted through lack
of conclusive proof. The Telugu woman said that she had
bribed the police in order to win her case.

In this case, the Telugu woman did not call upon her neighbours for help,
but upon qualité members who had some form of authority or some specific
asset which they could put at her disposal because of the duty linking
them. Whether it was the man owning a car, the man linked affinally to
her, or the policeman whom she did not know personally, all had to
become involved in the case since they were bound by the same circle,
and the matter was too serious to involve non-qualité people. The fact
that the woman who had allegedly poisoned her son was a Tamil made it
easier for her to accuse her of witchcraft, of having loose morals, and
finally of having bribed the police. After this case, the Tamil woman
and her mother left the village.

In another case where a Telugu woman was said to be having extra-marital
affairs, people gossiped about her, but a North Indian man told me that
he could not interfere, because it was the duty of her own qualité to
tell her husband of the fact and to try and get her back on the right
road. He actually spoke to one of her kin-members and told him to try

and resolve the matter. The people thus know implicitly when they are en
entitled to interfere and when they are not. Neighbourly interference
is restricted to matters that are not strictly confidential, to external
matters mainly; when it comes to deeper moral conflicts and issues, the
neighbour knows that he is not entitled to participate, and help must
come from the level of qualité solidarity. In the case of E and T
(see p.126/7), the neighbours did not interfere in the dispute because
it was between two Telugus. Non-qualité people believe that, however
deep the cause of dispute, it is always possible for the qualité
allegiance to prevail or to solve the dispute eventually, although this
is frequently not the case in reality. If they have taken sides, then
their position would be awkward when the two parties came together again.
They see qualité disputes as being similar to kin disputes. They are
temporary hostilities that will never break up the deeper order of
allegiance, whereas across qualité groups, there is no such deeper moral
bond to transcend causes of dispute or to prevent permanent disruption
of relations. The people themselves acknowledge the *moral* quality of
qualité solidarity.

> A Telugu woman said that once she had been to a village where
> she did not know anybody, and she got very hungry. She went into
> a shop and told the shopkeeper, a North Indian woman, that she
> was hungry, but that she had very little money on her. The
> North Indian women insisted that she should come into the house
> and partake in their lunch. The Telugu woman was obliged to
> accept, but she said that, in spite of the North Indian woman's
> kindness, she felt a deep reluctance to eat in a house that
> belonged to a different qualité. She felt very grateful that
> a non-qualité person should have shown such kindness to her,
> but this did not make commensality easier.

Thus, Telugus and North Indians say that there cannot be restrictions
of food between them because they eat the same thing, but in fact these
restrictions do operate very strongly, not on the basis of what they
eat, but on the basis of a difference between the people eating together
themselves, a difference of qualité. Between groups that are more
distant from each other, the prohibition on commensality is expressed
in stronger terms of 'repugnance' *(délicat)*.

Qualité thus operates at a deeper level than other forms of solidarity,
partly because of its nature as a relationship and as an order of being,
and partly because any open expression of it would be interpreted as

contradicting the village norms of non-ethnic solidarity. This makes
it both more covert and stronger than the latter. There is also an
implicit evaluation of the depth of involvement needed, and where moral
as well as effective solidarity is needed, qualité supersedes other
forms of solidarity. For this reason, the use of the word as an
expression of a bond is charged with symbolical notions of relatedness
or kind. Kinship and qualité are expressed in the same terms in Trois
Boutiques because people see the latter as an extension of the former.
The same codes for conduct are involved, as well as similar moral bonds.
Qualité members often act as a control group over kin-groups when the
latter are involved in intra-familial conflict. Among North Indians,
there are less extensive kinship links within the village – apart from
the immediate consanguineal ties – because of village-exogamy, so that
the qualité group is the predominant order of moral solidarity. People
who fail to fulfill the qualité duties are strongly condemned, since
the flouting of the duty is as serious as the duty itself. One young
unemployed man blamed members of his qualité for his status as an
unemployed, because those who have "arrived" – i.e. who have been
upwardly mobile – were not willing to help him out. He said that he
did all he could to help people reach the top, but when they got there
they would not do anything to help him. The duty of patronage of
qualité members is strongly felt outside the labouring sphere – where
it can be negatively evaluated as 'protection' – and people tend to
rely on it to obtain jobs outside the village. A money-lender called
Mondron was criticised by most North Indians in the village because by
lending money to some Muslims who wanted to start a business in Plaine
Magnien, he enabled them to become richer and to have a flourishing
retail shop there. Instead of helping a member of his own qualité to
improve his situation, Mondron helped a Muslim, and this was considered
to be paramount to an act of treason by the North Indians.

In fact, qualité duties often seem to conflict with the norms of
equality of the village collectivity and with ideas of non-personnel
behaviour and mobility, since qualité patronage is positively evaluated
and rules of privacy are adhered to as far as qualité is concerned.
The roots of ethnic polarisation can thus be seen to be laid even at
this level where ethnicity is muted and covertly expressed. Because
there are implicit rules as to when neighbourliness and village codes

operate, and when qualité codes operate, they do not actually induce
real conflict and can be operative in the village context at different
levels. The qualité bond is charged with an emotional significance
which the neighbourhood tie does not possess, and the neighbourhood
tie is allowed to express overtly a solidarity which the qualité bond
expresses only internally and implicitly.

Qualité is often expressed in terms of common blood or real kinship -
while the neighbourhood link is expressed as pseudo-kinship -, so that
it is clearly placed on the same level as blood and kinship in being a
relation of substance between people. It thus does not have to be
actively separative at this level, and can be maintained through
marriage and through interpersonal relationships which serve to
transfer the qualité and to preserve it through the duties binding
people together. The relation between kinship and qualité is also
expressed by the use of the word *propre* as a qualification. *Propre*
is used in relation to kin, blood and qualité with the meaning of 'own'.
(It could perhaps be translated as 'untainted' or 'unadulterated' in
relation to blood, since it means a blood link that is of the strongest
order, i. e. between parents and children, siblings, etc., as we shall
see in Chapter six). Used in relation to qualité, it acts as an
intensifier of the link, so that the bond becomes of the highest moral
order, and allows nothing to weaken it. In this sense, the qualité
link is allowed to supersede the village values of non-personnel and
the negative evaluation of protection, since behaviour relating propre
qualité members is meant to be characterised by altruism and cannot be
qualified as pertaining to self-interest. By placing qualité on the
same level as kinship and blood and caste in the order of relations
available to the villagers, one is justifying one's adherence to a
stronger solidarity group than the village collectivity; it becomes an
immutable relation which one is born into, and which encompasses the
whole identity of a person. It is thus not reducible to any specific
components such as religion, region of origin etc., but includes all
those, and incorporates them into the whole notion of identity. It is
in this sense a highly subjective notion of commonness rather than an
objective notion of relatedness. One cannot abstract the qualité from
the person, in the same way as one cannot change the blood of a person.
Even though it cannot operate in Trois Boutiques as an overtly divisive

factor, it cannot be weakened or denied as an ascriptive factor. Qualité does not have a meaning of separation or rallying force as words like *communauté* or *nation* have; it is simply an expression of an order of being which cannot be separated from the personality of the individual. It is a 'born into' category, which creates its own underlying compartmentalisation of the village community that may lead on to a more overt form of separation in different social situations, as we shall see in the case of Plaine Magnien.

The following comments will help to elucidate the concept of qualité:

- A Telugu woman whose poultry had been stolen: "I am surrounded by North Indians, this is why it happened. If it had been my propre qualité, it would not have happened".

- A Telugu man who was reluctant to speak to a Muslim police inspector in Plaine Magnien about a personal matter: "He is not my qualité, how will he understand my problem?"

- A North Indian man talking about a mixed marriage: "They (the couple) have not been taught by their parents that they must marry their own qualité".

- A man comparing Europe and Mauritius: "In Europe, everyone has the same blood, is the same qualité. Here in Mauritius, we all have different bloods, how can we ever be united?"

These comments, chosen among a great number of similar ones using the term qualité, summarise its many meanings: as a *duty* which forbids immoral actions towards qualité-members, as a basis for *understanding*, as a basis for *endogamy*, and as a substantial 'blood' relationship.

Qualité, in that it is a subjective notion of self, appears in informal aspects of village life, never being overtly expressed as ethnicity, and remains an underlying form of ascription and allegiance which does not become organisational on a formal level. Sociétés, in so far as they are formed on the basis of ethnic groupings, can perhaps be seen as an extension of ethnicity to the formal level, but they are not agents of 'ethnicisation' and ethnic separation as yet, and remain a form of social and financial assistance which does not serve to intensify boundaries between the groups. In fact, sociétés have very different meanings depending on the context where they are found, and, as we shall see in the course of this study, can be a form of assistance to their members, (and in this sense remain passive representations of groups), a means of channelling ethnic allegiances and structuring the society on the basis of these allegiances (in which case they become active and organisational representations of groups), or they can be agents of cohesion and rallying forces which organise the groups into concrete action at higher levels, where they become active generators of group strategies.

(i) Sociétés

In Trois Boutiques, sociétés fit into the first order, i.e. passive representations of groups, which however do have a function as providers of help and assistance and as caretaking bodies of places of religious worship. There are two main sociétés in Trois Boutiques, one a Telugu société and the other an Arya Samaj société. The Telugu société is described by the Telugus as a *société l'église* – i.e. a temple society – which is in charge of the maintenance and upkeep of the temple and its priest, and which is also responsible for the recruitment of a Telugu teacher. It also gives small sums of money to each member when there is a wedding, a religious ceremony or a funeral in his/her home. Société members must also be ready to provide help to fellow-members in all these cases.

The main shortcoming of the Telugu société is that it has failed to provide a competent teacher through lack of funds, and the current *pussari* (the local priest), who has been serving the temple for the past

six years, also teaches children in his spare time. However, he is both illiterate in French and English and deaf, so that he is hardly able to teach Telugu to the children. Secondly, there never seem to be enough funds to provide financial assistance to the members, and they usually rely on their own means and on the help of their neighbours for their ceremonies, weddings etc. There are thus complaints against the société, and nobody seems to be willing to reorganise it. The President of the société is also a member of the Village Council, and as such, he is mistrusted by a number of people. Money matters are a constant source of conflict within the société, because the treasurers are always accused of swindling, and the members are not always willing to give their monthly contribution.

Further, there are alternative ways of obtaining the help which the société is meant to provide, from the sugar estate, for instance, and from neighbours or higher level sociétés. Since they do not function as upholders of ethnic interests in Trois Boutiques, the sociétés tend to be only partly effective, and persist because people always feel the need to belong to one, however inefficient it is. In fact, the majority of Telugus in Trois Boutiques belong to two different sociétés, to the Trois Boutiques one nominally, and to a higher level Telugu société such as the Andhra Maha Sabha or the Jyoti Maha Sabha.

A number of Telugus in the village, because of their dissatisfaction with the Telugu société have preferred to switch over to the Arya Samaj société. The Arya Samaj société has been in existence for a long time and found a large number of adherents in Trois Boutiques because of the predominance of low castes in the village. It is at least forty years old, and the leadership of the société is shared by a high caste (Babuji) man who also acts as priest, and a young man of unspecified caste who is very active in the société as well as in other social spheres, such as youth clubs. There is a hall where the Arya Samajis can meet for their prayers and meetings, and which also acts as *baitka* or meeting place for all the Hindus in Trois Boutiques. The société is also in charge of the baitka activities, which are nowadays mainly confined to language teaching. It has the same functions as any other société, i.e. it is a form of financial assistance, provider of specific material goods for ceremonies, and it is in charge of the place of worship and of its officiant and also runs language courses for children. The Telugus who

belong to the société stress the fact that they do not have to send
their children to the Hindi classes to belong to the société, and in
fact, they tend to attend the Telugu temple rather than the Arya Samaj
one. They thus belong to the société for the financial and material
assistance it provides, while using the Telugu temple for religious
purposes.

The North Indians themselves are neither staunch Arya Samajis nor
staunch Sanathanists. They belong to the Arya Samaj société mostly,
but do not shun the more traditional Sanathan practices. Those who do not
not follow strictly Arya Samaj practices attend the Telugus temple or
the Plaine Magnien Shivala. All the North Indians celebrate the
Shivratri, Shankranti and Divali festivals, whether they belong to the
Arya Samaj or not. They see the société as a social institution
mainly, and express the difference between the Arya Samaj and the
Sanathan sect as one of caste practices, i.e. the Arya Samaj being
against caste differentiation, while the Sanathan sect ascribes to it.

The two sociétés in Trois Boutiques do not divide the population clearly
into ethnic categories, mainly because the people do not see them
principally as representations of the group they belong to, but as
providers of social help. From the following mapping, one can see that
there is no one-to-one correspondence between group and société in Trois
Boutiques, but a certain amount of overlapping:

Telugus A   ⟶ Telugu société
(Orthodox)

Telugus B   ⟶ Telugu temple
(Less orthodox)

North Indians A   ⟶ Arya Samaj société
(Sanathans)

North Indians B   ⟶ Arya Samaj temple
(Arya Samajis)
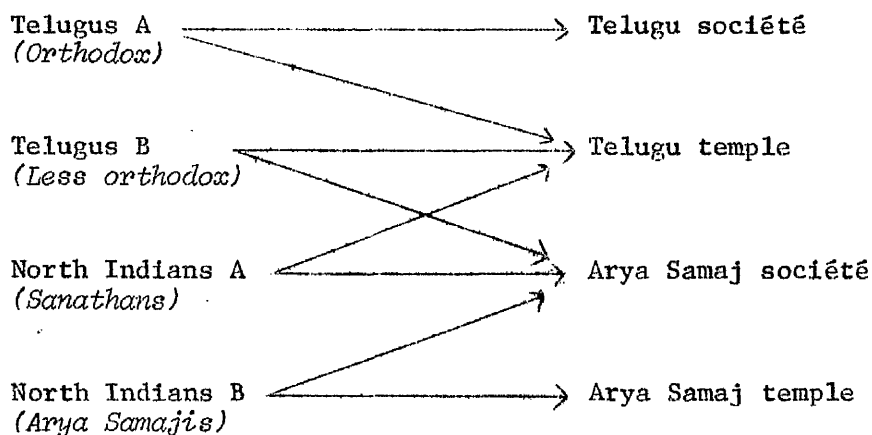
Diagram 4: mapping of ethnic groups and sociétés

(I have used the terms 'orthodox' and 'less orthodox' here to distinguish
between Telugus who belong to the Telugu société and the Telugu temple
and those who attend the temple but belong to the Arya Samaj société, not

because such a distinction exists overtly, but because the choice
between one or the other seems to indicate a more or less orthodox
way of thinking).

This overlapping is perhaps partly due to the internal make-up of the
groups. Ethnic separation between Telugus and North Indians has not
solidified to such an extent that they are prevented from following
in general the same religious practices. The *pujas*, or prayers held
every Friday in the temple are held for both groups, and the deities
worshipped in the temple, Ram, Krishna, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Shiva and
Hanuman, are all sanskritic deities who can be worshipped by any
Hindu. Special pujas are held for Shivratri, Shankranti, Ram and
Krishna Naomi, and during the month of *partasi* (September/October),
during which the Telugus hold fasts. There is thus no feeling that
the North Indians and Telugus have separate religions as such, only
that they occasionally have different ceremonies and pray in a
different language. This is consistent with the idea that the
difference at this level remains purely substantive and does not
engendersolid separations between the two groups in all spheres of
religious or social life. Boundaries have not yet emerged from the
sense of difference between the two groups, and for this reason,
adherence to sociétés and temple attendance are also reflective of
this lack of compartmentalisation.

The village thus seems to lag behind the trends present at higher
levels of society, where the groups are far more strongly differentiated
and boundaries ·have become more defined and sharply marked. Since
there are vertical links throughout the society which act as channels
of communication between members of each ethnic group, it is
predictable that these trends will eventually reach Trois Boutiques as
well. In fact, they have already started to do so in various ways, for
instance in the recent appearance of youth clubs with exclusive Telugu
or exclusive North Indians membership, and with the adherence of Telugus
to higher-level associations. It will take some time for these trends
to become clearer and more actively separative, since a lot will depend
on one group's impingement on the other, and it is this reactive element
which eventually leads to the crystallisation of boundaries. What is
more important is that, so far, Telugus and North Indians have not seen
each other as competing for various privileges and interests. Even on

the Village Council committee, there have always been Telugus as well
as North Indians to represent the population, and in this aspect of
formal organisation too, there is no opposition of these two groups as
yet. The opposition, where it appears, is between Hindus and Creoles,
as we shall see in the next section.

(ii) Village Council and factions

In order to understand the functioning of the Village Council in Trois
Boutiques, we must go back to the neighbourhood groups and see how they
emerge as factions with competing interest which become formalised
within the Village Council. In order that a form of grouping should
become factionalised, there must be distinct privileges and interests
involved, and in Trois Boutiques, these interests are linked, as I
have pointed out earlier, with the spatial outlay of the village in
the form of hamlets, and with the solidarity of the neighbourhood
group (see map no.2 p.66).

These hamlets, Beau-Fond, Carreau, Lapaille and Trois Boutiques are
usually those that benefit the most from the Village Council, because
the leaders come from those hamlets, and their population has more
manipulative power, in terms of votes and neighbourly pressure over
the leaders, than people from more remote hamlets. The factionalisation
of the Village Council is thus concentrated in these hamlets which have
polarised,in Village Council matters, into two neighbourhoods. Beau
Fond contains, as I mentioned earlier, slightly more prosperous villagers
than the other hamlets, and the main shop in the village, the Village
Hall itself, the Village Market (so far unoperative) and the newly-
built Community Centre can all be found in Beau Fond and in the lower
part of Trois Boutiques hamlet, adjacent to Beau Fond. Carreau Lapaille
is further from the main road, part of it contiguous to Beau Fond, and
part to Trois Boutiques hamlet. The latter in turn spreads out for
about half a mile along the main road to L'Escalier village, so that
its upper part is quite far from Beau Fond. The fact that most
amenities are concentrated in Beau Fond means that people from the lower
part of Trois Boutiques, from part of Carreau Lapaille and from Beau
Fond itself have easy access to them, while the others have to walk
quite a long way to make use of them. Further, there is the feeling
that the Beau Fond people are being given more favours than the others,

and it would have been more fair to place the various amenities in
different areas so that each area could have access to at least one
of them. This is the real cause of the resentment of the people, and
this has led to a conflict between those with access to the amenities,
or the lower part of central Trois Boutiques, and those who do not, the
upper part of the village, which are simply called *en-bas* (lower) and
la-haut (upper) by the people.

The rivalry of the two neighbourhoods on the basis of different
privileges has led the people to follow two political leaders. By
coincidence - or perhaps not so fortuitously after all - the leaders
of each neighbourhood are first cousins, whom we shall name Ram and
Lakshman. The *en-bas* leader, Ram is slightly older than his cousin,
the *la-haut* leader, Lakshman, and has been a leader and a member
of the Village Council for a longer period. He is resolutely pro-
Government and his followers are thus seen as being for the Goverment
as well. Lakshman is younger and apparently more **hot-headed** than Ram
and described by his enemies as being a trouble-maker. He was
originally a member of the National Opposition Party, but split from
it later on to run independently for the general elections in 1976.
He was not elected, but he gained quite a number of followers from
la-haut, and when he fought for the Village Council elections, he
was elected President and his followers were also elected as a majority
on the Executive Committee. Ram came back on to the committee as a
nominated member, along with two of his followers. (The executive
committee is made up of twelve members, nine elected and three
nominated). Since then, most decisions on the Village Council have
seen the constant opposition of the two factions, divided on the basis
of (a) neighbourhood allegiance, (b) leadership and (c) political
affiliation to a national party. The *en-bas* population say that
Lakshman won the elections through the intimidating manoeuvres of his
henchmen *(tappeurs)* and the *la-haut* population say that Ram is a
protégé of the Trois Boutiques MP and of the Government, which was why
he was nominated on the Village Council even though he had not been
elected. Recently, protests were expressed over the installation of
the public phone-booth in Lakshman's yard, and over the transfer of
the bus-stop from *la-haut* to *en-bas.*

The polarisation and opposition of the two factions is constant and
repeatedly expressed in Village Council matters. Indeed, the emnity
of the two cousins is expressed at each meeting in most strong terms,
and it is to be wondered whether it is not in fact a show rather than
a real hostility, since their opposed leadership has in fact succeeded
in securing considerable privileges to their family.

Although there are elections every three years, which are fought very
much like general elections, there is a change of chairmanship every
year, in order to give each ethnic group the opportunity to chair the
Council Committee. This applies only to Hindus in general and to
Creoles, for North Indians and Telugus are not considered as separate
groups. However, there is an implicit rule that there must be at
least two Telugus on the Village Council in order to defend the interests
of the Telugus. The President of the Telugu society is an elected
member, belonging to Lakshman's party. This year, a member of the
'General Population', or Creole, was supposed to obtain the chairmanship.
Under the cover of factional wrangling, however, a very clever device
was used in order to avoid giving the chairmanship to a Creole. At the
general meeting where a Creole chairman was supposed to be voted in
amiably, Lakshman proposed a young man, Francis, from Le Bouchon as the
next chairman. His candidature was at first accepted, but the Secretary
of the Village Councils' Board, who was there to supervise the meeting,
remarked that Francis had not attended meetings for over six months, and
that he was therefore not entitled to sit for chairmanship, and should
even be eradicated from the Committee on grounds of absence. Lakshman
objected that if there had been any cause for complaint, someone should
have proposed a vote of censure, and since nobody had complained, they
could not now object to Francis' candidature. Ram and his group started
to argue that someone who had not shown the slightest interest in the
running of the Village Council could not be elected as Chairman, and the
three 'nominees' including Ram, duly raised a vote of censure against
Francis. This led to another case of verbal assault between the two
cousins, until the Secretary of the Board said that he could not take any
decision, not being advised over the matter, and suggested that they
should postpone the voting. The majority faction then decided to walk
out and to discuss the matter outside, and they all went out of the room.

After about ten minutes, they came back and said that, since there
was such adamant opposition against Francis from the nominees, they
had decided to withdraw his candidature and submit that of another
member, called Karan, from Carreau Accacia. This was accepted, and
Karan was voted in as the Chairman. Another Creole was voted in as
vice-chairman, which was intended to safeguard the Creoles' feelings.
(Why the latter had not been proposed as a replacement for Francis,
instead of Karan is significant in the light of the whole strategy).
A member of the *la-haut* faction then said aloud to Francis: "when
you go back to Le Bouchon, tell the people there that we did everything
we could to get you elected, but because of the nominees' objections,
you were not elected".

The strategy involved in this election is both ingenious and interesting.
First, because of the previous riots between Hindus and Creoles, the
Hindus of Trois Boutiques would never accept a Creole as Village Council
Chairman; secondly because of the principle of ethnic equality, a Creole
should be given the chance to become Chairman; third, it was in the
interest of the majority faction to preserve the allegiance of the
Creoles because their votes also counted at the Village Council elections.
These were conflicting considerations which had somehow to be resolved.
The strategy of the elected party was thus to choose a Creole who was
not eligible as Chairman, who would not be aware of the regulations,
and who would have enough confidence in the faction not to doubt its
motives. It was predictable (or perhaps previously arranged between
the two cousins) that the nominees would object to Francis' candidature,
and a Hindu could then be voted in without damaging the reputation of
the majority faction from the Creoles' point of view. Eventually, no
one could accuse anyone on the Committee of ethnic discrimination, since
the objection to Francis' candidature was purely on legal grounds.

Thus, although factional wrangling is given overt expression in the
Village Council, a far more insidious kind of manipulation simultaneously
takes place in an underhand way. The opposition of Hindus and Creoles
is far stronger than any factional separation among the Hindus themselves,
and it is evident that the opposition of the two cousins and that of
the *la-haut* and *en-bas* parts of Trois Boutiques does not override
that between Hindus and Creoles. If a Creole had been voted in as

Chairman, it is probable that both neighbourhoods would cohere in their protests, and Ram and Lakshman would become the butt of their resentment for letting a Creole be elected. Thus, even if Ram played the 'bad' role as a nominee, the result was profitable to him as well. In fact, Lakshman himself is well aware of the amount of manipulation and what he himself calls 'brainwashing' that go with political activities. His father had been an active opponent of Creoles during the riots, and he feels that he has to face a harder task in obtaining the votes of the Creoles because of this. He must therefore be particularly careful in not hurting their feelings while preserving the allegiance of the Hindus.

The Village Council can be seen as an arena where leadership is fought over and factionalisation is overtly expressed; it is ineffectual as far as social change or concrete improvements are concerned, first because the leaders are not only manipulators, but are also subjected to the manipulation of their neighbours, kin, friends and qualité, and second because the allowance they obtain in order to run the Village Council is about 33 cents per head per year. As a form of formal organisation, it expresses very well the different types of allegiances and rivalries that exist in the village. The present leaders are not figures of prestige, but are recruited mainly from a labouring background, apart from Lakshman who is moderately educated. This makes them even more open to manipulation, since people feel that they owe them a debt for having been elected to the Village Council.

The factions can be seen as being opposed on several grounds, (neighbourhood, leadership, political affiliation), but they are temporary ones, and other allegiances on grounds of occupation, status etc. may form and dissolve at different times within the Village Council. There is thus no permanent polarisation at this level, in particular because the leaders themselves are aware of the manipulative power inherent in the interplay of several allegiances, and are constantly using them to win over different sections of the population. Here too, there is the management of one's social personality, overt in the case of neighbourhood affiliation, labouring affiliation and political affiliation, and covert in the case of ethnic membership.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have looked at Trois Boutiques village and tried to identify the various orders of solidarity that exist at the informal level, and the bases of organisation that emerge at the formal level. One of the primary areas of solidarity is the labouring sphere, since 90% of the working population in Trois Boutiques is engaged in agricultural occupations, primarily as labourers. I have used C. Jayawardena's analysis of solidarity and conflict in a Guianese plantation as a comparative viewpoint, and attempted to show that the form of "comradeship" that exists between labourers is more based on a transactional element than on a principle of sharing. There is an idiom of equality which governs their relationships, and within which differences of status and attempts at mobility are still articulated without disrupting the overall "ideology". In the same way, neighbourhood solidarity can be seen as a form of solidarity that governs a large part of social relations in the village. It is expressed in terms of pseudo-kinship and non-personnel behaviour, and is sustained by the overall balance between the gestures and cooperative acts accomplished by each neighbour, and which are aimed at preserving a feeling of equality and solidarity between the neighbours. Whenever this balance is disrupted, conflict may occur, and when there is an alleged superiority of one neighbour over the other, this conflict may become either a form of control, obliging the 'superior' neighbour to engage in acts of reparation and denial of his superiority, or else result in the estrangement of the neighbours, one of them adopting personnel behaviour.

These forms of solidarity can be seen as non-moral and non-enduring ones, enforced by a set of norms in the bounded arena where they operate. The labouring sphere is delineated by an occupation/status boundary, and the motivations of the labourers are geared towards maintaining all the others within these boundaries while endeavouring to achieve their own mobility. In the same way, the neighbourhood group is a spatial boundary which can be factionalised where different interests are involved, and the Village Council in particular is an arena where neighbourhood based factions are seen to emerge and are overtly expressed. However, these allegiances are neither stable nor permanent enough to lead to the emergence of actual groups at other levels of society, and they are not

profound enough to become translated as orders of identification.
They do not succeed in preventing ethnicity from being expressed in
the village,although its expression is generally covert, muted, and
informal at this level. This is basically because ethnicity in its
'qualitative' aspect belongs to a different order from the other types
of solidarity, and can be seen more as an ascriptive sense of kind,
similar in nature to kinship, than as an organisational feature. It
is at the root of endogamy, (although the differences of qualité between
the groups can be seen as more or less distancing, therefore making
certain types of inter-group marriages less objectionable than others),
and marriage becomes a primary perpetuating element, with each group
adhering to different components of identity in its marriage choices.
In Trois Boutiques, marriage links serve to extend qualité links to
other nearby villages in an informal form of ethnic recruitment and
organisation. Qualité also prescribes the duty of help in times of
crisis, when the conflict or the problem involved are too private and
too deep to involve any non-qualité people. It then displaces the
overt function of neighbourly cooperation and emerges as a stronger
bond than the former, operating at an underlying level.

As an order of identification, it is seen by the villagers as an intense
substantive link symbolised by common blood. The ideological notions
of kinship and blood are constantly used as attributes to the notion of
qualité, and the term *propre*, which is used in conjunction with kin
and blood in order to denote the closest set of relations with ego,, is
also used in conjunction with qualité as an intensifier, in order to
express its immutability.

In Trois Boutiques, ethnicity does not appear as an element of active
separation between North Indians and Telugus. They tend to use the
same temple, and Telugus can choose to belong to the Arya Samaj société
instead of to the Telugu one. On a surface level, the village society
seems to be more structured in terms of hamlets, neighbourhoods and work
community than in terms of ethnicity. This is partly due to the nature
of the two groups involved in close interaction, i.e. Telugus and North
Indians, since they are less differentiated at the village level than

other groups, and partly to the socio-economic environment which has a more monolithic class structure, fewer avenues of mobility, and more traditional norms restraining mobility and separation. The village also lags behind higher-level societal trends, which are undergoing a conscious process of differentiation and boundary strengthening, as we shall see in Part Two. However, the fact that there is already a number of recently formed youth clubs which have exclusive Telugu or North Indians membership, and the fact that a number of Telugus also adhere to higher level sociétés, means that these trends are also slowly reaching the village, and when the two groups will start seeing each other as competing ones – whether at local or at national level – it is predictable that ethnicity will then emerge as an overtly organisational factor. At the moment, it pertains to the order of substance, of qualité, and can be seen as being "soft" ethnicity. In the next chapter, we will look at Plaine Magnien village, where a different set of values, and composition of groups, has created a stronger and "harder" form of ethnic compartmentalisation. It will then be seen that, within a small geographical area, access to mobility and a more open-ended socio-economic environment can give rise to a completely different configuration of ethnic relations.

CHAPTER FOUR
SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ETHNIC POLARISATION IN PLAINE MAGNIEN

INTRODUCTION

Plaine Magnien as a village is considered to be separate from Trois
Boutiques. However, since the two villages are contiguous, and are
linked by several social and economic factors, they can in fact, for
the purposes of study, be seen within a single spatial dimension where
both the contrasts and the continuities are interrelated.

As we have mentioned in Chapter Two, Trois Boutiques acts partly as a
satellite village to Plaine Magnien, making use of the latter's social
and commercial amenities such as the Civil Status Office, the Dispensary,
the Police Station, the Shivala, as well as the supermarkets, chemists's
shops and taxi-service. The cultivated plots owned by people of both
villages are found in the same expanse of land surrounding the two
villages. There are kinship and marriage links between Hindus of both
villages, who frequently intermarry. Finally, the Muslims of Trois
Boutiques migrated towards Plaine Magnien mainly, because of the presence
there of two Mosques and their madrassas and of a more organised Muslim
community. Thus, an old Muslim couple who had remained in Trois Boutiques
through attachment to the place although their children had all moved to
Plaine Magnien, were finally considering moving as well: "when we die,
there will be people there to mourn us and the Mosque will be nearby, as
well as the cemetery", they said. The importance of identity was thus
felt by them primarily in relation to death and the funeral, although
the Hindus of Trois Boutiques had frequently shown their hostility towards
the Muslims. In spite of this hostility, they knew that the whole village
would attend the funeral as they are used to; but it was more important
for them to be among their own qualité and to be surrounded by the
tangible symbols of their identity, as this constituted the fundamental
basis of their social existence.

The links which exist between Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien make the
contrasts even more striking. First, from the monolithic class structure
existing in Trois Boutiques, where mobility is restricted through an overt
egalitarian ideology, we move on to a stratified society, where mobility
is overt and has given rise to three separate class strata. This is
because there has been a greater emphasis, in Plaine Magnien, on private

entrepreneurship and familial ventures, especially because mobility
had a positive value. Secondly, there has been a concomitant change
in *values*, deriving from a preoccupation with 'middle-class' standards
and a desire by the mobility-conscious people to separate themselves
from the values held by the labouring-stratum; the *non-personnel* values
operative in Trois Boutiques, which emphasise the homogeneity of class,
thus become in Plaine Magnien, under the dual impetus of mobility and
stratification, personnel values. The latter further serve to enhance the
separativeness inherent in Plaine Magnien society, in particular between
Hindus and Muslims who form, in this situation, two distinct corporate
groups.

These two groups attempt to maintain their own distinctiveness as much
as possible, both on an economic level, where they rely on family resources
to achieve mobility and use the commercial facilities controlled by their
own group, and on a religious and political level, where they make visible
their separate identities and use them as a basis for factionalisation.
On   an informal level, separativeness is articulated in terms of middle-
class *personnel* values rather than ethnic identity; and on a formal level,
the religious codes for conduct which embody the group's distinctiveness
allow ethnic identity to emerge as an overt form of organisation, and to
become, in opposition with Trois Boutiques, "hard ethnicity". The Telugu
group, which is not numerous in Plaine Magnien,   shows little
distinctiveness from the North Indian group, and, on the formal level, both
groups cohere as Hindus in opposition with the Muslims.

Section One deals with economic mobility and how people use such assets
as family labour, renting and ownership of land for cultivation as well as
ethnic patronage in achieving their mobility, while Section Two deals
with the organisational aspects of ethnicity in the village sphere, namely
in religious participation and in société activities, and finally with
the polarisation of the two groups in the context of the Village Council
and local-level politics.

SECTION ONE: MOBILITY, CLASS AND VALUES

The small planters in Mauritian villages can be seen as the bridge between the rural environment and the urban environment in terms of occupation and values. In terms of occupation, they are rural in that they are still predominantly agricultural. In terms of values, strategies and orientation, they are urban, in that they are constantly striving for a middle-class status, not only through the education of their children, but also through their way of life and paths of mobility. In this section, I want to look at the category of small planters and entrepreneurs in Plaine Magnien as initiators of change in the process of mobility, and as forming a distinct, though heterogenous, socio-economic category in the class stratification of the village.

(i) Small planters and entrepreneurs, family labour, paths of mobility

Sugar cane cultivation in Mauritius is neatly divided into two categories of cultivators: the first category includes the sugar estates, which incorporate all miller-planters and very large plantation-owners, and the second category includes all independent planters who do not run mills (see Chapter two, Section Three).

Within this second category, the category of small planters owning less than 10 arpents owned in 1974, 22.6% of cultivated land in Mauritius (Central Statistical Office). The small planters thus have a large share in the island's economy, and represent an important sub-category of independent cultivators which is almost entirely rural. Yet, the majority of independent planters own holdings that range between 0.5 and 2.5 arpents, which seems minimal considering the cane tonnage of approximately 25-30 tons per arpent. People who have achieved mobility from the labouring sphere have in fact done so through land, which indicates that there is a possibility of acceding to a higher socio-economic stratum through small-scale cultivation, provided that there are appropriate resources to exploit the land.

The land owned by the small planters in Plaine Magnien is mainly inherited land which has been parcelled out once or twice already between successive generations of heirs. There have been successive *morcellement* (or sale of land in small holdings) on the sugar estates in Mauritius which have

allowed people to acquire, from time to time, small amounts of land,
in particular at times of low sugar prices or at times when land value
was depreciating. Among the Indian villagers, the acquisition of land,
and of property in general, was of utmost importance both as a means of
mobility and as a means of insurance against more difficult times. The
land bought by villagers was characteristically in small holdings, and
for this reason, their children inherited eventually the fractions of
acres that they cultivate today. The economic variables involved in
the exploitation of small holdings are too complex to go into, and do not
fall within the compass of this thesis. I only want here to consider a
few of the strategies and assets used by some of the small planters and
cultivators in improving their economic conditions.

One of the main assets available to and used by the small planters and
cultivators is family labour, along with secondary occupations and certain
forms of patronage. In fact, the relation between small holdings and
family labour is immediately apparent, since a person with two acres of
land to cultivate may find it difficult to do so on his or her own, and
not financially viable to employ people to cultivate them. The advantage
of having sons used to labouring work is obvious, since, apart from the
husband-wife team, it is the nearest source of unremunerated labour which
can be used at any time of the day and year. The first step towards
financial mobility is thus to be prepared to work one's land oneself,
along with members of one's family.

The different types of joint families which I have identified in Plaine
Magnien offer different possibilities for financial improvement. They
can be classified on the following three bases: (a) sharing of incomes
(or part of them) from same or separate occupations, (b) sharing of
labour , and (c) sharing of hearths. All three bases are the result of
economic choices (although sharing of hearths is also subjected to
social and psychological pressure such as caste separation and avoidance
of intra-familial conflict). There are of course other variations
which are possible if one takes into account such factors as religious
observance, shared family responsibilities, etc. In this classification,

set out below in table form, I am looking mainly at the economic impulses which generate the different family-types.

SHARED HEARTHS	SEPARATE HEARTHS
TYPE A:Pool incomes from separate occupations	TYPE D:Pool part of income from separate occupations
TYPE B:Pool labour and part of incomes from separate occupations	TYPE E:Pool labour only, keep incomes separate
TYPE C:Pool labour and incomes from same occupation	TYPE F:Pool labour and part of of incomes from same occupation

Table 6: Variations on joint family in Plaine Magnien, based on shared/separate hearths, pooling of incomes from separate occupation/from same occupation, pooling of labour

In Plaine Magnien, type A families are either landless ones in which mobility is striven for through occupation mainly or belong to the labouring sphere still and are more hemmed in by their socio-economic status and by the lack of avenues for mobility as landless labourers.

In the *cité* there are several families who live jointly because they do not have enough money to be able to live on their own, and have to rely on labouring work only for subsistence. One Muslim man has two sons living with him, both married and only partly employed as labourers during the crop season. The second son's wife has just had a baby and has two older children going to school. The whole family live in a cité house, which has one common-room, two bedrooms and one tiny kitchen. They live mainly on the shared wages of the father and mother as labourers, and the part-time wages of the sons. One of the sons is trying to get a job as a 'development worker' with the Government, which is a work-scheme designed to recruit unemployed people for manual work.

In a second case, the family is a high caste North Indian one where the father is a sardar and the son an employed technician on the sugar estate. They already live in a concrete house with the son's wife and their children, and for them, mobility into the middle stratum is already achieved, mainly because of the father's former prosperity as a sardar, which allowed him to build his house and to send his son to school. They now have different occupations, but share resources and kitchen. The father is also characteristically active as a member of the Sanathan société.

The Type B and E families are those who are more likely to achieve
mobility from the labouring sphere into the middle stratum. In the
labouring sphere, some families own a little land or can, by pooling
part of their incomes, dispose of enough cash to rent land from the
estate for vegetable cultivation. The risk factors involved in
vegetable cultivation are numerous, since the latter depends upon
the weather, prices on the market and a maturing time that should not
exceed the three-month period allocated by the sugar estate. It is
thus not easy for labourers to go into vegetable cultivation, even
though the estate does put at the disposal of its employees 400-500
arpents of land for renting each year. Some may make a very big
profit which can be used for a major investment in land or in the house,
but for others, it can just mean an extra cash in the house which will
go towards daily expenses, or even a heavy loss for which heavy debts will
will have to be incurred.

> A labourer from Plaine Magnien, who has four children with his
> eldest daughter attending secondary-school, tried his hand at
> vegetable cultivation for the first time in 1980. He decided
> to have a kind of gourd on one arpent which he rented from the
> estate, mainly because it is easy to grow, not needing too much
> care, and also because it can be preserved for a long time
> before it is sold, so that one can wait for prices to rise
> before selling it. He spent Rs 1,600.00 in the course of
> cultivation, and harvested a very good crop of gourds. However,
> at the time of harvest, the prices were quite low, so he decided
> to keep them for a while. Not being experienced enough in
> cultivation, he did not realise that the gourd could be preserved
> for a long time only if there had been no fertilisers used. He
> finally had to sell them, and got about Rs 700.00 for them, i.e.
> 70 cents per gourd. He tends to blame the estate for most of
> his misfortunes, saying, for instance, that if the estate gave
> them land to cultivate at more appropriate times, they would be
> able to make more money from it, but the times at which land
> was available were not particularly good for several types of
> vegetables.

In fact, most people see vegetable cultivation as a gamble, a risk-
business; "it is like playing at cards", they say, "one can win or
lose, it is a matter of pure luck". It is true that it has allowed
people to break out from the labouring stratum, but it has also set
others more firmly back into it. But through persistence and
perseverance, people do eventually manage to improve their situation
considerably in the long run.

In Plaine Magnien, the majority of small planters with very small holdings also belong to Type B, as well as sardars and labourers renting land from the estate. They are people who have land assets which induce the working members of the family to pool their labour, but these assets are too small to be the sole resources of the family, so that they still have to have second occupations. Cultivation in this case provides an extra-income which allows the family to improve its **standard** of living and to engage in activities that will go towards their social mobility.

> In one family, the eldest son is a police-sergeant, the second one a taxi-driver, and the third is unemployed. Their widowed mother used to work as a labourer, but is now too old for this. However, when there is work to be done on the one arpent of cane land which is taken care of by the unemployed son, she also participates and works on the land along with the other sons who come in at harvest times to help in the harvesting. They also rent land periodically from the sugar estate, and again, this is taken care of by the youngest son and is used for vegetable cultivation. The young wives do not go to the fields to participate in the harvest, but at home, they help in the packaging and sorting of the vegetables. The front part of their house is still in corrugated-iron, but an annexe is being built in concrete behind the house, and eventually, the front will be made in concrete as well.

> One sardar has cane on his small 3/4 arpent holding which he cultivates himself with his two sons, but he also rents land from the estate, and has profited so well from it that he has been able to build a storied concrete house and celebrate two of his children's weddings in a year. The way in which he achieved this was by renting land from the estate in his own name, which only entitled him to one or two acres, but he also got a number of labourers whom he had 'befriended' or 'protected' (i.e. favoured) in some way, to rent land from the estate in their own names and then hand it over to the sardar against a small sum of money. This was possible because the labourers do not all have the means to cultivate land, and they can by this means obtain a little extra cash. The sardar could then dispose of four to five acres of land yearly for cultivation, which meant that he could plant several vegetables and have a bigger crop. His strategic position as a sardar who had previously entered comradeship relations with labourers could then be used for his own advancement in the Plaine Magnien context, where he was not socially restricted in terms of mobility.

The Type C and F families are those who have reached a certain economic position which will allow them to consolidate and build on their mobility in other areas of social life after having secured their financial mobility. They use as social models the few families who belong to the higher stratum through having been land-owners for two or more

generations, as well as high-caste or high prestige families, and in turn, they are used as models by people in the process of achieving their mobility.

In terms of occupation, they are generally centred around a single, main entrepreneurial venture. This can be either land or a commercial entreprise. If it is engaged in cultivation, the family has to own above four arpents, since the land resource has to be large enough and profitable enough for the family to subsist entirely from it. It is an interesting feature of type C families that in some cases, the involvement of all the working members in land and cultivation is not entirely out of choice but out of obligation as well. Most families would like their sons to have a white collar job rather than work on land, even if land is more remunerative. In the case of one type C family, the eldest sons were not highly educated and had to work with their father on the land, but the youngest one was educated and destined to obtain a job with the Government. However, when he finished school, he could not get a job and stayed at home for a few months until he finally decided to drive his father's lorry. He now works on the lorry and has stopped looking for another job.

Land represents the stepping-stone whereby the type C families can consolidate and expand their entrepreneurial ventures. Since they dispose of a fairly large amount of land, they can engage in both cane and vegetable cultivation and maximise the profit in opposition to cane cultivation only. It also allows the people to reinvest their money in the land, by buying more land, for instance, or by having adequate fertilisation, regular planting of new cane, or by buying a lorry which will cut down on high transport costs and can be an added source of income, since it can be rented out to other planters. A large part of the economic viability of these enterprises hinges on the trustworthiness and efficiency – as well as the cheapness – of family labour, since it is not motivated by self-interest but by familial interest as is observed by Galbraith (1973: 57). The 'altruism' of kinship and ethnic solidarity can here be more effectively put to use in the economic sphere than it can in Trois Boutiques, where other forms of solidarity serve to restrain the internally 'protective' functions of the former.

The other way in which type C families can re-invest their money
is in commercial enterprises. One needs a good capital to be able
to start a business, and the main shops in Plaine Magnien, such as the
two hardware shops and the two chemists shops as well as some of the
smaller retail shops were all started after the family managed to save
some capital through cultivation. Two of the big retail shops were
however opened a number of years ago by leading higher-stratum members
of the Muslim group.

> One type C family started out with two acres of land inherited
> from the family-head's father. They cultivated cane on it and
> rented land from the estate to cultivate vegetables. Slowly,
> the owner started buying land little by little, so that he had
> half an acre in one place, three-quarters of an acre in another
> and so on. Nowadays, he has approximately seven acres in small
> holdings, on which with the help of his sons, he cultivates
> cane and interline vegetables, and he owns a truck as well. He
> has recently opened a hardware shop in a joint venture with his
> brother who has his own joint household.

In spite of having a labouring background, these families have broken
away from it by using various economic strategies. The family has
become the focal point in the villagers' economic enterprises, so
that there is more of an inward-orientation in their way of life than
an outward one towards the village community. All the families
described above exhibit different assets, and different stages of
mobility; but what they do have in common is their predominant
preoccupation with mobility. In this they will use all the resources
available to them, in particular those forms of solidarity that
prescribe mutual aid as part of the duty of the relationship, such as
kinship and ethnicity, as we shall see in the next sub-section.

(ii) Kinship and ethnic patronage

In Plaine Magnien, the preoccupation with individual and familial
mobility expressed in the choices governing the types of joint families
existing in the village, allows people to make full use of the patronage
possibilities involved in kinship and ethnic relations. This does not
have a manipulative basis but is mainly an externally manifested
expression of qualité duties binding all the relations circumscribed
within the 'propre' or substantial identity. Where, in Trois Boutiques,

- 166 -

the codes for conduct deriving from kinship and qualité identity served
mainly to help qualité-members in moments of need, in Plaine Magnien
these codes become more tangibly operative in day-to-day and economic
spheres. Thus, the kin group has to exhibit active participation and
cooperation in its members' enterprises, and the qualité members have
to patronise the ventures set up by a member. In Plaine Magnien, the
Muslims exhibit a stronger sense of patronage than the other groups,
particularly because they can make use of the wider kinship category
such as affines in their ventures. The North Indians, because they
ascribe in general to village-exogamy, and are not bound by close
ties with their affines (see for instance Chapter six, Section One),
cannot make use of these extended kin ties in the same way. For the
Muslims, however, if one member of the wider kin-group is successful
in a village, he can call upon any of his own or of his wife's kindred
to come and help if he does not have the necessary labour in the
closer family group. Also, as a minority-group, there is a tendency
for members of the group to cluster in certain villages only. The wide
kin-group represents a fund of labour and cooperation which can be
drawn from at any time, and this is often expressed as the primary
resource in any enterprise. "If you have your family behind you, you
are bound to succeed": this is a belief often reiterated in the context
of mobility. In fact, a successful business will eventually lead to
other members of the kin-group settling in the village with their
families, so that this is a form of recruitment and settlement of
kin and ethnic members. For instance, two brothers (mentioned above
as having Type C joint families), joined to open a hardware shop
while exploiting their land separately. When a sister got married,
she and her husband came to live in the village and participated in
the business. At the same time, the sister's husband exploited the
land she had inherited from her father and expanded it in the way
the brothers had. He also has two sons who work with him on the land.
The diagram on the next page will show the expansion of the family
property and the use of family-labour.

HANDS DOWN LAND

buy and drive truck

buy and exploit land

open hardware shop

exploit land

buy and exploit land

Transports other planters' cane

Transports cane (free)

suppl certa A enities

KEY

A Original land owner

B C D A's children & heirs

E D's husband from outside

W B & C's wives from outside

△ Sons

Diagram 5: Co-operative family venture
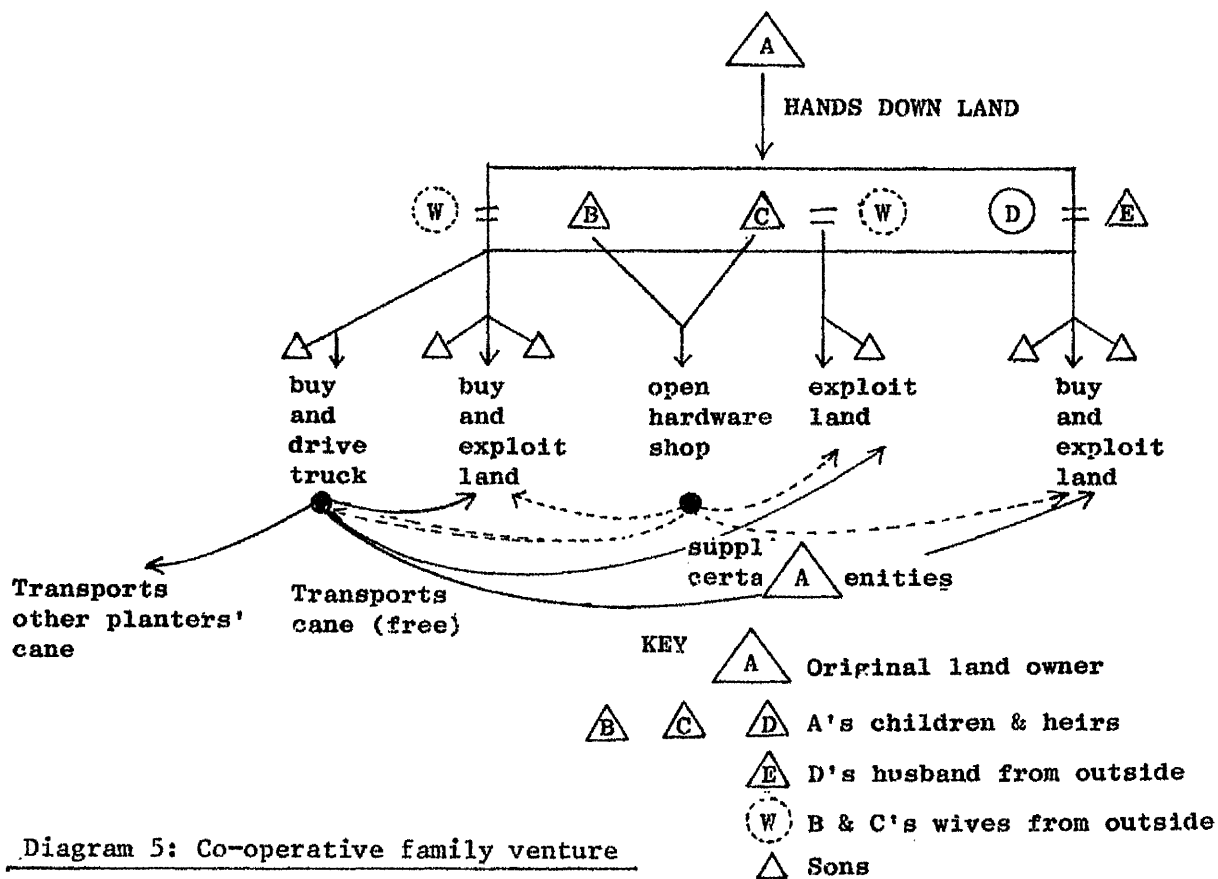
In the case of this kin-group, then, the original land was parcelled
out between three heirs. With the help of family labour, i.e. either
their sons, wives or husband, they managed to exploit the land and,
in B's and D's case, to buy more land. The truck served the dual
purpose of carrying cane for all three families of the kin-group and
of adding to the owner's income, since it could be rented out to other
planters to carry their canes. The hardware shop provided the spare
parts for the truck and furnished the family-members with the basic
amenities. (B, C and D had each their own joint household with their
children, but they lived in close proximity with each other). Thus,
although each of the original heirs lived separately and managed his/
her own business, the internal network of assistance and cooperation
remained.

The same duty also extends to the qualité-members in the village. When a
member of an ethnic group opens a shop in the village, other members are
bound by their qualité duty to give him their clientèle, even if they
have been using another shop before. Any economic venture rests heavily
on the availability of an ethnic clientèle, which acts as an insurance
of its viability. A Muslim would never consider opening a shop in Trois
Boutiques, for instance, since there are too few Muslims there to make
up a stable clientèle. There are no longer any binding credit-debt
relations between shopkeepers and their clients, but the ethnic basis

of patronage still constitutes a morally binding relation between them, and restricts choices as to where a person will start a business.

In fact, the whole pattern of settlement of Muslims in Plaine Magnien has been influenced by the existence, in the village, of a kind of group-infrastructure, i.e. all the necessary pre-requisites for an individual's or a family's integration into the village society through their group-membership. For instance, where in Trois Boutiques Muslims felt isolated and cornered into their little group, a person wishing to move to Plaine Magnien would know that he would find there an immediate nexus of relations through the société, the shop-owners, the Mosque and the whole arena of social life geared towards the ethnic group. A Muslim woman who once went to Trois Boutiques looking for a piece of land to buy, was told by a Hindu that it would be better for her to look in Plaine Magnien or L'Escalier, where there were more Muslims. The necessity to move into an already organised community is sharply felt, and in Plaine Magnien ethnic migration is even easier because the Muslims hold several resources such as land and commerce and are also well organised in terms of religious observance. In general, Muslim-owned land tends to be sold to Muslims. For instance, a man called Dodlah is engaged in a business of buying and selling land in small lots for residential purposes. Although this is a business enterprise, he also makes it a point to sell to Muslims only. This is not overtly discriminatory either, since Hindus would be reluctant to build a house in a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood, and Hindu land-owners also prefer to sell exclusively to Hindus. In this, however, the Hindus do not differentiate between North Indians and Telugus. At this level, the two groups do not form distinct interest groups competing for resources, but are merely differentiated by their qualité identity.

What this suggests is that the primary form of settlement and incorporation into Plaine Magnien is through the ethnic group. When the people describe the village, they compartmentalise it into Muslim sections and Hindu sections: for instance, the Dispensary Lane and Shivala Road, which are recent morcellement are predominantly Muslim while Bois d'Oiseaux is predominantly Creole and Cemetery Lane predominantly Hindu. The lower end of Shivala Road, furthest from the main road is occupied by a cluster of six Telugu households belonging

to a single kin-group. There is no 'institutionalised' separation
in the settlement procedure but the tendency to sell to one's ethnic
group mainly has created such a separation. In Plaine Magnien, neither
the occupational sphere, because of its diversity and individuality,
nor the neighbourhood sphere because of the transition to personnel
values, offer any alternative integrative framework for the individual.
The emergence of qualité 'protection' as an overt form of patronage
allows people to rely on it almost exclusively rather than on other bases
of assistance. People are intent upon achieving individual mobility,
but this mobility depends partly on the backing of the collectivity
behind it. Whereas in Trois Boutiques mobility is hindered as far as
possible by the village community, in Plaine Magnien it is given an
impulse by the ethnic collectivity, which is not bound any more by the
social and economic limitations of the plantation. The lack of
internal economic competition also serves to create a strong set of
linkages within the community.

> In the case of two truck-owners who were of the same qualité,
> there was an arrangement made that, should one truck not be
> able to complete its contract in the time required, the other
> truck would be brought in to help. If one truck broke down,
> the owner would give the other truck-owner's name as a possible
> replacement.

They thus 'protected' each other whenever possible, and, although they
might compete to obtain their clientèle, at a higher level this
competition gave way to a mutual 'protection' link. Further, truck-
owners in general also have their own cultivation, so that the trucks
are used to carry their own products and do not depend solely on outside
clientèle to be economically viable. This reduces the possibility of
disruptive competition between the owners. *Inter*-ethnic competition is
also very marked in this context, and there are frequent accusations
by members of each group that truck-owners of another group have set fire
to a land-owner's cane on purpose in order to be assigned the task of
cutting and transporting the cane very quickly to the mill.

> In the case of taxi-drivers, who are predominantly Muslims,
> ethnic 'protection' is highly regarded, and someone who has
> access to certain brokerage resources, such as knowing people
> who would help one obtain a taxi-licence easily, or who sell
> cheap cars, spare parts etc., will help others who do not
> have access to such resources. Young men who are starting as

taxi-drivers, and those who are applying for licenses rely
very heavily on the help of those who are already in the
occupation. This also operates when the taxi-drivers want
to obtain a licence to work at the airport.

Because of the high percentage of unemployment in the village, taxi-
driving is considered as a valuable 'resource', and inter-ethnic
competition is emphasised in this context.

Hindus tend to restrict their paths of mobility to the agricultural
sphere mainly, rather than commercial spheres. Their goals are more
oriented towards status mobility through the education of their
children, and financial mobility through agricultural work. One of
the ways in which financial advancement can be hampered is when their
children wish to move out of agriculture into low-paid white-collar
jobs. Agriculture still has negative connotations for most rural-
dwellers, and this can lead to an attempt to move out of it into an
occupational arena which has fewer possibilities for financial
improvement. One big land-owner in fact had to sell most of his land
because none of his children were willing to look after it. The rural-
dwellers still hang on to the ideal that real mobility lies outside
agriculture, and prefer to channel their children into higher education
which might lead to the dead-end of unemployment, rather than make them
work on the land with them.

Hindus rely mainly on their immediate consanguines for familial
cooperation, but not so much on more distant relatives such as affines
or distant consanguines. In fact, there is a difference here between
North Indians and Telugus, for the latter do show more internal
cooperativeness than the former.

> In Plaine Magnien, the few Telugu families are more or less
> clustered into one area, and the area where they can mostly
> be found contains about six households that are related by
> kinship. There are two brothers and a sister, each with
> their own household, as well as three members of the wider
> kin-group living in close proximity. They are a social
> unit in the sense that most of their daily interaction is
> contained within the cluster, and, although they have
> independent jobs either as labourers or sardars, they also
> take jointly care of the family land-holdings. They are
> however fearful that one day this cooperation might break
> up because of jealousy or intestinal disputes between the

brothers or between affines. This tendency towards internal disputes is counteracted by the close relationships existing between the families composing the kin group. For instance, sister-exchange has taken place between two affinal groups, so that a dispute between two affines may endanger the stability of the marriages. This fear prevents disputes from becoming disruptive, which is a situation that frequently occurs among the Telugus.

In a North Indian family, the father, a retired sardar, takes care of the family's land, which is made up of three and a half acres of land, but which he has already divided into equal parts and registered in the names of his two sons and his two daughters. One of the sons is abroad, so that he does not really have anything to do with the land. The other son is a senior primary school teacher, and his father lives with him and his family. The two daughters are married and live outside the village. The father however said that there were constant hassles over the inheritance; he feels now that the sons should have been given more since he gave jewellery to his daughters when they got married, but because he feared to antagonise his sons-in-law, he divided the land equally. Now he has to face the reproaches of his son, the teacher, who also feels that the son who is abroad should not really have inherited as much either because he has not participated in the cultivation. The father's problem really lies in the attempt to assess several different factors in terms of right to the land and in monetary terms: the jewellery, the amount of work put into the land, the fact that he is at the moment living in his son's house and finally the fact that the other son is more or less detached from the family are all being weighed in the same scale. The conflict between the affines also complicates matters further, because one cannot antagonise sons-in-law in case the daughters are made to suffer because of it.

This situation is very different from that obtaining among the Telugus, because affinal relationships express opposition rather than cooperation. Among Muslims, affinity is an important cooperative tie, and they rely very much, in their enterprises, on the network of "kindred of cooperation" (Mayer 1960) which includes both affines and consanguines. It is possible to speculate that cooperation between affines arises in connection with intra-kin marriages (cross-cousins and eZD among Telugus, and cross- and parallel-cousins among Muslims), which strengthen both internal and external ties in the wider kin-group. Affinity among Telugus is dealt with in Chapter six, and a study of affinity among Mauritian Muslims would provide an interesting comparative focus, although it falls outside the compass of this thesis.

In many cases, brothers do cooperate after the death of the father and go on taking care of the land together, but eventually, they tend to split up and run their enterprises separately. Yet, beyond the kin-group, ethnic patronage does operate among Hindus, who will patronise the Hindu-owned chemist-shop in the same way as Muslims patronise the Muslim-owned one.

> Thus, when the owner of a commercial location wanted to sell it, several Hindus came to him and told him not to sell it to a Muslim who had offered him a good price for it. Since no Hindu was offering a good price, he eventually sold it to a Chinese man. This solution more or less satisfied the Hindus, and the former owner, being an outsider, did not feel morally obliged to sell to Hindus.

In fact, Hindus very often express the idea that one made bad deals with qualité members because of the obligation involved in any transaction between members of the same qualité. The morality of the obligation comes in a sense before the transaction itself, and this leads to delays in repayment, to more bargaining over the price etc. However, people still abide by the rule, not only because it is in built in the codes for conduct of qualité, but also because there is a highly reactive element involved in qualité patronage whereby each group's attitudes provokes a similar attitude in the other group. Thus, if one group 'protects' its members, the other will do so too, and this creates a state of constant evaluation of each other's strategies. There is no direct hostility involved in such ethnic patronage, since it is articulated as qualité 'protection', which is a moral duty.

This attitude to ethnic patronage is obviously conducive to a stronger form of ethnic separation, with each group being intent upon patronising its own members when these have specific resources to offer. It is probably for this reason that there are several commercial enterprises in Plaine Magnien which offer the same goods, for instance the chemists' shops, the hardware shops, the retail shops etc. Although these shops' clientèles are by no means exclusive to a group, they do tend to contain a majority of one group or the other. Thus, although there is no formal separation between the groups in an economic sense, there is in fact a tacit arrangement whereby inter-dependence is lessened through each

community using its own internal resources: each group sees a new
commercial venture as being another step towards the self-sufficiency
of the group. The juxtaposition of the two groups creates a need for
a constant balance to be achieved, and the lessening of inter-dependence
means, concomitantly, the lessening of chances of direct conflict.

(iii) Class strata and personnel behaviour

In Section One, (i),I discussed the various family types in Plaine
Magnien and attempted to show how their concern with mobility influenced
their decisions and adaptation to changing societal trends. The opening
out of avenues of mobility in the village has laid the foundations for
a class-based form of stratification. By class stratification, I mean
broad socio-economic delineations based partly on income and occupation,
and partly on status. Whereas in Trois Boutiques, the village society is
characterised by homogeneity of class, with a labouring background
serving as a levelling factor for those who might not actually be engaged
in labouring work, such as sardars and taxi-drivers, in Plaine Magnien
there has been a process of separation between those engaged in labouring
and manual work, those who have moved out of the labouring sphere, and
finally, those who have never belonged to it. Thus, a labouring
background does not serve as a levelling factor any longer, since a large
number of families from the middle category are of labouring origin, but
have recently moved out of the labouring sphere.

The three socio-economic strata include both Muslims and Hindus, the
Creoles belonging mostly to the lowest one. In fact, the trend among
Creoles is to move to town as soon as some form of mobility is achieved.

The rules of non-personnel behaviour and of labouring comradeship still
characterise the labouring stratum in Plaine Magnien, and also serve
here as a differentiating factor from the higher strata. I mentioned in
Chapter three the definitional and boundary-forming aspects of drinking
partnerships and of non-personnel behaviour. This becomes more apparent
in Plaine Magnien, where people adhering to different codes and values
are juxtaposed, and thus are both defined and enclosed by these values.
In particular, the inhabitants of the two cités are closely bounded,
both by their occupation and by their low status as tenants and people
living in the cheapest possible form of housing. Owning a piece of land

and a house is very important for Indians, so that people living in cités bear the epitomy of low status because the land on which they live will never be theirs, even though they may be able to buy the house itself.

There is thus both an external and an internal boundary hemming in people of the labouring stratum: they are excluded by people from the higher strata from social participation, although they also belong to sociétés. (This in fact creates a paradoxical situation in which class distancing has to be covertly expressed and intra-ethnic solidarity and equality overtly asserted, as we shall see in the next Section). They also however set up their own boundary by defining outsiders as personnel people - giving the word all the negative connotations that we have seen in Trois Boutiques - and the inside as non-personnel. In the cités, codes of neighbourliness still operate, and it is interesting to see that here, Creoles come and go freely in a Muslim's or a Hindu's house.

> A Creole who dropped in at a Muslim's house while I was there
> one day was spontaneously offered a glass of Coke and a
> cigarette. She said to me: "I know the places where I will
> be well received, where I will be given a drink and a cigarette.
> These are my real kin, you see". They then started gossiping
> about a Hindu neighbour with whom they had been very friendly
> before, but who had now started acting in a personnel way,
> because he had sold his old bicycle to a cousin of his when
> he knew that the Muslim neighbour needed a bicycle. This
> gossip was however not ethnic-based, for later, the Muslim
> referred to both Hindus and Muslims as "malbar", a pejorative
> word which means 'Indian', and which is generally used for
> Hindus only. This man also drinks and smokes, which is
> common among the cité Muslims, and which is one of the bases
> for their low status.

The possibilities for mobility are extremely scarce for cité-dwellers, for their low status is due to several different elements which it would be hard to deny, even if they did succeed in achieving some sort of financial mobility. For members of the labouring stratum who live outside the cité, mobility may be possible if they lead lives that are more similar to the higher strata's. For instance, those who are already renting land for cultivation occupy an intermediary position between the lower and the middle stratum, for they have already started the process of mobility. They still have to maintain

friendly relations with other labourers, but they can also, through
giving up drinking, participating more in religious activities etc.,
start to adhere to values that are characteristic of the middle stratum..
Although the labouring sphere has built-in mechanisms to prevent
mobility, Plaine Magnien offers a social environment which is conducive
to it. The presence of an organised Muslim community, for instance,
makes it easier for a labourer to give up drinking in spite of the
criticisms of his fellow-labourers, because he will receive the backing
of his community. One labourer said that he had stopped drinking and
smoking because he wanted to go to Mecca before he died, and during the
Ramadan fast, he spent the forty days in the Mosque, observing a strict
fast.

Thus, although it is still a bounded stratum, there are possible paths
of mobility for members of the labouring community. They often adhere
to mutually incompatible values, for instance by behaving in a non-
personnel way towards other labourers while at the same time giving up
drinking, or by keeping a simple life-style while building a concrete
house. They thus also make use of impression management in order to
achieve the movement from one stratum to another.

The middle stratum in Plaine Magnien is characterised by a similarity
in life-styles and values. Although there is a great heterogeneity of
occupations and even levels of income in this stratum, its specificity
lies in the norms and goals it adheres to. The most visible marks of
the middle stratum are, as I mentioned in Chapter two, housing and the
area the people live in. The more recent morcellements in particular
are visibly middle stratum areas, with brand new concrete houses, all
conforming to a similar format.

Personnel behaviour, characterised by privacy values, helps qualify
the people adhering to it and the areas where such behaviour is common
as belonging unequivocally to the middle stratum. It can be seen as
stemming from different causes, some overt and some covert, the overt
ones having to do with class and status, and the covert ones being
ethnic-based. Thus, personnel behaviour has a dual purpose in the
society in that it acts as an overt expression of mobility while at
the same time representing a form of normative behaviour that allows
for and incorporates expressions of ethnic allegiance.

The need to adhere to personnel values comes from (a) emulation of the higher stratum, which restricts social contact and interaction on a class basis, and (b) distancing from the lower stratum, which adheres to values of comradeship and close neighbourly contact. The middle stratum, because it in fact has a labouring background, has to assert contrasting values to those of the labouring community, and the personnel concept seems to be the best vehicle for this. Whereas in the cité and among the lower stratum generally, people complain about gossip and "speaking behind people's back" and frequent quarrels among themselves, middle stratum people on the contrary assert that they do not gossip about each other because each one minds his own business and thus avoids causes of conflict. The nature of their occupations also induces the people to adhere to privacy. People engaged in independent cultivation, for instance, do not share their experience or knowledge among themselves, and each one prefers to control his own venture as privately as possible. If one asks a person which crop a neighbour is cultivating, he says he does not know unless they have contiguous plots. Also, when a person is explaining his cultivation strategies, he will always stress the fact that he can only speak for himself, because each planter has his own strategies. The need to keep business private is due to the fear that people might be jealous if one is too successful. Also, one small planter revealed that another one used under-age labour, i.e. young boys below working age, as well as old women who had stopped working on the estate, so that he would not have to pay them the legal price for labouring work.

> It is also significant that the cane cooperative in Plaine Magnien does not really exhibit 'cooperation' between the planter-members. The main reason for their adhering to it lies in the fact that it is a form of credit institution, making cash advances to the planters in between crop seasons when they have to buy fertilisers or rent machines for the land, and it also takes charge of the payment for the cane harvested. Planters thus have direct relations with the Secretary of the cooperative only, while relations among themselves as members are never economic ones. They do not try to set up cooperative ventures among themselves; for example, when a research officer asked them if they had ever thought of renting one truck in common to go and buy fertilisers from the capital, they all said that they had never thought of it and rented trucks or small vans separately to do so.

Thus, the personnel attitude is partly a result of the individualistic
forms of occupation adhered to by the people of the middle stratum.
The fear of jealousy and *méchanceté* exists here too very strongly,
but whereas in Trois Boutiques this was openly expressed in the form
of disputes and quarrels, in Plaine Magnien, the fear is translated
into an emphasis upon privacy and discretion.

There is still, however, the feeling that neighbours should entertain
friendly relations, but it is asserted that you can only remain on
friendly terms with your neighbours as long as you do not interfere
too much in their lives and they in yours. This results into what I
have called "door-step relations", since friendliness seems to be
preserved mainly through people meeting and talking to each other
outside the house, on the door-step, in the back-yard, or from adjacent
windows. There is perhaps here a stress on territory, again in
contradistinction with the labouring community's accent on common
territory, lack of barriers between houses and constant overlapping
into each other's space. In Plaine Magnien, the owned house is the
individual's first expression of status, and the hedge around it
further stresses this sense of ownership. There is consequently a
physical enclosure around each person's property, and a similar barrier
drawn around one's moral territory, so to speak. The establishing of
neighbourly contact at the door-step shows the reluctance of people to
invade this moral territory, and it also symbolises the setting up of
boundaries between people as members of different groups. Where in
Trois Boutiques the differentiation between qualité was expressed in a
reluctance to sustain commensal relations, but not in a parallel
reluctance towards physical proximity, in Plaine Magnien, the
differentiation becomes visible and tangible throughout the sphere of
social interaction.

Personnel behaviour thus helps to avoid conflicting situations between
neighbours in general, but in particular, it serves to avoid inter-
ethnic conflict, which people recognise as being the most dangerous
and easily exacerbated form of conflict. Distance between groups is
important both in the sense of separation and in the sense of avoidance
of conflict. Personnel behaviour incorporates both of these within the
compass of normative behaviour, so that, unlike the situation in Trois

Boutiques where ethnic separation contradicted the pattern of normative behaviour, in Plaine Magnien it becomes an accepted and socially sanctioned attitude. A Muslim lady told me that when she used to work as a labourer, Hindus and Muslims used to live and work together like 'fami', but nowadays, each one kept to oneself, and there was no longer as much contact between people. Underneath the daily contact on the door-step, on the street, in the shops or at the market, which preserves a perfunctory framework of friendliness, there are no deep links between the two groups, and when it comes to active and overt solidarity, ethnicity becomes the primary channel through which each group's allegiances are expressed.

> The switch from non-personnel to personnel behaviour is very
> well illustrated by a Telugu family which moved from Trois
> Boutiques to Plaine Magnien during my fieldwork period. In
> Trois Boutiques, they had lived in a corrugated-iron house –
> albeit a spacious one for Trois Boutiques standards – and
> had conducted their life generally on a non-personnel basis.
> The husband is a taxi-driver, and for this reason, had a large
> sphere of relations in the village. The wife had close
> relations with women from neighbouring houses, and they would
> spend whole afternoons in each other's house, chatting and
> gossiping. They would willingly look after each other's
> children when the mother had to go shopping or visiting, and
> sometimes, they would go shopping together in Mahébourg.
> However, when they moved to Plaine Magnien, where they had
> bought a piece of land from a Telugu land-owner in a middle
> stratum area, the wife's attitude changed automatically to
> a personnel one. She had established friendly relations with
> her immediate neighbours while the house was being built, and
> when she had just moved in, neighbours on both sides (both
> Hindus and Muslims) gave her vegetables which they had just
> harvested from their land, and offered to keep a watch on her
> house while she was away. Her North Indian neighbour had also
> stored building material in his own house while the Telugu's
> house was being built. But the relations did not go much
> further than that, and were from then onwards kept on a door-
> step basis. The wife told me that her neighbours were very
> nice, but she did not like to "come and go" to their houses
> and only ·spoke to them when she was passing by or from the
> window. She said she did not go·out much and preferred to stay
> in her house.
>
> Soon after moving in, she gave a "Ram Bhajan" ceremony, to
> which she invited her North Indian neighbour, and most of the
> Telugus from the village as well as Telugu relatives from
> other parts of the island. This was in fact a way of
> establishing her social environment within the ethnic sphere
> and also of asserting her newly established mobility. She now
> rejected Trois Boutiques people and the close neighbourly
> relations established there as being too interfering and

gossip-minded, and started to lead an existence in Plaine
Magnien, which was both in keeping with the values operating
in her own environment, and with her new image of self.

The middle stratum in fact sets the patterns for the general trend of
relations and behaviour in Plaine Magnien, mainly because it has most
of the assets for mobility and because its members are actively involved
in most areas of village organisation. Since personnel behaviour is
basically an individualistic form of behaviour, this allows the people
to articulate their community-oriented basis of behaviour through the
société, as we shall see in the next Section.

The higher stratum is composed of four families in all, two Hindus and
two Muslims. The Hindus owe their prestige to the fact that they
belong to large land-owning families, both very renowned in the island
as having been among the first Hindus to break through the barriers
limiting mobility and acquire land. They are also both high caste
families. The different members of these two kin-groups have moved
out to different parts of the island, but the family-name has retained
the prestige ascription which now confers status to the two families
remaining in Plaine Magnien. One of them still owns about 18 arpents
of land, which makes him a large 'small planter', while the other does
not own land any more but is employed as head of the stores department
with the sugar estate, which also confers him some prestige. Both have
large storied houses and lead rather private lives behind closed doors.
The land-owning man used to be very active in société and religious
events, but he has now retired from such activities.

The two Muslim families own flourishing commercial ventures, and are also
"high-caste" Muslims. It is mainly this latter element that conveys
prestige to them, and also the fact that they have not come from a
labouring background. One of the families is also the life-president of
one of the Muslim sociétés in Plaine Magnien, and his father was the
founder of that société.

As high-prestige figures, members of the higher stratum are both emulated
and placed in honorific leadership positions within their respective
communities by the middle stratum. They also act as patrons, since they
have access to higher spheres of the society, and are thus expected to

fulfill precise duties towards their qualité. They serve both as models of social behaviour and as examples of ethnic behaviour, so that their symbolical role in their community is very marked.

In this Section, I have looked at the ways in which economic mobility could be achieved in Plaine Magnien through the use of such resources as land, family-labour, ethnic patronage etc. Accéss to mobility allows for class strata to emerge, differentiated by occupation, status, and the values the people from each stratum adhere to.

Financial mobility can be achieved through the interplay of certain variables, namely, (a) owned or rented land, (b) cane or vegetable cultivation, (c) family labour, (d) secondary occupations. Through joint family organisation, it is possible for several members, either working separately or together on a joint venture, to pool their resources and/or labour, and improve their living standards, mainly through housing and material goods. The next step is seen in terms of education and white collar jobs outside the agricultural sphere for younger members of the family.

The main components of social mobility can be found in ethnic-oriented strategies, for instance marriage, religion and société participation, as we shall see in Section Two. Mobility thus directly affects the values, norms and codes of behaviour of the people of Plaine Magnien, and personnel behaviour allows for ethnic distancing to arise in the context of individualistic behaviour, while community-oriented behaviour is articulated mainly in terms of the ethnic group and the sphere of ethnic organisation.

In Trois Boutiques, internal differences of status and qualité were
framed and contained within the equalising framework of the village
society; in Plaine Magnien, the sphere of ethnic organisation can be ..
seen to provide a framework within which class and status differences
within each ethnic group are expressed without proving disruptive to
the group's cohesion. Social mobility is achieved mainly through
participation in the société and stressing the importance of religious
observance, as well as using the status and caste differences within
each group to validate upward mobility, where this is possible. But
this remains enclosed by the overall integrative nature of the groups,
and by the external boundaries that are drawn through the juxtaposition
of Muslims and Hindus and the reactive elements that come into play
in the process of interaction between them.

(i) Components of social mobility and internal differentiation

The orientation of the villagers towards the group and the société
is closely linked with the economic change that has taken place from
the traditional village structure exemplified by Trois Boutiques to
Plaine Magnien's more progressive structure, as well as with the
parallel change in values generated by the middle stratum. But the
other important factor conducive to ethnic polarisation lies in the
nature of the groups themselves, and in their constant juxtaposition
in day-to-day interaction.

In Plaine Magnien, the occupational sphere, in particular among the
members of the middle and higher strata, does not provide an
incorporative framework wherein allegiances and social groupings can
be formed. In fact, it is, as we have seen, highly individualistic
and family-oriented, so that it becomes easier for the villagers'
social existence to be oriented towards the kin-group and the ethnic
group as well. Drinking relations, which constituted a major form of
social interaction in Trois Boutiques are here restricted to the
labouring stratum, and even then, the sociétés, in particular the
Muslim ones and the Arya Samaj, actively campaign against drinking.
The société partly fulfills the need of the individual for involvement
in a collectivity, and serves all the basic functions of social

assistance, financial help etc., outlined in Chapter three. At the
same time, one of the ways in which social mobility can be achieved
within the ethnic group is through active participation in the
société. In fact, financial mobility is only a stepping-stone towards
the goals of the middle stratum families: their real goals revolve
more around positions of prestige in their social sphere. In order to
do this, they must maintain an exemplary image within the group, as
well as contribute to the socio-religious organisation of the community
at the local level.

Muslims

One finds, among the middle stratum families, an intense preoccupation
with social respectability as well as religious fervour and active société
participation. For Muslims, socialisation into the religious sphere
starts at an early stage with sending their children to the 'madrassas'
for religious instruction. There they are taught to read and memorise
passages from the Quran, and also the general principles of Islamic
behaviour. At home, the emphasis upon fasting, saying prayers, not
drinking and smoking also creates an atmosphere of religious
consciousness which is not as marked among Hindus. The channelling of
children into their religion is a consciously organised framework of
socialisation among Muslims and is carried on until adulthood. The
codes for conduct are also clear enough for people to be able to
distinguish between a good Muslim and a bad Muslim. Significantly,
the aggregates of the bad Muslim, such as drinking, smoking, not
attending the Mosque and not fasting are found among the labouring
stratum, and this enables the middle stratum to stress even more
strongly its separation from the former.

One of the ways in which class difference is expressed within religious
practice is through the charity aspect of religion. People from the
middle stratum take a great pride in giving, and perhaps more
importantly, in being able to give. On Eid day, all the poor Muslims
go to the Mosque and are served food which those who are able to give
have donated to the Mosque. The latter also have to give a fraction
of their wealth to the national level société which is in charge of
all the Muslim sociétés, the Waqb. One old Muslim lady recalled that
when she was young, she and her husband used to go to the Mosque to

receive the food. Now, she said, she was able to give to others.
Charity is important for Muslims, another man said, because we must
help our own, and protect our own 'nation'. These two points stress
clearly the duality of charity in the religion: on the one hand, it
draws a line on a class basis between givers and receivers; but at
the same time, the overriding qualité duty, to give to our own,
prevents the differentiation from becoming divisive. The people are
thus able to express their mobility in the social and religious sphere
from the position of receiver to that of giver while placing it under
the encompassing code for conduct towards qualité members.

The société is also in certain ways expressive of status differentiation,
and this is particularly visible in Plaine Magnien because of the
existence of two sociétés and two Mosques.

> There had originally been only one Mosque in Plaine Magnien,
> attended by the whole orthodox Muslim community and headed
> by one of the two higher-stratum Muslims, M, who owned a
> shop and some land. However, about twenty years ago, people
> started to dispute M's leadership, saying that he had only
> become President because of his money, and that others were
> as much entitled to leadership as he was. From this dispute,
> a rift was created in the community, and M and his partisans
> decided to form another société and built a second Mosque
> which they only were entitled to attend. People nowadays
> say that the dispute had arisen because of money, and because
> M had wanted too much power. After M's death, the two
> sociétés continued to function simultaneously, with M's
> eldest son becoming life-President of the more recent one.
> Attendance of the two Mosque is now unrestricted, since the
> cause of the dispute no longer exists but each société
> claims to be more efficient than the other, and there are
> still undercurrents of rivalry between them.

The President of the other société and its Secretary are relatives,
called E. The Secretary is also President of the Village Council.
The attitude of the leaders of the two sociétés is one of leniency
and tolerance within the community: they say that one has to accept
the internal differences that may exist in the group and learn to
tolerate them rather than let them create major dissensions and split
the community, as they had twenty years ago. This spirit of tolerance
does not however include the Ahmadiya sect, which is a reformist
group that occupies an ambiguous position in the Muslim community.
They are endogamous, but they celebrate the same rituals as other

Muslims, although they have different explanations for them. From the outside, at any rate, they are seen as part of the Muslim community.

In fact, Islam does not sanction differences of class, status or caste among its adherents. For this reasons, these differences must remain covert, and such divisions as the Mosque dispute are nowadays more strongly suppressed. The division was not only one of financial status, but one that can perhaps broadly be termed 'caste' status as well. The M family belongs to one of the higher Muslim 'caste' groups, the Surtis who emigrated to Mauritius as traders, and, although this entitled them to a position of leadership and respect in the community, it also triggered off antagonism from other aspiring leaders. This is a reaction which often occurs in the Indian community in Mauritius, where there is both respect and contestation of caste, as we shall see in the case of Hindus as well.

A number of Muslims belonging to the Surti group now claim their origins from Arabs and Persians rather than from Indian Muslims, and prefer to learn Arabic rather than Urdu. M, the President of the société in Plaine Magnien, has started Arabic classes in the Madrassa, to teach children spoken and modern Arabic as well as classical Arabic. They are thus differentiating themselves, not only from Hindus and India, but also from labouring Muslims who cannot avoid their Indian origins.

The labouring Muslims from villages form a large endogamous unit in opposition to the 'high caste' Muslims. However, even in the labouring group there are differentiations which come from attempts at upward mobility through hypergamy and financial mobility, and, conversely, from instances of mixed marriages in a family-history, which become attributes of low status. Thus, people who have converted from other religions and people who have married into other religious communities, even though they may also have brought their husband or wife into the community as converts, retain a low status ascription which affects their marriage possibilies. Although Islam is an incorporative religion in the sense that people become integral parts of the community through conversion, and mixed marriages are accepted if the non-Muslim partner converts, the actual identity of a person remains tinged by his former identity and he acquires a kind of ambivalent

identity where he is officially a full member of the community, but
his 'deep' identity (composed of both past and present) still affects
his position in the community. People's 'ethnic-history' so to speak,
remains an integral part of their personalities. Not only do mixed
couples lead very secluded and socially separate lives in the village,
rarely attending weddings and social functions, but the marriage
choices for their children are also restricted primarily to families
with a similar history or to very low status Muslims.

> Thus, in the case of a mixed marriage between a Hindu woman
> and a Muslim man, the couple has been forced to move away
> from the man's family which is an extensive joint family, and
> set up their own nuclear household in the village. The woman
> officially converted to Islam upon marrying, but she neither
> wears the Muslim 'pajama' suit nor has made her daughter wear
> it. The husband attends Mosque, but their social life is
> very restricted, and the wife visits her family outside the
> village more frequently than they visit the husband's family.
> She reluctantly admits that she only prays very occasionally.
> Another man whose parents were a mixed Tamil and Muslim couple
> has recently celebrated the wedding of the son to a girl from
> Trois Boutiques who is also of Tamil descent. I was told that
> her grand-father's name was Marimootoo, but after converting
> to Islam, he became Mahmod Hossein.

At the other end of the 'labouring' Muslims status category, are those
who have achieved financial mobility long enough to exempt them from
the low-status ascription. These, through exemplary social behaviour
and involvement in the société, in particular financing higher-level
sociétés, may have secured a position which allows them to make a
hypergamous marriage. On the other hand, a high-caste family that has
become impoverished may find it advantageous to marry from a lower
family that has achieved mobility. Girls who have been educated, for
instance, may marry upwards more easily than boys from a low status
family. Hypergamy thus becomes one of the means of mobility available
to low-status families, and in time, they may lose their low-status
ascription and move into an intermediary position on the status grid.

The status or caste-like divisions within the Muslim community thus
offer, at both ends, sharply demarcated groups that are at the poles
of the hierarchy, in the same way as the North Indian group polarises
between Maraz and Chamars.

The difference of caste and status within the community allows in fact for mobility to be achieved, but are not ultimately divisive in the sense that they do not lead to the formation of distinct corporate groups with rigid boundaries. They are in fact 'corrected' by external and internal integrative elements which lead to the overall cohesion of the group, as for instance the qualité-duty aspect of charity, and collective religious practices which we shall look at in a further section.

Hindus

Among the Hindus too, there are strikingly similar patterns of internal differentiation which allow mobility to be expressed within the group. Caste is an important aggregate of status, and, as among the Muslims, it confers a position of prestige to the high castes, and is a vehicle of mobility through hyper- and hypogamy, but it has also induced a sectarian division in the form of the Arya Samaj movement.

> When the orthodox Sanathan société was formed in 1950, the villagers automatically chose a Maraz Hindu who was also a land-owner, as their President. He had both the prestige and the financial attributes which, as in the case of M. among the Muslims, entitled him to a position of leadership in the community. However, he also chose high caste people as members of the executive committee, and, although this was accepted for a long time, a number of people later on began to question this choice. The first contestation came from Babujis, as the committee was made up primarily of Maraz; later on, when Babujis were also included, the lower castes started to contest this high caste exclusiveness. This led to a number of them moving over to the Arya Samaj société. But others went on contesting within the Sanathan société itself, and eventually succeeded in breaking through the caste barrier on the committee and becoming active members of the société. However, even today, the President of the société is a high caste Hindu, and recently, when a new social Hall was inaugurated in the Shivala courtyard, a number of people grumbled that the guests of honour were all high caste Hindus.

There is thus quite a lot of resentment over caste even today. However, this negative attribute of caste does not prevent people from using it for purposes of mobility through upward marriages. Among North Indians in Mauritius, there is more of a tendency for a high caste girl to marry downwards than for a low caste girl to marry upwards, probably

because a low caste man can achieve mobility and marry upwards whereas it is difficult for a low caste girl to get rid of her low-status ascription. This is the opposite of what happens among Muslims, and also of the general trend among North Indians in India, which is for a girl to marry upwards and never downwards.

The girl's side, among North Indians is already lower in status than the boy's side. The inferiority is very marked in all relations between the two sides, as well as in the way the wedding ceremony is conducted. It is the girl's parents, for instance, who ask for the boy in marriage. If the girl is further of a lower caste than the boy, the discrepancy would be even greater, and the girl would have no regard whatsoever from the affinal family. Among Hindus in general, there is a preoccupation with 'equilibrium' as a major basis of choice in marriages, and people like to make their choices on the basis of a general equilibrium between the girl's side and the boy's side on the basis of caste, occupational status, financial status etc. This has been observed in several overseas Indian societies and seems to be a common adaptive trend exhibited in the caste system (Jayawardena and Smith 1967).

Caste remains an attributional element in the people's identity and can thus not be completely lost. But most of its institutional aspects have been lost, so that it now remains as a status-giving element, a means of informal categorisation and a basis of kin-like allegiance in the North Indian group. Thus, although it is *part* of the substantial identity of the people, it is not by itself a basis of identity, since it does not lead to permanent group formation at a higher level where in certain South Asian societies caste can become an 'ethnicised' and organisational element in the society - (e.g. Barnett 1970 and Chapter seven below) - here it has been integrated into the wider and deeper order of ethnic identity, and is partially operative within it.

Another means of enhancing status within the sphere of religion, is through the individual religious ceremonies held in people's homes. The practice of Hinduism is divided into the collective and the individual, in the sense that, in opposition to group ceremonies and festivals, there are smaller ceremonies which can be held in each person's home. These include *pujas* which are private prayers that can be performed both with

and without a priest, and in the family or with guests, and *hawans* which
are prayers performed by a priest on specific occasions, such as upon
entering a new house, or on ritual occasions such as after a death in
the family. These are generally privately performed practices and span
the whole of an individual's life in the sense that they mark auspicious
events in his life, as well as indicating major changes and happenings.
The other aspect of religious practice held in the home is the reading
of the sacred books, which is not held at any particular moment, but
can be a kind of thanksgiving towards God, or part of a promise –
promesse – made in the event of a particular venture succeeding. The
katha as it is called, is held in the person's homestead and performed
by a priest, and people are usually invited both from the village and
from other parts of the island where kin-members live. In Plaine Magnien,
where *pujas* and *hawans* remain private occasions where only the immediate
family is invited to attend and participate, *kathas* can be performed on
a much larger scale and become a means of asserting a person's status
and religious respectability.

In one particular case, a North Indian man who had performed
a *katha* derived a great sense of pride from the fact that
his had been the most lavish one to be held over a number of
years in the village. Formal invitation cards were printed
in Hindi and sent out to all the guests – most of them were
delivered by hand by a member of the family, as is usually
done for weddings. A few days earlier, the man's sons and
their friends and members of the société started building the
'tent' (or marquee) under which the *katha* was to be held.
They brought chairs from the société hall which are kept for
such occasions specifically, as well as multi-coloured light
bulbs with which they decorated the tent. The women in the
family as well as North Indian women from the neighbourhood
started to cook food early in the morning. The guests came
at around six o'clock and food was immediately served both
outside and inside the house, and on banana leaves as is the
tradition in all ceremonies. The women from the family in
fact spent most of the evening serving food to the guests,
and after dinner was over, preparing the *parsad* or sweet
offering which has to be made to each guest upon departure.
At about eight, the priest, who had come from Mahébourg,
started reading the Gita, first in its original version,
then translating it in simple Hindi and explaining the
meaning of the verses. The guests all brought offerings of
fruit and flowers and a coconut which they placed at the
foot of the podium as they arrived. The reading went on till
about midnight, then the guests left. (In fact, a large
number of them had left earlier, and only a few remained until
the end of the reading). The same was repeated on three
consecutive nights.

The man who had held the *katha* told me afterwards that it had been the most successful one to be given in Plaine Magnien. He held *kathas* regularly — nearly every year — but this year he had wanted it to be particularly grand because he had had a good crop of vegetables. At the same time, it was also an expression of his financial status, but made in such a covert way that there could be no accusation of 'vantardise' made towards him. Receiving many people and serving them large quantities of food, whether on a religious occasion, or at a wedding, is one of the ways in which people can gain prestige in the village. This parallels the 'giving/receiving' aspect of Muslim religion, but is distinctive from it in that the receivers are not low status people. They are merely temporarily in the 'lower' position of receivers; their attendance of the event is a way of sanctioning the person giving it in his claim for prestige and status. The fact that the man giving the *Katha* had taken a lot of trouble over the 'flashiness' of the event and the amount of food to be served, and the fact that the guests left earlier than they should in principle have done shows that it is not so much the religious content of the event that gave it its importance and meaning but perhaps to a larger extent its social significance.

The Ram Bhajan held by the Telugu taxi-driver when he moved to Plaine Magnien (mentioned on page 179 above) is also illustrative of this aspect of religious practice. The ceremony was not only a way of confirming the family's incorporation into the society through a Telugu ritual which included primarily Telugus both from the village and coming from outside, but it was also an affirmation of a new status in the middle stratum surroundings.

These assertions of status are made specifically within the ethnic group, and do not have much significance outside it. It becomes visible then, that the individual's aim at mobility is oriented towards the group in the sense that he wishes to achieve a higher position within the group's status hierarchy and evaluation rather than within the village society as a whole. People do not in fact compete for prestige across groups. Their strategies for social mobility remain circumscribed within their group, using the available paths of mobility through caste, status and religious practice in an individual way without these divisions becoming in any way operative as more stable groupings.

(ii) Elements of group cohesion

The division of the Hindu community into the Sanathan and Arya Samaj
sects does not represent, as I pointed out in Chapter three, a deep
rift in the group. They are both contained within the frame of Hinduism
and, although people may belong to different sects, in fact this does
not make them ascribe to different identities.

> Thus, one man who had been very active in the Arya Samaj
> société and had acted as Treasurer for a long time, left
> the société after he was accused of embezzling the funds
> from it. He joined the Sanathan société, and said that
> they were both the same, except that the Arya Samaj did
> not venerate idols. Another old man living near the Shivala
> said that he had left the Sanathan société after the dispute
> over leadership described above and joined the Arya Samaj.
> However, he had been feeling that, since he now lived near
> the Shivala, he should perhaps join the Sanathan société
> again in order to show the Pandit that he bore no hard
> feelings towards them.

The Arya Samaj is more effective than the Sanathan société in attempting
at an early stage the socialisation of children into their religious
group. Far from creating a sense of separation between members of the
Hindu community, the Arya Samaj is in fact attempting to create more
cohesiveness and a deeper sense of religion than has existed so far
among Hindus. Children attend classes regularly where they are taught
Hindi as well as the precepts of the "Satyarth Prakash", a philosophical
book written by the founder of the Arya Samaj.

> The leaders of the Arya Samaj, one of whom, a twenty three
> year old Babuji man, is involved in several areas of social
> and religious organisation in Plaine Magnien, are conscious
> of the need for cohesion in opposition to the Muslim's
> cohesive structure. In fact, the young man who leads the
> Arya Samaj société is also a leader among the North Indians
> in general, and as such has much influence among them, in
> particular among the youths of the village. He is a member
> of the Village Council and is aiming at becoming President
> of the Council at the next elections. He is also President
> of the Centre Social, and has founded one of the many North Indian
> youth clubs in the village. He is also involved in labourers'
> union activities, although he is at the moment unemployed,
> and teaches Hindi at the Arya Samaj Hall for a small fee and
> cultivate vegetables with his brothers. He is, in this sense,
> an entrepreneur in a wider sense of the word and his links
> with certain ministers of the Government on a caste basis
> and on the basis of his political participation at local
> level make him a broker as well. He thus exercises a kind
> of informal but very wide-spread and effective power among
> North Indians, and people constantly come to him for advice and
> help. He acts also as a unifying link between the different

groupings among the North Indians, since he participates in the two sociétés, the various youth clubs, the various local associations etc., and his position in the formal local sphere also makes him capable of evolving and acting upon specific group strategies. For instance, his latest project is to form a société which would regroup all the various North Indians social groupings in the village into a kind of federation, so that, in his own words, one should be able to *see* their unity. He also wants to set up adult Hindi classes so as to make the adults literate in Hindi.

The way of thinking of this young man is highly coloured by the presence of the other group in the village. His strategies are thus reactive ones, geared towards replicating to what he sees as a potentially dangerous power of cohesion in the other group. They also attempt to make visible the internal qualité identity, and for this purpose, all the components of identity which serve to bind members of the ethnic group have to be used. In fact, the existence of multiple ties *inside* each group -- as for instance cross-cutting caste and sectarian membership -- precludes the solidifying of sub-groupings and enables the wider ethnic identity to become organisational. Further, group cohesion represents a means to an end in Plaine Magnien, since access to specific resources is facilitated by concerted group action.

The same kind of reaction can be seen in the religious sphere, where group cohesion can be more overtly expressed and seen. As I mentioned above, in spite of internal bases of differentiation, the Islamic religion is a highly integrative one and sustains group consciousness mainly through its congregational aspects. The société partly functions as a body that ensures that the prescriptions of religion are followed by the adherents, and it thus exercises a measure of control over the Muslims in Plaine Magnien in keeping them within the bounds of their religion and sustaining the integrative framework. In small village sociétés, it is easy to ascertain who attends the Mosque and who does not, who drinks and who does not; the société is then able to exert some form of pressure over the deviating members so as to make them revert to religious ways. If a person drinks, for instance, he is first warned that he is going against the prescription; then if he is caught again, he is fined Rs 50.00 (£2.50). If he is repeatedly seen to be drinking he can in principle be ostracised from the société. This however has not happened in recent times, because of the spirit of

tolerance advocated by the leaders of the community who realise the
risk involved in antagonising too many of their members, and also
because the concern with mobility inclines people to give up drinking
by themselves. The société also controls the attendance to the
Mosque and the other prescriptions of charity and giving to the Waqb
etc., so that, in order to maintain their position of respectability
in the group, the people have to obey the rules. The société is thus
the main element that ensures the preservation of the collectivity
and preserves the religious boundary around the community in an
organisational sense. It is essential in that it maintains religious
consciousness not so much for its own sake as for the maintenance of
group cohesion. As a Muslim lady said: "if we are not united, others
will tread on us". The existence of a higher-level organisation, the
Waqb, which controls all local-level Muslim sociétés also contributes
to a feeling of ethnic identity which transcends the village boundary.
(This is perhaps a form of organisation which characterises minority
groups mainly, since there are similar controlling higher-level
associations for Telugus and Tamils as well, but not for North Indians.
The latter do have higher level associations which do not however
control lower-level ones).

The prescriptions of religion themselves also serve to maintain the
congregational aspects of religious observance. Attendance at the
Mosque demarcates the Muslim community from others, by separating them
physically from the other groups everyday and at the same time, and by
indicating their identity through diacritical symbols; for instance, all
the men wear white *pajamqs* and *kurtas* and a white cap to attend the
Mosque, and they thus define themselves overtly, by emphasising their
similarity with each other and difference from others in physical ways.
The women are also recognisable through their clothing, (except for
those of the labouring community who tend to be similar, at least in
their working gear, to Hindus).

The overt aspects of identity are perhaps as important, if not more,
in the boundary-maintaining aspect of ethnicity. Thus, whereas religion
can also be practised privately in the home, the collective practices
not only stir up the feeling of commonness, but also make the differences

more apparent between the groups. Collective practices in fact seem to heighten to a great extent the consciousness of the group and its separateness. During the fasting periods, the Muslim community is mainly concerned with the maintenance of a practice that establishes a continuous link throughout the community, and encompasses it in the act of abstention from food. At the end of the fast, unity is again stressed by the act of eating together the same type of food. At the Bakr-Eid festival, for instance, groups of three or four neighbouring families join to buy one ox – or more – for slaughtering. Depending on their financial situation, they can slaughter up to four oxen. A part of this will be given to the Mosque and the poor, and a part will be shared among the families. The joining to buy the ox, and the joining to eat it are all seen in the light of commensality by the people. In opposition to the commensality asserted, but not practised in the neighbourhood sphere in Trois Boutiques, intra-ethnic commensality in Plaine Magnien is both asserted and practised, as we shall see below. This religious cooperation within a neighbourhood set also provides a parallel to neighbourliness in Trois Boutiques: here the cooperation and commensality are based upon the real codes for conduct prescribed for the qualité group and confirm the overtness of ethnicity in the village; in Trois Boutiques, cooperation a and commensality between neighbours are metaphorical assertions borrowed from the substance-codes. Since cooperation in Plaine Magnien takes place in the sphere of religious practice, it is both intensified and justified as against personnel behaviour and "door-step" relations: nobody would question the prescribed code in the religious sphere because of the latter's implicit morality which reinforces the morality of qualité itself.

The collective Hindu practices have taken a significance in the light of ethnicity because of the differentiation between the groups. The Hindus all celebrate such festivals as Shivratri, Divali, Shankranti etc., and the North Indians in particular celebrate Holi and Ganga Snan as group practices along with the Shivratri festival. What makes these three festivals stand out is the fact that their collectivistic aspect is perhaps more important than their ritualistic aspect, in particular in the case of Holi and Ganga Snan. Holi is not considered a religious festival and does not occasion prayers, but is a secular one transposed within the sphere of group practice. It has only

recently been revived as a North Indian festival.

> Some old people in the village still recall when it was
> celebrated during their youths as *Fagooah*, an occasion for
> riotous merry-making, drinking *bhang* and alcoholic drinks and
> a general day of licentiousness, in particular for men.
> Religion-conscious people later on banned the festival,
> especially when the Arya -Samaj started to have more influence
> in the villages, and, as a member of the Arya Samaj now
> recalls, people stopped celebrating it because it gave a
> bad name to Hindus.

However, since Independence, there has been a conscious effort made to
revive certain festivals on a larger scale, and Holi and Shivratri have
become festivals of a central importance to the North Indian group.
Holi is now celebrated mainly in the capital, and people from the
villages, in particular young men, charter buses to go there to partake
in the celebrations. The youth clubs sometimes join in chartering the
buses and making it a collective enterprise: what makes the occasion
important is the fact that they all come together as North Indians in
celebrating the festival, to the exclusion of all other groups, and on
that particular day, there is a mobilisation of all the North Indian
youths from the village in a loud and overt demonstration of their
ethnicity. In the same way, the Ganga Snan festival, which is supposed
to be a religious one dedicated to Ganga, is, according to the Plaine
Magnien pandit, an occasion for people to go on picnics at the seaside.

> People go to the seaside to make offerings of coconuts,
> fruit and flowers to Ganga. After lighting some camphor
> and incense-sticks and performing a short 'puja' on the
> beach, they throw the offerings into the water and immerse
> themselves into it. Again, people hire buses to go on the
> pilgrimage, and take food and drinks to make the most of
> their trip and spend the day at the seaside. The religious
> feeling that should go with such occasions is lacking, in
> most cases, particularly among the young. A young Arya
> Samaji commented about this fact in the following terms:
> "the Muslims keep their fasts and perform their 'roza'
> scrupulously, but we Hindus use religion as a pretext for
> amusement".

But it is again an opportunity for the group to cohere openly on the
basis of religious identity, even though without exhibiting the
religious feeling that is concomitant. It seems that religion acts
as a congregating element for the group and a symbol of 'ralliement',

without the ritualistic aspect being of a great importance on certain occasions, but merely a series of empty gestures.

The Shivratri festival, however,has retained both its ritualistic and emotional nature as a religious festival, and has become an element of cohesion in a reactive sense.

> The ritual aspect of the festival lies mainly in the building and carrying of bamboo structures, heavily decorated with white muslin paper and mirrors in different shapes and sizes. These are carried by devotees of Shiva who walk to the Grand Bassin Lake in the centre of the island along with thousands of pilgrims. The walk itself is very strenuous, and the bamboo structures can be quite heavy. People are encouraged by the presence of all their fellow-villagers who will walk with them and help them bear the load. In Grand Bassin itself, prayers are held in the Shiva shrine all the time during which pilgrims will be there, and most stay the night under make-shift covers if they have come from afar, and go back to the village on the next day. In the village, *pujas* are held in the temple for three days, from the departure of the pilgrims till their return, and vegetarian food is cooked near the temple by North Indian women and served to the poor and to devotees who stay in the temple during those three days. The pilgrims' departure and return is an important event in the village, and people of all groups come out and line the road to see them pass by. Hindus cook vegetarian food on Shivratri day, and the pilgrims themselves only drink water until they reach Grand Bassin.

This festival is one occasion on which religious consciousness is heightened among the Hindus, and in particular, among North Indians. North Indians in general fear that the young people are losing their attachment to religion, but in fact, the pilgrims to Grand Bassin are composed in majority of young people. A number of them will stress the fact that it is one festival where they can express their cohesion, especially considering that the Hindu religion is not congregational enough and does not offer them a strong basis for participation. Although the young people are not in general conversant with the dictates and prescriptions of their religion, when it comes to collective practice, they are ready to participate actively. There is both an internal **pull** in the Shivratri festival which reminds them of their identity as Hindus, a feeling of corporateness that is expressed in the long walk towards the Shiva shrine, and a boundary strengthening

aspect which circumscribes them as a collectivity. In the case of all three festivals celebrated by the North Indians, however, it is mainly the collectivising aspect that is important and stands out as the main motivating force behind them.

Among the Telugus of Plaine Magnien, very few actually go with the North Indian pilgrims to Grand Bassin. Every morning on the three days where pujas are held in the Shivala, they attend the prayers and they eat vegetarian food on Shivratri day. One family actually offers food to be cooked and distributed in the Shivala. But the festival itself is considered more as a North Indian one than as a pan-Hindu one, perhaps for the simple reason that there is a more powerful display of North Indians in terms of numbers. The Telugus' participation thus remains muted and unstressed, without their expressing any deep identification with the North Indians. The only times when the Telugus of Plaine Magnien come together as a group are on the occasion of Ram Bhajans, which several of the families perform in turn, and on the occasion of weddings, when they all invite each other and ask each other to participate more extensively than they do North Indians. In juxtaposition with a stronger and more numerous group such as the North Indian group, they are not as visible as they would be in a situation where they are in numerical majority. They merge partially with the North Indians as Hindus in the village organisation, but when it comes to expressions of internal identity, they retain their distinctiveness, if only by abstaining from full-fledged participation in the case of the Shivratri festival, or by forming a nominal, non-functional, but separate société. This société has been in existence for the past twenty years or so, but, as there is no Telugu temple in Plaine Magnien, they do not have a place to convene, and are not numerous enough to obtain a subsidy from the Andhra Maha Sabha. The founder of the société says that his attempt to rally the Telugus was met with a lukewarm reception. Whenever there is a meeting only ten or twelve people turn up. This is probably because all the Telugus belong to a higher level association which fulfills their needs, and organisation in Plaine Magnien itself is precluded by their small numbers.

The importance of qualité as an integrative element of each group in the society can be seen in the sphere of commensality, which I have spoken of earlier. I have mentioned, for instance, that the giving/receiving

aspect of religion was a means of expressing a status difference both among the Muslims and among the Hindus. However, among the Muslims, charity also has the significance of helping your own, in other words, it fulfills the main qualité duty of helping qualité members whenever they are in need. Thus, one of the société leaders in Plaine Magnien said that charity constituted a chain from the richest member of the community to the poorer. Further, what is given is mainly food, and in particular the Bakr-Eid festival has a special significance relating to food because of the sacrifice by Abraham, which is translated here into the sacrifice of the oxen. The qualité duty of charity is further enhanced by the sharing of the sacred food eaten by Muslims only, the beef on which a *halal* act has been performed. The substantial link established, and periodically reasserted in ritual terms, by the sharing of a particular kind of food that is only eaten by the group equalises the status difference that arises between the givers and the receivers, so that the line drawn between them does not become divisive. Further, the nature of the food also delineates those outside the group from those inside, since Muslims eat beef and Hindus do not, and Muslim and Hindu religious practice opposes the sacrifice of the oxen to strict vegetarianism -- at least in so far as North Indian practices are concerned. Thus on the occasion of a wedding in Plaine Magnien, about twenty years ago, a group of Muslims who had been invited to a meal were extremely offended because the meat was not *halal*. This created a rift between the two groups and marked the beginning of the separation existing today. Among Hindus, the difference of status that is created by the giving of food is contained within the qualitative similarity of the group. On religious occasions where food is served, such as the *katha* described above, the person giving the feast may express his mobility through the lavishness of the food served. However, the act of commensality itself establishes a link between qualité members, as we have seen in the previous chapter. This is so particularly for qualité groups which are not strongly differentiated from within, such as the Telugus. Among the North Indians, caste, which also derives from a notion of substance, sometimes prescribes commensal relations only within the caste, especially as far as the high castes are concerned. But in the villages, where the lower 'undifferentiated' castes are in majority, such restrictions over caste are weakened by sectarian and economic affiliations.

The sharing of *parsad* at the end of a ceremony is an act which is
seen as an expression of a moral bond, and which separates the inside
of the group - those who share - from the outside - those who do not
share - in the same way as the *halal* meat separates Muslims from
outsiders. *Parsad* is not only a mediating link between the deity and the
worshippers, but it is also seen by the people as constituting a
horizontal, qualitative link between themselves: when asked about the
significance of *parsad*, they give two explanations, one that it is the
'remainder' or 'remnant' of the food that has been offered to the deity
and which has been sanctified by the act of offering, and second that it
is a means of acknowledging the relationship of qualité between the
people sharing it - "we share *parsad* because we are of the same qualité".
In this case, the religious component of identity is stressed. This also
allows for North Indians and Telugus to share *parsad* occasionally, but
the trend towards religious separateness that is taking place in the
society, (see Chapter seven), is weakening this link as well.

After each festival, Muslims and Hindus share sweetmeats with each other,
Muslims offering a typically 'Muslim' sweet dish made with vermicelli,
and Hindus offering typical sweets such as 'gulab jamuns', 'burfis',
'khajaas' etc. The latter are shared on the occasion of Divali mainly.
These sweet dishes do not have a religious significance, and for this
reason can be served across the groups. They do not have any of the
substantial significance of religious food, and do not therefore establish
a qualitative link between the people sharing them. They can be seen as
gestures maintaining cordial relations on a face-to-face basis across the
ethnic groups, and at the same time emphasising the boundary at which
commensal relations are replaced by sweetmeat sharing. (In relation to
commensality as bases of exchange and substance-coding among castes in
India, see Marriott 1968; 1976).

Thus, even within the religious sphere, it is qualité which establishes
the deep internal link between members of each group. On the one hand
the act of commensality, and on the other the 'sacred' nature of the
food shared, are both linked in reasserting the substantial bond between
members of the groups.

Religion also acts as one of the main collectivising forces at work
on the groups, becoming an arena where ethnic separation and group
cohesion can both be overtly expressed in the village society, and
where strong boundaries can be erected between the groups in a reactive
sense. The other area where such a separation is expressed is the local
political sphere, as we shall see in the next sub-section.

(iii) Elements of ethnic polarisation

At the level of day-to-day interaction, the people of Plaine Magnien
try to maintain, as far as possible, friendly relations with their
neighbours, regardless of their ethnic group, mainly through door-step
relations and through informal cooperation when it is needed. Beyond
these external manifestations of friendliness, people lead their lives
according to personnel values, i.e. by refraining from too close
interference in each other's lives, so as to avoid a possible invasion
of privacy, and also a possible cause of conflict. At the level of village
politics, however, friction does occasionally arise because the groups
then are not only in juxtaposition, but also in competition for specific
interests. The ethnic orientation of the society becomes mainly apparent
at this level, where people participate and interact from an ethnic
standpoint, i.e. as representatives of their group rather than as
individuals.

Cohen's (1974) definition of ethnicity as the politicisation of non-formal
groups which are competing for interests in the same economic environment
seems to apply to Plaine Magnien in the sense that ethnic allegiances are
actively operative in local-level politics and can become exacerbated in
certain specific situations. Although ethnicity as an ascriptive and as a
differentiating element can be found at other levels of the village
society – and, for that matter, of the global society –, its rallying power
can be observed mainly at the level of local politics, where competition
is more apparent and sometimes more violent. At this level, we can see
the process whereby ethnicity 'hardens' as a separative element in the
society and creates a situation of conflict and competition between the
groups.

We have seen that, in Trois Boutiques, factionalisation was spatial, with
neighbourhood groups acting as competing interest groups and polarising

under the competing leadership of the two leaders. The whole economic environment was geared to the suppression of ethnic conflict and of the polarisation of these two groups. In Plaine Magnien, ethnic competitiveness is more overtly channelled into Village Council matters, in particular because people are avowedly trying to achieve a balance of privileges between the two groups and in the process create a stronger form of polarisation between them.

As in Trois Boutiques, the Village Council runs on the basis of elections every three years and delegation of chairmanship to a different ethnic group every year. There are in fact three groups involved, Hindus, Muslims and Creoles, since Telugus are not numerous enough to be considered separately from North Indians and given informally a seat on the Committee as is the case in Trois Boutiques. What has been observed is that the real basis of factionalisation opposes Muslims and Hindus, with Creoles playing a more passive role in the Village Council. Even when the chairmanship goes to a Creole, the rest of the executive committee remains divided between the first two groups. At present, on a committee of thirteen, only three are Creoles, six are Hindus and four Muslims. The Muslim Chairman cannot thus resolve in any way the factionalisation and opposition of the members, since the executive committee is made up of a fairly equal proportion of Hindus and Muslims, so that, whenever a decision has to be put to the vote, a dead-lock situation arises, pitting the factions against each other.

The privileges which can be obtained from the Village Council are mainly in the form of improvements to specific streets and neighbourhoods, and people feel that each dominant faction will try to provide these improvements to neighbourhoods made up predominantly of its own members. There are also specific projects which seem to benefit mainly one group rather than the other, as for instance the use of Village Council funds to provide a cremation ground to Hindus: it is then argued that the funds should be used for purposes more applicable to the whole village instead. Disputes also occur over subjects which might seem strikingly trivial and not particularly suiting the interests of one group rather than the other; the opposition of the factions then merely translates a feeling of rivalry and a wish to hamper one faction's projects. This is further exacerbated by the adherence of each faction to a particular political

party, so that trends present in the wider society have a direct impact on the village society in the sense that they are immediately reflected by the Village Council and by the relations between the two factions.

One dispute which occurred and went on for several months, and which did not seem at first sight to have an ethnic significance was the taxi-rank dispute.

> The taxi-drivers did not have a permanent taxi rank, but used the central village square as a rank. With the numbers of taxi drivers increasing every year, the place began to be very congested, and the Village Council decided to suggest an alternative place which they could use as a taxi rank. The taxi drivers suggested that a Chinese shop-owner should give them a piece of land which he owned in the centre of the village and which was unused so far. However, an ethnico-political element intervened here: the taxi-drivers, being predominantly Muslims, adhered to a particular national political party; the Chinese shop-owner was a partisan of a different party, of which the Hindus were also partisans. The Hindu members of the Village Council did not, consequently, wish to ask the Chinese man to give his land to people who adhered to a different party to theirs and his. They suggested that another piece of land, further away from the village centre, and belonging to a transport company, should be given to the taxi-drivers. But the latter rejected the location, saying that it was too far from the centre and would be bad for their business. The argument went on for a long time, until the Chairman of the Village Council, a Muslim, decided to try and convince the taxi-drivers to accept the new locality. As Chairman of the Village Council, he was forced to settle for the less conflicting situation, although this meant antagonising his own group. This indeed succeeded in infuriating the taxi drivers further, and they accused the Chairman of being a traitor, and acting for his own interests rather than for those of the community. They threatened to break the Village Hall furniture and create total havoc in the place until they were told that they would be given a different and more satisfactory location. Another location was eventually found, and the dispute was resolved in that way.

This dispute shows that even matters that are basically non-ethnic in nature can degenerate into an ethnic-based conflict. This is mainly because people interpret most issues that arise in the formal sphere from an ethnic standpoint and all matters concerning the Village Council are coloured by the factionalisation that exists in its midst and which everyone is aware of.

The other aspect of group competition that arises in the formal sphere
is in aiming at gaining access to positions which are considered as
brokerage ones in the village. For instance, the Social Centre, which
is in charge of various social activities and forms of social assistance,
is also a centre of dispute over leadership. The basis of such disputes
lies in each group's wish to obtain key positions in the village, since
leadership roles emphasise the power of the group in the society.
Thus, when the President belongs to one group, the opposed group lodges
protests against him, and vice versa. When the last President was
elected, the opposed group sent young men to throw stones at the Hall
in protest, and refused to cooperate in some of its activities.

The Youth Clubs exemplify perhaps the most aggressive form of ethnic
polarisation. There are no clubs regrouping Hindus and Muslims in
the village. The young people engage in cultural, literary and
sporting activities, but there are frequent opportunities for clashes
between the clubs in village competitions, whether literary or sporting.
The latter in particular are frequent causes of dispute in the village,
especially when the clubs are pitted against each other in football
matches. This reflects a national level situation, since the major
football teams in the island are also ethnic-based. When there is a
football match opposing a Muslim and a Hindu team, the sport fans from
the village immediately polarise into their respective ethnic groupings,
and whatever the outcome of the match, it is sure to end in a fight
between both teams and fans.

> When a Village Development Officer tried to organise a
> football tournament last year, he found himself the butt
> of resentment from all sides, because first he chose a
> Hindu referee, and the Muslims protested; then he chose
> a Muslim one, and the Hindus protested; finally, when he
> chose a coloured one from outside the village, the Muslims
> again protested, saying that, the Village Development
> Officer being a Hindu, he would induce the referee to
> give favour to the Hindus. The Officer eventually gave up
> the project.

In fact, the social workers in the village constantly find themselves
confronted by the problem of their own identity being used against
them. They are seen as brokers, being outsiders from the village
and Government-appointed, so that they constitute a bridge between

the village and the higher formal level, and have access to areas of patronage that villagers aim at using when they are looking for jobs and financial assistance etc. They thus expect a social worker or a development officer who is of their own group to exhibit protection towards them as they expect from Village Council members.

> When the Officers were in charge of allotting Government-owned plots of land to villagers for market gardening, the latter expected the Officers to do so on the basis of group rather than of the people most suitable to undertake successful market gardening. In the same way, the selection of people who should benefit from assistance in rabbit-rearing or kitchen gardening is done on purely economic criteria, but the people themselves feel that they can manipulate the social workers on the basis of their identity and thus obtain their 'protection'.

If the social workers do not submit to these pressures, they are accused of not fulfilling their qualité duties; if they do, the other group is bound to acause them of favouritism. They are thus in a conflicting position vis-à-vis the villagers, and find it extremely difficult to perform their duties without becoming involved, against their will, in the ethnic factionalism that exists in the village.

In the same way, people appointed as Police Inspectors in the local police station, or Civil Status Officers, or even the doctor assigned to the Plaine Magnien Dispensary are seen by the villagers entirely in the light of their ethnic identity, and as such are expected to exercise 'protection' towards their group. Each group thus tries to get its own members appointed to these positions as far as possible, often by lodging complaints against those already fulfilling these functions. The Civil Status Officer has thus been changed several times in Plaine Magnien, mainly because he is able to celebrate - or to refuse to celebrate - mixed marriages that young people may wish to contract. Whenever the villagers are not happy with the way the Civil Status Officer deals with mixed marriages, they lodge complaints against him and try to get him posted elsewhere. This situation of competition for privileges is represented on the next page as follows:

(a)   LEADERSHIP ROLES

                VILLAGE COUNCIL   SOCIAL CENTRE

Can provide   can exercise   expresses   can exercise
improvements   brokerage in   national level   patronage/brokerage
in Muslim/   relation to   political   in relation to higher
Hindu areas   higher level   partisanship   level goods
                 goods

(b)   'PROTECTION' ROLES

        SOCIAL/DEVELOPMENT   DOCTOR/NURSE   CIVIL STATUS   POLICE
             WORKERS   OFFICER   INSPECTOR

Have access   have access   can provide   Can control   can control
to higher   to specific   'better'   inter-ethnic   and influence
level   goods e.g.   health care   marriages   intra- and
personalities   financial/   to own group   inter-ethnic
                 material   conflict
                 help for
                 small scale
                 enterprises

Diagram 6:   Roles governing access to privileges sought by each group

This situation of constant opposition has remained static for many years
now, probably because it is restricted to formal and semi-formal spheres.
Although as collectivities the people see each other as a potential threat
to their own group's privileges and position in the village society, this
is not transferred to the interpersonal level, and the neighbourly
relations are not allowed to deteriorate on an ethnic basis except on
occasions when a conflict degenerates and becomes a full-fledged dispute.
People are in fact very concerned, on an informal level, with the avoidance
of dispute. Two years ago when a crime was committed by a Hindu on a
Muslim from Plaine Magnien, the people took care not to discuss the matter
with members of the other group so as to avoid the possibility of an
argument. There is thus a kind of balance that is achieved between the
informal and the formal level, whereby order and good relations are
preserved in the first, and ethnic separation is allowed to become
conflictual in the second, without the overall order in the village being

disrupted. In fact, the groups interact on three different levels in the village society which can be seen as follows:

- as interest groups whose privileges should be maintained at the formal level of society.

- as collectivities emphasised and kept separate by their religious corporateness and the boundary-strengthening aspect of sociétés.

- as collections of individuals who interact at an interpersonnal level on the basis of personnel behaviour and door-step relations.

It is thus probably the conjunction of these three forms of interaction that prevents the disruption of the society in spite of the potentially conflicting nature of the society itself.

In this Section, I have looked at the organisational aspects of ethnicity in Plaine Magnien. The villagers are oriented, in their social life, mainly towards the ethnic group, through the incorporative nature of the société. Social participation is geared towards société activities, which is partly a way of enhancing respectability in the process of social mobility, and partly a reaction to each group's cohesiveness and involvement with the collectivity. Religious observance also emphasises the collectivity, in spite of the internal bases of differentiation such as caste, status, sect etc., which remain contained within its integrative framework. In the sphere of formal organisation, however, the groups do become more openly factionalised and competitive, reacting as interest groups competing to gain access to specific goods and privileges in the village society. It is thus at this level that ethnic polarisation can be most clearly seen in Plaine Magnien, although as a structural element of the society, it pervades all the other spheres as well, as I have attempted to show in this chapter.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, I have attempted to show how ethnic identity can become
a major element in the structure of village-society. It is partly an
'independent' variable, in the sense that the nature, or content of the
groups involved in close interaction will inevitably affect the kind of
ethnic relations that obtain in the village, and, consequently, the
degree of separation and polarisation of the society in terms of groups.
However, it is also dependent on external factors of which a major one
is the economic orientation of the village society. The occupational
structure of Plaine Magnien is thus an important variable in the nature
of ethnic relations, since it acts as a context-creating element within
which ethnic identity can be expressed or stifled, can become aggressive
or remain passive.

In this Chapter, I have first looked at the changes that have taken
place in the occupational structure from the traditional structure
exemplified by Trois Boutiques, to the open-ended one embodied by Plaine
Magnien. The plantation does not act as an encompassing body any more
and remains a source of occupation and an economic resource which does
not intrude into the social existence of the villagers. The villagers'
preoccupation with mobility emphasises the need for private
entrepreneurship, mainly in agricultural ventures such as cane and
vegetable cultivation, on owned or rented land, using family resources.
The opening out of avenues of mobility has also led to the emergence of
'class', or socio-economic stratification in the village, which can be
broadly incorporated within three separate strata; the lower one,
comprises people still engaged in agricultural and manual work at the
labouring level, and who still adhere to values of non-personnel and
comradeship, and are involved in drinking relations. The middle stratum
is the most mobility conscious, and, having reached a certain level in
financial mobility, is intent upon achieving social mobility as well.
For this reason, it adheres to personnel values which serve to differentiate
it further from the lower stratum, and which create a moral and physical
distance between people. Friendly relations between neighbours however
are preserved through informal cooperation and the maintenance of relations
on the door-step, i.e. outside the house, which can be seen both as an act
of friendliness and as a means of avoiding close contact with neighbours.
The higher stratum is made up of four high prestige families who occupy

this position by 'birth', i.e. not only through their financial position as land or shop owners, but also through ascriptive features such as caste, and through the fact that they do not have a recent labouring background.

Personnel values can be seen as one of the informal boundaries between individuals as members of ethnic groups in the course of day-to-day interaction. But as one moves towards spheres where collective organisation is more stressed, the separation between the groups becomes even more visible and overt. In the sphere of the religious société and of religious activities, the nature of the ethnic groups becomes an active force of separation in the society, and one can see both external boundaries arising, in differentiating elements such as clothing, food, congregating at specific times and on specific occasions, and internal bonds being stressed, in the force of commensality within the group, and the emotional allegiance to religion. Thus, although people do use the société and the group to articulate their social mobility, through an emphasis upon respectability and upward mobility through the internal hierarchies of caste and status, the overall cohesion in terms of groups is not affected by the internal differences. The contiguity of the two groups, the Muslims and the Hindus, makes the strengthening of boundaries important, and conscious strategies are evolved within each group in order to stifle inner rifts and antagonisms, and stress outer cohesion and sense of belonging to the group.

Finally, on the formal political level, the groups become actively opposed as interest groups competing for specific privileges and positions in the village, and this often results in deadlock situations where the opposition becomes entrenched over matters that do not even involve ethnic interests.

Plaine Magnien society thus rests upon a balance between mutual tolerance in certain areas and mutual competition in others. Qualité 'protection' may be accepted in economic spheres, but contested as a threat to the opposed group in the political sphere. This is in fact where ethnicity becomes operative as a political element in the friction and confronting of ethnic groups as interest groups in a Cohenian sense. Each group preserves its internal institutional features and modes of

differentiation, but at the same time remains contained within the frame of its identity. Where the groups come into contact as collectivities, the boundaries become strengthened and consciously 'hardened', and the underlying qualité consciousness becomes translated into a surface 'communauté' feeling.

In the next chapter, we shall look at the interrelations between Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien, and draw out the implications of these interrelations in terms of ethnicity.

CHAPTER FIVE
IDENTITY AT THE MICRO LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

In the two preceding chapters, I have looked at two village structures in the light of occupation, social and economic mobility, and the nature of allegiances and solidarity that appear in the course of day-to-day interaction as well as in the sphere of formal organisation. The differing structures of the two villages and the role played by ethnic identity in these structures may be seen as hinging on a specific set of variables: in this chapter, I want to look at these variables so as to try and define the role and significance of ethnic identity at the micro-level, and perhaps to shed a light on its significance in the wider society. Section One will look at the economic variable involved in creating the different configurations present in the two villages, while Section Two will look at the nature and content of the ethnic groups themselves as the second variable.

In the preceding chapters, I tried to draw out the differences between
Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien in terms of a bounded structure and
of an open-ended structure. I approximated Trois Boutiques with the
original plantation village in the sense that the villagers were
occupationally plantation-oriented, and also relied partly on the
sugar estate for certain social benefits and forms of patronage in
housing, obtaining building materials and cash advances when organising
weddings and ceremonies, and also in seeking employment for their
children. Being physically a fairly isolated village, it is also
inward-looking in terms of social relationships and forms of social
assistance, although there are various channels through which external
contacts can be established. But eventually, the nexus of solidarity
relations for villagers in Trois Boutiques is established inside the
village and is overtly of an occupational and of a spatial order, and
covertly of an ethnic order. The village can thus be seen basically
as a closed-in environment, and, for this reason, the villagers are
bounded on all sides by factors limiting individual mobility and
stressing collective assistance and cooperation, and internal modes
of differentiation that might threaten the collectivity remain subdued
and expressed mainly at an underlying level.

In Plaine Magnien, conversely, the geographical situation of the village
and fairly recent morcellement˒ processes have led to the settlement
there of more entrepreneurial types of people and people concerned with
social and financial mobility. There is a proliferation of social and
commercial amenities which have led to the emergence of the village as a
centre towards which many of the people from less developed villages in
the vicinity converge, and communication facilities have thereby been
increased both with these villages and with the small 'townships' of
Mahébourg and Rose-Belle.

There are several reasons which have led to the difference of orientation,
one outwards and one inwards, of Plaine Magnien and Trois Boutiques.
The geographical location is one. The other important reason is the
change in economic structure. In fact, the economic situation in the
two villages offers an empirical context within which different surface

manifestations of ethnic identity can be found. Although at the cognitive level, the nature of identity as qualité remains unchanged, the empirical level shows the different ways in which this identity adapts to external forces in its overt expression. One cannot in this sense divorce the empirical from the cognitive, in particular because the reactive and interactional significance of ethnic identity in the society takes place at the empirical level.

I have attempted, in the preceding chapters, to look at both levels in the shape of externally observable allegiances and means of separation, and cognitively significant orders of identification. I also believe that the empirical context may shed a light on the general pattern of development of Mauritian society in general, in that the occupational and economic structures of the two villages can be seen as linked by a time dimension.

Most of the agricultural villages in Mauritius have had similar origins, and should in principle have followed the same patterns of development. However, location, and the forms of settlement which the people have adhered to, governed partly by ethnic factors and partly by economic factors and inter-village migration, have created different conditions in each village, so that at one moment in time, villages that can be found in the same vicinity exhibit different features and social configurations, as we have seen in the case of Plaine Magnien and Trois Boutiques. This does not mean that, eventually, the same pattern of development will not be traced in each one, occurring at different times and speeds. In fact, this can be seen even in Trois Boutiques, where changes in the plantation structure, which has moved to a more contractual basis of recruitment, and the impingement of values from higher levels of the society are already producing changes in the village society. As we have seen in Chapter three, even the internal modes of solidarity can accommodate strategies of mobility, provided these are phrased in the appropriate social idioms.

Thus, there is a continuity between the two villages which makes them appear, not as opposed structures, but as related ones that represent two different stages of development linked by time.

The change from a plantation-oriented village-type to a more independent form of occupational structure can be seen in terms of the general developmental process in Mauritian society. We have seen in Chapter One (the historical background), how during the early colonial period up to 1930, each ethnic group composing the plural society occupied a more cr less defined occupational and social niche from which mobility was difficult, because the resources were controlled and restricted both by the Colonial Government and by the Franco-Mauritian miller-planters. From the 1930s onwards, the regular parcelling of land by the sugar estates (which have been undergoing since then a constant process of fusion and fission following various economic constraints and strategies -- see, for instance, Rouillard 1968), opened out avenues of mobility to the Indian population. Education had also come within the reach of an increasing number of people, making another means of mobility accessible to the people of labouring background. Nowadays, the two main sources of employment of the Indians are the estate and the Government itself, the latter providing employment in widely varied areas such as the Civil Service, para-statal educational bodies and Government-controlled firms and industries. Thus, the process of breaking out from agriculture, in particular from the labouring sphere, is still going on for the majority of rural Indians, using the same elements of mobility, i.e. land and education. In a way, the process has been repeating itself for the past fifty years for different generations. Since 1974, the economy of the island attained at intervals a flourishing level due to high sugar prices and record crops, thereby accelerating considerably the process of mobility for agriculturally oriented people, and a large number of families have been able to use the sudden prosperity to achieve a break from the labouring stratum. However, economic recession can also considerably affect this process, and the present, seemingly indefinite one is undoubtedly going to set back a large number of rural people even further. High inflation rates, successive devaluations of the currency raising the cost of living to a prohibitive level, and increasing unemployment are fast shutting the avenues of mobility previously opened out.

The difference between the two villages can thus be seen in a global perspective as shedding a light on the strategies of mobility used by rural Indians in the course of Mauritian history. The recession has not yet affected the villagers so deeply as to diminish their concern

with mobility: their priorities are still very much geared towards it, with education and better employment for their children appearing as paramount concerns alongside social respectability and status mobility for themselves.

Thus, in Trois Boutiques, in spite of the elements serving to restrict mobility, there are strategies which allow people to achieve it, but these eventually seem to lead them away from the village in the form of migration. However, slow changes in the village itself, as the people start to adhere to more personnel values or to express in covert ways their need for mobility, will eventually provide a framework for the expression of mobility and a movement out of the labouring sphere within the village itself. This will then represent a transition from a traditional structure to a changing one similar to Plaine Magnien. There is a distinct transformational link between the two structures, which is dependent on time as the main generator of change, but also on the encompassing nature of the plantation which has to be broken out of in order that mobility should be overtly expressed. This transformational process can perhaps be schematised as follows:

TRADITIONAL STRUCTURE   OPEN-ENDED STRUCTURE
    (TROIS BOUTIQUES)   (PLAINE MAGNIEN)

                  Agricultural   AGRICULTURAL   OTHER
PLANTATION   resources   PLANTATION   RESOURCES   ASSETS

Plantation   Land
hierarchy   financial
                 mobility   Commerce

Sardars   Sardars
                                                   Mobility
Labourers   means of   White
                 subsistence   Labourers   -collar
                                                                 jobs

Enclosed within   generative   Change   personnel
ethnic & status   process   towards   values
boundary and   individuality
non-personnel
values

(Use of family labour for financial mobility)
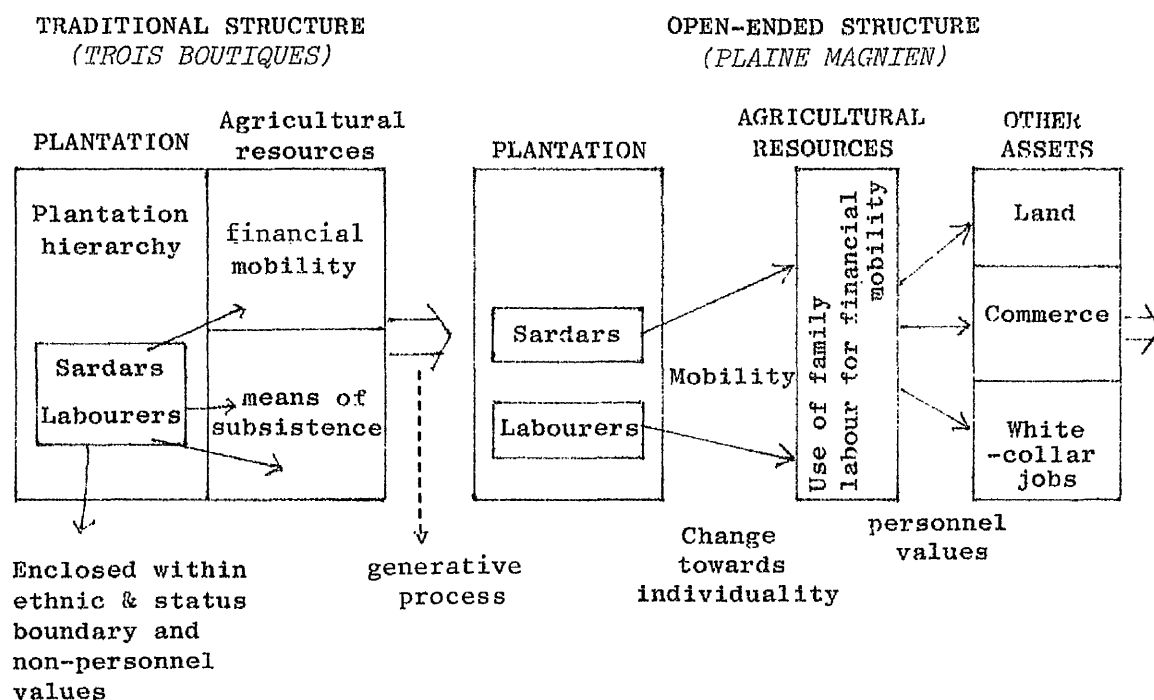
Diagram 7:   Process of change from the traditional structure to the
                        open-ended structure

- 214 -

In the traditional structure, the plantation encloses the sardars and
the labourers within an external boundary which is also sustained by the
internal forces of non-personnel and comradeship values. Renting land
can be a form of mobility for the sardar, but he cannot overtly use it
to express this mobility in the village context. His means of achieving
prestige and authority are restricted to the strategic use of comradeship
and informal networks. For the labourers, renting land is mainly a form
of subsistence cultivation, since it only serves to bridge the gap
between the crop season where money is available, and the inter-crop
season where it is scarce. The strategy of renting land thus remains
enclosed within the boundaries of the plantation, and cannot be translated,
in the social sphere, into mobility. This helps maintain the monolithic
class-structure and the egalitarian values which form part of the internal
bonds running through the village-society and preventing the overt
articulation of ethnicity. At this stage, ethnicity remains at an
underlying level as a 'soft' phenomenon; even the inherent hostility
between Indians and Creoles remains covert and manifests itself under
the cover of non-ethnic factional wrangling while the relationship between
Telugus and North Indians is articulated in terms of amity while preserving
its internal qualitative difference.

As one moves gradually towards a 'progressive' structure, the sugar
estate ceases to encompass the economic orientation of the village
society, and land-renting and cultivation strategies become a means of
moving out of the traditional structure into one where individuality is
made possible. This involves the use of family labour, and to a certain
extent ethnic patronage. Values become more geared towards personnel
ones, as each family tries to achieve mobility through further entrepre-
neurial ventures such as buying more land, starting a commercial
enterprise, or obtaining white-collar jobs. These can then be translated
into social mobility strategies which are articulated in terms of the
ethnic group and the société representing it. Thus, the movement out of
the plantation structure does not mean necessarily breaking out of the
agricultural sphere. Independent farmers can deal with the estate on a
strictly business basis without being socially involved in it and without
submitting to any form of control on its part. Cultivation then becomes
the triggering device for class stratification to appear in the society.
Because of the emphasis upon individual/familial ventures which rely on

the patronage of the ethnic collectivity, and the articulation of social mobility within the group, ethnic separation becomes overt, and competition for privileges and specific goods allow ethnicity to become a 'hard' phenomenon.

Although we have seen these two configurations appear in two different villages, with the polarisation and the group-articulation of the society being further emphasised in Plaine Magnien because of the *nature* of the groups - a variable which we shall be looking at in the next section -, in fact, this socio-economic transformation can take place in one village within a time-span. For instance, the continuities that can be observed in Plaine Magnien, where members of the labouring sphere still partly adhere to the non-personnel values exhibited by people of Trois Boutiques show that even there the transformation is not complete. The contrastive situation in the two contiguous villages in fact allow us to see at a single moment in time the two related configurations and their implications, and thereby to discover the influence of the time-dimension on the village society.

Because of the group-oriented nature of the open-ended structure, it is possible to predict that, even in a village like Trois Boutiques where the qualité groups are not strongly differentiated as yet by external factors, areas of competitiveness will eventually arise as the society moves forward, and the groups may eventually become bases of factionalisation as well. Already, the young people, who are more accessible to the trends occurring in the wider society, are forming group-exclusive youth clubs. A deeper preoccupation with Telugu identity and with obtaining specific rights for the group will probably lead them to compete with North Indians in Village Council matters as well, although this has not started to take place as yet. There will also be a more conscious attempt to differentiate overtly between the two groups, a process which we shall look at in Part Two of this thesis.

What this implies is that the underlying qualité consciousness in the village, which remains nascent and unpoliticised and expresses mainly moral bonds related to kinship and blood, only needs the catalyst of an economic transformation from a traditional, encompassing structure that exercises control and a constraining force on the separative elements of the society,

to a more open-ended structure that lifts this constraining force, in order to become actively operative and organisational in the society. The economic dimension thus acts as an empirical contextual variable in the emergence of ethnic identity as an overtly separative and organisational element in the society.

The intensity and swiftness of polarisation and politicisation are however largely dependent on the nature of the groups, and this is the other variable which I shall look at in the next section.
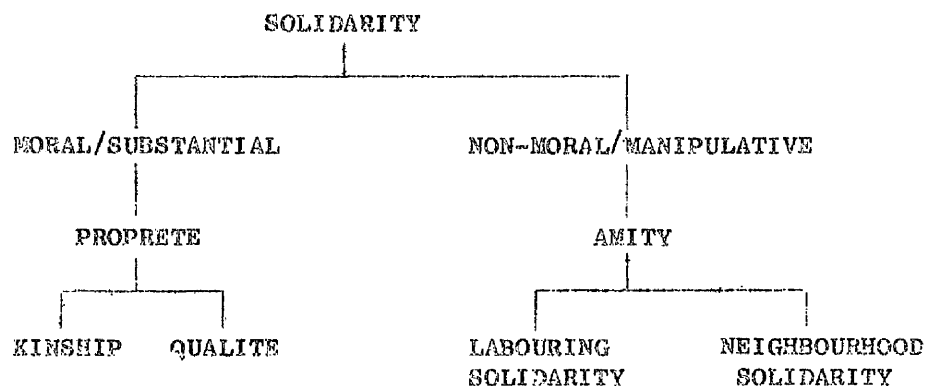
Ethnic separation can be seen as being fostered in two ways: one is from an internally derived sense of difference that is built into ascription, and the other is from an externally constructed basis of separation that springs from a reactive element in group-allegiance. This second, reactive aspect is what effectively compartmentalises the society on an organisational level. The qualitative aspect, on the other hand, is the primary one, since a sense of identity to a kind cannot exist without a sense of difference from other kinds, which is basically what the word qualité conveys. Qualité does not in fact express a collectivity or a group. It is more a sense of relation and belonging, entirely different from the expression of allegiance to a *nation* or *communauté*. The latter are expressive of the rallying power of ethnic identity; the former relates an individual to individuals sharing the same qualité, in the same way as an individual is part of a kinship group through his belief in the affective and biological bonds relating the different members to each other, and, as such, both qualité and kinship belong to the realm of ascription and substance.

Thus, in Trois Boutiques, it is possible for this substantial 'propre' identity to co-exist with other orders of solidarity that create different groupings in the society, because (a) they do not pertain to the same order of relations, (b) they do not conflict because they operate on different levels, and (c) they do not have the same power of cohesion.

The main aspect of solidarity that becomes apparent in the village sphere is that it has, on the one hand, a moral, altruistic sense, and on the other, a self-interested, manipulative sense. We have to relate these to the universe of ego's relations in order to see how they co-exist and influence each other. They are all couched within the same ideological terms of duty, equality, friendship and kinship, which serve to keep them within the same framework as a nexus of solidarity in relation to ego, but in fact they are conceptually kept separate, as we have seen in the subordination of neighbourly duty to qualité duty, for instance. It is possible to relate these orders of solidarity to Pitt-Rivers's classification of 'amity' relations as kinship and pseudo-kinship, which he in turn categorises as jural and non-jural. He states that kinship is first and foremost con-substantiality, but he included under the

consubstantial category the different types of pseudo-kinsmen who are
ritually made into kinsmen, in opposition to adopted kinsmen who are
'surrogates' rather than moral kin (1973: 87). The stress on the fact
of consubstantiality and the category of 'amity' perhaps offer us the
basis of another classification which would oppose the category of
consubstantiality to that of amity rather than subsume the one under
the other. This has the advantage of placing them both within an
ideological framework of friendship and duty, while at the same time
keeping them separate as relations of ascription and relations of
non-ascription. What Pitt-Rivers describes as "inflexible, involuntary,
immutable" relations (p. 87), fits the category of ascription which
includes blood, kinship and qualité, which can be seen as the 'propre'
relations. In fact, the term 'propreté' offers a good basis for the
definition of moral and substantial solidarity relations with ego, and
in opposition to the propre category, there is the amity category which
includes the non-ascriptive solidarity relations that ego will establish.
This category, not being an ascribed one, has to be held together by
specific elements which we have looked at in Chapter three. Amity is
expressed, in Trois Boutiques, in terms expressive of friendship, such
as 'camarade' ("comrade") and of pseudo-kinship, such as 'fami'. This
opposition can be represented as follows:

```
                          SOLIDARITY
                              |
        ┌─────────────────────┴─────────────────────┐
        |                                            |
  MORAL/SUBSTANTIAL                         NON-MORAL/MANIPULATIVE
        |                                            |
     PROPRETE                                      AMITY
        |                                            |
   ┌────┴────┐                              ┌────────┴────────┐
   |         |                              |                 |
KINSHIP   QUALITE                       LABOURING        NEIGHBOURHOOD
                                        SOLIDARITY        SOLIDARITY
```

<u>Nexus of solidarity in Trois Boutiques</u>

Thus, ego's nexus of solidarity is conceptually separated into a propre
category and an amity category which involve, on the one hand altruistic,
moral relations, and on the other, manipulative, transactional relations.
The conceptual separateness of the two orders of relations is also

expressed in terms of commensality, which we have looked at briefly in Chapter three and four.

I have stressed the fact that commensality should be restricted to the qualité members only, since people in general are unwilling to eat with people of a different qualité-group. Commensality is closely related to the nature of the qualité group, and in fact can be seen to be one of the defining aspects of qualité. This is related to the idea of 'substance' as proponed by Marriot and Inden. The latter see human groupings as being more adequately described as 'genera', which conveys the idea of a fundamental form of ascriptive grouping whether this be kinship or caste, and which include the 'natural' relationships that a person has. In relation to South Asian society, the genera express groupings that are linked by a particular substance and by particles which are ordered into codes. These codes cannot be regarded "as transcendent over bodily substance, but as immanent within it" (Marriott & Inden 1977 : 228). They are both expressive of the group and can be used in order to accomplish specific transactions with other groups. Relationships of commensality between castes can then be seen as transactions of substance-codes which are meant to uplift the different genera through conduct that is in keeping with 'dharma'. Substance-coding in fact encompasses many elements such as food, occupation, verbal behaviour and even money, which can all be classified as 'gross' or 'subtle' transactional elements (Marriott 1976).

In the sphere of commensal relations in Trois Boutiques, food as well as the particular qualité of the people whom one eats with are involved in allowing or preventing the establishment of commensality. The ideal relationship with neighbours is meant to be emphasised by commensality, but in fact, this is not observed in real life. The only cases of commensality across groups are when there are social events such as weddings or religious ceremonies, in which case everyone eats on banana leaves and with their hands. This perhaps avoids the closeness of contact that is involved in eating together on an informal, day-to-day basis, and this also generally takes place outside the house. Collective events in villages can perhaps be seen as 'transitive' ones where commensality does not involve a deep substantial transaction but more an overt expression of collective solidarity on an amity basis. In general, neighbourly

commensality remains a verbal assertion, an idiomatic expression of solidarity.

In the labouring sphere, too, conviviality does not involve a relation of substance, but more a transactional link between drinking partners. This also takes place outside the house in the impersonal environment of the local shop, and the low-status ascription of alcohol makes it an unfit vehicle for the transmission of substance in any case. Further, even when a sardar eats and drinks in a labourer's home -- as in the case of the sardar who ate in a Creole's home --, the relationship established is described as a transactional and strategic one, not a moral one. The restriction on Hindu-Creole commensality in other situations shows that the sardar/labourer commensality did not pertain to the same order, and took place on a different conceptual level.

This indicates that the villagers are well aware that the different orders of solidarity belong to different abstract planes. Commensality does not always imply a substantial link between the people involved: if it takes place in a *non-altruistic* sphere of relations, if it is made less intense through specific elements such as eating on banana leaves and with one's fingers outside the house -- since banana leaves can be thrown away, whereas plates, knives and forks retain the substance of the person who has used them --, if it is verbally asserted but not actively established, then it can be used to express solidarity between non-qualité people. But eating in a person's house, and on his or her crockery in a non-transitive situation -- i.e. in a situation that does not diminish the intensity of the act -- does involve such a transmission and loss of substance, which is why people are reluctant to enter such commensal relations in any situation. The intensity of this reluctance is also dependent upon the distance between the qualité groups, and in the kind of food eaten by each group.

There are then two separate paths of commensality in the village, one where it is 'transitivised' by the situation and the particular conceptual plane on which it takes place, i.e. whether within the sphere of moral relations or within that of non-moral relations, and the other where it is more intensely progibited as one moves further away from the qualité group. Within the sphere of non-moral amity relations, it is an

idiomatic and a transactional expression of a link between neighbours
or between labourers, so that qualité, neighbourliness and labouring
comradeship are all subsumed under the same axiom of solidarity, even
though they belong to different orders. Within the sphere of moral
relations, the significance of commensality is reminiscent of the
substantial basis of caste and kinship in South India, where one shares
substance both with caste members and kin members, but one only sits
and eats with kin members (David 1973). Thus kinship and qualité both
prescribe commensality, but it is more frequent and closer among kin
than among qualité. Both however are conceived as relations of substance.

In Plaine Magnien, there is a progression of qualité solidarity from the
individual, informal level, to the collective and formal level. This is
achieved partly through the occupational context which I discussed above,
and partly because of the nature of the two main groups involved, which
are not only strongly identified from within, but also strongly opposed
from without. In the village, the Muslims and the North Indians show
the stronger opposition because of their numerical equivalence and
dominance, while the Creoles remain circumscribed in their low status
boundary, and the Telugus form a small and outward-looking group.

The codes of qualité are apparent in Plaine Magnien in several areas:
these may be classified as codes of 'duty', and codes of 'same-ness', or
perhaps more significantly, as active and passive substance-codes. The
codes of duty, which are the active ones, preserve the sense of identity
through prescribed acts of mutual aid and cooperation. We have seen in
the case of Trois Boutiques that this was resorted to in cases where
the situation could not involve 'external' people, or outsiders. The
ideological basis of qualité cooperation is that a qualité member
cannot use knowledge that he has acquired about another qualité member
against him, and can only be motivated by a sincere desire to help. (This
does not work precisely in this way, but in fact, whereas people of the
same ethnic group *do* indulge in gossip over the private matters of a group-
member, they will rarely gossip about the same matter with a member of a
strongly separated group). This is then one of the ways in which substance
works, i.e. by making the group prior to the individual. In fact, even in
Plaine Magnien where the occupational sphere has an individualistic basis,
the society can be said to be group-oriented, not in the sense of the
village-collectivity, but of the qualité group. This can be seen in the

use of kin-members in entrepreneurial ventures, and in the emphasis
upon qualité patronage. The active substance-codes are apparent in the
occupational sphere in the fact that each individual is expected to help
and 'protect' his qualité in any situation. This works mainly when this
help and 'protection' are set in the context of inter-group competition.
Then mutual help in the group does operate, and this is why competitiveness
is prevented between qualité members. Qualité 'protection' is not seen
as a negative form of favouritism but as a natural act, since it forms
part of what each person knows to be the prescription of propre relations.

The passive codes are the set of shared elements of the group: food,
beliefs, prayers etc., can all be included in this set, since they are
part of what each member knows that he has in common with other members.
We have seen that commensality is severely restricted in Plaine Magnien
and certain types of sweetmeat sharing are meant to create a bridge
between the groups, because they do not involve a substantial link. In
fact, the passive substance codes are only passive when there is no
contact with and opposition to other groups. I.e., members of the
qualité group do not have to eat together to know that they eat the same
things and are linked by the fact that they can share food. Similarly,
they can observe religious practices privately and still know that they
form part of a religious collectivity. The passive substance-codes are
thus part of the knowledge of each qualité member of what he shares with
others, even if he does not actually express this sharing concretely.
There is no need of external and verbal assertion of same-ness among
qualité members, since this same-ness is part of them as their qualité.

It is in fact the contact between qualité groups that creates the need
to express the internal same-ness by external differentiation. Even in
Trois Boutiques where one was not meant to express overtly one's qualité,
restrictions on commensality did draw precise boundaries between the
qualité groups. In Plaine Magnien, where there is no socially enforced
rule to stifle ethnic solidarity and to overtly deny its separative force,
passive and active substance codes become appropriate vehicles for
expressing the difference between the groups. Thus, although qualité
itself, as an order of being, does not draw boundaries, substance-coding
can in fact be used to draw external boundaries between the groups.
Where in the sphere of caste relations in India, they were used as

conceptualisations of rank through the sets of transactions that could
be conducted between the castes, and thus became externally expressive
of rank and status while being internally expressive of substance, in
the sphere of qualité relations in Mauritius, substance-codes do not
externally express a system of ranking, but a system of boundaries that
can be more or less distancing depending on the groups and on the context.

Thus, the active codes in Plaine Magnien emerge as ethnic 'protection'
in the Village Council sphere, for instance, and in other formal areas,
so that the polarisation of the groups becomes visible and aggressively
competitive. The positively evaluated code of qualité 'protection' becomes
the negatively assessed ethnic 'protection' or 'communalisme'. The
passive codes are translated into overt differentiating elements such as
clothing, congregating, and the intensifying of certain types of food
as embodiments of the group such as the *halal* and *parsad* food sharing.
These elements then become the active definitions of the group, creating
a frame around each which is made up of rigidified substance codes.
These can then no longer be made more transitive, as they are in Trois
Boutiques. They have in fact become strong boundaries, and the society
can no longer be seen as a collectivity, but more as a conglomeration
of groups which each occupy a niche and will probably be vying for more
space around this niche.

CONCLUSION

The observation of two different village environments as spatial
contexts within which one can elucidate the significance and role of
ethnicity has allowed us to draw several conclusions which may be
applied to the wider society as well and not just to the micro-level.

First, the two villages may be seen as linked within a time-continuum
and representing two different stages in the development pattern of
Mauritian rural society. They represent a movement from a traditional
structure to an open-ended structure which can be seen in transformational
terms, one having generated the other. The occupational sphere,
(contained, in the traditional structure, within the plantation, and more
independent of it in the open-ended structure), represents an empirical
context within which different cognitive as well as organisational
patterns can be observed. It is then the first variable which can be
seen to affect the nature of ethnic relations and the role of ethnic
identity in the society.

Secondly, the nature of the groups, in a qualitative sense, and their
juxtaposition, in a reactive sense, act as the second variable which
may alter the significance of ethnicity in the society. Trois Boutiques
society is organised into separate orders of solidarity which can be
classified as belonging to the propre, ascriptive order, and to the non-
ascriptive, non-altruistic order. These are ego's nexus of solidarity
relations through which he can both ascribe to the non-personnel,
collectivity-oriented nature of the society, and express his deeper
allegiance to qualité. In fact, the non-ascriptive forms of solidarity
use idiomatically the language of altruism and morality which is the
basis of qualité substance-coding. In Plaine Magnien, qualité operates
both at the individual, informal level, where it is expressed in terms
of codes of duty – active codes – and codes of similarity, or sameness –
passive codes –, and at the formal, collective level where these codes
are rigidified into boundaries between the ethnic groups. This hardening
of ethnic identity comes into being mainly because of the juxtaposition
of two groups, in particular where they are strongly identified ones as
the Muslim and the North Indian groups.

There is thus a transition that takes place in the significance of
ethnic identity, from a substantial order of ascription to a structural
form of incorporation into the society. In the process of emergence
from the cognitive level to the surface level, it also undergoes a
process of hardening which makes it appear as a strong separative
element in the society, leading to the formation of politicised groups
and interest-groups within a competitive sphere.

This process, illustrated here in the village context, can also be
exhibited by a single group. In Trois Boutiques, we have seen how
the Telugus remain distinct as a qualité group but are not actively
separated from the North Indians on an overt level. In a multi-group
context where they are numerous, they show a certain amount of informal
organisation through sociétés, religious activities and marriage
networks. But these do not lead to their politicisation, in a Cohenian
sense, and to their emergence as interest-groups. However, at the
macro-level of society, recent trends in ethnicity have led to a sharpened
consciousness of the manipulative uses of ethnic identity. Although the
village lags behind higher-level societal trends, it can be predicted
that these will eventually reach the micro-level as well, again
transforming ethnic relations.

In Part Two of this thesis, we will now look at the Telugu group in
isolation, in order to discover the internal bases of its ethnic identity,
and at the macro-level in order to examine the organisational processes
and 'politicisation' of the group as it moves from 'soft' to 'hard'
ethnicity.

PART TWO

CONTENT AND ORGANISATION OF IDENTITY

CHAPTER SIX

RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION OF TELUGU KINSHIP

INTRODUCTION

In Part One of this thesis, I introduced the concept of qualité as
representing an order of being, sustained primarily by an ideological
notion of substance similar, in its ascriptive form, to blood and kinship.
I would like, in this Part, to retrace the notion of ascription and qualité
through particular institutions of one group. Kinship and marriage, both
on an effective level and on a symbolical level, seem to me to be at the
core of this group's identity, both notionally and as a preservative
element. Take away the principle of endogamy, and the group may slowly
dissolve through repeated contact with other groups. This depends also on
whether the group can be seen as a 'strong' one or as a 'weak' one. The
Tamil group, for instance, is a strong minority group, since it is overtly
identified in the wider society as a separate group; the North Indian
group is a strong majority one because of the power it wields in being
numerically dominant. The Telugu group, which I have chosen to analyse in
this part of the thesis, represents features of both numerical and
organisational weakness. Preservation from the 'inside', so to speak, is
thus of the utmost importance in the survival of the group in a situation
of plurality where there are both factors of diffusion and factors of
cohesion at work in the society. It is important to see how the group is
internally maintained before one sees how it externally fits into the
context of competing and impinging groups in the whole society.

So far, the different studies and analyses of ethnicity that have been
attempted have perhaps taken one of these aspects for granted: although
anthropologists such as Epstein and Wallman have made it clear that the
'inside' of the ethnic boundary is as important as the 'outside', there
have been few attempts to actually define the inside in concrete terms.
The Telugu group, which has been looked at in the village context in Part
One, behaving as a qualité group but without exhibiting sharply
contrastive features with the other Hindu group to which it was juxtaposed,
is interesting for several reasons: in the official classification of
ethnic groups in Mauritian Censuses, it is not considered as an ethnic

but as a linguistic grouping subsumed under the Hindu category. It does not have strong identifying elements which would make it . immediately recognisable from the outside; in fact, for a long time, the non-Hindu groups of Mauritius were hardly aware of the existence of a separate Telugu identity, although they were aware of the North Indians and Tamils as distinct groups within the Hindu category. Yet, the Telugus are the third Hindu group numerically, and do identify . themselves as a separate group on the basis of qualité. They are also endogamous, and if one is looking for the differentiating factors that exist between them and the other Hindu groups, these can in fact be seen in the sphere of kinship and marriage, where people consciously abide by different rules. Among the Telugus, qualité and kinship are closely linked, both in a real and in a symbolical sense, through the fact that the Telugus see the qualité identity as being first and foremost engendered by relations of kinship, and perpetuated by endogamous marriage. Because of the smallness of the group, relations of kinship can easily be traced and memorised, and each member of the group is categorised in terms of the position he or she occupies in the network of kinship relations. By looking at relations of kinship, and in particular at the significance of marriage and alliance among the Telugus, I wish to bring out the fact that these are institutions which are at the basis of identity in that they convey relations of substance, and also act as differentiating elements vis-à-vis other groups. The preservation of a separate identity for Telugus hinges primordially on the preservation of specific Telugu practices in the kinship sphere, and on a surface level, on overt manifestations of the group, which we shall look at in Chapter seven.

I would like to point out that this discussion of kinship is not meant to be set in a paradigm of kinship theory but will only be compared to similar studies on the subject in order to bring out the persistence of cultural patterns in the preservation of identity.

SECTION ONE: KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE

When a Telugu meets another Telugu for the first time, the main
preoccupation is to find out which kin-group the person belongs to,
whom he is married to, and which kin-groups he is allied to. He will
then be able to find a common link either to the kin-group itself or
in the allied group, and be able to establish a relationship with the
person on a kinship basis. The conclusion he will come to is that,
after all, all Telugus are *fami*.

Although this may at first seem to be merely a way of setting a new
relationship within a known territory - i.e. if you have defined a
particular link with a person, you know how to behave towards him or
her - this form of link-establishing reveals several things about
Telugu kinship. First, although the kinship assertion seems to be a
symbolical one, it is always phrased in terms of real links that are
painstakingly explored and expressed. It is not enough to establish
that two people are both allied to the same kin-group: we must also
find out and explain *how* we are allied to it, and therefore, how we
are allied to each other. Secondly, the fact that this device is
usually successfully achieved means that there are in fact actual
affinal bridges running throughout the community. Thirdly, the
assertion of kinship on the basis of remote affinal links shows the
importance of affinity and marriage in the kinship structure of the
Telugu group.

The notion of marriage as *alliance* (French/Creole for 'affinity') is
not peculiar to the Telugus of Mauritius only. In fact, the same
kinship patterns have been observed in several societies in South
India, which show striking ressemblances in their marriage regulations
and in their kinship terminology. We should then perhaps have a
preliminary look at Dravidian kinship patterns before going on to look
at specifically Mauritian-Telugu institutions.

(i) Dravidian kinship

The primary features of Dravidian kinship are based on the symmetry and
logic of the terminology, the importance of cross-cousin marriage and
prohibition of parallel cousin marriage, and on the complementarity -

or opposition, in structural terms - of consanguinity and affinity.
Even with differing terms, kinship patterns observed in Tamil Nadu, in
Shri Lanka and in other parts of South India exhibit strikingly similar
features, revolving around cross-cousin marriage and eZD marriage as
the most apparent unifying links[1]. The similarities and systematic
nature of the terminologies have not prevented serious and long-winded
controversies from arising among social anthropologists, about the
significance of the system, the possible heuristic explanations for its
existence, and the interrelation between terminology and application
of it on the ground.

In this section, rather than look at the controversial issues
themselves - which try, for instance, to determine whether cross-cousin
marriage is due to the mode of descent and transmission of property
(cf. Gough 1956; Yalman 1969), and whether Dravidian kinship expresses
at all an ideal of filiation and lineal descent or is solely an
expression of marriage, a view adopted by Dumont, for instance - I will
look at the distinguishing features that characterise the system, in
relation to Telugu kinship in Mauritius. After having looked at the
latter, it will then be possible to shed some new light on the
controversies.

Dumont has been the first to look at the kinship terminology in
structural terms as an expression of the system itself. The peculiarities
of the Dravidian system have however been noted as early as 1877 by
Morgan (cited in Dumont 1953: 34), and Rivers also stressed the importance
of the classification of the terminology into cross and parallel
(ibid.:34-35). But the relationship between terminology and system only

---

1. Most of the studies of Dravidian kinship have been centred on Tamil
   Nadu and other Tamil-speaking areas. Very few - if any - have been
   specifically made with reference to Telugu-speaking people except in
   Trautman's (1981) study, where he mentions briefly that Telugus also
   ascribe to the same terminological system. The dearth in similar
   analyses of kinship among the Telugus makes a controlled comparison
   of Indian Telugus and Mauritian Telugus difficult, but since
   Trautman does not mention any significant variants in Telugu kinship
   in South India, I will interpret the data gathered in Mauritius as
   Mauritian variants. It is to be hoped that subsequent studies of
   Indian Telugu kinship in terms of Dravidian kinship as well as
   substance theory will clarify this position.

became a focus of interest when Dumont (1953; 1961) pointed it out and tried to contest the notion that kinship systems were necessarily based on descent and filiation rather than marriage. For Dumont, the very principle of Dravidian kinship systems rests on the fact of marriage. Going from the premise that cross-cousin marriage is a prescribed form of marriage, while parallel-cousin marriage is prohibited, one finds the kinship terminology compartmentalising, in relation to ego, all relatives into two classes, which revolve around the crucial affinal relationship between F and MB - or, reversing the sexes, M and FZ. Thus, F is in opposition to MB, who is an affine both in relation to F and to Ego for whom he is a 'father-in-law'. M is in opposition to FZ who is Ego's potential 'mother-in-law' (1953: 35). The distinction of the two classes through the kinship terms used runs through three generations, distinguishing Ego's relatives of his father's generation, as well as those of his generation and those of his children's generation. This results in a consistent separation between Ego's cross-cousins and parallel-cousins, and, by extension, of his cross-relatives and parallel-relatives. Since the distinction arises mainly because of the possibility of marriage between Ego and a cross-cousin, who thus enters an affinal relationship with the cross-relatives, this implies that there is an equation here between cross-relatives and affines, and parallel-relatives and consanguines. What we have, then, is a terminology that expresses the marriage system and formalises it through the perpetuation of the alliance distinction (between F and MB) over several generations. In Dumont's terms, affinity is transmitted lineally over several generations in the same way as consanguinity is, and cross-cousin marriage in fact represents the establishment of alliance through a repetition of the link formed in the previous generation. For him, the Dravidian kinship system "can be considered, in its broad features, as springing from the combination, in precise configurations, of four principles of opposition: distinction of generation, (...) distinction of sex, distinction of kin identical with alliance relation, and distinction of age" (ibid.: 39).

Nur Yalman is in general in agreement with Dumont, especially over the question of the importance of the terminology in identifying two distinct classes of relatives with whom one may and one may not marry (Yalman 1969). However, rather than describe the basic opposition

in the terminologies as consanguinity versus affinity, he observes
that this affinity is in fact embodied mainly in the fact of ego's
marriage to his cross-cousin, and that in higher generations than
Ego's father, i.e. in his grand-father's generation, the distinction
is lost, since the grand-parents merge as Ego's consanguines. The
opposition, then, should be described in term of the cross and parallel
opposition, and be seen as describing lateral relationships rather than
lineal ones. He eventually ascribes the practice of cross-cousin
marriage, on the basis of his Ceylonese material, to the brother-
sister relationship, and the claims they have on each other's children.
In the different groups he observed, the significant aspects of the
brother-sister relationship were the sharing of equal property-rights,
which either one or the other could relinquish in favour of the other:
this created a subsequent 'right' which the sibling who had relinquished
his or her property had on the other's children (ibid.:623). In fact,
where Dumont saw the notion of alliance as being the essential feature
of the kinship systems and cross-cousin marriages deriving from its
diachronic dimension, so that the latter did not need any external
explanations such as dual organisation or transmission of property to
account for their presence in the society, Yalman (1969) and Gough (1956),
in her study of Tanjore Brahmins, do resort to explanations that rely
on extraneous factors existing in the societies where the kinship systems
can be found. Gough, for instance, ascribes the differences between
Brahmin kinship patterns in Tanjore and low caste ones in the same area
to the particular economic features present in the two groups' structure.
The subordinate status of women in the first group, which is organised
in terms of lineages and corporate rights to land, is ascribed to their
economic dependence on men and to the inferiority of status of wife-
givers in relation to wife-takers. Thus, they are 'assimilated' to
their husbands in the sense that they use the same terms of address to
their husband's relatives. The low castes, on the other hand, do not
have a deep lineage structure, and women participate both in cultivating
the land and in their natal group's activities; this results, according
to Gough, in the economic independence of the women, and their using
different terms of address from their husband's (Gough 1956). But
Dumont sees the difference of terminology between Brahmans and low
castes, while both have prescribed cross-cousin marriages, as stemming
from the existence of a hypergamous principle among the former and the

lack of it, with an emphasis upon alliance, among the latter (Dumont 1961). (We will come back to this particular point at a later stage).

The variations which these authors have observed are in fact group or area-specific ones. I.e. the ethnographic material contains variations which may seem basic to the anthropologist in so far as they are reflected in the kinship system; however, in spite of these differences, which have induced the anthropologists to ascribe the system to various institutional features that belong outside the sphere of kinship itself, it seems that,underlying all these overt forms, there is an elementary form that unifies the kinship system throughout these social situations. In this sense, Dumont's emphasis upon the underlying aspects of Dravidian kinship seems more productive than Gough's approach, which stresses the differences, or even Yalman's, who brings in the notion of property to explain the incidence of cross-cousin marriage in the groups he studied. Also, a more recent approach seems to be leading away from the concern with descent, lineality or laterality, and behaviourist or economic explanations, in favour of a substantive approach based on the notions of blood and substance. Good (1981) critises those anthropologists who choose to analyse kinship in terms of either behavioural, jural or categorical (i.e. taxonomic) constructs: this choice of one level of analysis only gives rise to many "inconsistencies and incongruences" which can be explained if one takes into consideration all the levels. In fact, an inconsistency on one level may be explained on a different level (1981: 108-109). The 'ethnosociological' approach advocated by Schneider (1968), Mariott and Inden (1977), in general tends to isolate the jural rather than the behavioural or categorical, but David (1977) introduces both cognitive and normative constructs in his approach. This seems to be in fact the best approach, since the cognitive is both elucidated by and elucidates the normative. The substantive, jural level should then also be analysed in terms of the classificatory schemes which are implicit in the total system, as well as in terms of the practices exhibited "on the ground" by the people. In one particular article, David uses the exegesis of Jaffna Tamils to elucidate the kinship terminology. What he finds is that the terminology itself is based on notions of substance which segment as the orders of

relations considered narrow down: people are thus classified as caste
members and non-caste members, and caste members, who share common
substance, in turn segment into kin-members and non-kin members. The
kin members, who are all sharers of one form of substance, again
subdivide into sharers of bodily substance and non-sharers of bodily
substance, and finally, the non-sharers are classified into uniters
of substance and non-uniters of substance. Caste members share
substance through the myth of origin ascribing common descent to all
members, and kin-members share substance at a higher level,but are
divided into uniters and non-uniters, on the one hand, and sharers on
the other hand. Sharers and non-uniters are the non-marriageable kin -
who would be otherwise termed parallel relatives - while uniters are
the marriageable ones, or cross-relatives (David 1973: 525). What this
implies is that there are different degrees or kinds of substance
delineating these different classes. David concludes that the
distinction between cross and parallel relatives does not hold because
of the belief in the transubstantiation of women upon marriage, so that
in fact, they do not share common blood with their natal group any
longer. The cross relatives in fact fall under the category of uniters
of substance, while the parallel ones are divided into the categories
of sharers and non-uniters which are however denoted by the same terms,
while affinal terms are applied to uniters.

It is important to preserve, to a certain extent, both perspectives.
Dumont's emphasis upon alliance as opposed to descent or filiation as
the main principle of the Dravidian kinship system provides an important
insight into both the terminological structure and the functioning of
groups which do not ascribe to hypergamy, and have, perhaps, a tendency
towards forms of endogamy rather than exogamy. The distinction between
cross and parallel relatives upheld by Yalman should also be kept, since
it may provide us with a useful classificatory scheme in societies where
the exegesis does not have such clear-cut categorisations of substance
as those held by the Jaffna Tamils. But the idea of substance is also
interesting in itself, and can lead to a deeper understanding of the
cultural significance of consanguinity and affinity as opposed to a
more biologically oriented concept of substance.

I will be looking at the particular points about substance in Section
Two. I will now go on to look at specific aspects of Telugu kinship
in Mauritius.

(ii) The kinship terminology

In looking first at the terminology, I wish to show some of the striking features of resilience and change that are exhibited by the group. Although in most areas, many terms of address as well as reference are no longer used in Telugu, having been replaced by Creole terms, in villages with a predominant number of Telugus, there is a far stronger survival of terms. This is partly linked to the use of the language itself, which is also more widespread in those villages, but kinship terms in general show more survival capacity than use of language. In particular, knowledge of terms does not seem to correspond to usage, and all the people interviewed in the course of fieldwork showed a deeper knowledge of the terms to be used than was warranted by usage. Among young people, in particular, Creole terms are more frequently used in address than Telugu ones; however, close family members are addressed by the Telugu terms, as well as immediate affines, while more distant relatives are addressed by Creole terms. But even the young people know all the terms shown in the table below. The competence/performance gap is thus very marked, but since competence was fairly consistent among my respondents, while performance varied widely according to age, region, degree of orthodoxy etc., I have in general relied upon competence rather than performance, since my preoccupation was with knowledge of traditional terms rather than usage.

The Telugu terminology conforms very much to the pattern described by Dumont; i.e. all relatives are clearly demarcated within two categories which include Ego's cross and parallel relatives and which can be termed 'terminological affines' and 'terminological consanguines', since the terms used for cross relatives are those used for in-laws, while those used for parallel relatives are also used for affines of affines, i.e. WZH, WBW, HZH, HBW etc. All the people related to Ego, whether by blood or by marriage, will then fall under either of these two classes. Further, there is a distinction of generation demarcating Ego's generation and his father's generation, which fall under both categories of consanguines and affines, but at the level of Ego's grand-father's generation, the terms stop delineating the categories, thus indicating a merging of the two. Thirdly, there is a distinction of age, where the terms used in Ego's generation are all addressed to

people who are older than Ego, and in his father's generation there
are also prefixes to indicate older and younger. These relations
may be seen in tabular form in Table 7:

	MALE			FEMALE		
1	TATA-FF, MF		AMAM MM		BABAM FM	
2	NAINA (F)	Ped: FB/MZH (e) Pin: FB/MZH (y)	AMMA (M)	Ped: MZ/FBW (e) Pin: MZ/FBW (y)		Terminological Consanguines
3	Men: MB : 0: FZH MAMA (F-in-L)		Men: FZ : 0: MBW ATTA (M-in-L)			Terminological Affines
4	ANNA — FBS/MZS/HZH/WZH (B)		AKKA — FED/MZD/HBW/WBW (Z)			Terminological Consanguines
5	BAWA — FZS/MBS/HB/WB/ZH (Archaic:Mardi,y than Ego)		ODNEN — FZD/MBD/WZ/BW/HZ (Other form: Vadinen)			Terminological Affines

Table 7: Telugu kinship terminology

The axes of the terminology thus demarcate clearly between three
generations and two orders of kindred. The sub-sets in some of the
classes do not break them up, but merely provide another form of
differentiation. The distinction of age in the class of father
and mother has to do with the position of authority and respect in the
family. Father's elder brother, for instance, will be the actual
figure of authority in any matter concerning the whole family, and for
this reason, he and his wife should be treated with even more respect
and deference than father himself. On the other hand, the younger
brother is not as important, and as the 'little father' is treated on
a friendlier basis by Ego. The same applies to mother's elder sister,
who, although she would not be living in the same environment as Ego,
still holds a position of respect, and is seen as the first mother and
the one who has authority over mother. There are two other age

distinctions which were mentioned by some older people, but by few of
the younger generations: these are terms for younger brother and
younger brother-in-law, 'tammudu' and 'mardi'. When older women meet
an unrelated, younger man, they may use the term 'tammu' to address
him, and he will use the term 'akka'. But this is no longer very
frequent, and the terms can be considered to be archaic nowadays, since
people use first names to address their younger relatives. In category
three, the distinction involving the patrilateral and matrilateral 'Mama'
and 'Atta' is more difficult to explain. It is possible that this
indicates a differentiation between prescription and practice (cf.Good
1981 and p.244 below). In the prescriptive schema, MB and F-in-L are
identified and FZ and M-in-L are identified. At the level of practice,
however, they are not necessarily identified, and it becomes important
to differentiate between the real affines and the terminological affines.
Thus F-in-L and FZH, who are both affines, are denoted by the unmarked
term, as well as M-in-L and MBW, while the terminological affines, who
occupy a very important position in the sphere of kinship relations,
are marked as 'menmama' and 'menatta'. The people explain this by
saying that the FZH is described as "menatta's husband", while the MBW
is described as "menmama's wife". Further, if one has married one's
cross-cousin -- i.e. according to prescription -, one says that one has
married one's "menatta's or menmama's son or daughter", thus specifying
the concordance of prescription and practice. There are certain cases
where the grand-mothers are distinguished by the terms 'Babam' (father's
mother) and 'amam' (mother's mother), with the patrilateral side being
marked, but this is not a general rule, and the grand-fathers remain
undifferentiated, with the term 'Tata' used for both.

The inconsistencies and ambiguities of the terminology are evidently
created by the survival of some terms and the loss of others. All
classes of terms will not disappear in the same way and all sub-divisions
will not be lost. Some remnants may be more easily explained than others.
The main distinction preserved by the terminology is then the cross/
parallel one, and the 'consanguineal'/'affinal' one. This distinction
operates between two conceptual categories that impartially contain
real consanguines and real affines, and both patrilateral and matrilateral
relatives. The conceptual distinctions only correlate real ones in the
case of real cross-cousin marriages, which is why the terminology is said

to reflect a system based on cross-cousin marriages, and in which
affinity is predicted by the use of the proper terms.

These terms are the ones which have survived to this day, and are still
used by Telugus to describe their relationships. As forms of address
they are used towards immediate kin and affines rather than to their
classificatory extensions outside this sphere. In the case of cross-
cousins of ego's generation who are not affines, 'Bawa' and 'Odnen'
(which is a condensed form of 'Vadinen') are not much used, since
first names are generally used unless the age-difference is very
great. People in fact seem to switch easily from the Telugu term to
Creole terms when describing kinship relations. For instance, when
they talk about MB/ZD marriage, they use the term "Mama-nièce"
marriage, since there is no Telugu term used for niece. A woman who
had married her real patrilateral cross-cousin consistently spoke of
her 'Menatta' and her "Beau-père" (father-in-law), reflecting, again,
the distinction mentioned above within the category of terminological
affines between real and categorical affines. The survival of certain
terms and the loss of others seem to be directly linked with the
structural importance of those terms in the terminological scheme.
Thus, terms for people of father's generation have survived because
the generation as well as the ordering of relations within it are both
structurally significant in relation to Ego. In Ego's generation,
terms for younger relatives have not survived because they do not
identify significant categories. Terms such as 'niece' and 'nephew'
are not important since the significance of the relationship between
uncle/aunt and niece/nephew is brought out by the terms applying to
the higher generation. Thus, the higher generation is important in
opposition to the younger one, and, within a generation, the higher
age-group is important in opposition to the lower one. If a term is
to be lost, it will be the lower/younger one, because the higher/older
ones can still sustain the significance of the relationship in the
system. On the other hand, the cross/parallel distinction has
survived in its entirety over the two significant generations of
Ego and Ego's father, and it can perhaps be seen, in a sense, as the
deepest imbedded structural feature of the terminology and of the
cultures that use such a system, as both Dumont and Yalman have pointed
out.

Although the Telugu terms seem to represent a core of structural features around which the kinship system is built, the loss of certain terms and the use of Creole terms does not necessarily signify the loss or obscuring of the relationships themselves within the conceptual framework. The Creole terms at first sight seem to follow Western terminological systems in having a restricted number of terms which make a distinction between age-groups, real consanguines and real affines. Thus, terms of address classify all relations of father's generation as *tonton* and *tantine* (uncle and aunt) irrespective of type of uncle and aunt and of matrilaterality or patrilaterality. Also, cousins who are much older than Ego are also addressed by these terms. Address in Creole follows an extremely simplified code where, apart from father and mother, all relations are either uncles and aunts, or called by name if they are of Ego's age group. Thus, whereas Ego's immediate kindred may be addressed by Telugu terms, the kindred forming the wide kin-group are usually addressed by Creole terms, so that the relationship is not specified in address, but merely transmits the appropriate deference owed to age.

However, when it comes to reference, a different configuration emerges: the Creole terms, even in their restricted aspect, become far more specific and precise. When people speak about their relatives, the need for specification is strongly felt, and the Creole terms allow them, perhaps even better than the Telugu ones would, to define exactly the kind of relationship that links them with the people they are referring to. The distinction between matrilineal and patrilineal relatives is generally made, but in the case of cross-cousins, the two types of cross-cousins are merged and become opposed to parallel cousins. Thus, in father's generation, one has, apart from father and mother, *frère-papa* and *frère-mama* (father's and mother's brother respectively) and *sère-papa* and *sère-mama* (father's and mother's sister). Terms for grand-parents distinguish between paternal grand-parents and maternal grand-parents. In Ego's generation, the main distinction is between parallel and cross-cousins: both types of cross-cousins are referred to as *zenfant sère-frère* (sister-and-brother's children), while parallel cousins are referred to as *zenfant dé-frère* and *zenfant dé-sère* (two brothers' children and two sisters' children respectively). Thus, it is possible to describe any relationship in terms of the original

sibling relationship that led to it, in other words, breaking each
kinship relation down to its components. Thus, father's matrilateral
cross-cousin can be described in several, explicit ways, e.g.: "mama
mo papa so frère so garçon" (my father's mother's brother's son) or
"mo papa èke X zenfant sère-frère" (my father and X are sister-and-
brother's children). The Telugus will in fact never speak about a
kin-member without such specifications. The Creole terms used to
describe a kin-member in fact constitute precise verbal 'diagrams'
through which it is possible to retrace the relationship back to its
original relation.

The main problem that arises in the Creole terminology comes in the
terminological consanguine/terminological affine distinction.
Although the cross/parallel distinction is preserved in Ego's
generation through the specification of the particular sibling
relationship in Ego's father's generation, the relation of cross/'affinal'
and parallel/'consanguineal' is not at first sight brought out in Creole.
People in fact have to resort to metaphorical explanations of the
differences between the two classes of relations: for example, they say,
"they are *zenfant dé-sère,* so they are like brother and sister". However,
there are also other ways in which these correlations are made, both
within the sphere of consanguinity and within that of affinity. In
reference, mother's sisters speak about sister's children as "my son or
my daughter" rather than as nephew and niece. Parallel aunts and uncles
become, for Ego's children, 'grand-mothers' and 'grand-fathers'. Thus,
the particular assimilation of parallel relatives with father/mother,
brother/sister is incorporated within reference terms. Affinal terms,
on the other hand, are the same as Western ones, i.e. *beau-père, belle-
mère, belle-sère, beau-frère, belle-fi* and *zanne (gendre)* – or, father-
in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law and
son-in-law. These terms are not used at all in the sphere of real
consanguinity, but in the sphere of affinity, they are more extensive
than western ones: thus, *beau-père* and *belle-mère* designate HM/F and
WM/F, but also HMZ/HFB and WMZ/WFB, thereby indicating the status of
father and mother that these two last sets of kin have towards Ego's
husband or wife. *Beau-frère* and *belle-sère,* similarly, designate HB/Z
and WB/Z, but also HFBS/D, HMZS/D, WFBS/D, WMZS/D, i.e. Ego's husband's
or wife's parallel cousins, again indicating the brother and sister
status that these have towards husband or wife.

What becomes apparent here is that the parallel category is
distinguished by being marked in the sphere of consanguinity - "my
niece and my nephew are my daughter and son, and their children are my
grand-children" - and in the sphere of affinity by being set in the
same category as F,M,B and Z when they become 'in-laws'. Thus, the
parallel/consanguineal identification is also expressed in the Creole
terminology through terms of reference, thus becoming distinguished
from the cross category. But the cross category itself seems to remain
unmarked in this system, although in the Telugu terminological system it
bears the distinctive 'affinal' identification in a significant way.
This comes about because semantically, the terms designating 'in-laws' and
and 'father and mother' in Creole represent distinct structural
categories in the western kinship systems from which they originate.
These categories, which represent real affinity and real consanguinity
cannot be merged. Aunt and uncle can be designated as father and
mother without being conceptually anomalous if it is to a real
consanguine, or as father-in-law and mother-in-law to a real affine,
because they would not be overriding two structurally distinct
categories. However, if a real consanguine is designated, before
marriage, by an affinal term, such as *beau-père* or *belle-mère*, they
would create a semantic and conceptual anomaly in the language used.
This is why, for Telugus using Creole terms, parallel relatives are
marked by terms assimilating them with father and mother and brother
and sister, whereas cross relatives remain unmarked, designated by
neutral terms such as *tonton* and *tantine* which can apply to anyone of
that generation. They are thus structurally distinguished by the very
fact that they are unmarked *in opposition* to the marked parallel
category. This incorporates the Telugu concept into the system without
disrupting the semantic structure of the borrowed terminology.

In fact, in the case of real cross-cousin marriages, the two terminologies
become congruous, since, in that case, the terminological affines of the
Telugu system become real affines which can be designated as such in the
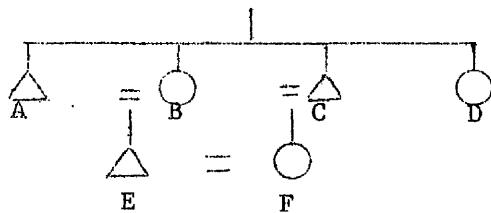Creole system. For instance, in the following case:

Diagram 8 : Cross-cousin marriage terminology

A,B,C,D are siblings. E and F are cross-cousins. In the Telugu
system, before marriage, E would call A and C 'Mama', and B and D
'Amma'. F would call C and A 'Naina', and B and D 'Atta'. When E
and F get married, there will be no change in the terms used: E will
still use affinal terms for A and C, and consanguineal terms for B and
D, and F will still use affinal terms for B and D, and consanguineal terms
for C and A.

In the Creole terminology, before marriage, E would call A and C
tonton, B *mama* and D *tantine*. But D would refer to E as her son. In
the same way, F would call B and D *tantine*, A *tonton* and C *papa*, but A
would refer to F as his daughter. When they get married, however, a
change will take place: C becomes *beau-père* for E, and A, being WFB,
will also become *beau-père*. D retains her *tantine*/mother status
towards E. In relation to F, B is *belle-mère*, and D, as HMZ, becomes
belle-mère as well. A retains his *tonton*/father status towards F.
Thus, we have C and A being referred to in affinal terms by E, and B
and D in consanguineal terms, while B and D are referred to in affinal
terms by F, and A and C in consanguineal terms. This brings us back
to the Telugu system. (The same type of change will occur in relation
to cross and parallel cousins).

The difference between the two systems is that the Telugu one predicts
the affinal relations between cross relatives, while the Creole one
only makes the adjustment when marriage has actually taken place, and
real consanguinity is translated into real affinity. It is evident,
then, that the different terminologies express the extent of
institutionalisation of marriage rules and kinship roles within the
cultures from which they originate. The Telugu terminology expresses
cross-cousin marriage as an inherent structural feature, along with the
distinctions and oppositions that it generates; the Creole terminology
does not express it in the terms themselves, since it originates from
a Western cultural form and tends to express a distinction between
real consanguinity and real affinity. However, the use of Creole kinship
terms has been made to adapt to and assimilate certain cultural norms of
the Telugus, and thereby does eventually express the Telugu kinship
patterns, through a distinction between cross and parallel relatives by
'marking' the latter, and through the identification of parallel

relations and 'terminological consanguines' in terms of reference. Further, the use of component terms in describing any type of kinship relation achieves the same degree of specificity which Telugu terms have in themselves, so that even the limited Creole kinship vocabulary can be made to express, in the form of verbal diagrams, the complex forms of Telugu kinship, which can reckon a relationship back to a sibling relationship over three generations.

We will now go on to look at marriage patterns and choices, in order to see how far they conform to the original prescriptions and how they diverge from it.

(iii) Marriage patterns

In the marriage patterns observed among the Telugus, it is possible to delineate concentric circles that radiate from the closest node of marriage possibilities. The basic marriage rule involves two prescriptions and one prohibition: the prescriptions are cross-cousin marriage and MBy/eZD marriage, and the prohibition applies to parallel cousins and their classificatory extensions.

The ambivalence of the terms prescription and preference has given rise to many controversies in the field of kinships theory since Lévi-Strauss's distinction between systems of "generalized exchange" (prescriptive) and "direct exchange" (preferential) with which he identified matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and patrilateral cross-cousin marriage respectively (Lévi-Strauss 1967 (1947)).Since the issue is both complex and ambiguous, I will not go into it here, but I would tend to agree with Needham (1972) when he states that prescription belongs to one level and preference to another level[1]. Lévi-Strauss himself expresses this idea when he says that all systems are prescribed in theory and preferred in practice. What appears as formal *rules* which are implictly accepted by the people, surfaces as more lenient *choices* subjected to circumstantial variations on the ground. This brings us

---

1. In reference to this subject, see Lévi-Strauss (1967), Needham (1962; 1967; 1972) and others.

back to the consideration of *levels* advocated by Good (1981), but the
latter makes another kind of distinction between prescription and
preference. Prescription, according to him, is imbedded in the
categorical level of a kinship system: it forms part of the system in
a structural sense, so that the system would not exist without its
prescriptions. Preference, on the other hand, is a narrowing down of
prescriptive categories, in that it isolates a single category within
the total system, with whom marriage is preferred. This preference
may be due to empirical factors that create sub-rules, subsumed under
the main system, but which are not structurally essential for the
functioning of the system. Thus, the "rule does not contradict the
distinctions made in the system of categories, but merely makes a further
distinction which retains intact all the categorical boundaries in their
precise, original forms" (Good 1981: 125). As we shall see later,
preference does affect to a certain extent prescription, and practice
in turn often flouts both prescriptive and preferential rules among the
Telugus.

Although the existence of a prohibition may imply the existence of an
exogamous rule, in fact the pattern of choice seems to be more strongly
geared towards endogamy. This is because the prohibition very rarely
extends to all its classificatory extensions, beyond, for instance,
children of two parallel cousins of the same sex. Further, a loosening
of these rules is in fact creating a very strong form of kin-endogamy
which we shall be looking at at a later stage. In the people's terms,
also, marriage is expressed as endogamy: "we marry *within* the family,
within the kin-group, within the qualité group". In fact, the most
elementary rule is that "we marry within ourselves" *(dans nous)*, and this,
it seems, is a most explicit expression of endogamy. I would therefore
consider the marriage patterns as resting fundamentally upon a principle
of endogamy, where the only circle of prohibition comprises a small class
of terminological consanguines which does not extend beyond a certain
genealogical distance.

The closest possible marriage choice falls within the immediate circle
of real consanguines and terminological affines: i.e. real cross-cousins
or mother's brother/sister's daughter. These are called propre relatives,
and such marriages are described as being "within propre kin" ("dans

propre fami"). Both matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin
marriages are possible, and, when asked, people will say that they are
both equal forms, but that there is more of a tendency to marry
matrilaterally, if Ego is a man, than patrilaterally. The ideal, in
fact, is both types of marriage contracted as an exchange, i.e. brother
and sister marrying sister and brother. People say that cross-cousin
marriages were widely practised until about twenty years ago, after
which there seems to have been more of a preference for marriage outside
this immediate consanguineal sphere. They ascribe this to a kind of
reluctance about marrying relatives who were too propre, and this in
fact may be due to the North Indian view of cross-cousin marriage as
some kind of deviant form of marriage. However, over the past few years,
cross-cousin marriages have once more become frequent, and this seems to
correspond to a parallel revival of interest in Telugu identity. But it
cannot be said that the 'form' has ever threatened to die out, since
classificatory cross-cousin marriage has been practised all along. In
the same way, eZD marriage has almost died out in the sense that, although
it was formerly practised, there are at present very rare cases of it in
Mauritius. However, considering that the prescription is meant to delineate
a *category* rather than real eZD, the marriage form itself has not died out
since there are still many cases of classifcatory eZD marriages, for
instance with parallel cousin's daughter.

The propre sphere is very strongly bounded, both in relation to marriage
and in relation to blood. In this sphere, marriage is seen both as a
perpetuation and as a preservation of blood, as we shall see later.
Outside it, we come into the second marriage circle, which comprises
consanguineal kin of a slightly more distant order, and where
classificatory cross-cousins are drawn from as marriage partners, as
well as a small set of immediate affines. There are thus the cross-and
parallel-cousins of Ego's father and mother and their children, as well
as Ego's siblings' affinal kin, who are also Ego's affines. Considering
the ramifications of both matrilateral and patrilateral relatives
descending from Ego's four grand-parents' brothers and sisters, this
constitutes a very wide set of marriage possibilities. The actual
relations between people in this set do not have to be very close for
the kinship link to be known and preserved. In fact, the importance of
the kinship link can often only be realised when marriage is involved:
then the people contained within this circle fall into place and become

categorised by the possibility of marriage or its impossibility.
Thus, in principle, children of parallel cousins of the same sex should
not marry, while children of parallel cousins of different sex and
children of cross-cousins may. Where parents can explicitly be said
to be 'as two brothers or two sisters', the parallel prohibition operates.
Children of cross-cousins, whether they are of the same sex or not are
generally allowed to marry. This is incidentally a different process of
classification from David's Jaffna Tamils, where children of cross-
cousins of different sex cannot marry because they are like brother and
sister: "consider my mother's mother's brother's son's daughter: she is
the daughter of the man who might have married my mother; then she is my
sister". (David 1973: 524). Here, there is a complementary reversal
from parallel to cross and from cross to parallel, so that the children
of people who were not allowed to marry can marry, whereas children of
people who were allowed to marry cannot marry. Among Mauritian Telugus,
the classificatory extensions to the basic rule are not as clearly
thought out, and do not seem as important, as long as it is not
immediately borne out that the parents are 'like' two brothers or two
sisters. In fact, as we shall see later, even these prohibitions can
be argumentatively waived when the need arises. Within this second
circle of choice fall the set of immediate affines, who cannot be
classified as propre blood, but who are sometimes considered as propre
kin. Marriage with such affines is contracted in order to establish
alliance, and we shall look at this particular aspect in greater detail
in the next sub-section.

As the distance from the propre circle increases, the marriage
possibilities also increase. In the second circle the kinship relations
can still be traced back to the propre sphere - for example, the bride's
mother and the groom's father are *zenfant sère-frère* - so that the
marriage is still endogamous within the kin-group, while not being too
close within the blood group.

The third circle contains more distant kin and a wide range of affines
who are described as 'a little related' ("èn pé fami"). This also
covers a wide category of people who can be genealogically traced back
to each other whether through blood or through marriage. They meet
mainly at weddings and funerals, so that weddings in particular have

become the main arena for spotting prospective marriage partners.
This is done mainly by old women relatives who can inquire informally
among themselves about a boy or a girl from an appropriate family.
They call this "informer", to enquire about, and they make up an actual
network which transmits news of potential partners throughout the
island. There are no institutionalised match-makers, but these old
aunties are jokingly referred to as "agwa" (intermediaries) by people,
since they effectively act as such. They are particularly useful
because the parents do not have to become involved until all the
information has been gathered on each side.

Thus, in the third circle too, the existing relation - whether through
blood or through marriage - does not become significant until it is
necessary to demonstrate the appropriateness and eligibility of the
potential spouses through this existing link. If people are a little
related, then they must be suitable as partners. These three circles are
those in which spouses are mostly chosen. In fact, the stronger the
relation, the better it is, for, as Good observes about the K.K. Maravar
of Tamil Nadu, "they emphasize that the ideal spouse is someone to whom
one is already closely related (sondam)" (1981: 118).

The fourth and last circle is made up mainly of unrelated people. Since
it is very rare that an affinal relationship will be entered into with
totally unknown people, the people in this circle will also have some
previous link with Ego's kin group, for instance by being affinally
related to people affinally related to Ego. Or else, as is frequent
in this circle of choice, they will be people living in the same locality
as Ego, or very near. Since in small villages, people of the same
qualité group tend to constitute close clusters and have relationships
that are 'like kin', this is considered to be an appropriate extension
to kin endogamy, as the people know each other very well, and, being
in close proximity, have the possibility of preserving intensive
relations with each other. In fact, this preserves the overt reasons
for which people ascribe to kin-endogamy, i.e. "we know each other and
the family history, and we can maintain close relations with affines".
Good (1981) also notes that among the K.K. Marawar, isogamy is the norm
for similar reasons. The two important aspects borne out by marriage
choices are then (a) knowledge of each other and (b) maintenance of

close relationships, so that marriage can also be seen as an extension
or an intensification of the kin-group.
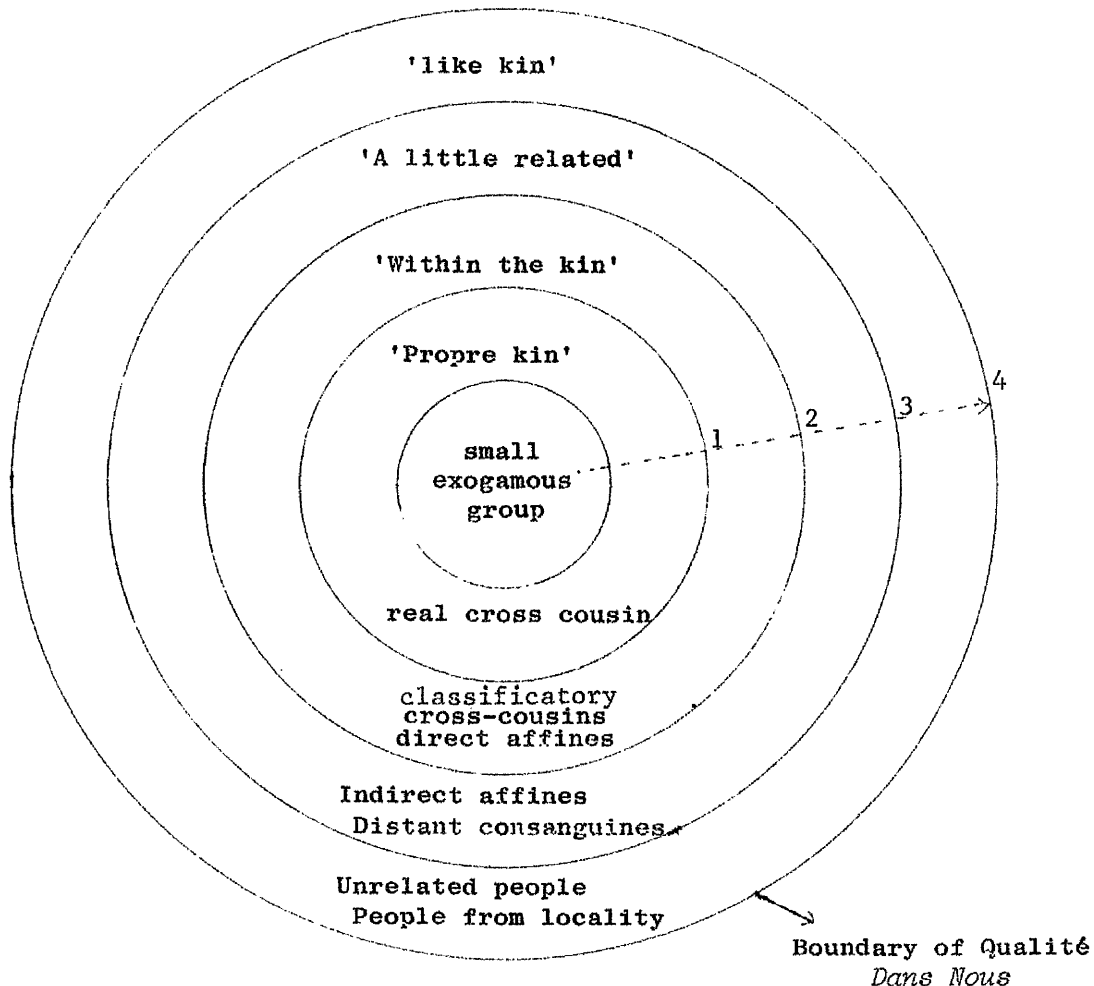
The four circles of choice can be represented as follows:

There are then four structural distances along which marriage choices can
be made. These are eventually bound at the fourth circle by the rigid
qualité boundary that represents the outer limit of the endogamous group,
the *dans nous* (within ourselves) boundary. The four distances progress
along a decreasing substantial axis - i.e. blood and kinship - but the
distance itself is mediated by knowledge, by the existence of traceable
propre links, and, in the fourth circle, by spatial contiguity. Thus, even
a remote genealogical link can mediate the horizontal distance between Ego
and people of the fourth circle. These structural distances are actually
conceived of by Telugus as such, and, in the case of the two last circles,
they themselves explain the mediating factors that lead to choice within
them. Further, the fact of marriage in any one of these circles serves
to reduce the distance: thus, a marriage within the second circle
intensifies the existing relation, so that if it is a classificatory
cross-cousin, the two families become circumscribed within the propre

sphere again. Within the third circle, a marriage link moves affinal kin-groups into the second circle, and an unrelated kin-group from the fourth circle is moved into the third circle.

This process is seen by the people as one which is constantly creating links throughout the group, and in this, *alliance* is a very important element, as we shall see in a later section. Further, the preoccupation with endogamy, which is intensified by the existence, in the society, of outside groups which do not share any kind of common substance with the qualité group, has served to diminish the importance of the internal marriage prohibition and increase the latitude of preferences. Thus, people do not ascribe much importance to classificatory parallel-cousin marriage prohibition any longer. If there are no available cross-cousins, and if there happens to be an eligible classificatory parallel cousin, the marriage may take place with few objections. Any objectijns that may arise will be based on the actual closeness of relations between the people involved. For instance, if there have been close relations between two parallel-cousins as 'brothers' or 'sisters', then their children are not likely to be allowed to marry. If the relations between the two families were not extensive, the rule may not be considered as important. Set against the possibility of marriage 'outside' the qualité group, it is far preferable to accept 'inside' marriages, even if they seem to flout certain rules. People justify these marriages by saying that "it is good to marry within the kin-group, after all, it is better to keep the girl in her own kin-group". In recent years, there have been a small number of real parallel cousin marriages taking place - five cases were mentioned to me by the people I spoke to. The cases are known by people from widely distant kin-groups because they are still seen as an objectionable form of marriage. Fifteen years ago, two matrilateral parallel cousins who wanted to get married were confronted with the adamant refusal of their parents. They went abroad and got married secretly. Nowadays, in spite of objections to such marriages, they are accepted once they are contracted. In all these cases, the marriage choice was made by the couple itself rather than by their parents. Faced with the possibility of open rebellion on the part of the children, the parents prefer to accept the marriages in spite of possible criticism and gossip from the rest of the community. Each in fact acts as a precedent for the others. And it is the very existence

of the cross-cousin marriage rule that serves to justify the transgression of the prohibition: arguing 'logically' they will say that, there is no reason why the other form should not be allowed. The resistance to flouting the patrilateral parallel-cousin marriage rule is ascribed to the fact that these cousins bear the same name and live close together and grow up as brother and sister, but matrilateral parallel-cousins do not usually have such close relations. There are also views of blood relationships and substance links which are discussed in these cases, which we shall look at in Section Two. The fact is, there is no real authority to explain why these rules and prohibitions exist, so that people are more or less free to twist them conceptually the way they want it, in particular if it means preserving the overall principle of endogamy.

The other way in which the rules have become more flexible is in the cross-generational marriages. The *mama-nièce* marriage, as it is called, is not practised in its real form any longer, and is even looked upon with strong reservations by most people. But the existence of the rule allowed a very widespread pattern of cross-generational marriages to take place, with classificatory Mama and with more distant kin belonging to that generation. In this case, it is probably more a question of matching age-groups, while the Mama-nièce marriage provides a convenient traditional framework within which to set and explain these marriages. In families with numerous children, for instance, the youngest would belong to the age-group of a younger generation, for instance of an elder sister's children, so that the Mama-nièce marriage, which was practised at any rate between mother's younger brother and sister's daughter, provided a model for classificatory extensions to the rule. The model also made the switching of roles and statuses easier. In certain cases, however, there have been such a mixture of generations through cross-generational marriages – with sometimes a woman of a higher generation marrying a man of a younger generation – that people jokingly refer to them as resulting in a man being his own grand-father or a woman her own grand-mother! But these kinds of transgressions of generational order are more easily accepted than those of the non-generational order. In these cases, the structural features of the system, i.e. opposition of parallel and cross, opposition of generations and opposition of age become ordered so that one is pre-eminent over the

other. The opposition of generations is less important than that of 'consanguinity' and 'affinity', and it may also be governed by considerations of age, as for instance when the correct order of generations is reversed and a woman of a higher generation is allowed to marry a man of a lower one. But most of the cross-generational marriages observed were between affinally related people rather than consanguineally related people, except when the Mama-nièce status was unequivocal, as for instance when mother's parallel cousin marries parallel cousin's daughter. Thus, although there are many extensions - and probably transgressions - to the rule, they do not take place within the sphere of real consanguinity, probably because people prefer to avoid the possibility of a marriage that could be termed incestuous. Within the affinal sphere, it is possible to justify certain elaborations of the rules through the fact that the marriages do not fall within the propre sphere, and people can also use the traditional language to express the adaptive impulses that have taken place over the years. (See next page for illustrations of cross-generational marriages). The variants within the kinship system are thus couched as far as possible in the language of tradition and in the right classificatory or terminological system. But where this is not possible, justifications are expressed at the level of practice in terms of empirical constraints operating in the society.

Marriage patterns among the Telugus exhibit to a large extent the relaxation of the original rules existing in the community. But these relaxations are still, as far as possible, placed within the overall conceptual grid encompassing the group's cultural identity, and, rather than tend towards the assimilation of cultural features from other groups, they tend, on the contrary, to *intensify* the opposition with other groups. There had been, at one stage, an attitude towards cross-cousin marriages that was influenced by the North Indian view that consanguineous marriages were deviant marriages, but over the past years, there has been a reversal of this trend among the Telugus, making them more conscious of the need to be identified from the inside and to preserve endogamy at all costs, even if this means loosening the existing marriage proscriptions within the group.

1.

E

EGO married ZHBD = eZD

2.

E_1

E_2

E_3

3.

E

E married - FZSD = cross-cousin's D
     (or) - MZDD = ZD
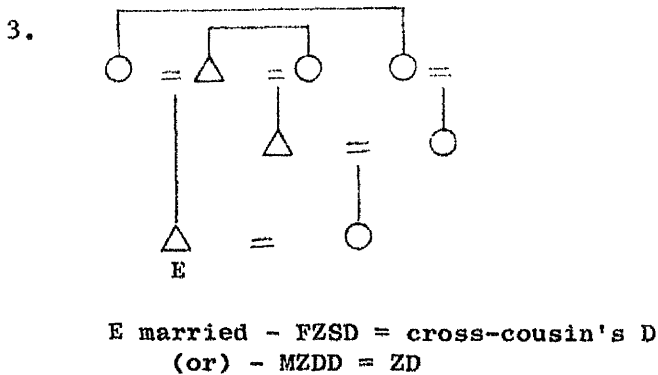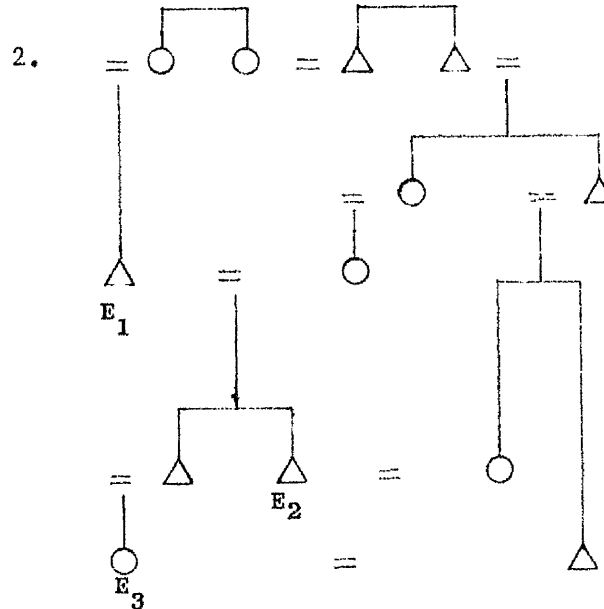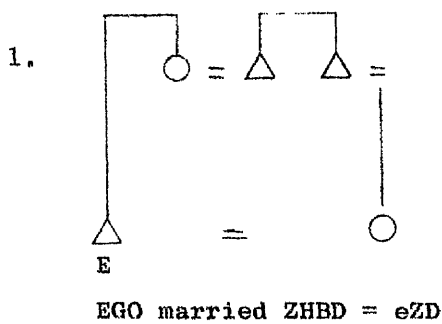
E_1 married MZHBDD = MZDD = eZD

E_2 married - MMBD = M's cross-cousin
       (or) - FMZHBSD = FMZSD = FBD
(Both traditionally unacceptable)

E_3 married - FMMBS = FM's cross-cousin
       (or) - FBWB = MB
(Both acceptable)

(Diagram 10: Cross-generational marriages)

The marriage in 1 and the marriage of E_1 in 2 both took place in the 1940s.
They are both classificatorily acceptable marriages as *Mama-nièce*. The
marriage of E_2 and E_3 in 2 and of E in 3 took place in 1978, 1979 and 1980
respectively. E_3's marriage is acceptable although she married her grand-
mother's cross-cousin, because the order of generations was preserved, and
from one point of view, it could be classified as a Mama-nièce marriage.
E_2's marriage would not have been traditionally acceptable, in particular
because the woman he married could be classified as a FBD, which is a
sister. But the distance of the link and the pre-eminence of age over
generation made the marriage acceptable. In the case of E, there was no
traditional restriction on marriage with a cross-cousin's daughter, and
from the matrilateral point of view, he was marrying a sister's daughter.
The marriage was thus accepted and even validated from the traditional
point of view.

This is also made possible by the cognitive view of marriage, not as a division or separation within the kin group, but as an extension of kinship ties. The existence of marriage partners inside the propre sphere shows that affinity does not represent a separate order of relations from consanguinity, but can be assimilated to it in the overall context of kinship relations. This is what Dumont meant by stating that "kinship equals consanguinity plus affinity" (1961: 81).

I will now go on to look at affinity, or more precisely, at *alliance* as a particular institution of the group, in order to find out its significance in the Telugu community today.

(iv)   The significance of *alliance*

Dumont identifies alliance as the affinal relationship existing between people and establishing an enduring link through a transmission of affinity over several generations. In his first formulation of alliance, he used the word to denote the affinal link between a man and his wife's brother, which seemed in contradiction with the idea that alliance is diachronic (Dumont 1953). But in a later publication (1975), he corrects this first view in favour of the second, i.e. that alliance is affinity transmitted diachronically over the generations. The second view was in fact present in the 1953 article as well, when he said that "what we are accustomed to call cross-cousin marriage is nothing but the perfect formula for perpetuating the alliance relationship from one generation to the next, and so making the alliance an enduring institution".(1953: 38). What he meant was that cross-cousin marriage transformed into an alliance relation the original marriage link established in the previous generation. The distinction is important, since otherwise, by calling the original marriage link an alliance relation, one would be saying that marriage *is* alliance. But in fact, marriage is only the preliminary link which allows alliance to be established, and, as we shall see in the Mauritian context, it is not only cross-cousin marriage which establishes alliance, but a whole process of repetition and intensification of ties. Thus, the Creole term *alliance* used by the Telugus, and the Dumontian term do not have exactly the same meaning: the Creole term has a deeper significance of inclusion and incorporation, while the Dumontian term signifies a link or bridge rather than a fusion.

For the Telugus, the term *alliance* is used to describe the relationship
between two families linked by marriage, which is expressed and
intensified so that the two groups become like one - i.e. "non-kin
become like kin". The alliance relation is then seen as being more
important in the context of unrelated families linked by marriage than
in the context of consanguineal marriages themselves. People already
linked consanguineally do not in fact need such an intensification of
ties: their relationship already exists through the fact of belonging
to the same blood group, so that there is no need to 'establish'
alliance as such between them, and affinity is already built into the
relationship. Cross-cousin marriages are then more a preservation of
an already existing bond and a perpetuation of it. On the other hand,
when marriage takes place between people who are either more remotely
linked or not at all, then marriage itself is not strong enough to
forge the bond: it is *alliance* that achieves it, and in this sense,
alliance is perhaps a kind of mirror-image of the sphere of consanguineal
relations, in that it aims at making the bond between the affinally
related families as intense as the one already existing between
consanguines.

Alliance is first entered into through the marriage ceremonies themselves:
i.e. the ceremonies lead two separate kin-groups towards each other,
through repeated meetings, sharing of food, through the turmeric-
anointment which is seen as the first act of 'appropriation' of the
bride, and finally through the wedding ceremony proper, where the bond
is sealed with the *tali*-tying, and the two kin-groups become fami. The
two kin-groups then have to sustain the new *alliance* through participation
and cooperation. Finally, the *alliance* is cemented, so to speak, on the
one hand by the birth of children, and on the other by the repetition of
marriage between the same kin-groups. Then, over the next few
generations, an incorporation process takes place through cross-cousin
marriages and further marriages between the two kin-groups until they
eventually become one larger, undifferentiated group which is called
fami par alliance. (This phrase itself has however a double connotation:
when used in juxtaposition with real consanguineal relations, it
establishes a distance between the two kin-groups; when it is meant to
describe the close relations that obtain between the two groups through

their mutual fusion, it is employed with an 'as-if' term, i.e. "we are
fami par alliance, as if a single kin-group"). Thus, it is not only the
perpetuation of the affinal ties over several generations that
establishes *alliance*, but also the three phases mentioned above,

(a) the ritual phase

(b) the transactional phase, and

(c) the confirmatory phase.

(a) The ritual phase
     ─────────────────

After the preliminary introductions through the self-appointed
intermediary have been made, and each kin-group is more or less satisfied
with the other's family history and antecedents, a formal meeting will be
arranged to introduce the two groups to each other. In fact, two meetings
will be arranged, so that, in the first place, the prospective groom's
kin will come to the bride's house, and in the second place, the bride's
kin will go to the groom's house. These two meetings are called
Réunion des familles (meeting of the two kin-groups). The number and
kinship status of the people composing the réunion-des-familles group is
not fixed. Number depends basically on means and convenience, particularly
if the houses are small. Each side will let the other know before hand
how many people are coming, and usually, the bride's group will be equal
in number when they return the visit, to the groom's group. The people
involved are meant to represent a cross-section of both patrilateral and
matrilateral kin of the groom and bride. They usually comprise the
parents, parents' elder siblings and their spouses (younger ones too will
come if the number is large), groom's and bride's elder siblings and
their spouses, and of course, if any grand-parents are alive, they too
will be part of the group. Apart from these, if the party is not big
enough, people are more or less free to choose any other relative,
whether consanguineal or affinal, or non-relative such as a neighbour or
a close friend. Each party will bring gifts of flowers, fruit and
sweetmeats for the bride and the groom, and nowadays, the groom's party
may also bring a ring for the bride, as this is considered as the
engagement ceremony. A number of years ago, dinner was served on these
occasions, but the food had to be both sweet and sour, and only food cooked

in ghee and sugar could be served. Nowadays, people merely serve
sweetmeats and tea. People explain the tradition of serving sweet
and salty food simultaneously as being expressive of the need for both
kin-groups to remain on good terms both in times of hardship and in
times of joy, and also, since it was the first meeting, they had to
share both types of food. The exegesis does not comprise the pure/impure
definition of food, but the tradition probably meant that the two groups
could not share 'real' food - since the sweet and salty food could not
be considered as constituting a real meal- until the bond between them
was confirmed, i.e. after the turmeric anointment. The mixture of
sugar and ghee can perhaps be seen as a mediating device between the
two kin-groups before they were ready to share salty food proper. The
sharing of food constitutes the formal acceptance of the marriage by
each group. The réunion-des-familles is the first step that brings
them together.

The next occasion when the two kin groups meet is for the turmeric
ceremony, two days before the wedding. In Mauritius, all the Hindu
groups have the turmeric ceremony, but with variations according to the
group: thus, among North Indians, the groom's kin anoint him with
turmeric in the presence of a priest, and the bride's kin anoint her,
each in their own household, and the occasion does not involve any
participation between the two kin-groups. Among the Tamils, the groom's
kinswomen go to the bride's house to anoint her, and the bride's
kinswomen go the groom's. Among the Telugus, the groom's kinswomen go
to the bride's house to anoint her, but the bride's kin do not go to
the groom's house, and the anointment of the groom is done by his own
kinswomen. For the Telugus, the anointment of the bride and groom with
turmeric is a purificatory rite. They cannot go out of the house once
they are anointed, and they have to carry a pair of scissors with them
to avoid any evil influence and must not take presents from people in
their own hands. But apart from the purificatory significance of the
rite, the fact that the groom's kinswomen dress the bride in clothes
and jewels which they have brought, and are the first to anoint her
actually symbolises the 'appropriation' of the bride by the affinal
group. The people say that the bride becomes 'for' (or perhaps 'like')
her mother-in-law - "li vinne pou so belle-mère". It also marks her
entry into the status of a married woman, as the rite is performed by

five or seven of the groom's married kinswomen. Generally, these are the groom's mother's sister(s), the father's sister(s), father's brother's wife, groom's brother's wife and any married sisters. It is interesting to note that although the married sisters belong in principle to a different kin-group, their participation in the natal household is extensive. This shows that marriage may imply an appropriation of the women into the affinal group, but not a separation from the natal group.

After the five or seven women have anointed the bride with turmeric and tied the 'kanganum', which is a piece of saffron wrapped in a leaf and held around the wrist by a turmeric-smeared string, her own relatives also anoint her one by one and bless her by throwing rice rubbed in turmeric, and flowers on her. (There is no priest involved in this ceremony. In fact, there is no priest involved in any ceremony before the wedding). After that, everybody sits down to eat, this time cooked salty food, with the groom's kin being served first as honoured guests.

Among the Telugus, the wedding ceremony is held either in front of the bride's house or in a hall, with all the expenses borne by the bride's father. This is the case among North Indians as well, but among Tamils, it is the groom's father who bears the expenses and the ceremony is held either at the groom's place or in a hall. When the bridegroom arrives at the place of the ceremony, seven of the bride's kinswomen – who can be married sisters, patrilateral or matrilateral aunts, sisters-in-law etc – receive the groom and his kin-group by performing *aarti* in front of them. The two fathers embrace. The couple stand in front of the assembly of guests and exchange garlands. Then the bride, her father and mother each performs *aarti* in front of the groom. *Aarti* is a form of honouring, whether of God or of a person who is temporarily in an honoured position. It is also a way of discarding the 'evil eye' or evil influences. After the ceremony, when the bride and groom go to the bride's parents' house, and later on to the groom's parents' house, kinswomen perform *aarti* in front of both of them before they enter the house.

The vows that are taken during the ceremony are as follows:

- The two sets of parents together promise that they will protect and look after the couple;

- The groom makes a vow to the bride's parents that he will look
  after the bride as well as respect and honour them;

- the bride vows that she will not move from the groom's side;

- the bride's parents give presents to the groom and bless him,
  then take the bride's hand in theirs and place it in the groom's
  hand, thereby giving her to him ('kanyadhan');

- the groom's parents give the bride her gifts and vow that they
  will be responsible for her well-being;

- after the circumambulation of the fire and the tying of the *tali*,
  the priest tells the groom, on behalf of the bride, that he is
  responsible for the bride as well as for her family. He then
  tells the audience that the two families are now united and have
  become one family between whom there will be no distinction and
  division. (See Appendix for a full description of the ceremony).

I have only brought out aspects of the marriage ceremony which concern
the union of the bride and groom, symbolised by the tying of the tali,
as well as the union of the two kin-groups, expressed in the series of
vows taken by each. The idea of a transference of the bride to the
groom's kin-group is implicit in the ceremony, but the groom also vows
that he will be responsible for the bride's parents as well, and that
the bride's brother - who holds the *dhan* out for the bride and groom
to pour into the fire - will be well-received in his house. The
priest formally announces the union of the couple, and emphasises the
beginning through them, of the union of the two kin-groups. There is
then a double movement, one where the bride moves into the groom's kin-
group, and one where both kin-groups move towards each other. This
results in an ambiguity regarding the status of women, which will be
discussed in Section Two.

After the ceremony, the couple go to the bride's father's house along
with the groom's immediate kindred, and eat there along with the bride's
kindred and guests. Then they leave for the groom's parents' place.
On the next day, the bride's kin will go and fetch her and the groom
as well as a few of the groom's kindred back to the bride's parents'

place. They eat there again, along with the bride's patrilateral
and matrilateral kin. This is called *ennalu* or *virundu*. They go back
to the groom's place after the meal. Formerly, the same was repeated
two days later,but then, the couple stayed the night at the bride's
parents' place. This is however not done any longer, because it
prolongs too much the marriage procedure and incurs extra expenses.
(It must be noted that the couple frequently spend the night or a few
days at the bride's parents' house after marriage, and this is a common
practice among Telugus and Tamils, although not among North Indians).
A final ceremony takes place after twenty-seven days, when the bride's
kin again fetch the couple. The bride's mother will remove the
turmeric-smeared cord by which the *tali* is held from the bride's neck
and replace it with a gold chain as well as two spherical pieces of
gold.

This marks the completion of the marriage procedure. This is when the
two kin-groups are formally allied. People say that they are now bound
to participate in each other's activities, and to help in all the ritual
and social events that take place. In fact, the ritual bond marks the
adherence to a new, specific code which is prescribed by *alliance*, and
which represents the transactional phase.

(b)   The transactional phase

The main duty prescribed within the kinship sphere is that of cooperation
and participation in all kinsmen's activities. Allied families also
become bound by the same duty, thus marking their status as kin. In the
Telugu group, there is a marked lack of differentiation, on ceremonial
and ritual occasions where kinsmen participate, between consanguines
and affines. In the course of the preparation for marriage itself,
there is a constant mixture of consanguines and affines displaying equal
involvement in the activities. Sisters-in-law and sisters hold the same
status, and can even be substituted for each other in certain instances:
when, during the turmeric ceremony, the groom's 'sister' is meant to
lead the bride in circumambulating the ceremonial place, it can be a
real sister or an elder sister-in-law. In the same way, patrilateral
and matrilateral aunts are merged in the sense that parents' sisters
and sisters-in-law hold the same position in the kin-group. There is

then an assimilation of roles of cooperation between consanguines and affines, although certain ritual roles cannot be interchanged between the cross and parallel categories (but real consanguines and real affines belonging to each category can be interchanged). Married women are entitled to participate as fully in their natal household as in their marital household.

One important aspect of *alliance* which is emphasised by the transactional phase is the fact that it cannot co-exist with hypergamy. If a difference of status existed between the two allied kin-groups, such an extensive participation which is meant to lead towards the eventual integration of the two groups, would not be possible, since there could be no merging involved. Dumont, when he compares marriage in North India and in South India, observes the fact that, among Sarjupari Brahmans in Rampur, there is a one-way link between exogamous descent-groups which classifies them as wife-givers and wife-takers. The act of worshipping, performed by the bride's father in washing the groom's feet, called *pao puja*, conveys a permanent 'worshipful' status onto the groom and his patrilineal kin-group. Marriage cannot be reversed between the two groups, because the worshipful cannot in turn perform pao puja towards those who have worshipped, or "one cannot take a girl from the local descent-group of the worshipful" (Dumont 1966:105).

This corresponds to the situation in Mauritius as well, where the North Indians do express a consistent hierarchical distinction between the groom's kin and the bride's kin, which pervades the whole marriage procedure, and the subsequent relations between the two groups. They remain, at any rate, quite distinct, without entering any kind of *alliance* relationship. The *teelak* ceremony, which takes place on the eve of the wedding, involves a number of the bride's kinsmen going to the groom's house with gifts of clothes and gold, and they have to pay a symbolic 'bridegroom wealth' to the groom. It is an opportunity for the groom's kin to display several prestige symbols, such as lavishness of decoration and feasting, number of guests invited to attend etc. while the bride's kin is in an inferior position in the sense that they have come to 'pay' the groom, even symbolically, to marry their daughter. The turmeric ceremony is also kept separate, and there is no indication of a movement or *rapprochement* of the two kin-groups towards

each other. The explanation of the *kanyadhan*, without the
simultaneous movement of the two groups implies a one-way movement of
the bride - alone - to the groom's kin-group: the parents are meant to
say, through this gesture, that "this girl is no longer ours, as from
today, she is yours, we do not have any responsibility towards her".
This shows a completely different mode of thought and of conceptualising
marriage from the Telugus. Among Telugus, the marriage procedure is
more expressive of equivalence, and *alliance*, as the principal purpose
and significance of marriage, expresses a completely different
ideological and conceptual order of relations, which cannot exist
simultaneously with hypergamy and the *pao puja* concept. The difference
evident between the North Indian and the South Indian culture forms in
Mauritius seems to indicate that the system of hypergamy and the system
of alliance are opposed and mutually exclusive, and their survival in
the Mauritian context is directly linked with the survival of the
different ethnic identities they form part of. This does not mean,
however, that an idea of hierarchy does not exist among the Telugus,
but this may not be an intrinsic part of the system, as we shall see in
sub-section (v) below.

Thus, among the Telugus, the very code for conduct which is at the
heart of kinship, and which is transferred to the allied group upon
marriage, precludes a difference of status between the two groups and
marks the merging of the two groups into one. The code of participation
and cooperation hinges upon a transactional form of give-and-take. It
is important to note that this cooperative aspect is almost entirely
dependent upon women. In most ceremonial occasions, it is the women
who are in charge of the preparation, of the cooking, the serving, and
very often of the ritual itself. This takes place as a chain or sequence
of relations, so that the women who have helped in a consanguine's or
in an affine's household can in turn count upon the latter's help when
they need it. The integration of the two kin-groups thus takes place
through this particular movement of women from one to the other in a
continuous sequence of cooperation. Thus, when a woman has married into
a kin-group, at any event which takes place in that group, her own
natal kinswomen will come to help: not only her mother and sisters, but
her aunts,and sisters-in-law will all be involved in participation.
Conversely, when an event takes place in her natal group, her mother-
in-law and sisters-in-law will also go to help.

At a Ram Bhajan, held by a man, X, and his wife, Y, the women involved
in the preparations were: Y's mother, Y's sisters, Y's brother's wife,
X's sisters, X's matrilateral parallel cousin's wife, X's patrilateral
parallel cousin's wife, X's mother's brother's wife. When X's
matrilateral cross-cousin Z got married, the same set of women were
involved, except for Y's sisters and sister-in-law. Instead, Z's
matrilateral relatives became involved, i.e. his mother's sister, and
mother's sister's sons' wives and mother's sister's daughter.

Each group then calls upon its closest affines in the sequence of relations
that takes place around social and ceremonial events, so that there will
be different permutations involved at each event. The women involved at
each of the events mentioned above can be represented as follows:
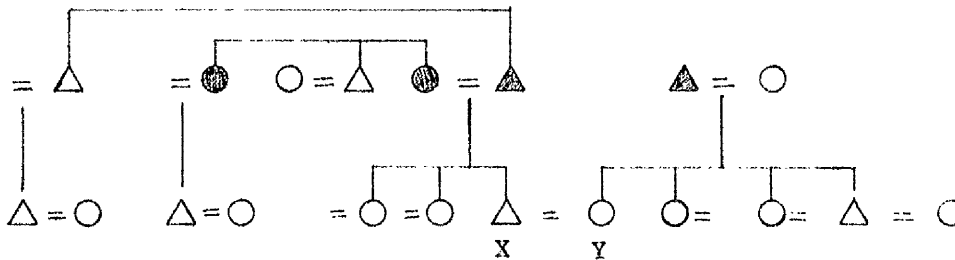
Diagram 11: Ram Bhajan
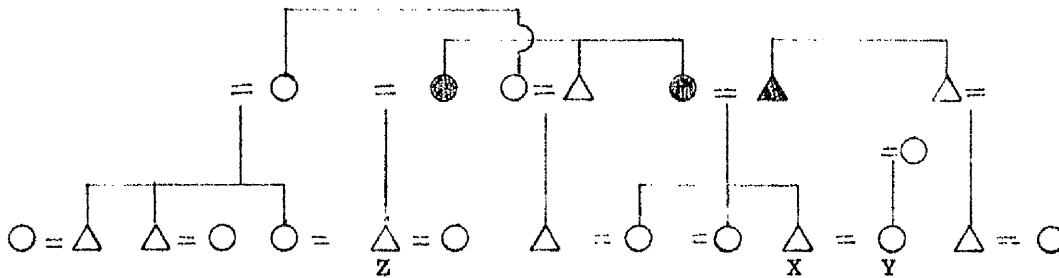
Diagram 12: Wedding

This sequence of cooperation is an intrinsic part of *alliance*. At funerals,
in particular, this function of *alliance* is visible in the fact that when a
person dies, his or her real consanguines, i.e. parents, siblings, husband
and children are too grieved to be able to conduct the ceremonial procedures.
This becomes the function of slightly more distant consanguines and of
affines. Since food cannot be cooked in the house of the dead person, it
is again affines who take charge of the cooking and bring food over to the
deceased's house to serve to the guests. This stresses the complementarity
of consanguinity and affinity in the sphere of kinship relations, and such
a complementarity cannot be achieved without the establishment of *alliance*.

(c) The confirmatory phase
_____

The final phase which transforms the *alliance* into a deep, immutable
relationship is when the two kin groups become embodied in the married
couple's children, to whom they are now commonly related as consanguines,
and when further marital links are contracted to seal the existing bond.

One of the now lost customs that used to take place in marriage
procedures among Telugus was the meeting, at the bride's house, of the
bride's mother and of the groom's mother before the wedding. This was on
the day of the *ratha* ceremony, which took place when the first pole of the
marriage 'tent' was set up, and which had to be accompanied by a special
rite. The two mothers would hold the *ratha* together and sing about the
fruit of their wombs joining to create new fruit. They would then grind
grain together in a mortar, still singing Telugu songs. This rite, although
remembered by many old women, is no longer practised today, but the *ratha*
ceremony still takes place, with five married women pouring milk and
lighting incense in front of the pole and smearing it with turmeric. The
bride is then taken round the *ratha* by an affine. The old rite was
explicitly a fertility rite, but with the significance being that the
bride's fertility would bring about the merging of the two kin-groups and
the perpetuation of both. Even the present-day rite involves such symbols
as milk and a whole coconut, which are representative of motherhood.
Marriage is then seen primarily as continuity and perpetuation, so that
alliance itself is the embodiment and proof of this continuity over the
years, not a momentary link or the movement of one woman from one group
to the other.

With the birth of children, the affinity which has been progressively
changed into a closer kinship relationship becomes finally transferred
into the realm of consanguinity in relation to the children. The grand-
parents, aunts and uncles then become incorporated into the proper
category of kin in relation to the child, and, instead of the synchronic
relationship of affinity distinguishing the bride's kin-group from the
groom's, there arises a diachronic relationship of consanguinity with
their children, generating a different order of categorisation which
cross-cuts the matrilateral/patrilateral distinction and polarises
into the cross/parallel distinction. *Alliance* then operates the change
from an affinal form of relationship to a consanguineal form of
relationship, in the process of which the higher generations are merged,

as Yalman (1969), observes. The other, parallel way in which the bond
is confirmed and reinforced is through reversals and repetitions of
marriage between the two kin-groups. There are frequent cases, among
Telugus, of sister-exchange. This happens both between unrelated
kin-groups and between cross-cousins. In two separate kin-groups
observed, the original marriage link was between two unrelated people,
but at the next generation there were two reversed cross-cousin
marriages. Thus, the reversal can take place either in the first
generation of *alliance* or in the second generation. Further, repetition
of marriage can be between the two allied kin-groups or between a
member of one of the kin-groups and a member of a kin-group affinally
related to the allied one. (See next page for illustrations of such
alliances).

Diagrams 13 (a-d) show successive marriages between affinally related
people, in order to establish *alliance* between the respective kin-groups,
and also illustrates different patterns of choice among Telugus: In (a),
two sisters B marry A and C; at the second generation, a son of each
sister (i.e. two parallel cousins) marry two sisters, while a daughter
of another male from C marries E; at the third generation, a male from
A (from the AB marriage) marries cross-generationally a daughter from
E (from the CE marriage). This effectively cements the *alliance* between
ABC and E. Although women may be thought to move into their husband's
kin-group, in fact, *alliances* can be established in the direction of the
women's kin-group. Both A and E marry in the direction of their mother's
affines, in the case of A through his mother, and in the case of E
through her mother's father.

In (b) a more complex interweaving of ties is shown: in the second
generation, a daughter of a woman from a kin-group C marries a man from
B, while her MB, a man from C, marries cross-generationally a woman from
B. Another man from B marries his cross-cousin A, while the latter's
sister A marries into E. At the fourth generation, a son G of a woman
from C marries two generations down the daughter, F, of a woman from E
whose mother was from A. A was consanguineally related to a kin-group B
which was affinally related to kin-group C. Again, the relationship of
alliance for G and F is established through their mother.

(a)
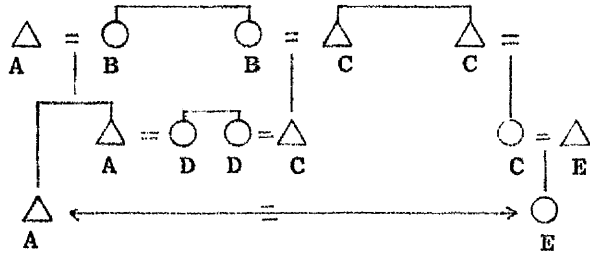
1st Gen: Two sisters B marry A and C.

2nd Gen: Two parallel-cousins A and C marry two sisters D. C's female parallel-cousin marries E.

3rd Gen: A marries E, closing in the alliance relations

(b)
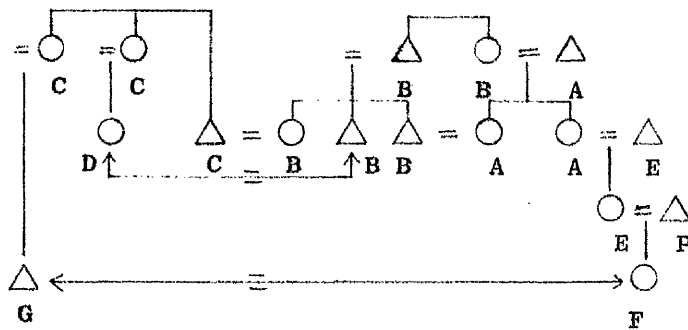
1st Gen: B marries A

2nd Gen: Cross-cousins B and A marry. A marries E. B marries C and her brother B marries C's niece D.

3rd Gen: E marries F

4th Gen: F marries G,(daughter of E and son of C).

(c)
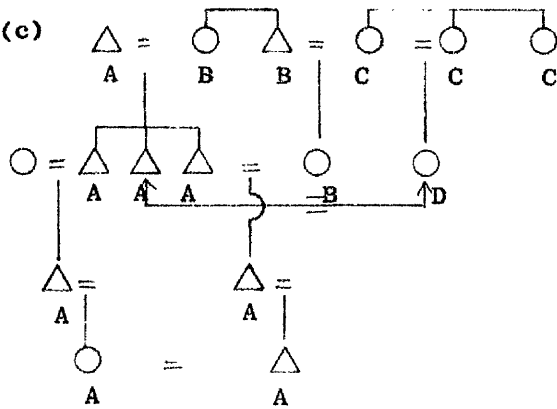
2nd Gen: Cross-cousins A and B marry. A marries D, daughter of C (i.e. two brothers marry two parallel-cousins).

4th Gen: Two As marry.

(d)
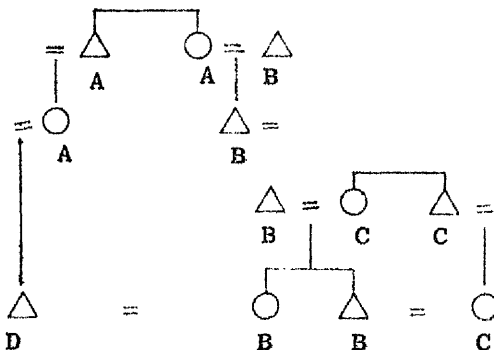
Closing of alliance at 4th generation; first three generations contract 'outside' marriages. Relationships are revived by D marrying his MFZSSD, while B marries his cross-cousin C at the fourth generation.

Diagram 13(a-d): Examples of different types of *alliance*

In (c) the direction of *alliance* is towards one group A, with consanguineally and affinally related women being brought in through marriage to men from A. Thus, at the second generation, a man from A marries his MBD, B, while another man from A marries his MBWZ, D - i.e. two brothers, A marry two parallel cousins B and D. At the third generation, the sons of two brothers A (one of them being the son of AB) contract outside marriages (not within the *alliance* group). At the fourth generation, the daughter of one of these sons marries the son of her father's parallel cousin, also from A. In principle, this should not be allowed, since in Mauritian Telugu exegesis, two parallel cousins are two brothers, and their children may not marry. However, as is visible from the fact that kin-group A dominates the *alliance* formation, A is a powerful group in terms of status and money. This allows for *alliance* to be repeated within this group even if it flouts the structural rules of marriage to a certain extent.

Case (d) illustrates the repetition after two generations, of an *alliance* between kin-groups A and B. During the first, second and third generations, the people shown contracted outside (non-kin) marriages, except for D. At the fourth generation, D contracted a cross-generational marriage with MFZSSD belonging to kin-group B, i.e. his mother's cross-cousin's son's daughter. Further, B's brother married his MBD, C. This illustrates a case which can be seen in all four illustrations, where a group that was expanding horizontally is brought together again by *alliance*, and decreasing relationships at the third or fourth generation are revived, in a sense, by a marriage that creates new blood and affinal ties between the groups involved. *Alliance* is thus both sychronic and diachronic in nature, cementing the relations between affines, and intensifying old relationships that had been decreasing over the generations. I have called this process the 'closing in of alliance'.

When a number of these repetitions have taken place, it becomes difficult to distinguish kin-groups from one another. Transmutations of kinship roles take place, with affines becoming terminological consanguines, and consanguines becoming real as well as terminological affines. Since cross-cousin marriages can be seen as a model where marriage is prescribed

within the consanguineal sphere, *alliance* can perhaps be seen as a
way of incorporating non-related marriages into the kinship system
and making them conform to the original model by an integration process,
so that one feels that the kin-endogamy principle has been preserved.
This is why *alliance* can be said to 'mirror', in a sense, the real
consanguineal marriages: (a) terminologically, because the class of
cross-relatives are denoted with affinal terms and affines of affines
are denoted with consanguineal terms, (b) ritually because the marriage
ceremonies operate a movement of each kin-group towards the other until
they are said to be symbolically merged, (c) effectively because the
same code for conduct applies to kin members and to members of the
alliance group, involving a chain of cooperation between women, and
(d) substantially because eventually, the synchronic affinal roles
become diachronic consanguineal roles, and repetitions of marriage
between the two groups intertwines relationships to such an extent that
they become indistinguishable.

Whatever the structural distance separating the allied groups then, there
is an incorporative process whereby this distance is reduced so that,
eventually, the principle of endogamy is preserved. *Alliance* creates
strong internal bonds which induces a form of structural cohesion
within the group.

We will now go on to look at the formation of broad status groups in
the community, and the ways in which they are prevented from becoming
disruptive and divisive in the context of intra-group relations.

(v) <u>Alliance groups as status groups</u>

In the preceding section, I stressed the fundamental distinction between
alliance and hypergamy as two mutually exclusive cultural forms. This
does not mean, however, that hierarchical distinctions do not exist in
the communities adhering to *alliance*. In India, these hierarchical
divisions usually take the form of caste or ranked lineages; in Mauritius,
they are a mixture of several status-components of which caste is a part,
and which can be seen to lead to the formation of broad, but not
necessarily rigid, status groups.

In S. Barnett's study of the KV caste in Tamil Nadu, the author notes
that in each village cluster, not all KVs are allowed to intermarry.
In spite of the fact that all caste members should in principle share
the same degree of purity, in fact, within the caste, there are narrower
distinctions of rank in the form of groupings called *vakaiyara*, which are
small endogamous units and which do not contain internal rankings, but
are ranked in relation to each other (Barnett 1970). Among the KVs,
there are lineages and there are alliance networks. The immediate
alliance network is held together by the prescription of close cooperation
between *sampanti* (bride's house and groom's house). The alliance networks
also incorporate two kinds of relations, *rompa sontakaran* and *duram
sontakaran*, which are translated as close and distant affinal relations.
These are conceptualised, in the case of three affinally related lineages
A, B and C, as follows:

A __Rompa Sontakaran__ B __Rompa Sontakaran__ C
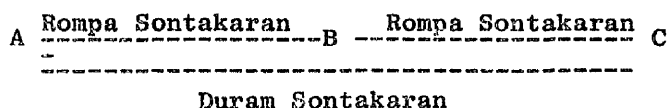
__Duram Sontakaran__

(Barnett 1970: 62).

One's *vakaiyara* then comprises one's lineage, as well as one's *rompa* and
duram sontakaran, which allows marriage to take place, apart from with
the direct and classificatory cross-cousins, with any of the affinally
related lineages contained in the *rompa* and *duram sontakaran*. "Actual
genealogies show complex ramifications of all kinds in accord with these
rules. Families will ally with others over many generations, at the
same time shifting other alliances (...), and establishing new alliances"
(ibid.:66). *Vakaiyaras* are ranked endogamous units, and ranking is
expressed through restrictions on interdining which are recognised and
respected by all. Ranking is also based on secular power, and the higher
vakaiyara lineages usually control the panchayat and most of the wealth
in the villages. This means that ranking is very much expressive of
general social status, and not simply of degree of purity. The lineages
ally on the basis of wealth and rank, so that the *vakaiyara* are endogamous
in a preservative sense, and, although intermarriage does occasionally
occur between two *vakaiyaras*, the marriage is not seen as a link between
them but as an occasional deviance, and relations between the two lineages
do not become of the *sontakaran order* (ibid.: 68).

The above observations correspond in a striking way with the Mauritian situation. The close cooperation between *sampanti* (here expressed in the borrowed Hindi terms *samdhi/samdhin*) is also an integral part of *alliance*. Thus, when people contract locality marriages, they explain their choice in two ways: (a) the daughter remains close to her mother's household, and (b) *samdhi/samdhin* relations can be constantly maintained. In a village with a predominant Telugu population in the North of the island, called Rivière-du-Rempart, several locality marriages have resulted in clusters of affines living close together and adhering to *fami* relations with each other. In several of these cases, both sets of parents have equally helped the young married couples to set up their households, and it is not seen as a shame if the bride's parents give a house to the couple or help them financially. The in-laws express a marked concern for the welfare of the couple, and see it as their responsibility to help them as far as possible. In many cases, changes in the direction of *alliance* make it unclear and irrelevant whether it is the bride's kin-group that is helping the couple or the groom's kin-group, since they are both inter-linked in any case. The samdhi/samdhin relationship removes the possible shame that a man may feel in accepting financial assistance from his in-laws, since the two *alliance* families are felt to be a single kin-group, in particular if they live close together, and the *alliance* tie is made stronger by the locality tie.

The other way in which the KV case and the Telugu case correspond is in the formation of stable alliance networks which broadly correspond to the *vakaiyara*, i.e. a network that is maritally self-contained. There is no specific word to describe these groups, but it is possible to retrace, through family-names, the specific *alliance* groups. Further, the rompa sontakaran and the duram sontakaran – to use Barnett's terms – are resolved by a marriage link between the two kin-groups linked by duram sontakaran, so that the relationship becomes of the order of rompa sontakaran, and effectively closes the circle of alliance. This can be represented as a variant of Barnett's diagram, with arrows indicating marriage ties:
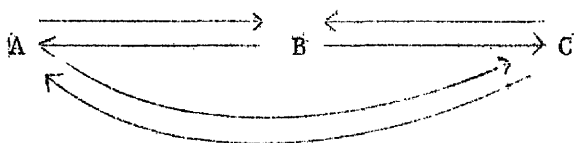
Thus, the duram sontakaram relation existing between A and C through their common connection to B is changed into rompa sontakaran. (See diagrams on pg 266 which illustrate this process).

This reveals an important fact about *alliance* which can be observed in the marriage patterns adhered to by Telugus: *alliance* and cross-cousin marriages can be seen as alternating over generations to allow the endogamous group to expand as well as maintain its internal ties. In the two *alliance* networks we mentioned in the previous sub-section, we found two unrelated people marrying; the second generation was marked by two cross-cousin marriages, reversed; in that same generation, other marriages were contracted outside the propre kin group; in the third generation, cross-cousin marriages again take place, linking the children of the outside marriages with those of the second generation cross-cousins, and marriages contracted between duram sontakaran closing in the *alliance* network.
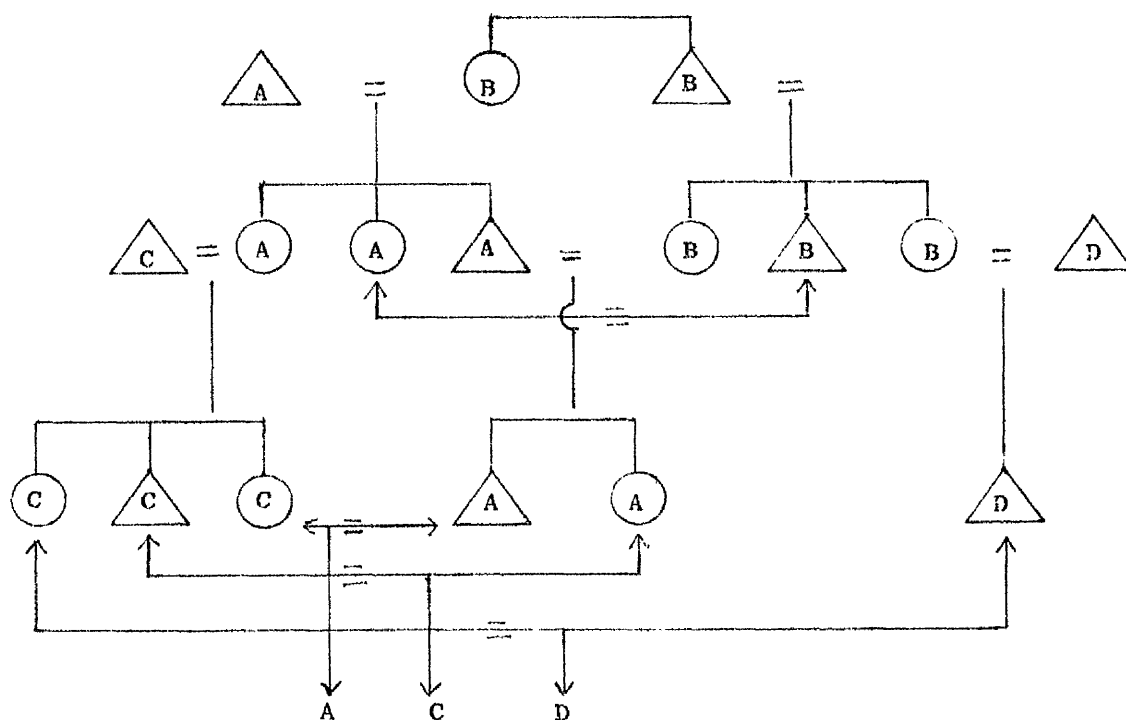
(Diagram 14: Establishment of an *alliance* network)

The above diagram shows this process, linking kin-groups A, B, C and D. The direction of *alliance* is not as important as its maintenance and the closing in process whereby duram sontakaran relations become rompa sontakaran. This process eventually identifies a group of *alliance* kin-groups bound by marriage and who keep repeating these ties over the generations.

How then does the status gradation appear? When Telugus speak about
consanguineal marriages, they tend to ascribe them to two main reasons:
(a) "it is good to preserve the 'name' of the family" (*nom* - reputation,
honour, and by extension, *propreté*), and (b) "people who consistently
marry in the family want to keep their wealth in the family, or want to
marry in the same caste because of its status". These two aspects, which
are both 'preservative' in the sense of good name/honour and in the
sense of wealth/status, are important criteria of choice in marriages
contracted by high-status families. One finds, among these families,
more intensive marriage alliances in the propre group and with the same
families, with few marriages based on locality. Conversely, people of
lower status contract more locality marriages, which also give rise to
close samdhi/samdhin relations and to the establishment of *alliance*
clusters in the locality. The important aspect of *alliance*, then, is
that there should be no hierarchy or difference of status within the
alliance groups, and when people are looking for potential spouses,
they have to respect this fundamental prerequisite of *alliance*. However,
status is, as we have noted in previous chapters, a composite of several
elements such as caste, wealth and profession. There is no one method
of assessing a kin-group's status. Thus, even within broad status-
groupings, the families linked by an *alliance*-network are also ranked
vis-à-vis each other. This gives rise to both internal and external
ranking: those families which have all three components of status make
up the highest level of the status hierarchy. These are joined by
people of high caste who do not have the attribute of wealth, and those
of 'middle' (i.e. not classified as low castes, but not of high caste
either) castes who have wealth and professional status.

Below this upper section, one finds differentiations arising between
town-dwellers and rural-dwellers: thus, low caste town-dwellers tend
to intermarry, while high-caste rural-dwellers have to seek marriage
partners quite far in other villages in order to find the appropriate
castes. For this reason, they are generally giving up the emphasis
upon caste as a criterion of marriage, since low-caste people compose
the majority of the community, and they also are relying more and more
on locality marriages. The upper section bases its *alliances* on
status, while the lower ones tend to use occupation/previous acquaintance/
proximity as the main criteria for marriage choices.

The upper section kin-groups are known by all the people of the community since, as in the case of the KVs, they also hold positions of power or authority, acting as leaders of the community at national level and voicing its needs. There are three kin-groups of the Telega caste -- which is the highest Telugu caste in the island - among the uppermost *alliance* group; they have married among themselves as well as with two other high caste kin-groups belonging to the Kampolu and the Kalinga castes (see diagram on next page). Marriages between these three castes are considered to be highly appropriate, "according to the rule". This is why they are isolated as the highest ranking ones even in the upper section of the community, and *alliance* is more deeply established between them than with the other *alliance* groups in this section. Below this group come three other kin-groups which possess some of the status attributes but not all, so that, even though they belong to the upper section, they are ranked slightly lower than the topmost *alliance* group. One of them is a Telega kin-group with professional status but no property; the other two are lower caste ones with professional status as well as property. There have been marriages between these three as well as hypergamous marriages with the upper section. In the case of the Telega kin-group, several marriages have taken place with the level one kin-groups; in the case of the marriage linking the lower caste kin-group with a higher caste one of level one, there has been only one marriage, not repeated. Further marriages have linked the kin-groups of the same level rather than across levels. The third level has two kin-groups which have come into the upper section mainly through their belonging to a high caste -- in the case of R -- and through hypergamous marriages -- in the case of A. R are Telegas who have become very poor and thus have a lower status than the other Telegas. When an R woman wanted to marry a Py man, the marriage was not liked in terms of caste, but accepted because the Py man was professionally more highly placed. But when an N woman could not find a marriage partner, it was as a last choice that the family accepted an R man -- although they were of the same caste -- because of the difference of wealth. For the Ns, the Rs having married down caste-wise mitigated their caste status, and since they were not wealthy nor had high-status jobs, this marriage was considered as marrying down. However, when this occurred, everything was done to help the couple, which showed that the marriage had been accepted. The As have contracted marriages mainly

with the Pi kin-group, who are of the Telega caste but not a property-owning one. The diagram below represents these levels and *alliances* of the upper status section:
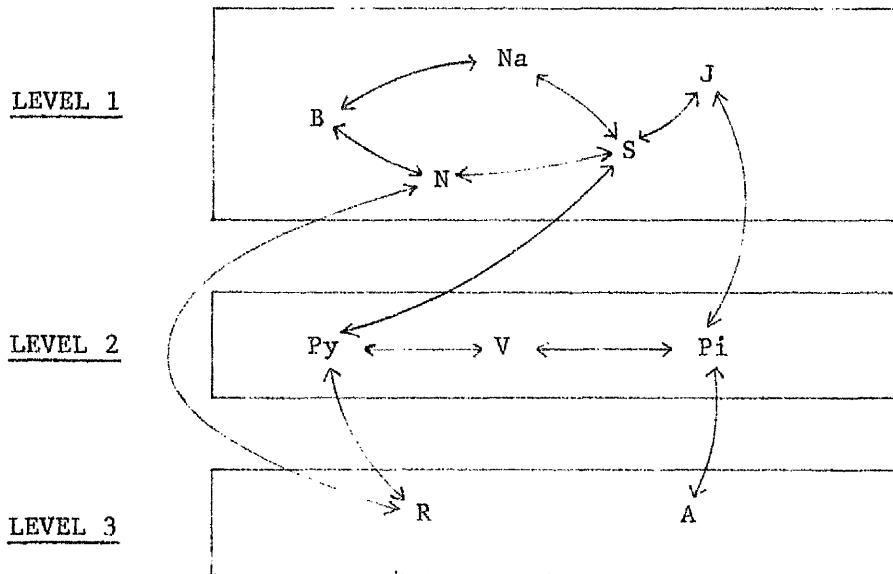
Diagram 15 : Upper section of the kin-groups of the Telugu community, showing internal ranking and *alliances*

The two genealogical diagrams below show a cross-section of *alliances* of the level 1 kin-groups, and a cross-section of marriages linking all three levels. As can be seen from the two genealogical diagrams, the intensity of internal *alliances* is more evident in the level one kin-groups. The two other levels exhibit more fluidity, in particular in recent times, in their marriage choices, since other kin-groups are now acquiring mobility through professional status and are slowly becoming integrated into the *alliance* group.
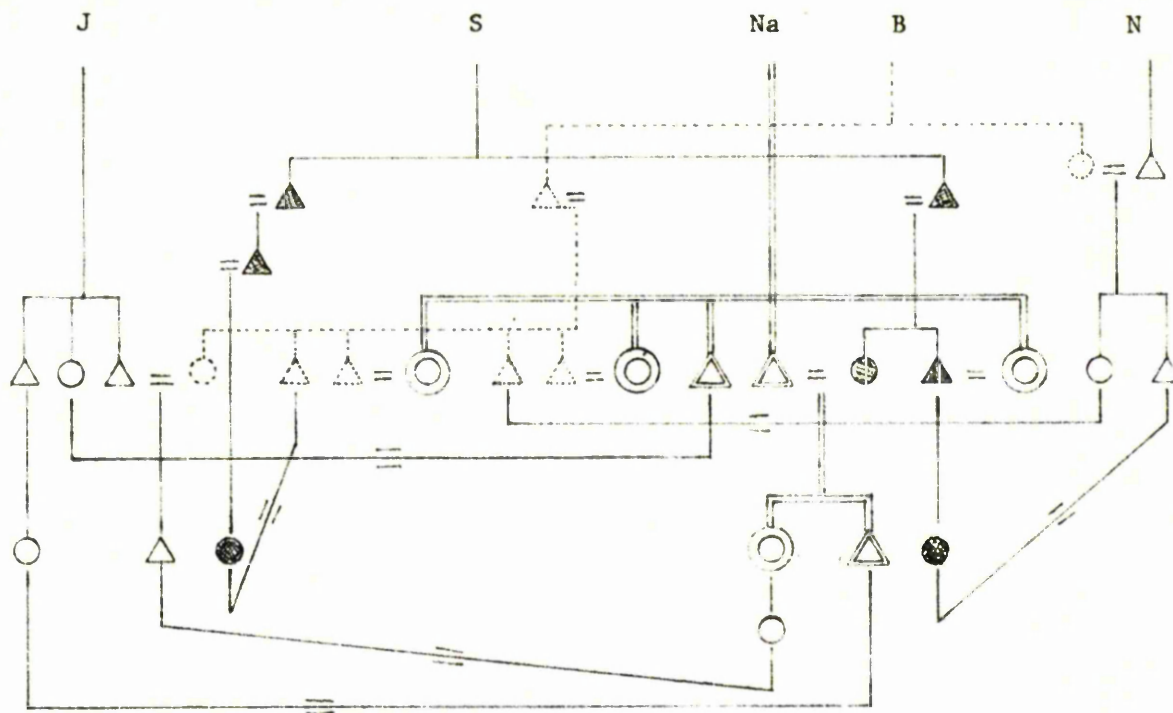
Diagram 16: *Alliances* of level 1 kin group
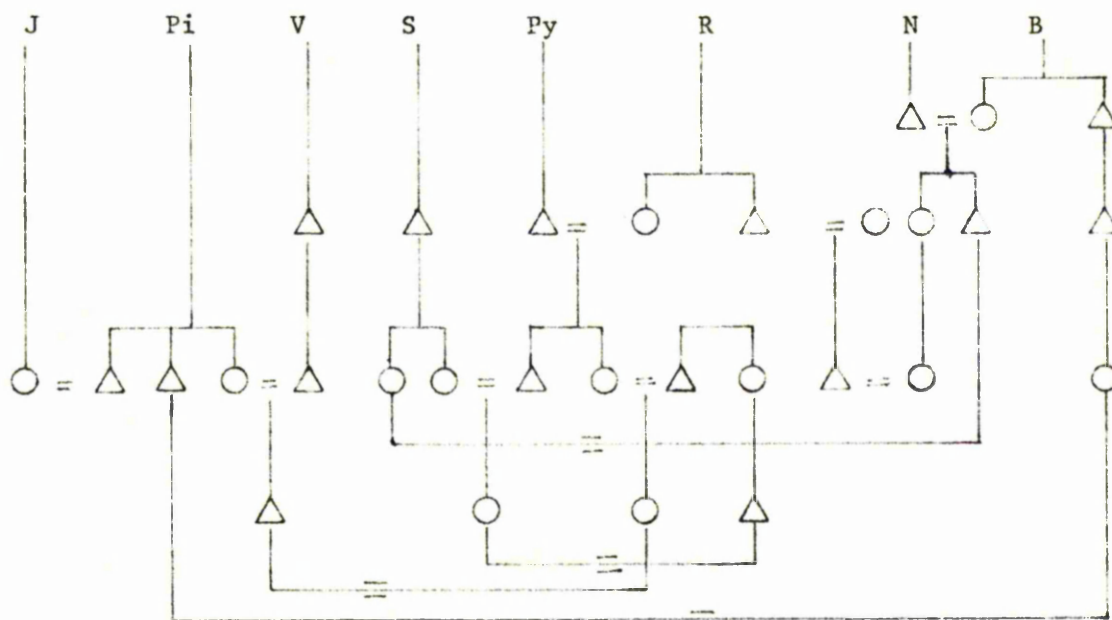
Diagram 17: *Alliances* of kin-groups of three levels

The internal ranking within status groups and across them gives rise
to a hypergamous pattern. Although *alliance* as a principle should not
incorporate any difference of status, status seeking is in fact an
intrinsic part of the society. Even in societies which ascribe to the
Dravidian kinship pattern in South India, the principle of patrilineal
descent, in particular among Brahmans, creates a difference of status
between wife-givers and wife-takers, so that a pattern of hypergamy
arises. Although alliance systems have usually been considered in
opposition to hypergamous systems, this is not necessarily so at the
level of practice advocated by Good (1981). In practice, people who
ascribe to alliance are also concerned with mobility through marriage -
although perhaps not predominantly or primarily -, while people
who use hypergamy as an intrinsic part of marriage do try to create
stable bonds with specific kin-groups, as is observed by Vatuk about
a Hindi-speaking people on the outskirts of a city of Uttar Pradesh
(1970).

However, in Mauritius, hypergamy is negated by the fact of *alliance*.
Thus, once a marriage is accepted and sanctioned, (unless there has
been a dispute over it between the families involved), relationships
after marriage do not continue to express the hypergamous relation as
it does among North Indians through a uni-directional flow of
prestations (Dumont 1966), but becomes more or less equalized. Other
factors come in to make up for the status inequality, such as knowledge
of the family, good *samdhi/samdhin* relations etc. Thus hypergamy can
be seen as an initial phase element in the marriage procedure, but
one which is corrected subsequently through the process of *alliance*.
This is where a difference arises between Mauritian Telugus and North
Indians, because, among the latter, a difference of status precludes
close relations between the affinal families and is not negated by the
marriage itself. Hypergamy remains a constant fact in the relationship,
whereas among the Telugus it is only a phase in the cycle which is
overborne by *alliance*.

The emphasis upon *alliance* as one of the main structural features of
Mauritian Telugu kinship can then be seen both as a resilience factor
of the group and as an adaptive one. It is resilient in the sense
that it is in keeping with all the fundamental features of Dravidian

kinship systems and in fact bears marked ressemblances with some of them with which it has no common links apart from similarity of origin; in other ethnographic cases, such as the Pramalai Kallar of Tamil Nadu, for instance, there is not so much emphasis upon the unity and cooperativeness of alliance groups, and the marriage rituals do not involve the progressive *rapprochement* of the two affinal groups, but a movement of the couple from one group to the other, accompanied by series of prestations (Dumont 1957). The differences or similarities can be seen as stemming from the particular position of the group in its immediate environnement. Whereas the Pramalai Kallar make up a territorial unit and are not set in opposition to other groups, the Telugus are in a position of constant opposition to other groups with strong identities from which they have to guard themselves in order to avoid assimilation. They do so by intensifying the internal bonds through the fundamental, essential institution of marriage. But *alliance* is also an adaptive form in that it has translated the openly divisive order of caste distinctions into the covertly separative order of status groups which are not rigidly closed. The status groups are maintained through the fact that, as *alliance* networks, they are maritally self-contained, and, in conceptual terms, conform to the model of kinship unity and equivalence. Thus, since Telugus consciously see caste as a potentially disruptive factor, saying, for instance, that if they started exerting caste-based restrictions on their children's marriage choices, the latter would probably end up marrying outside the group altogether, there is a deliberate attempt to play down caste differences most of the time. And, although status groupings tend to reflect caste-based arrangements, they are not as rigid nor as apparent as caste groups are within an operative caste system, and status groups are more easily justified in the people's eyes than caste *per se*. They also offer a wider and more open choice for marriage, since it is not enjoined by the system to marry within a status group but a matter of choice, and within broad status groups, several *alliance* networks are available to Ego, which tend to overlap.

Alliance is also one of the reasons given for qualité-endogamy. There can be no *alliance* with people of a different qualité, because they cannot become 'kin'. "Your affines are not your propre blood, but they will become your propre kin. The two families will become like

one. With people of a different qualité, you cannot become one, you cannot merge". In this explanation given by a Telugu man, of how *alliance*, kinship and qualité are related, we perhaps come nearest to the essence of all these orders of relations: they bring in concepts of substantial identity,of *propreté*, and of substance which are deeply linked with the nature of the group itself, as we shall see in the next section.

In this section, I have looked at structural features of Telugu kinship in terms of cross-cousin marriages and *alliance*. I would now like to see how concepts of substance and blood lie at the basis of kinship, how they can seem contradictory, and how they are resolved.

SECTION TWO: NOTIONS OF SUBSTANCE

The notion of substance is a fundamental one in ancient Hindu scriptures and classical texts. It enters the metaphysical and symbolical as well as the biological aspects of caste and kinship, evolving, in the way substances mediate, interrelate or separate, a precise and highly complex ordering and ranking of these castes and of kin, both from within and from without. Anthropologists in recent years have used the information provided by classical texts in explaining and understanding South Asian systems of thought as an ideological background to sociological processes (cf Marriott and Inden 1977; Orenstein 1970). In fact,different culture forms can be seen to be generated by widely divergent cognitive processes, and in South Asian systems in particular, these cognitive processes are a fundamental part of the religions,mythologies and texts that have been at the root of Indian civilisation for centuries.

It must however be recognised that one cannot rely entirely on the classical texts to formulate explanations of the different culture forms that exist within India itself. People borrow widely from texts in their exegesis of religion and tradition, but since the texts themselves contain widespread ambiguities and contradictions, the exegesis also tends to incorporate these ambiguities. Notions of blood and substance in particular are generally inconsistent, since they are used to express bonds of several orders, such as caste, kinship and identity - whether this be village-identity or regional-identity. As Orenstein observes, "ambivalence (in the Shastric texts) was a necessary outcome of the conflicting but simultaneously held definitions" (1970: 1366). Parallelly, David makes the remark that "the Shastras assert both that one shares particles of natural substance with maternal kin and affines and that one does not. Neither they nor (he) can reconcile this contradiction" (1973: 531-2).

In this section, I will look at the inconsistencies involved in Telugu exegeses of kind, and try to discover an explanatory framework to resolve them.

(i) Propre and non-propre

The main contradiction that enters peoples' explanations of kinship and
marriage in Mauritius involves both of the structural oppositions
contained in the kinship system itself, i.e. cross and parallel, and
consanguines and affines, and this seems to be the result of a partially
cultural and partially biological definition of blood that creates a
conflict in their minds.

The first inconsistency that one encounters among Telugus is in their
explanation of the marriage rules: the prohibition of parallel-cousin
marriage is strongly expressed in certain families, while, in others,
the matrilateral restriction is being questioned. Explanations for
these vary; they are expressed as:

- a brother and a sister are not the same blood, therefore their
  children can marry

- children of two brothers are the same blood and have the same name
  therefore they cannot marry

- two sisters are like mothers to each other's children, therefore
  their children cannot marry (alternatively they say that "I cannot
  call an 'amma' by the name 'attah'").

These three axioms, which are the most frequently used, do not make use
of the same logical concepts: in the first two, the concept of common
and different blood is used to explain the cross and parallel
distinction; but, since two sisters cannot, as a logical corollary of
axioms one and two, be said to have the same blood, one cannot explain
in the same terms the prohibition on matrilateral parallel-cousin
marriage. Therefore, the people switch from the concept of substance
to the concept of relation in order to explain the matrilateral
parallel-cousin prohibition. Sisters bear the actual and terminological
relation of mother to each other's children, therefore their children
are siblings and cannot marry. When they want to justify a relaxation
of the matrilateral rule, they do so by pointing out that, within the
concept of blood, the matrilateral rule is contradictory.

The second contradiction appears in the reckoning of blood. When cross-cousins marry, the marriage is considered to be within propre blood. When asked to name the people they consider as propre blood, people include both cross and parallel relatives, and both matrilateral and patrilateral relatives. Again, there is here a conceptual switch, this time from a cultural reckoning of blood, to a 'biological' reckoning of blood. Where in order to explain the tradition of cross-cousin marriage they used the cultural notion of substance that brother and sister are not of the same blood, in effect, they classify cross-cousin marriages as 'consanguineal' marriages in a biological sense or perhaps in a different cultural sense — "marrié dans disang" (to marry within blood). In fact, the switch is perhaps more significant if one sees it as a movement from one cultural concept to another: in one sense, blood is reckoned in terms of patrilinearity, and in the other, in terms of bilaterality.

This is a puzzling aspect of most of the Dravidian kinship systems observed by different authors: the basic, elementary forms of the system do not show any preference for one form of filiation and descent or another; both patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are possible, and the cross and parallel distinctions cross-cut the matrilateral/patrilateral one. Marriage and affinity exhibit more a complementary relation with consanguinity as they are set within the same conceptual framework, than an opposition to it. Yet, in the cases described by various anthropologists, lineages, descent-groups and reckoning of filiation show a preference for one form or the other, i.e. it can be patrilineal, matrilineal or bilateral. To try and explain the appearance of cross-cousin marriages in terms of any of these modes of descent and filiation is self-defeating, since all these types co-exist with the Dravidian kinship system, and it appears that the latter can in fact function regardless of the particular mode of descent. Thus, Gough, in trying to fit the matrilateral parallel-cousin marriage prohibition into the patrilineal scheme of the Tanjore Brahmins has to resort to behavioural explanations by stating that sisters have close relations with each other and frequently visit each other, which is why their children cannot marry (1956). David, who wishes to resolve once and for all the two oppositions of consanguinity and affinity and of cross and parallel adopted by Dumont and Yalman respectively, by using the peoples' own classification of kin as sharers

and uniters of substance, still does not succeed in incorporating the matrilateral rule in the explanation. Instead, he resorts to the Jaffna Tamils' own dismissal of the contradiction with an "as if" remark (1973: 523/4).

All the contradictions inherent in these systems in fact revolve around the position of women in the kinship classifications: do women belong, in terms of substance, to their husband's kin-group or to their natal kin-group? Around this fundamental question, we see the other questions arising, i.e. why does the opposition between consanguines and affines, which should in principle make a distinction between patrilineal relatives and matrilineal ones, become terminologically embodied in parallel relatives and cross relatives, and why do ego's grand-parents become terminologically merged, as well as ego's grand-children? The problems that arise then seem to hinge around the following elements:

- the existence of matrilateral parallel-cousin marriage prohibition

- the opposed notions of real consanguinity and affinity and 'cultural' consanguinity and affinity

- the notion of transubstantiation of women

First, in looking at the real consanguinity/affinity and terminological consanguinity/affinity opposition, I think that it should be borne in mind that people *can* in fact make the distinction between the two conceptual orders. If one asked a Telugu person whether he or she is related by blood to his/her maternal grandparents, the answer will be yes. Further, in any context, he or she will make a difference between a real cross-cousin and a classificatory one in terms of distance of relation and kinship, in the same way as the difference between real mother and classificatory mothers is felt and made. In fact, the biogenetic concept of blood is very much present among Telugus, and this concept is the basis upon which they classify their kinship relations into propre and non-propre.

This distinction between propre and non-propre can perhaps be seen in terms of substantial identity and untaintedness - i.e. my propre blood and my propre kin are closest to me, and therefore we have the same

substantial identity. 'Propre', with its real meaning of 'clean' can perhaps be seen to denote a state of *untaintedness* within the pluralistic society in particular, since the existence of a large number of identities makes such a state difficult to sustain. Marriage is the main area where identity can become tainted through mixed marriages, and since this is the way in which qualité is perpetuated, it becomes even more important to contract 'propre' marriages in order to preserve this untaintedness.

When people explain marriages within the propre blood group, that is, with real cross-cousins, they say that it is to preserve the 'name' (or kinship identity), so that the marriage remains in the propre category. There is no stronger form of endogamy than marriage within the propre blood group, and it is preservative of honour, reputation and of natural similarity. Real cross-cousin marriages can then be seen as the ideal form of marriage. When we come to *alliance*, it is also a form of preservation of substantial identity, since one chooses among a set of people who are in every way equivalent to one in terms of caste, status, good name etc., and who have previous relations with one. Through the establishment of *alliance* and the merging of the allied families described earlier, the immediate affines also become incorporated into the propre group as propre 'fami', and in fact, they will become propre blood to the children of the couple linking the allied families. Thus, this concept of substance allows for a notion of identity – propre – and a notion of blood to be expressed in consanguineal marriages as well as in alliances. First, there is the division of kin into propre and non-propre, and the propre category subdivides into propre blood and propre kin, the latter incorporating direct affines who will become propre blood to one's own blood, i.e. to the children resulting from the *alliance*:

PROPRE CATEGORY

PROPRE BLOOD   ALLIANCE   PROPRE KIN
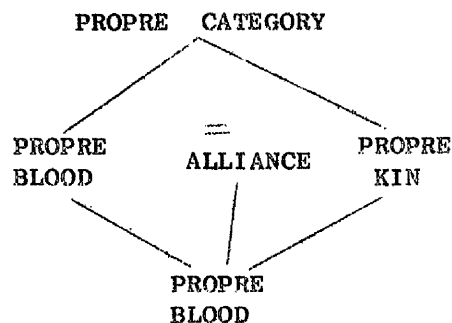
PROPRE BLOOD

Diagram 18: Propre Categories

- 283 -

In the distinction between propre blood and propre kin, the distinction
between real blood-kin and real affinal-kin is preserved, while at the
same time preserving the substantial link forged by *alliance*. As the
two categories become merged as propre blood at the next generation,
the need to distinguish between possible marriage partners within the
propre category and those whom one may not marry then gives rise to the
emergence of distinct roles which can be termed consanguineal roles
and affinal roles. This fact has been noted by Dumont when he commented
about the Mama being a ritual and ceremonial role, since the real Mama
can be replaced by several orders of kin (1953). The role, he adds, is
more important than the actor. Among the Telugus too, the notion of
roles can be seen in the fact that if the real consanguine or affine is
not available, he is replaced by the classificatory one. The younger
brother's and sister's roles in the marriage ritual, for instance, can
be filled by a younger parallel cousin. In one particular case, since
the bridegroom's father, father's brother, and mother's sister's husband –
all fathers – were dead, the only available person to fill that role was
the eldest parallel cousin, i.e. an elder brother who could replace the
father. The people themselves are well aware that these are roles
rather than real kinship relations. They are often only significant
in the sphere of ritual and ceremonials, and a kinship role may remain
latent during all of one's existence. Thus, a cross-cousin may act
throughout his life as a consanguine towards a female cross-cousin
without the potential marriage relationship being realised. The fact
that they do not marry does not mean that they have no kinship link.
Their relationship as propre blood will remain throughout their lives
until they get married, in which case they will still be propre blood,
while being also husband and wife. These are not, in fact, contradictory
notions.

The terminological system, and the notions of kinship roles, with their
marriage prescriptions and regulations,can perhaps be seen as a system
with its own internal logic and conceptual structure, separate from
notions of biogenetic substance. This logical system is internally
consistent, but externally contradictory in terms of notions of real
consanguinity and affinity. This is mainly because people are
constantly making switches from one to the other and explaining one
in terms of the other. On the ground, the group functions perfectly

with its traditional kinship system and terminology, and its internal notion of propre and non-propre, without the contradictions affecting the one or the other. It is only when explanations are sought and the exegesis is probed that the conceptual contradictions become apparent, but even these may eventually be used to justify certain changes and relaxations of the rules. The main area where one sees the inconsistency between traditional concept and actual belief arising is in the position and substantial nature of women, which we shall look at now in greater detail.

(ii) The substantial nature of women

As we have seen in the previous section, the Dravidian kinship system does not involve a defintion of descent or lineage; in terms of filiation, it predicts bilaterality, with marriage and alliance becoming the key factors inducing the merging of the two kin-groups. It has been noted that several forms of descent systems can co-exist with the Dravidian kinship system. In Mauritius, a curious situation has arisen in which there is a dual notion of substance juxtaposed in the people's explanations of kinship and marriage relations. The biogenetic notion of substance is at the root, as we have seen, of the categorisation of kindred into propre and non-propre. This would seem to concur with the notion of bilaterality involved in alliance systems, so that the resulting kinship configuration should fit very neatly into a single notion of blood and substance which is based on bilaterality of transmission and complementarity of roles between mother's kin and father's kin. Further, children inherit from both their parents regardless of sex, so that even property is no longer transmitted patrilineally. However, there seems to be a remnant of a patrilineal form of descent which is expressed in peoples' notions of blood and in their rationalisation of tradition. For instance, it is still asserted frequently that children have more of their father's blood and that women belong to their husband's blood-group rather than to their parents'. In the explanations of marriage rules given above, that same idea is involved in the assertion that two brothers have the same blood while two sisters do not nor a brother and a sister. The idea of appropriation of women to marriage is also expressed ("she becomes 'for' her mother-in-law"), and mourning prescriptions, where the wife cannot hold a rite for her parents in her conjugal household also imply that she no longer has blood links with her natal kin.

This idea has been considerably stressed and developed in India, in the notion of 'transubstantiation' of women during the marriage rite from one group to the other. In North India, the notion is clearly expressed during the marriage ceremony, in particular since the idea of merging of affinal groups is not present, and there is also a marked physical separation between a woman and her natal group through village exogamy. The idea of transference is also expressed in South India among Brahmans (Gough 1956). Women are evidently a focal element in any kinship structure. They embody both the marriage relation, in a movement from one lineage or kin-group to the other and in the bond they create between alliance groups, as well as the perpetuation of the endogamous group in the bearing of children. In terms of caste, as well as kinship, women have a pivotal role. As Yalman states, "it is through women, (and not men), that the 'purity' of the caste-community is ensured and preserved. It is mainly through the women that blood and purity are perpetuated" (1963: 43). Yalman further observes that, in South India, caste is held to be transmitted bilaterally. Women, therefore, contribute as much to the children's caste and the group's purity, through their own lineage history, as men. Among Brahmans, women's purity is preserved through extreme seclusion, and conversely, through extreme chastisement if they flout caste rules. It is the men's responsibility to ensure this seclusion and to give punishment in case of a breach, since the women are felt to be custodians of the lineage's or descent group's purity and therefore potentially dangerous for this purity (ibid.: 41). Thus, in North India and among Brahmans in South India, the substantial identity of caste is made to rest partly on the purity of women, and, because of the fact of their transubstantiation to their husband's descent-group, they are also responsible for the purity of this group as well.

The idea of transubstantiation is also in keeping with the hypergamous pattern in the sense that wife-givers are considered to be inferior to wife-takers, and since, a woman enters her husband's descent group, she cannot retain any of the inferior status of her natal group, and undergoes complete transubstantiation upon marriage. Thus, even where the Dravidian kinship operates, as among the Jaffna Tamils, for instance, patrilineal descent induces a notion of substance to emerge that goes against, in a sense, the bilaterality of alliance. David observes that

women are held to be transubstantiated and not to belong to their
natal kin-group any longer (1973: 523). The terminology exists without
a corresponding idea of shared substance between alliance groups, or
rather, among the Tamils in Jaffna, the shared substance is of a less
intense nature between allied groups than that which links patrilineal
kin: thus, patrilineal kin are classified as sharers of bodily substance,
while matrilineal kin are classified as uniters and non-uniters of bodily
substance. There is then terminological assimilation and notional
separation of patrilineal and matrilineal kin, since the same terms are
used to denote matrilateral and patrilateral cross and parallel relatives -
in keeping with the Dravidian system - while they are kept conceptually
separate in the ideas of substance. (Incidentally, although David also
notes the fact that a woman's death is not as polluting to her natal kin
as to her conjugal kin, he stresses that pollution can still be observed
by the natal kin in order to maintain alliance (ibid.: 530)).

The notion that women are transferred to their husband's kin group upon
marriage, which is held by Mauritian Telugus in certain circumstances -
in particular, ritual circumstances - can perhaps then be ascribed to
the remnant of a patrilineal form of descent sustained by the patrilineal
transmission of name. This would explain the idea that a woman cannot
hold fasts for her dead parents or hold a mourning rite in her conjugal
household for them. It also explains why people sometimes describe
children as having more of their father's blood, and sometimes equal
amounts of their parents' blood, since there are two parallel notions of
substance existing in the people's minds which enable them to switch
conceptually from one to the other. On the one hand, the notion of
patrilineal descent is the more traditional one, as well as being in
keeping with a Brahmanic ideal. The more orthodox Telugus adhere to a
traditional notion of substance in matters concerning ritual and
ceremonial practices without seeing them as being in conflict with a
biogenetic notion of substance, perhaps in the same way as body
particles are held in North India to be shared only with patrilineal
kin, and yet pollution and sapinda rules also include matrilineal kin,
albeit to a lesser degree, thereby indicating that body particles are
also shared with matrilineal kin (Orenstein 1970). Among the less
orthodox Telugus, however, biogenetic notions of substance serve to
justify changes, in questioning the validity of matrilateral

parallel-cousin marriage prohibition, for instance, and also, perhaps more fundamentally, to sustain *alliance*. In fact, these contradictory notions of substance can in some ways be incorporated into traditional practices without appearing to flout or contradict them.

Thus, although the funerary rites observed after a woman's death take place in her conjugal household, and the main mourner is either her husband or her son, this does not prevent her propre blood kin from participating in the rites. In one particular case, a woman's husband, children, mother, brother, and sisters observed the fast on her death, and were all involved in her funerary rites. Prayers were held in the deceased's household outside the house, and no food could be cooked in the house while the body was still there. The deceased's consanguines were only allowed to drink tea without milk. Women affinally related to the deceased, i.e. her husband's sisters, husband's parallel-cousins, aunts, etc., took charge of the serving of refreshments to all the people who had come, which included a very wide range of kin and acquaintances. Only men are usually allowed to go to the cemetery or the crematory ground. This particular woman was buried, and men from both her husband's kin-group and from her natal kin-group as well as people from the village walked to the cemetery. The women stayed behind. For the next three days, the consanguines ate only vegetarian food and drank tea without milk. On the day of the funeral, when the men came back from the cemetery, the affinally related women went to the house of a nearby relative - the husband's parallel-cousin - in order to cook vegetarian food which they brought back to the house to serve to the people who had attended the funeral. These affines of the deceased showed an appropriate measure of grief, but not in an ostentatious way. The direct consanguines however did express their grief very loudly, shouting and crying, in particular her mother and sisters. The affines expressed their feeling of corporateness with the deceased and the mourners by taking charge of the material and practical aspects of the event.

On the third day after the funeral, a small number of men, mainly from the husband's kin-group, with the addition of the deceased's immediate consanguines, went to the river with a priest for the *pinda* ceremony.

Milk was poured by the deceased's son in front of the river, and he then placed the pinda on leaves from the 'jack-tree' and let them float into the river. The priest then recited prayers for the peace of the deceased's soul. After this ceremony, they came back to the house and food could then be cooked in the house itself.

On the eleventh day another big ceremony was held with a large number of relatives attending. In the morning, a private *hawan* was held by a priest with the deceased's immediate consanguines and two of the husband's sisters being present, but the main hawan was held in the afternoon, when a large gathering of kindred from both sides were present. After the hawan, food was cooked by the women -- this time the deceased's sisters could also help -- and everyone sat down to eat. This marked the end of the strict mourning period, but for the next three months, the propre group would not attend nor hold any major ceremonies, and in particular, marriages could not be held in any consanguineally related household.

There does not seem to be any precise idea of death pollution any more. The restrictions upon celebrating a wedding or holding a ceremony in the house seem to be due to a western conception of mourning rather than to a Hindu idea of pollution. The only mark of conscious pollution is when people wash their feet and hands outside their house after attending a wake or a funeral, and then bathe themselves immediately and have all their clothes washed. The restriction upon cooking food in the deceased's house may also be related to the idea of pollution, but it is not explicitly stated as such. There is no particular statement about who is more and who is less polluted by death. The length of mourning depends upon the closeness of kinship and is really a matter of choice outside the propre sphere. (Among Tamils, however, the idea of pollution is more consciously expressed: for instance, when a woman is pregnant, the men in her household cannot lift the Cavadee or walk in the fire, because they cannot attain the required degree of purity on account of her pregnancy).

Thus, although members of a woman's natal group are not meant to be substantially related to her any more, they do actually participate

extensively in the funerary rites in her husband's household as propre blood. Her brothers and father go to the river for the pinda ceremony along with male members of her husband's kin-group. In the same way, when either of a woman's parents dies, she participates in her brother's household, sometimes actually taking charge of the ceremony itself if she is older than the brother's wife. The practice, then, upholds a concept of blood which is not contained in the ideology behind it. A person's propre blood do take part in funerary rites, and these in fact serve to sustain a stronger sense of *alliance* by closely involving both kin-groups. A priest further told me that a woman *could* hold a rite for her natal kin provided she does it outside her conjugal household, under a tree, for instance.

What this implies is that there is no real feeling among the Telugus that the woman does not have any substantial links with her natal kin any more. The residual patrilineal form offers a symbolic mode of ordering relations and rituals, but in effect, the deeper notion of substance is based on bilaterality. Within the patrilineal notion of substance, links are preserved between a woman and her natal kin through either her brother or her husband. Thus, if a woman dies, her natal kin will participate in the funerary rites in her husband's household; if a woman's parents die, she will participate in her brother's household. This can be represented as follows:

EGO is female

────▶ : funerary rites

─ ─ ─ ─▶ : participation

─────▶ : underlying propre link

Diagram 19: Participation in funerary rites

Through the intermediary of the brother or the husband, the underlying blood link between Ego and her parents is thus sustained and preserved. And we come back here, in an interesting way, to Dumont's idea that F and MB represent a fundamental opposition in the system of alliance; they are, in relation to Ego, H and B, again set here in opposition

as main mourners for Ego and Ego's parents respectively. We have come back, in a sense, to the principle of *alliance* itself, where all these actors are linked within a chain of relations that sustain both *alliance* and blood, a chain that can be extended to link Ego's husband's parents, in which case HZ is set in opposition with Ego, and HZH occupies the remaining slot.

In the sphere of mourning, as in the sphere of marriage, women then occupy a pivotal position as sustainers of the *alliance* link. We cannot, then, in the Mauritian context, ascribe totally to the notion of transubstantiation, although there are traces of such a notion in certain ritual concepts of blood. But if one goes deeper into the process of thought, and considers the ideas held by the Telugus themselves, one can perhaps derive some clues about how the opposition between these two separate concepts, biogenetic substance and transubstantiation, is resolved.

When Telugus talk about marriage, they use the notion of appropriation of the woman into her husband's family as well as of merging of two *alliance* groups, ritually through the tali-tying ceremony and the increasing involvement of the two kin-groups, and substantially through the couple's offspring - 'the fruit of the two wombs'. There seems to be a conceptual gap involved here until one questions them further: but does the bride actually lose her blood-links with her parents and is in a way transformed by marriage so that she only has blood-links with her husband's family? The important distinction that the people make, then, is between what happens in reality and what happens metaphorically. For, in reality, they believe that the woman is not transformed, but acquires her husband's essence. One man said that the woman acquired her husband's blood "by communication". Another woman said that the woman went to the 'side' of the husband, i.e. to the husband's kin-group, but she did not lose her own blood. (Incidentally, when they speak of a person's blood links with natal kin, they usually say 'Mother's' blood "disang so mama" - which indicates that the transmission of blood through the mother is strongly felt). Another Telugu villager used the Hindi term *arhangini* to describe the married woman: 'she is half of her husband and half of her natal kin'.

When it comes to children, they are again seen as having both bloods
in reality. They may be held to be nearer their father's kin or to
have more links with them. But people stress the metaphorical idea
of having common blood only with father's kin with the term *couma dire*,
'as if'. "Children have their father's name, so it is 'as if' they
have more of his blood, but in reality they have both father's and
mother's blood, and in fact, they are nearer their mother".

What seems to be expressed here from these mixed notions, is a new
concept of substance, that is neither entirely biogenetic, nor entirely
traditional: women are seen by Telugus as the focal point of marriage
and alliance, since they are in fact the *changing* element, the element
which achieves the *alliance* link and which allows it to be diachronically
perpetuated through the children that they will bear. They thus acquire
some of their husband's substance through the marriage rite, the tali-
tying, and the idea of transference from one kin-group to the other;
in their status as married women, they now belong to the conjugal
household. However, they have not lost their natal blood, since it is
by transmitting both the husband's blood and their natal blood to the
children that the *alliance* bond will be sealed by the two kin-groups
becoming propre blood to the children. They then retain an immutable
substance which is their natal blood, and acquire a mutable substance
from their husband. They can then be seen as 'mediators' of substance,
since it is through them that the two kin-groups' substances will be
passed on to the children. Men, on the other hand, pass their blood
indirectly to their children through their wife. They do not change,
but ensure the transmission of their kin-group's blood to their children:
they can then be seen as 'transmitters' of substance. Finally, children,
whether they are closer to their father's or to their mother's kin-group
in terms of relations, inherit both their parents' substance, through
the mediating device of their mother's part-acquisition of their father's
blood and retention of her natal blood. Both in a real sense and in a
substantial sense, they bring the two *alliance* groups together, and in
this sense, they are 'mergers' of substance.

Thus, what started out as a *biogenetic* notion of substance, perhaps
inherited by the Telugus from the westernised culture forms existing in
the island, has become a new *cultural* notion of substance that is made

to fit into the principle of *alliance*. It is probable that the residual notion of patrilineal descent will go on weakening, as more emphasis is given to bilaterality. But the change from old to new has to be articulated within the already existing cultural framework that encompasses Telugu identity. *Alliance* can be seen as a fundamental principle in particular because it is a binding form of relation that creates strong ties within the community, and it has come to be sustained by a notion of substance that validates bilaterality in a cognitive sense.

Thus, the substantial identity which is transmitted by women, and sustained by the principle of *alliance* (which transforms non-propre into propre kin) is present in the cognitive structure of the Telugu people. It can perhaps be seen as a metaphorical notion which validates ethnic identity in terms of substance, but is it unquestionably so? It is difficult to assess exactly where the mechanics of kinship within the Dravidian kinship system become the cognitive features sustaining the core identity of the kin-group and, by extension, since the whole Telugu community is thought to be linked by kinship, the identity of the group. Both are in fact set within the same conceptual schema, so that the overt, traceable, and widespread kinship and *alliance* links are underlined by the deeper notions of propre and blood that sustain substantial identity. For the Telugus, there is no conceptual separation between the two, and ethnic identity is always seen in terms of qualité and kinship, i.e. the common substantial identity.

CONCLUSION

We have looked, in this chapter, at both factors of change and factors of resilience in the Telugu community in Mauritius. Both resilience and change seem to be geared towards the maintenance of a corporate identity rather than to its dissolution and diffusion.

The terminology used in address and reference exhibits a survival of the deep structural features inherent in the Dravidian kinship system adhered to by Telugus: the opposition of generations, of age, and of cross and parallel relatives is preserved in the Telugu terms which have survived the loss of the language as a spoken element, which shows that the kinship terminology is a deeply-imbedded system in the culture of the group that acts independently of language itself. Further, even where Creole terms have superseded Telugu terms, the basic kinship patterns and features of the Dravidian system are made to appear within the western culture-form from which the Creole language has been derived. Without being semantically anomalous, the classificatory extensions present in the Dravidian system are expressed in the Creole terminology as well, thus showing the independence of terminology from language.

The principle of *alliance* which lies at the base of Telugu marriage patterns is also expressive of part-resilience and part-change. *Alliance* is integrative in the sense that it is meant to intensify the marriage bond between two families until they become assimilated into the same large kin-group, through repetition of marriage and through the perpetuation of affinity over generations. It also leads to the formation of broad status groups which are in-marrying and within which there is also status differentiation but with a greater emphasis upon equivalence. In this sense, caste differences have been translated into a less divisive system, so that the equivalence which is at the core of *alliance* can still be preserved.

Although *alliance* in itself rests upon bilaterality, there can be seen a kind of residual patrilineal form of transmission of blood and substance which underlies the traditional exegesis of blood among the Telugus. This is in fact contradictory to the biogenetic notion of blood which

is at the root of the classification of kin into propre and non-propre, and of the reckoning of transmission of blood both by the mother and the father. There is then a contradiction involved in the adherence to certain beliefs and traditions such as mourning, until one analyses them more deeply. The traditional notion of substance is in effect displaced by the deeper adherence to a new notion, which is partly biogenetic, but which has evolved in order to be accomodated within the cultural Telugu framework. While all the traditional practices are still kept, the new notion of substance, where children are seen to merge both mother's and father's blood, while women acquire part of their husband's blood while retaining their natal substance, accommodates the changes which have taken place in the practices, as for instance a woman's consanguineal kin participating in her funerary rites in her husband's household, and a woman participating in her parents' funerary rites in her brother's household. This new notion also reinforces the bilaterality of alliance, which is at the core of the group's substantial identity in that it aims at maintaining a fundamental form of endogamy. Even the transgressions that are now allowed of the basic marriage rules can be phrased in terms of the maintenance of qualité endogamy or blood purity or kin-endogamy.

The resilience of cultural features is then directly linked with the preservation of the group's identity, and the level of practice, but even the changes that have taken place aim at weakening internal boundaries and barriers, rather than external ones. The adaptation of the group to a biogenetic concept of substance has not disrupted the internal structure of the group, but on the contrary, has reinforced both alliance and endogamy and the 'kinship' relation that binds all Telugus together. Thus, even what seems to be a weakly organised and externally identifiable group is internally held by strong structural features which exhibit both resistance to diffusion and accommodation of change into a traditional framework.

In the next chapter, we shall go on to look at the external bases of organisation of the Telugu group, in terms of associations, religious organisation, and strategies of cohesion.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MANIFESTATION OF TELUGU IDENTITY AT THE MACRO-LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, we have looked at the internal aspects of
Telugu identity in terms of the 'core institutions' of the group,
i.e. endogamy, alliance and kinship. These are features that serve
to sustain the sense of commonness and the sense of difference from
other groups in an internal sense, achieving a kind of cohesive pull
on the members of the group without emerging as overt boundaries around
the group.

The Telugus as a group have had their own cultural associations for the
past sixty years or so, and have been conscious of their deeper identity.
They have also maintained their own temples and priests, but it was only
around 1956 that it became overtly recognised that they constituted a
separate group within the Hindu category, and separate religious
subsidies were officially awarded to them as well as to the Tamils.
The official report on the subject identified the criteria according to
which a group could be considered as having a separate religion as:
(a) possessing its own rituals, (b) having its own priests, (c)
its own places of worship, (d) a reasonable number of adherents and
(e) having been in existence for a reasonable number of years (*Mauritius
Legislative Council*, Sessional Paper 9 1956: 12). This led the 'religious
organisations   to canvass actively in order to get people to report
officially on censuses as Telugu-Sanathanists, Tamil-Sanathanists etc.,
and it is held by these people that this marked the beginning of
separation between these groups.

In recent years, there has been a conscious 'revival' movement in all
the minority groups of the Indian community, where an attempt is being
made at organisational level to intensify the groups' identities and to
claim specific rights for them as independent minority groups; this is
done partly by reverting to old cultural practices that may have been
almost completely lost, representing a deliberate "choice of suitable
pasts" for identification, in Marriott's terms (1963:51), as well as
choosing new cultural practices based on a modelling on that particular

group in India. This is meant to define the group more strongly within the total society, through diacritical features and the exhibition of differentiating cultural forms. This process can be seen throughout the society, where different groups adopt specific strategies in order to assert their identity and to validate it in the group-based structure of society. The condition of plurality in a sense breeds the internal group consciousness, as we shall see in the course of this chapter. The society thus has become an arena for the emergence of actual ethnic identities as politicised groups at surface level.

The basis of politicisation of groups has to revolve around consensus and corporateness within each group, and an appropriate organisational framework in which the group's needs and claims can be canalised and cogently articulated. As M.G. Smith observes, "the corporate forms that the (institutional) system includes constitute the collective frameworks of social organisation for the people concerned" (1974:216). These corporate forms may already include an institutionalised form of group leadership, in which case the group is already politically distinct, or such a form of leadership must be created out of the consensus and become the vehicle of expression of the group's needs in the total society. This is achieved by using what Cohen (1981) has called "symbolic forms" based on various cultural features in order to articulate the organisation of the group. These "symbolic forms" can be "manipulated by collectivities of all sorts in their own interests" and are "both moral and utilitarian, steeped in the human psyche, yet greatly conditioned by the power order" (1981:219). By manipulating such elements as language and religion as "symbolic forms", the Telugus are able to achieve a certain cohesion. This cohesive force was lacking for a long time, due, perhaps, to their small numbers, to rival forms of leadership, and to an emphasis upon individual mobility rather than group mobility; it was therefore necessary, as part of their strategy, to create cohesion and emphasise the need for a corporate identity through appropriate leadership.

In this Chapter, I shall be looking at these elements of cohesion among the Telugus, and at the factors that are leading to the emergence of corporateness. Section One will deal with religion, how it becomes

a vehicle of collectivisation with the intensification of group
practices and the re-evaluation of the content of the rituals. Section
Two will look at the role of the main Telugu association and the
nurturing of specific strategies geared towards an externalising of
collective identity. Section Three, finally, will place the group
in the global societal framework, and try to define the need for
claiming a specific position and specific 'rights' in the plural
society.

SECTION ONE: RELIGION: PRACTICE AND SIGNIFICANCE

In this Section, I will be looking at the normative use of religion
in the context of the validation of identity. The wealth of symbols
inherent in religion, and the ideological basis of religious worship
are appropriate vehicles of identity, in particular because of their
emotional impact and the power to induce a feeling of cohesiveness in
a collectivity. Religion has this dual nature in which, on the one
hand, it helps "endure human failures and unavoidable crises"
(Khare 1977: 110), and, in rites de passage and individual prayers
and practices helps the individual to order and partly control his
universe, and on the other hand, it has a social significance in
which it becomes an expression of a particular social order. Nicholas
has observed how, in rural Bengal, certain collective rituals have
become expressive of a specific hierarchy which is not present in the
general social structure. The fact that certain villagers are
instituted as Brahmans for the duration of the Gajan ritual, and a
symbolical change has taken place in marriage prestations from giving
of bridewealth to giving of dowry, expresses the need for the people
to restore - temporarily at least - what they perceive as an ideal in
village relations, i.e. a caste hierarchy. Religion is in this sense
used normatively to give new meanings to social relations and to
reflect what is at that particular moment perceived as an ideal and
followed as a model (Nicholas 1967). In the same way, Barnett
observes that "a person may shift ideological stance given the
cumulative effect of new acts and persuasive counterinterpretations,
so action can restructure positions of interiority and exteriority
for particular persons" (1977: 395). Thus, although each individual
or group must situate himself/itself in a particular ideology in
order to have a meaningful identity, this ideology is also open to
choices and actions that may change its meanings and 'restructure'
them in specific ways. For Barnett, identity choices hinge on this
relation between ideology and action. For Khare, the forms of worship
based on :prestations and prayers themselves serve to *express* a person's
identity and to place him/her within a collectivity: "prestations
socially and prayers philosophically help a Hindu to announce his
identity in relation to a greater totality. It is with the help of
prayers that he demonstrates his correct alignment with ultimate

values of the culture; and it is with prestations that he correctly recognises the presence of social collectivities that surround him" (1977: 110).

Among the Telugus in Mauritius, the ideological meanings of religious worship are not very pronounced mainly because few people are knowledgeable enough to explain the meanings of the different rituals and prayers. Further, Hinduism itself provides several -- sometimes contradictory - models of religious worship which the group has borrowed from quite extensively, so that it now exhibits both features of exclusivity, in adhering to Telugu-specific practices, and features of assimilation, in adopting both North Indian and Tamil practices. All these practices have now become open to the imposition upon them of new values and modes of interpretations which have to do with the maintenance of identity, as we shall see in the course of this Section.

(i) Telugu rituals

The religious practices adhered to by Telugus can be classified in the following way:

(a) pan-Hindu practices

(b) South Indian vegetarian practices

(c) South Indian non-vegetarian practices

The pan-Hindu practices include all the major festivals celebrated throughout India, e.g. Shankranti, Shivratri, Divali, Ram Naomi,Krishna Jayanti etc. Most Telugus celebrate these festivals in their homes, by holding a morning puja in the family and eating only vegetarian food during the day. Telugu temples also hold prayers on the occasion of Shivratri, Ram Naomi, Krishna Jayanti and Divali, which Telugus from nearby areas can attend. The different Hindu groups, although they all celebrate these festivals, do not do so jointly. People either celebrate them privately, or in separate congregations. These festivals do not thus occasion the fusion of the Hindu groups under an overarching Hindu consciousness, remaining distinct religious practices with different significances for each. Thus, as we have seen in Chapter Four, the Shivratri is a major cohesive element for the North Indian group, as the pilgrimage becomes a rallying force, emotionally

and politically. It does not have the same meaning for Telugus, who celebrate it in the seclusion of their homes or in their own temples, as part of the orthodox religious observances and as an inherent feature of sanathanist rites which does not hold an identificatory power for the group, since it is neither group-specific, nor is likely to lead to a display of the group's cohesion in the same way as it does for North Indians. There seems then to be a semi-conscious choice in the utilisation of religious practice as symbols of identity, based on the power of the practices in inducing the group to cohere, and representing it as a collectivity. The Tamils, who also adhere to several pan-Hindu practices are now contesting the validity of some of them in terms of their religious significance: the Shankranti festival, which has always been celebrated as a Hindu 'new year', has recently been described as a harvest-festival, celebrated in parts of India. The Tamils are now questioning the need to celebrate a harvest-festival in Mauritius and to declare it a public holiday, in particular since it does not correspond to the beginning of the Mauritian harvest-season. They see Shankranti as being first a North Indian festival and the holiday as being allocated to the North Indian group rather than to all Hindus. The Divali festival as well has become implicated in the North Indian/South Indian opposition: the South Indians celebrate Divali a day earlier than the North Indians because Rama is believed to have passed over South India first on his return to Ayodhya. The Telugus find themselves in an odd position where some ascribe to this and celebrate Divali a day earlier with the Tamils, while others do so later with the North Indians. They are now increasingly opting for the South Indian way.

This reappraisal of pan-Hindu practices may be due to the fact that these sanskritic forms of religious practice are becoming more closely identified with the North Indian group, and in that sense are seen as a threat to South Indian separateness and specificity; and, although the latter will not cease to worship the sanskritic deities, who are as much part of their pantheon as of the North Indians', they may try to separate themselves more by adopting variations in the ways of worshipping these deities, as is evidenced by the Divali case, or by ceasing to celebrate these festivals which do not have a particular religious significance for them, such as the Shankranti. At any rate,

both the Tamils and the Telugus have their own new year, the Varusha
Piruppu and Ugadi respectively.

The Telugus have so far tended to celebrate the pan-Hindu festivals
more consistently than the Tamils, in particular in villages where
they are not very numerous and are surrounded by North Indians. As
a man from such a village said to me: "we have to do as they do, and
use bhojpuri instead of Telugu, otherwise we will be too isolated.
If we were more numerous, we would have our own temple in the village
and follow our own practices". This is partly a case of following
'majority' practices, mainly in situations where identities are not
openly confronted with each other, and partly an example of the way in
which the village lags slightly behind the trends present at the higher
levels of society. As we have seen in the case of Trois Boutiques,
Telugus followed pan-Hindu practices and North Indians attended pujas
in the Telugu temple without these being seen as dangerous to each
group's identity. It is at the higher level that such threats are
more clearly perceived and chanelled back into the community, as we
shall see in Section Two.

On the other hand, sanathanist practices are also associated with a
higher form of Hinduism among urban-dwellers and the higher classes of
all the Hindu groups. Among the North Indians, there are no 'low caste'
rituals as such or rituals dedicated to what might be called little
traditional deities. People adhere mainly to the sanathan practices
dedicated to sanskritic deities, or to the more rigorously 'unritualised'
Arya Samaj practices. Vegetarianism is general in the practices of both
sects, and all the different castes adhere to the sanskritic form of
religion which has a homogenising effect on the group, at least in so
far as caste is concerned. The higher status Telugus have also
adopted a less ritualised and more private form of religious practice
which is vegetarian and sanskritic. It is perhaps for this reason that
there are few specifically Telugu rituals as such, and apart from the
Ram Bhajan and Ammoru ceremonies, and a few village-based rituals
dedicated to specific saints, there is not much evidence remaining about
the actual rituals that used to be held only by Telugus during early
indenture. Some old people however still recall the holding of sacred
plays called 'natakon' which used to be enacted by men only in the

village and related the stories of various deities. Unfortunately, the practice has now died out completely.

Of the specifically South Indian practices which are still adhered to by Telugus, the main ones are: (a) Ram Bhajan, (b) Ammoru Panduga, (c) Seemadree Appanah Puja, (d) Mounessprince. The first two are the most generally practised ones among all Telugus, and those that are more likely to become the main symbols of identity. The last two are 'saints' who are worshipped mainly in villages and can perhaps be seen as survivors of the little tradition which the Telugus brought in with them upon emigration. Seemadree Appanah is usually worshipped during the Ram Bhajan, but not all the people who hold Ram Bhajans choose to hold this puja simultaneously.

Ram Bhajans are held during the month of Partasi, in September/October, where they mark the 40-day fasting period among Telugus and Tamils. (The Tamils call this period the 'Govinden' period and have regular praying sessions in temples dedicated to Krishna, but they do not hold Ram Bhajans). The Ram Bhajan is a vegetarian ritual, which can be held in a private home with guests from the kin-group and the village, or in the temple, when it is mainly organised by the village-sociétés. I have classified it as a South Indian ritual although it is dedicated to a pan-Hindu deity because of the form of the ritual, which is specific to Telugus, and the songs are sung in Telugu. There is also the 'testing' aspect of the ceremony, in order to find out whether it has been accepted by the deity or not through a visible sign which is meant to be made by the deity, and which is common to South Indian rituals, but not found in North Indian ones in Mauritius. The test is meant to ensure that the household where the ritual is held is fit to hold it, and that the people have propitiated the God correctly.

A person wishing to hold a Ram Bhajan in his household must fast -- i.e. eat only one vegetarian meal a day -- for thirty days before the ceremony and for ten days after. He must also give up drinking, smoking and sleeping with his wife, after which he is considered to be pure enough to hold the ceremony. Members of his household also observe similar restrictions. On the day of the ceremony, they all refrain from having any food until the evening, when the ceremony is over.

Among Telugus, preparations for the Ram Bhajan are very much a kin-based activity. Like the wedding, the set of close kindred are meant to cooperate and participate actively in the ceremony. The société is also involved in that its members will come and build the tent under which the ceremony will be held, and the local temple will provide the big ceremonial lamps needed for the ceremony. The lamps are indicative of the lavishness of the ritual, since a lot of oil is needed to keep them lit all night. The more modest have only one; the more lavish have three.

At a Ram Bhajan which was held in Trois Boutiques by a Telugu shop-owner, one lamp was obtained from the local temple, another from a village not far away. For the third lamp, the shop-owner's wife went to a distant village called Tyack, where she had heard that there was a magnificent lamp bought in India recently. She also got the Bhajan singers from that village, since they had a very good reputation all over the island. Both the lamp and the singers were felt to be elements of prestige in the ceremony.

In the course of the Ram Bhajan ritual, the Seemadree Appanah ritual was also held. It involved the carrying of two heavy iron torches filled with burning oil by a member of the family performing the ritual. He is believed to enter a trance-like state where the saint enters him and prevents him from feeling any pain.

The Ram Bhajan ceremony was also performed with all its prescribed rituals, which are described in detail in the Appendix. The *pannel*, an earthen pot filled with various ingredients, was prepared by the priest *(pussari)* for the testing of the ceremony. After sunrise, when all the rites had been completed, the pussari opened up the *pannel* to see if the ceremony had been successful. If the *pannel* has become coated with a thick, moss-like substance, it means that the deity has not accepted the ceremony. If the mixture has remained 'uncoagulated', it means that the ceremony has been accepted. In this particular case, there had been no coagulation. The shop-owner's wife said that her Ram Bhajans were always successful, and she was the only one in the village who knew how to keep the tradition and how to perform the prayer properly.

When an individual holds a Ram Bhajan in his household, it becomes
a matter of prestige and status, in the lavishness of the ritual,
the number of guests attending, the kind of food served. It is also
a way of asserting one's honour and respectability in the community,
as was shown in the case of a low-caste man who had become rich through
business deals, but had not been able to carve a niche in the high-
status stratum of the Telugu community. He started giving Ram Bhajans
every year and inviting important and high-status members of the Hindu
community such as Ministers. The Ram Bhajans are held on such a
lavish scale that the Telugus themselves now consider it an event that
they have to attend.

In the same way, the high-status families of the community could choose
to patronise a nearby temple by giving large-scale feasts and rituals
there, to which the whole village would be invited. One example is a
local société, the Andhra Jananda Sahaya Sahanam, which was founded in
1923 by a prominent high-caste Telugu in a village in the East of the
island. He used to organise Ram Bhajans in the local temple every year,
which were attended by large numbers of people. Leadership was
transferred from father to son and the family earned a widespread
reputation in the island for its socio-religious activities in that
area. However, the present president, who is the grandson of the
founder, faces opposition from lower castes: the leadership problem
is one which is present in most of the sociétés, and even the main
Telugu association, the Andhra Maha Sabha, has constant trouble over
the delegation of leadership, as we shall see in Section Two (i).

On the other hand, when the local société holds a Ram Bhajan or any other
ritual in the temple, and if it is not associated with one particular
patron-family, then it is an occasion for the whole Telugu group in the
village to come together and participate in an event which is specific
to the group and thereby differentiates them from other groups in the
village. The société then effectively acts as a cohesive force for the
group, and religion becomes the main vehicle through which their
corporate identity at the local level is expressed and maintained.
Formerly, there was not such a rigid separation in the festivals and
ceremonies held by the different Hindu groups, and they participated
freely in each other's practices, but more recently, the separation
has become more entrenched, and, as a leader of a local société said

to me, other groups must now ask for permission if they want to participate in a particular ritual, or even if they want to attend.

The Ammoru ritual, which is the second main Telugu ritual, illustrates the change from non-vegetarian to vegetarian forms of worship, and from the 'collectivisation' of particular ceremonies in the context of strengthening identity. The Ammoru Panduga is a rite propitiating the seven godesses, or seven sisters. (Few people were able to name more than two or three of the goddesses; their names are: Poshamma, Pedamma, Yellamma, Balamma, Maicamma, Edamma, Mankalamma (Hiebert 1971). But some Telugus in Mauritius give them sanskritic names such as Durga, Lakshmi, Draupadi etc.) They are held to look after the health and well-being of members of a household and of the village, and can sometimes be the cause of illnesses and epidemics. For instance, when a child has measles or the mumps, the illness is felt to be caused by one of the Ammoru deities, and no meat can be cooked in the house until the illness is gone. People perform the Ammoru once a year in their households. Recently, the village-wide ritual has undergone a revival, mainly through the encouragement of the Andhra Maha Sabha and certain local sociétés in villages where Telugus are numerous. Formerly, the ritual used to be a non-vegetarian one, and, if held in the temple, goats were killed, while if it was held in the household, a chicken was sacrificed. Nowadays, the sociétés and the pussaris emphasise the need for keeping it as a strictly vegetarian ritual, and the practice of animal-sacrificing is slowly dying out. In 1981, a large-scale Ammoru ceremony was held in Rivière-du-Rempart, to which Telugus all over the island were invited. Instead of killing goats, the pussari cut seven lemons in front of the ceremonial place where offerings of flowers, fruit, cooked sweet food had been placed. After the 'sacrifice' of the lemons, one for each goddess, a man who carried the 'peva' (a small bamboo structure built as an offering to the deity) from the village to the Kalimai temple, was allowed to bring it down and place it in front of Kalimai. The pussari went on reciting his prayers, and after that *parsad* was distributed to all the villagers and gathering of people, and the President of the société seized the opportunity to say a few words to the gathering, stressing the importance of such a ritual for Telugus, and how it was necessary to perform only vegetarian ceremonies because people are now more 'civilised'. (See Appendix).

The people attending however recalled how big 'services' used to be held where a large number of goats were killed at the Kalimai temple and cooked on the grounds and distributed to all the villagers. This marked the climax of the ritual, but now that there were no animal-sacrifices, the main focus of the ritual was the procession from the village to the temple. The pussari also repeatedly stressed to the gathering that meat-sacrifices were performed by 'illiterate' people. In other villages, however, animal-sacrifices are still being performed for the Ammoru ceremony. Although goats are no longer frequently killed, as they are very expensive nowadays, in villages like Côte d'Or, in the East of the island, cocks are still regularly sacrificed at the temple and distributed among the villagers. Some villagers do not in fact think that the goddess has been adequately propitiated unless an animal is killed.

The household Ammoru also used to involve killing a cock, but nowadays, most people prefer to sacrifice lemons. When animals used to be sacrificed, there would be two separate worships, one outside, on the spot on which the animal was killed, and one inside, after the sacrifice. The parsad of the outside ritual was given to the man who had killed the animal – usually a low-caste Telugu –, while the parsad of the inside ritual would be shared between the family. The ceremonial place is smeared with turmeric paste on which seven spots of red powder *(kongomu)* are dotted. The offerings are placed on banana leaves, along with seven betel leaves on which a little *java* and a betel nut have been put. The prayer is then performed by the head of the family, who cuts the lemons in halves and places the halves on the sides of each of the betel leaves. Each member of the family prostrates him/herself in front of the ceremonial place. Vegetarian food is then served to all the family.

The major changes that have taken place in the Ammoru rite are then twofold: (a) there is now more of an emphasis on the collective ritual as opposed to the private, familial one, with a revival of the village-wide ceremony following the tradition that is still remembered by the older generation; in the collective ritual, instead of the occasion being patronised by one prestige-wielding family in the area, it is now organised by the local and national sociétés, so that the whole

village collectivity, and wider collectivities when the ceremony is performed on a large scale, are involved without status-differences arising; (b) the second change is a switch from meat-sacrifices to vegetarianism, both in the collective and in the familial ceremony, which has not yet become a Telugu-wide practice, but is being actively encouraged by the société and higher-status Telugus in the community.

The other non-sanskritic local deity that is worshipped in certain villages is called 'Mounessprince' (my orthography represents the Creole version of the name, since I could not find out any Dravidian source-name for it). In the village of Côte d'Or, there is a small shrine on the river which is dedicated to the saint. The villagers still perform goat-sacrifices occasionally for him, and if they cannot afford a goat, a cock is sacrificed annually, in a ceremony that takes place at night, on the banks of the river. He is a saint who is meant to protect the household, and if he is not adequately propitiated, he appears in a white shape near the front entrance of the house. A Brahman Telugu priest told me that animal sacrifices should not be performed for this Saint, and only lemons should be cut as for the Ammoru, but in villages where the pussaris are not Brahmans, animal-sacrifices are still performed. This saint is not propitiated in all villages, and in Trois Boutiques, for instance, the Telugus did not worship him. Côte d'Or is made up mainly of Telugus and Creoles, and it is perhaps for this reason that one still finds animal sacrifices to non-sanskritic deities there, since there is no Brahmanic or North Indian vegetarian model in close proximity for them to follow.

We will now go on to look at the significance of the recent changes that have taken place in religious practices among Telugus.

(ii) The collectivising aspect of religion

The religious practices followed by Telugus throughout the island seem to hover mid-way between North and South, sanskritic and non-sanskritic traditions, representing their intermediary position, as a group, between North Indians and Tamils in the island. Where they are juxtaposed to Tamils, they tend to practice Tamil rituals as well, in particular the Cavadee and fire-walking rituals. However, even

this practice is becoming a source of friction in certain places where ethnic identity is becoming more and more closely linked to the religious practices specific to each group. Thus, in one village where there are both a Telugu and a Tamil temple, one Telugu man who is the President of the Telugu société used to participate in the organisation of the Cavadee and fire-walking ceremonies every year. He would serve food to people attending the rituals, and had a special time allocated to him each year for members of his société and of his family to perform the fire-walking ritual. However, a few years ago, a younger set of Tamils from the Tamil société started complaining about the special treatment given to the old man, and contested his right to have a time allocated to him for the fire-walking rite. This led to a deterioration of relations between the two sociétés, and, although they still occasionally cooperate, there are frequent accusations of bad-feeling and uncooperativeness on both sides. The Telugu man has now stopped participating in the fire-walking ceremony and only attends as an ordinary onlooker.

This indicates that recent processes of reaffirmation of group-consciousness are not only leading to an internal sense of cohesion, but to a more marked sense of separation as well. The Telugu practices described above can be broadly classified under four categories in the form they adhere to: sanskritic/non-sanskritic and vegetarian/non-vegetarian. The pan-Hindu festivals fall under the sanskritic/vegetarian category, the Ram Bhajan falls under the non-sanskritic/vegetarian category, the Ammoru under both non-sanskritic/vegetarian and non-sanskritic/non-vegetarian category, while Mounessprince falls under the non-sanskritic/non-vegetarian category. These categories can be represented by the following grid:

<u>Vegetarian</u>

```
                            |  Ram Bhajan
              Pan Hindu      |  Seemadree Appanah
                            |  Ammoru
                            |
Sanskritic  ----------------|------------------------- Non-Sanskritic
                            |  Ammoru
                            |  MounessPrince
                            |
```
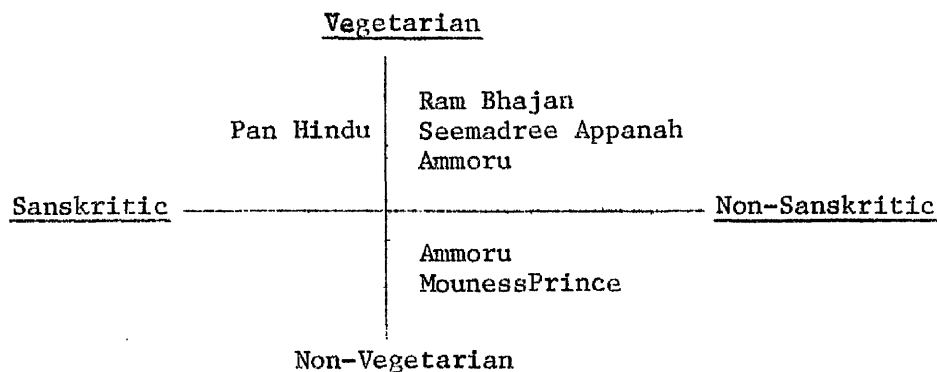
<u>Non-Vegetarian</u>

<u>Diagram 20:</u> Telugu practices

In terms of groups, the North Indians fall exclusively under the sanskritic/vegetarian category. The Tamils are adhering more and more exclusively to the non-sanskritic/vegetarian category, while the Telugus, who so far have overriden all three categories, are exhibiting a trend where they will soon have their main practices encompassed by the non-sanskritic/vegetarian category, like the Tamils. The trends for change came first as an emphasis upon the non-sanskritic rites in order to identify their South Indianness more clearly. Secondly, the emphasis upon specifically Telugu rituals was necessary so that there could be differentiation from the Tamils. Thirdly, the movement from non-vegetarian to vegetarian practices was a way of elevating the status of the group as a whole, both in relation to the already 'vegetarianised' North Indian and Tamil groups and in reference to the internal model of the high-status Telugus. By making practices more homogeneous and following the higher model, the double goal could be reached of reducing internal differences within the group, while ascribing to a form of worship that would raise the status of the group. There is in this sense a process of levelling upwards rather than downwards, in the same way as in India, "regional and communal parties have felt constrained to keep toward the upper end of the civilizational hierarchy" (Marriott 1963: 32). Marriott further observed that "anti-Brahman agitation has rarely gone so far as to exalt elements of peasant religion, but has rather asserted the right of non-Brahmans to practice Brahmanic rituals" (ibid.:32). In the same way, Telugu specificity had to be enhanced without losing out in the status evaluation of religious practices in the global society.

These processes may not have been entirely conscious. For instance, the emphasis upon vegetarianism may have started out less as a conscious process than as an influence from the North Indian group who see animal-sacrifices as barbaric. But the subsequent reaffirmation of certain Telugu rituals as elements of the group's corporateness was triggerred off by a conscious resistance to further assimilation or to loss of a cultural and religious identity.

The public aspect of religion can then be seen as a communicative and cohesive agent for each group: it communicates the corporate presence of a particular group in a village, cluster of villages, or in the

whole society, and it induces the cohesion of individual members into
a collectivity which becomes symbolically representative of this
group's identity. The appropriateness of religion for this process of
communication of identity lies in its visibility: collective rituals
are immediately observable in the society and express in overt ways a
feeling of corporateness that could not be expressed in other ways
without being negatively interpreted. The validation of group-identity
in a multi-group context has to be based on the group's visibility in
the total society, as Barnett (1970) observes in relation to the KV
caste in South India. Although this caste, as a non-Brahman one
occupying a position of power in the areas where it is found seemed
ideally placed to take over the key position occupied by Brahmans in
South India before the anti-Brahman movement started, it had to make
itself visible in an all-India framework before it could aspire to
replace the Brahmans. Internal consciousness of identity is thus not
enough to validate a group's presence in the society, it has to be
expressed externally, and religion is well-indicated to become the
focus of this expression. The Telugus are in fact conscious that they
have remained 'invisible' and passive as a group for too long, and
they stress the fact that it is because of the active expression of
identity among the North Indian and Tamil groups that they too have been
made to act in the same way. In this sense, the use of religion as a
symbol of identity can be 'relational' in that the adoption of particular
modes of worship is designed to reflect other groups' conscious
strategies and to respond directly to them. For instance an emphasis
upon different forms of worship between North Indians and South Indians
is in keeping this relational aspect. In fact, the very nature of
devotion and worship seems to differ considerably for North and South
Indians. Among Tamils and those Telugus who take part in the Cavadee
and fire-walking rituals, self-mortification is not only an expression
of devotion to God and a way of entering direct contact with Him, it is
also the test which is present in most of the South Indian rituals,
and which is essential in order to ascertain the response of the deity
to his devotees. During the Cavadee, the fact that the devotees do
not shed blood when pierced with needles is a test of *their* purity and
the extent of their devotion and penance. But the fact that the milk
which they carry in small copper pots and of which a considerable
amount is split on the way to the temple, does not curdle and reaches

the brim of the pot upon arrival to the temple is seen as a proof
of the deity's response and acceptance of the devotees' prayers. The
same applies to fire-walking: if the devotees are not burnt, it means
that their fasting and prayers have been successful, but if they do get
burnt, it may also means that the priest involved has not achieved the
appropriate degree of purity for the temple so as to ensure the goddess's
protection. The Seemadree Appanah puja has a man carrying burning
torches, and if his trance is genuine, he will not get burnt. The *pannel*
is used to test the success of the Ram Bhajan and the acceptance of the
prayer by the deity. Another means of testing the prayers is by breaking
a large gourd by throwing it onto the ground: if it breaks into two
clear pieces, the prayer has been successful; if it breaks into several
pieces, the prayer has failed. There is thus a two way process in all
these prayers in which the devotees can both test themselves and obtain
the tangible answer from the deity invoked. Self mortification, trance
states, tests for the efficacy of the prayers are closely associated
with the South Indian rituals and are all absent from the North Indian
practices. This may be because the North Indians worship exclusively
sanskritic deities; for it seems that this difference is also present
in South India, where the various orders of deities are worshipped in
different ways according to whether they are Brahmanic ones or
'indigenous' ones. Hart (1979) believes that the difference stems
from an Aryan/Dravidian dichotomy, in the sense that the ways in which
South Indians worshipped their indigenous deities before the
implantation of Brahmanic deities and modes of worship were completely
different in their very nature. Thus, "the indigenous Tamils believed
that power comes from the taking of life. (...) Indigenous gods were
worshipped with blood and sacrifices". (Hart 1979: 15). There was thus
a predominant concept of sacrifice in these modes of worship, and blood
was held to be a part of the 'sacred substances' such as milk, water,
amrta, and seed which were associated with temples and shrines. Hart
observes that "even today, it is customary to influence a god by the
sacrifice of some substance closely connected with life. Devotees may
shave their hair. (...) They may fast for a day each week (...) or
they may shed their blood by walking on nail-studded sandals or
performing the Kavati ceremony" (ibid.: 16). There are thus nowadays
different modes of worship according to the deity involved. Brahmanic
ones must be kept untainted and blood cannot be shed for them, whereas

indigenous gods are propitiated through sacrifices. In some cases, the gods may be "hybrid deities": like Murugan, who combines both "indigenous characteristics of power and untaintedness". These hybrid deities "often possess (Venkateshwara), are propitiated by sacrifice of substance in some form (...), but their priests are Brahmins and they must be kept pure" (ibid.: 17).

The South Indian rituals found in Mauritius can then perhaps be seen as dedicated to hybrid deities, in the sense that they have a relation to sanskritic deities - Ram Bhajans, Cavadee, dedicated to Muruga, son of Shiva, fire-walking, dedicated to Draupadi - but are worshipped in ways involving sacrifices, of self, in self-mortification, and, as used to be practiced formerly, of animals as well. However, self-mortification cannot be seen on the same level as animal-sacrifices, as Hart tends to do, for in fact, self-mortifications at the Cavadee or fire-walking are not meant to shed blood, but are on the contrary proof of the devotees' purity because of the fact that blood is not shed when their skin is pierced. This is perhaps why it is now kept as a major part of the South Indian rituals, while animal-sacrifices have been stopped. It however remains true that the forms of worship adopted by the South Indians in Mauritius, and which are seen as major components of their identity, differentiate them more strongly from North Indians. This is partly through a deliberate choice on the part of the South Indians to emphasise the religious practices that express their specificity, and partly through an unconscious reiteration of the old Brahmanic/non-Brahmanic and Aryan/Dravidian dichotomy in South India, which perhaps shows that there is a profounder basis of cultural differentiation that has remained between the two groups over the years: elements of a non-Brahmanic and non-Aryan religious heritage have been preserved, ensuring a difference of substance in religious worship. At the same time, there exists a sociological force which induces South Indians to maintain a distinction in the form of worship. The claim by the Tamils that they have a separate religion perhaps lies in this socially significant difference of form in the ways in which the people practice and perceive their religion, a difference that comes across more strongly in public practices than in private ones, emphasising more salient features of identity and separateness.

Thus, the differences between North Indian and South Indian practices
may be seen as a structural difference, a difference of form; the
Tamil/Telugu dichotomy is more one of choice, and can be seen as the
utilisation of regional variants to nurture a conscious sense of
separation between the groups and of identity within the groups. I
have summarised these differences in the following way.

PAN HINDU PRACTICES

        Birth (naming/shaving the head)
        Death (Pinda)
        Marriage (with variations)
        Main Sanskritic festivals

NORTH INDIAN	SOUTH INDIAN
KATHA	MORE COLLECTIVE RITUALS
PERIODIC FASTING	TRANCE STATES
PITR PAK	PROLONGED FASTING
RITUAL PURIFICATION	RITUAL PURIFICATION
BY BATHING IN SACRED LAKE	THROUGH SELF-MORTIFICATION
BRAHMANIC MODEL OF VEGETARIANISM & NON-POSSESSION	TESTING OF PRAYER BRAHMANIC MODEL OF VEGETARIANISM

TAMIL	TELUGU
CAVADEE	RAM BHAJAN
FIRE WALKING	AMMORU
CANJEE	SEEMADREE APPANAH
etc.	etc.

Thus, in religion as in kinship, there are basic features of
differentiation which allow each group to maintain a separate identity.
But, whereas kinship remains an underlying form of identity, religion
can be used as an overt form, in its public, collective aspects, in
order to enhance the corporateness of the group. In the quest for
identity, each group may modify to a certain extent its patterns of
worship and of religious practice, and emphasise certain aspects rather
than others. Thus, whereas for a long time the Telugus had chosen to
adhere to several Tamil practices on the basis of their South
Indianness, there is now a deliberate movement towards a separation

of practices, which can be seen in the emphasis upon the Ram Bhajan and Ammoru ceremonies as major Telugu rituals. They are also fast becoming the main symbols of Telugu identity, since they are the most 'visible' aspects of their religious practices.

Within the sphere of Hinduism, with its numerous sects, regional variants and syncretisms, qualité identities are primordial and use the internal religious differences in order to generate a stronger sense of identity within the qualité groups. Some of these differences can be consciously activated in order to become collectivising agents and overt symbols of group identity. Thus, there is a very distinct process within the Telugu community to make religious practices express their presence in the society as a colàctivity, through an emphasis upon Telugu-specific practices and a trend towards the general 'vegetarianisation' of the practices. In this Section, we have looked at these trends, and now we shall go on to look at other features which enhance Telugu identity, mainly through the activities of the national-level société.

SECTION TWO: ANDHRA MAHA SABHA: ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE

An important aspect of the pluralistic set-up of Mauritius lies in the presence at national level of cultural/religious associations that are representative of each group, and which ensure that the group's needs and claims can be voiced at the higher-level of society, where they are more likely to be fulfilled. These associations can be seen as vehicles through which each group expresses itself and makes itself heard in the global framework. The other function is to implement new ideas and strategies within the groups they represent, and in this sense they are agents of innovation which can reach out towards lower, local-levels, and act as a unifying force throughout the group. However, their innovative power lies very much in the people who control these associations and in their own aims: leadership can be used to gain access to certain resources meant to further the individual's goals rather than the group. Status differences within each group can give rise to a conflict of interests between those who act as leaders and the majority of the group. In India, the Andhra movement, which was ostensibly a separatist movement to create an independent Andhra State, was first engendered by the Brahmans as a means to acquire further power and to consolidate their position in the society. But the movement only became really effective when it became later on an expression of anti-Brahman feeling and was led by non-Brahman castes. It was only then that the majority of the people felt that the movement was acting on their behalf and not on that of a small élite (Leonard 1967).

In Mauritius too, the group associations representing the Telugus have for a long time been led by a small high-status élite which aimed mainly at enhancing its high-status position in the society. It is only when a change of leadership occurred that specific strategies could be nurtured through the associations in order to create a deeper sense of identity within the group and to validate its presence in the wider society. In this Section, we shall be looking at the Andhra Maha Sabha and its role as a "porte parole" of the Telugu community in Mauritius.

(i) Functionning of the Association

The Andhra Maha Sabha was founded in 1946 by a Telugu called Kistamah
Kamayah. For ten years, it functioned without official recognition or
subsidy from the Government, mainly through the donations of prominent
members of the Telugu community and through the contributions of its
own members. It had more or less the same functions as village-sociétés,
i.e. it provided loans to its members upon major events such as weddings,
religious ceremonies, funerals, etc. , and when a member died, it
proferred financial assistance to his family. When a prominent figure
from India came to the island, the association would organise a party
for him or her, and when a member of the Telugu community achieved
some kind of distinction in Mauritius or abroad, the A.M.S. would also
honour the person through a reception or party. The President or
Chairman would also frequently go to India on cultural delegations.
In 1957, the A.M.S. was officially recognised by the Government as
an association representative of Telugus in Mauritius and awarded
annual subsidies.

The present subsidy it receives from the Government is of the order of
Rs 4.00 (about 20p) per Telugu, and since according to the last
official census there were 23,000 Telugus approximately, the A.M.S.
receives annually Rs 92,000 from the Government. (But the President
believes that there must be more Telugus in the island, and that the
above figure is not correct). There are now over 3,000 members of the
central A.M.S. who pay a monthly fee of Rs 3.00 each. The main expenses
which have to be met are loans to members for building or repairing
their houses, pandits' and pussaris' fees and maintenance , teachers'
fees, maintenance of temples, and the different cultural and religious
activities organised by the A.M.S.

There are 58 branches of the A.M.S. in different parts of the island,
mainly located in scattered villages where Telugus are numerous. Two
members of each branch represent the latter in the head branch in
Port-Louis. The mother branch has an executive committee of 20 members,
all of which are at present elected at the annual general meeting,
but the President would like to change this system to 15 elected members
and 5 nominated members. At the moment, he says, the high-status
Telugus do not run for elections because they do not wish to compete

with common people. If 5 members were nominated, they could be chosen from among the high-status members without the latter having to stand for election. In order to be eligible for membership on the executive committee, people have to be able to read and speak Telugu.

Whereas in the past there had been a lack of communication between the A.M.S. and the branches, the newly started "fraternal visits to branches" try to fill the gap, and establish practical and effective means of cooperation and control.

The pattern of leadership of the A.M.S. has also changed considerably since its inception in 1946. Until very recently, all the leaders were prominent, high-status figures of the Telugu community, being either land-owners, businessmen or having prominent white-collar jobs in the Civil Service. The leaders, once elected, would occupy the position for four or five years before relinquishing leadership to someone else. Thus, over the past thirty years, there have only been ten different leaders, seven of whom had one or several attributes of status, i.e. caste, wealth or professional status. For the past three years however, the Presidents have come from more humble backgrounds and from rural areas. The change in the type of leadership took place at a time when the community became more aware of the need for a dynamic association which would be truly representative of Telugus and would be more active in sustaining their interests. The people who were A.M.S. leaders for all these years were part of a small élite, both within the wider society, as leaders of the Telugu Association, and within the Telugu group, as members of the higher stratum of Telugus; they were not inclined to work for the whole community and eventually roused general mistrust from the rest of the community as they were mainly concerned with establishing their own prestige and used the A.M.S. for political advancement as well. Even today, many Telugu view the A.M.S. with distrust because they remember the ineffectiveness of its role over the years.

Although leadership today has become more representative of the majority of Telugus, it is not exempt from factional disputes, because, now that leadership has become accessible to non-high-status people, more Telugus compete for leadership, thus polarising support. At the last A.M.S. elections, the present President, who has been in office

for two years, was confronted with an opposed faction that contested
his leadership. While he was in Malaysia attending a World Telugu
Conference, the opposed faction, whose leader came from a village in
the North East of the island, led an extensive canvassing against him
in view of the coming elections, labelling him a "Government puppet".
This faction threatened to topple him over from his position, but
through his own strategies, he managed to get back the lost support
and to be re-elected for another term of chairmanship.

The 'democratisation' - in a sense - of leadership has thus given rise
to divisive forces which might affect the strategy of the group in
asserting its identity at the national level.

However, the change in type of leadership has more significant and
positive implications for the whole community. Disputes are part and
parcel of such group-associations, but they tend to be short-lived.
As an élite-association, the A.M.S. was rapidly falling into disgrace.
Although élite groups are very often looked upon as the generators
of change and as being able to express more adequately the needs of
the groups at the higher-level of society because they have a better
access to it, this did not happen in the case of the Telugus. The
members of their élite were neither numerous enough nor politically
important enough to have any major impact on the position of the
Telugus in the whole society, in particular because they gave far more
importance to their particularistic needs rather than to their
universalistic functions. In order for an élite to maintain its
position in the society, it has to strike a balance between the
particularistic and the universalistic, as is observed by Cohen in
relation to the Sierra Leone Creoles (1981). They however did - and
still do - have access to certain resources, whether in terms of
higher contacts or in financial terms to be still useful for the
community. This is why the present President is still keen on having at
at least a few high-status members of the community on the executive
committee, since, as nominated members they would not be able to wield
too much power in the association, and yet be able to provide specific
advantages in terms of patronage which the more modest leaders - status-
wise - may not have access to.

The change in leadership has proved that the present form of leadership is more appropriate in terms of benefits to the community than an élitist form of leadership. To use the simple example of Telugu films imported to Mauritius over the years, it is significant to note that from 1946 until five years ago, there have been approximately half-a-dozen films shown in Mauritius which had been imported by the A.M.S. Over the past five years, there have been more than a dozen, with eight films being screened at the South Indian film festival held in Mauritius last year. The same can be said about the number of qualified Telugu teachers, the number of children taking the Telugu examinations - 800 children passed the first two non-local Telugu exams last year - the help being given to young people who want to go and study abroad etc.

This change has also taken place within a parallel climate of intensification of identities in the whole society that was part of recent Government policies concerning the different cultural groups in the island. These policies are articulated in terms of the preservation of cultural identities and protecting their rights, but they also - perhaps more importantly - preserve the resource aspect of ethnicity and its organisational power in the society. The leaders were thus able to obtain what they wanted far more easily, since their strategies were in keeping with Government policies and thus benefited from active encouragement on the latter's part. This has increased the credibility of the A.M.S. among the Telugus, and it has now become an effective coordinator of the group as a whole. In its present structure, it can be seen as the head of a 'federation' of local sociétés, thus establishing direct links between the latter and the higher level of the society, as well as providing an integrative framework for the Telugu community as a whole. This unifying structure can be seen as follows:

```
                          HEAD BRANCH
                        /      ↑      \
                       /       |       \
"Fraternal visits ←---/  Members/2 repre- \- - - -→ Participation
visits", loans,       |  sentatives from  |        in religious/
subsidies             \  local sociétés   /        cultural events
                       \       ↑          /
                        ↘      |         /
                          LOCAL SOCIETES
```
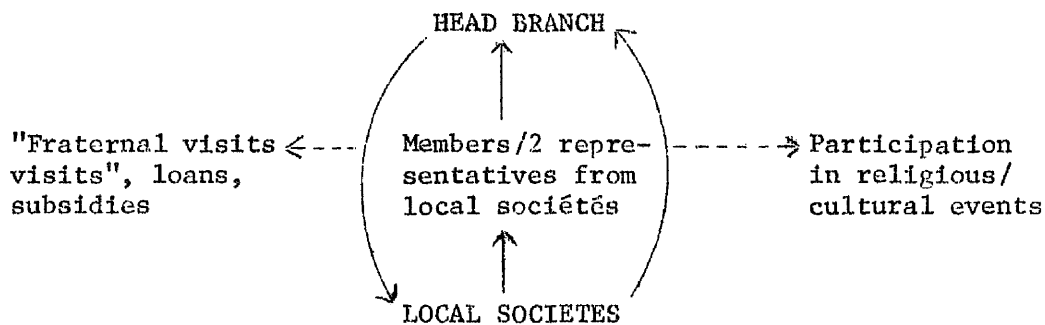
Diagram 21: Present structure of the A.M.S.

There is thus now a direct vertical contact from the national level
to the local level which did not exist before, and the consciouness
of this vertical group-identity cutting through geographical distances
and levels of the society is obviously an important strengthening element
in group-cohesion. This can be seen as one of the strategies leading
towards the emergence of an overt identity among the Telugus. We shall
now go on to look at other strategies adopted by the A.M.S. and which
are now being actively implemented in Mauritian society.

(ii)   Identity-strengthening through association-strategies

Some members of the A.M.S. maintain that, if they did not see other
groups actively working towards the maintenance and strengthening of
their own identity, the Telugus would not have felt the need for any
strong form of cohesion among themselves. They perceive themselves as a
loosely organised group reacting to the influence of other groups in the
society. In fact, the A.M.S. has to a large extent modelled itself on
the Tamil Temple Federation - the main Tamil association - in implementing
its own policies and strategies. But the Tamil Temple Federation has
undergone its own parallel re-structuring processes before emerging as
an effective agent of change and of cohesion among the Tamils. A brief
look at the Federation will put into perspective the strategies
adopted by the A.M.S.

The Tamil Temple Federation has existed since 1960, when it was set up
so that there could be a centralised administration of the subsidies
given to temples by the Government. Today, there are 93 temples in all
in the T.T.F. Like the A.M.S., the T.T.F. was set up and run by
prominent members of the Tamil community. The élitist pattern of
leadership was even more visible in the Tamil association, since, from
1960 to 1980, only three people in all have been President of the
T.T.F., all affluent businessmen and active in politics. Their
political influence perhaps allowed their leadership to go uncontested
for the past twenty years. The person who is responsible for most of
the recent changes in the federation is a well-know doctor who wanted
to achieve a change of outlook and orientation in the Tamil community.
He became Secretary to the Federation in 1979. His main contention
against the T.T.F. in its old form was its elitism. The Federation is

now open not only to temples, but also to regional cultural and youth associations. In this sense, it has become a real federation, not only on a religious level, but also on a cultural and social level.

The Secretary of the T.T.F., wishing to bring improvements to the organisation and position of the Tamil community in Mauritius, organised a conference in June 1980 which regrouped all the religious and cultural Tamil associations of the island, along with youth clubs and interested individuals, with the aim of identifying the elements of identity lacking in the Tamil community and of recommending corrective measures. They came to the conclusion that the Tamils did not know their religion, their language and their culture, though they admittedly practiced their religion extensively (*Mauritius Tamil Temples Federation* Report 1980).

Their preoccupation was thus both with internal identity and with external boundaries. Religion, language, and culture were objectively seen as the main symbols of identity in a communicative sense as well as in an integrative sense. Although subjectively the Tamils - as all the groups in the island - have survived as a distinct group since emigration and have resisted assimilation into other groups, there is now a need for an objective identity which can be expressed at the global social level. They are aware that they are in principle Hindus, but it has become a matter of *objective choice* to communicate their identity as Tamils, as they repeatedly indicate that North Indians do not consider them to be Hindus.

After the conference, most of the decisions reached were immediately acted upon. Several cultural shows and devotional song-concerts were organised, with tremendous success. In August 1980, an international Tamil conference was held in Mauritius, again drawing crowds of people, and establishing links with Tamil Nad through Ministers from South India who attended the conference. Tamil conversation courses and prayers were recorded on cassettes and sold through the various sociétés. That all this should have taken place in two years shows the strength and effect of a movement which has both popular support and efficient leadership - and perhaps its timeliness.

The A.M.S. was slower to move than the T.T.F., partly through lack of adequate funds, and partly because of a less efficient President. However, it is also following the same route in intensifying the objective bases of identity. The principal aims of the A.M.S. are to spread knowledge of the Telugu language and to train better teachers for the job - there has only been one Telugu ever to have graduated in Telugu from Andhra University. Young people are encouraged to set up youth clubs and to organise cultural activities. Since 1975, the Youth Drama Festivals, organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, have been held in seven different languages instead of only English and French as they used to be. This has encouraged young amateur actors to learn and speak their language of origin, and even to write in it. Last year, two of the Telugu finalist plays had actually been written by young Telugus. Such language-based activities are giving a new impetus to language-learning among members of Youth Clubs. A renewal of interest in learning religious songs and keertans to be performed at Ram Bhajans, as the young group of singers from Tyack have been doing, has taken place. Indeed, the young are even displacing, in the process, the old people who used to be in charge of Bhajan singing.

Within the sphere of religion, the A.M.S. has been encouraging people to organise religious ceremonies in villages through loans and material help. It has also been adhering to a policy of 'décentralisation', i.e. moving towards rural areas rather than centralising national-level festivities or ceremonies in the towns as it used to do. Now, the A.M.S. organises festivities for Ugadi or Andhra day in a different village each year, so that rural-dwellers should not feel cut off from the mainstream of events. This also creates more opportunity for contact between Telugus from different areas as well as the different branches of the A.M.S. Pandits are also going to be sent for training to Andhra Pradesh. At the moment, there are no properly trained Mauritian pandits, and the only pandits who have served temples in Mauritius have come from Andhra Pradesh and have only stayed for a short while. There is now an arrangement with Andhra to give scholarships to a number of young pussaris to follow religious courses there which will make them into trained pandits. They will be expected to bring in 'purer' forms of religious worship, and to prune borrowed

practices from present Mauritian Telugu rituals. It is difficult to predict at this stage, since no one has come back yet to put into practice these planned changes, whether they will really have a strong influence on the nature of Telugu religious practice in Mauritius.

This represents a new phase in the intensification of identity, in the sense that, as well as seeking bases of identity in past customs and in their origins, the Telugus are parallelly looking towards modern Andhra as a model and perhaps as a new form of 'territorial' identity. There are now increasing links being established with Andhra Pradesh, and Andhra University offers a number of scholarships to young Telugus each year in various cultural and non-cultural disciplines. The A.M.S. has also established links with the International Telugu Institute, which has so far provided help in the form of language-courses for adults, books, printed material, records etc. The same process of link-establishing can be seen in the increasing contacts with Telugus all over the world at international conferences: at the last Telugu conference held in Malaysia in May/June 1981, there were representatives from South Africa, Fiji, Russia, North America, Andhra Pradesh, Mauritius and Malaysia itself. This seems to be creating a basis for a Telugu identity that goes beyond the insularity which has characterised the different Mauritian identities until now. The symbolical allegiance to region of origin and to an ancestral territory is now being changed into a real allegiance to modern Andhra, which is also taking an interest in overseas Telugus all over the world. Mauritian Telugus, in seeing modern films from Andhra Pradesh and important Ministers, artists and film-stars visiting Mauritius, are acquiring a consciousness of being part of a wider community, originating from a culturally rich and important State. Their perception of self is changing as well as the very ways in which they conceive of their position in Mauritian society. When the South Indian Film Festival was held in Mauritius in 1981 and was opened with the well-publicised première of an award-winning Telugu film, all the Telugus felt a deep sense of pride that such a film could come from their country of origin. The effect of increasing links with Andhra has to do with both external identity - the position of the group in the wider society - and with internal identity - the Telugus' perception of self and acquisition of a new sense of territoriality.

As I mentioned in Section Two (i), these strategies of enhancing
internal and external identity have come about with a parallel movement
in the Government to encourage the preservation and the practice of
all the different cultures and religions in the island. Thus, oriental
languages are now being taught in primary schools as part of the
curriculum, and children are offered the option to learn their own
language[1].

It is significant that, whereas Telugu identity has for a long time
been unconsciously maintained mainly through the institutions of
marriage and alliance described in Chapter six, the maintenance of
identity has in recent years surfaced to a conscious level, probably
due to the policies engendered at national-level and to the ways in
which the country has adapted to its own plurality – a point to which
we shall come back in Section Three.

The strategies geared towards the expression and strengthening of
identity at surface level fall under three headings: language revival
and use, religious consciousness and redefinition of culture. These
can be seen as defining the overt boundaries enclosing the Telugu
community, using overt "signals or emblems" (Barth 1969) of identity.
Language is a particularly visible 'signal' in that it pertains to
what Fishman (1977) has termed the 'phenomenology of ethnicity' i.e.
the meanings an actor attaches to his "descent related being and
behaving". This descent-related being and behaving corresponds in
fact to the substantive aspect of identity, and to the individual's
substance and the code for conduct he adheres to as a member of a
group. Being and behaving are both intricately linked in the
substantive nature of identity, but it is in the realm of behaviour
that identity can become an overt construct through conscious
manipulation and managing of its internal codes. The code for
conduct is the basis for both internal recognition of identity among

1. The language problem has periodically come up in Mauritius as a
   basis for the articulation of ethnic rivalries and hostility;
   An attempt recently at placing the oriental languages at par
   with French at the primary final year exam has met with severe
   resistence from Franco Mauritians and Creoles as they feel that
   oriental languages are being given too much importance and
   posing a threat to French and to their own identity.

members of a group, and external expression of identity in relation
to other, contiguous groups. By using the visible elements that make
up the internal code for conduct, and transforming them so as to make
them appear as solid boundaries and identity-markers in the society,
the group is changing the code for conduct into a code *of* conduct
(David 1977). In David's terms, every cultural symbol is an "indigenous
theory of reality for members of that society: regularities in phenomena a ⌐
are codified by symbols, and orientations for action are provided by
symbols" (ibid.: 200). The cultural symbols used by any group contain
both a prescriptive theory, or code for conduct, which underlies their
actions at a cognitive level, and a descriptive theory, or code of
conduct, which regulates interaction and behaviour at the surface level.
In the context of caste, he identified two contrary normative schemata
by means of which "actors oriented themselves to the action of others
(code of conduct), and with which they guided their own action (code
for conduct) (ibid.: 200). In the context of ethnic identity, the
two schemata or sets of symbols are not necessarily contradictory;
they also embody the internal/external opposition, or substantive/
relational opposition, in that codes for conduct may remain subconscious
and unrealised to a certain extent, whereas codes of conduct are
conscious uses of cultural symbols in the multi-group context, but the
same symbols may be involved in both sets. These can also be seen
in terms of passive codes and active codes, the latter being the
boundary-strengthening ones and identity-markers.

Thus, whereas within the group, language can remain a latent symbol of
identity in the knowledge that the same language-of-origin is shared
by members of the group (in the same way as region-of-origin or
symbolic territoriality is a shared code for conduct symbol), outside
the group, it is necessary for the language to be used in order to
become actively differentiating and representative of the group.
This has the dual effect of actively emphasising the 'shared' element
of the code for conduct among members of the group, and of expressing
it in visible, emblematic terms to the other groups (Incidentally,
it is interesting that many Telugus use the French word "emblème" in
designating such overt symbols as language and collective rituals).
The contrast between "code for" and "code of" can perhaps be made
through the two different attitudes to language expressed by a villager

and a member of the A.M.S.: the villager deplored the fact that a
large number of Telugus in villages spoke bhojpuri rather than Telugu,
and many did not even know Telugu. When I asked him if it meant that
the language was being lost, he answered: "no, it cannot be lost; we
will always know that it is our language, we cannot lose that." What
he meant was that, even if people do not use it, they still know that
they share it, opposing in this sense the normative use of language
and its symbolic function. On the other hand, the member of the
A.M.S. having repeated several times that it was important for
Telugus to learn to speak the language, concluded with: "after all,
how can we show people that we are real Telugus if we cannot speak
our language?". He was mainly concerned with expressing identity,
and for this, it was crucial to speak the language, not just to know
that it is a shared symbol. As a code of conduct, language is
immediately perceivable to the rest of the society, whereas as a code
for conduct, it is not.

However, it is as a code for conduct, i.e. in its symbolic use that
it is fundamental to identity. The loss of language use, which is
only being revived now, did not entail a parallel loss of identity.
The Telugu language only survived in religious ceremonies where they
were an intrinsic part of the rituals. Although the sociological
significance of language has mainly been studied in relation to
contextual variables and to the likelihood of the politicising of a
linguistic group (cf. Fishman 1972; Inglehart and Woodward 1972),
its deep significance in a cognitive sense where it subsists as a
transmitter of cultural identity has not been studied in enough depth.
It is a necessary condition for Telugu identity - in particular in
their 'objective' self-definitions - but not a sufficient one, in the
sense that it is an *instrumental* element of identity, a code, not an
organic and substantial element such as blood or kinship.

The same opposition of 'code of' and 'code for' applies to the
collective religious practices - which we have looked at in Section
One, (ii) - and the need to send pandits for training in Andhra as
well as "vulgarising", in a sense, religion, by using Creole
explanations (and parallelly, the use of prayer cassettes by Tamils
and of booklets written in French to explain rituals and festivals).

The code for conduct only enjoins the practice of religion, whether individually, privately or collectively and publicly. The practice of the different forms of Hinduism does not involve very rigid rules which serve to bind people to one particular form rather than the other. Adherence to a set of rules or religious norms is directly linked to the internal code for conduct of a particular group, but there is also the freedom to change or emphasise certain aspects of religion in order to make it more suitable to the strengthening of identity. For Tamils, for instance, the use of prayer-cassettes, prayer-books, French explanations etc. are part of a deliberate attempt at "westernising" religious practice to a certain extent so as to reach the younger generations in particular.

The changes taking place in religious propagation are meant to counteract the force of conversion to other religions by modelling religious practice on the more accessible practices of western religions[1]. Further, the stress on vegetarianism in the context of group-specific practices stems from an attempt to raise the status of religious practices according to a pan-Hindu model without losing the particularistic traits that allow them to demarcate the group from others. The same applies to the training of pandits instead of using local pussaris who are not conversant with the higher meanings of religious practices.

Whereas the code for conduct is deeply imbedded in each group's primordial identity, the code of conduct is essentially a surface construct which operates at the conscious level in defining and re-defining the group's identity using various available models: in the

---

1. In Chapter One, I mentioned the trends of conversion of South Indians to Christian religions mainly for purposes of mobility. These either merged with Creoles, kept a separate identity as *Tamil-baptisé* or resumed their Indian identity later on. Recently a new wave of conversion to various Christian sects has started to take place, again implicating Tamils and Telugus mainly. The interesting point here is that, when members of these sects intermarry, they do so *within the qualité group*. This indicates perhaps the resistence of qualité to religious conversion, and also that qualité is non-religious in essence.

sphere of religious worship, for instance, a Brahmanic/vegetarian model is being used by both Tamils and Telugus to raise the status of religious practices, as well as a South Indian traditional model that preserves their particularity. Parallelly, a western model is being used in the spreading of religion. The Catholics have been using this system for a long time, by allowing modern tunes and modern instruments to be used in the singing of hymns in Church, and putting up shows and plays with the help of young people so as to get them more involved in religious practice. Priests go out towards the people in order to maintain an essential contact between the religion and its adherents. In recent times, the Catholic Church in Mauritius has been integrating a cross-cultural element in religious practice, for instance in having hymns sung in different languages including Creole and oriental languages.

The success of Catholicism in preserving its adherents and preventing conversion provides an obvious model to other religious groups, in particular those which are being threatened by conversion. For Tamils and Telugus, translation of sermons in Creole is one of the ways in which this model is being followed. Already, a number of Telugu priests make it a point to explain wedding rites in Creole to the couple and the guests at marriage ceremonies, thus helping to make them more accessible (some go even to the extreme of translating them into English and French as well as Creole, perhaps in a display of their quadrilingualism!). This can easily be extended to pujas and collective practices, and the Tamils' use of their French monthly, La Lumière, to explain the origins of different festivals also represents such a modernisation of practice using a western model. The use of these different models can be represented as follows

SANSKRITIC/VEGETARIAN   MODERNISATION, ADAPTATION

NORTH INDIAN   CATHOLIC

TAMIL   TELUGU
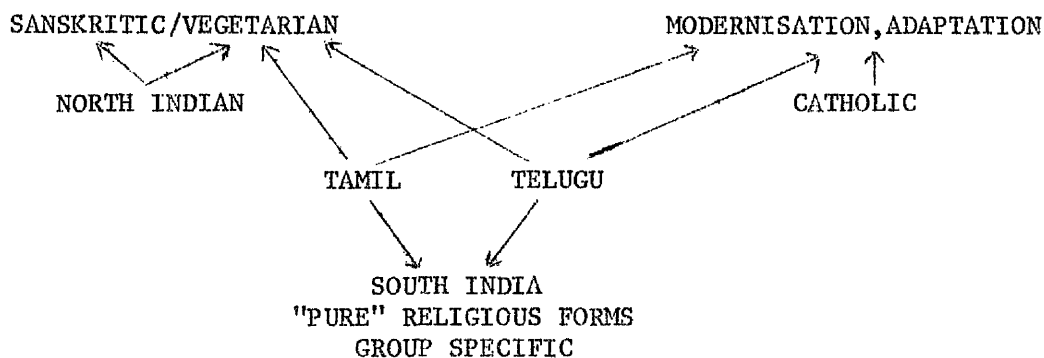
SOUTH INDIA
"PURE" RELIGIOUS FORMS
GROUP SPECIFIC

Diagram 22 : Models followed by the Tamil and Telugu groups in Mauritius

In the cultural sphere, the model that is being used is mainly a modern-day South Indian model. Here, there is an example of an entirely new code of conduct being evolved and integrated into the framework of identity. The only 'cultural' practices of Telugu in Mauritius are singing film songs learnt from records or from the radio, which could hardly be used to validate their cultural identity on a global level. There used to be sacred plays called "natakon" which were held in villages and depicted the lives of saints and deities, but these were lost as the language fell into disuse and the men who knew and put up these plays died. The only way in which a new cultural identity can be forged is by looking towards Andhra itself and finding new forms there which can be imported to Mauritius. Government efforts in establishing cultural links with India facilitate this. For example, a School of Indian Music and Dance was set up in Mauritius over fifteen years ago by two dance and music teachers from North India, the dance teacher holding classes both in Kathak and in Bharat Natyam. The young people who joined the school did not do so on the basis of North or South Indian, but mainly out of interest for Indian culture forms, and many went to India after a few years at the school to study Kathak or Bharat Natyam or music. This triggered off interest in art forms which are expressive of Indian culture, and created awareness of specifically South Indian art forms. With their emphasis upon Carnatic music and South Indian dance-styles as part of their South Indian cultural identity, the Tamils are now encouraging people to learn these particular art forms rather than North Indian ones. The close relation that these art forms have with religion are leading to a kind of amalgamation of both in cultural events where devotional songs and music are performed in pure Carnatic style, making them even more effective transmitters of Tamil identity.

So far, the Telugus have not been able to claim a particular art form for their group, but they are also encouraging young people to go for further training in Carnatic music and Bharat Natyam, and whenever there are public performances of these art forms, the songs are in Telugu. In this case, it is the language in which the art is performed which serves as an identity-symbol. Classical Telugu poetry and devotional poems are also being revived through records, books and collections brought from India. Literature is another field which

can be used to express the high tradition of Andhra and thus help
bolster Telugu identity, but, unless translations are made available,
the Telugus will have to reach a high level of literacy in the
language before they are able to use it.   There is thus a deliberate
attempt to heighten the cultural-consciousness of Telugus through
art-forms that were not previously practised by members of the
community.   The shows held on the occasion of Ugadi, for example,
have improved in standard over the past few years because of the
availability of a few trained singers and dancers, as opposed to the
rather amateurish performances that used to be given before.

The whole sphere of traditional South Indian art and cultural forms
is now providing a new basis of identification to both Tamils and
Telugus, and, in internalising them in the set of "emblems" or
signals of identity, they have become a new possible set of codes
of conduct available to these groups in the island.   Perhaps in a
number of years from now, when these practices will have become more
fully integrated as bases of identity, they will be transferred to
the deeper level of code for conduct, and become part of the shared
consciousness of the Telugus as a group.   But it is difficult to
predict whether the trend of strengthening identities will remain as
dynamic over the years as it is now, or other ways of coming to
terms with the pluralistic situation in the island will be found.

In this Section, I have looked at the strategies adhered to by the
Andhra Maha Sabha   at national level in order to strengthen the
group's consciousness and use of ethnic identity in the society.

We shall now go on to look at the context within which this process
of group validation takes place as a competitive arena for the
obtaining of specific privileges in the society.

One may ask, at this stage, what the need is for such a strengthening
of identities from minority groups, and what the specific advantages
are that they wish to obtain at the global social level. These qualité
identities have really started to become salient in the society after
Independence when the Colonial Government was replaced by an Indian-
majority one. The political situation became more obviously an
expression of the plural situation in the island, and people saw
political parties increasingly as representatives of specific groups.
The whole process of intensification of identities then seems to be
in keeping with both the pluralist situation and the political
situation, in that they are both closely interlinked at national level.

Although I do not intend to make a political study of party formation
and the politicising of ethnic groups, I will look briefly in this
Section, at some of the elements conducive to the emergence of ethnic
groups on the national political level.

(i) Official policies regarding ethnic groups[1]

The Constitution of Mauritius officially accounts for only four distinct
groups, or communities in the island: the Hindu community, the Muslim
community, the Sino-Mauritian community, "and every person who does not
appear, from his way of life, to belong to one or the other of those
three communities, shall be regarded as belonging to the General
Population, which shall itself be regarded as a fourth community"
(Constitution of Mauritius, First Schedule). It is from this

---

1. This account was written before the national elections held in
   June 1982 in Mauritius. These created an unprecedented situation
   in the island, where a single party was returned to Parliament,
   winning all sixty seats. The implications of this fact concerning
   ethnicity cannot yet be drawn out, but the item of the Constitution
   concerning 'Minority Seats' (see below) became a central issue.
   The decision had to be taken in court, and it was decreed that the
   proviso would be respected and four seats (instead of eight)
   allocated to members of the "Population Générale".

classification that the provision for what has come to be considered by Mauritian politicians as 'minority seats' in Parliament stems. Thus, the Constitution states that, in addition to the sixty-two seats representing the different constituencies, there should be eight seats to be allocated to members of communities who, in relation to their numbers in the country, are not adequately represented in Parliament by the sixty-two elected members. Since so far, the majority Hindu group ·has always been more than adequately represented through elections, this proviso in fact seems to apply to the minority groups only and is seen as a protection for the minorities in the island at constitutional level. In this scheme, the two groups which have most frequently benefited are the Muslims and the General Population. This has given grounds to the minorities to be constantly aware of the majority/minority dichotomy, in particular as access to Parliament is partly based on numbers and on the proportion in which the minority groups stand in relation to the Hindu majority.

The other provision which is made by the Constitution with the view that there should be no ethnic-based 'dictatorship' in the society, is that people should be allowed to practice any religion, belief or creed they wish to. This stipulation is meant to preserve a certain equilibrium in the structure of Mauritian society, with its proliferation of religious, linguistic and 'racial' groups, but at the same time, it tends to maintain the basic plurality of the society. Although the Constitution only accounts for the four main 'categories' to be represented in Parliament, it also implicitly recognises a far greater aggregation of groups in the society, so that the 'rights' of these groups have to be preserved and subsidies made to their respective associations on the basis of their numbers. (This policy has in fact led to a proliferation of such associations representing groups which ascribe to narrower and narrower bases of identification). The foundation for claims based on the different identities can thus be found within the Constitutional framework itself, with its attempt to account for the plurality of the society without attempting to define the exact nature of this plurality. Equilibrium seems to be sought in separation, not in assimilation. As M. Freedman observes in the case of Malaysia, "from a purely structural point of view, (Malaya's) plural nature is more marked today than ever before.

Nationalism and political independence in their early phases have tended to define, on a pan-Malayan basis, ethnic blocs which in former times were mere categories (...). As 'Malays', 'Chinese' and 'Indians', come to be realized as structural entities on a nation-wide scale, they can begin to have total relations with one another" (quoted in Geertz 1963: 154). The recognition of plurality implicit in the Constitution is made explicit as groups try to obtain more rights in the society.

But for any group to claim specific rights at the national constitutional or political level, it is necessary for this group to make itself visible in the global social framework and to validate its identity in terms that are immediately recognisable by the other groups because they have already been tested and tried before. This comes close to Cohen's view of ethnicity as arising mainly in the political sphere where the groups compete for specific interests. In particular, his most recent approach approximates the situation in Mauritius in the sense that he sees the moral and subjective bases of identity being used in the organisational process of the group when it starts competing for power (Cohen 1981). This process is reflected in the Indian community which represents, in a way, a microcosm of the plural society: first the distinction Hindu/ Muslim appeared on an ethnico-religious basis, backed by the partition of India into Hindustan and Pakistan; then the North Indian/South Indian distinction emerged, on a linguistic-cultural basis, reflecting the Aryan/Dravidian opposition in India; further, the South Indian category itself was divided into Tamil/Telugu on a linguistic basis and conceptualised by the members of these groups in terms of different qualités, i.e. primordial identities which had to be exhibited at the higher level of the society, particularly in opposition to the majority North Indian group, in order to be recognised and afforded their basic rights as minority groups. The Muslims already achieved this in 1958 when they succeeded in having census categories separating the category "Indo-Mauritian" into Hindu and Muslim. With this precedent set, the same process could be attempted by narrower groups in their validation of separate identities.

(ii) Majority and Minorities

Since in the Constitution representation in Parliament is not based on ethnic dominance, but numerical position is important, most claims

from the different groups have been phrased in terms of numbers. Thus, although there is no proportionate representation, the principle is anchored in the strategies used by the groups to gain access to specific positions in the society. As Geertz observed, in access to Governmental jobs, "statistics, real or fancied, concerning the ethnic composition of the Civil Service are a favorite weapon of primordial demagogues virtually everywhere" (1963: 126). As soon as access to the Civil Service became open to all the groups (through the avenue of education mainly), it became a matter of ethnic pride that one's group should be adequately represented in statal and para-statal bodies. Thus, in 1947, the Government of India made a formal enquiry from the Governor of Mauritius as to how many Indians were employed in the Civil Service. The latter's answer was as follows: "the Government of India asked that I should inform them of the proportion of posts in the Civil Service filled by gentlemen of Indian extraction. That was not the sort of information I like to collect; it seems to me a matter of no importance in a country where we are all Mauritians. At the same time, very nearly synchronising with this demand was a repeated allegation made publicly in the newspapers that racial discrimination was being shown in this colony this time not against those of Indian extraction but against those of Mauritian extraction" (*Debates of the Council of Government* 1947/48: 73).

The respect of group rights was thus closely linked with the assessment in terms of numbers, whether in the Civil Service allocation of jobs, in the number of public holidays, in radio and television broadcasting hours, and it became important to prove that the group was large enough to justify the allocation of all these rights. The same trend has been observed in Mauritian society at different times, with different identities being stressed and validated.

Many Telugus maintain that it was the allocation of religious subsidies according to the number of people professing a particular religious faith, such as Hindi-speaking Sanathanists, Tamil-speaking Sanathanists, Telugu-speaking Sanathanists etc., that triggered off the trend of separation between these groups. The emphasis upon numbers has led the leaders of the community to contest the statistical validity of the 1972 census on the grounds that there has been much confusion over the different labels (such as mother-tongue, spoken-language, religious

denomination etc.) which has distorted the real facts. They think that there are 40,000 Telugus rather than 23,000. The same argument is held by the Tamils, who wish to query the 1972 census since it lists their number as 60,515, while the 1952 census lists it as over 65,000: they feel that it is hardly likely that their numbers should have decreased and again blame the difficulty of categorisation on the census forms for this discrepancy. They now want to launch a campaign in order to explain to people how to fill in census forms. However, there is now an increasing fear among both groups that conversion to Christian sects might reduce their numbers even further, thus reducing their rights proportionately, and they feel that even the non-Hindu people — i.e. converted Tamils and Telugus - should be encouraged to classify themselves as Telugus and Tamils linguistically. This preoccupation with numbers also stems from a belief that power hinges on numerical 'weight' in the society, if one does not control specific resources: the more numerous a group is, the more 'goods' it can claim.

The matter of radio and television broadcasts has also become controversial in this light. All oriental languages are allocated a number of hours on radio and television, but Hindi is given one hour daily on television, and approximately 26 hours weekly on radio, whereas the other Indian languages have one and a half hours weekly on radio and half-an-hour fortnightly on television. This has caused Tamils and Telugus to issue protests against such an unfavourable treatment, and the Tamils, as usual, have been the most vehement in their protests. They have claimed 12% of the time allocated to Indian programmes and a regular Tamil feature film on T.V. on the grounds that they represent one eighth of the Indo-Mauritian community. In the same way, the number of public holidays had to be divided equally between the different groups.

Apart from an emphasis upon numbers, there is also a stress on the contribution of the group to the society. Each group is constantly assessing the contribution that its most prominent members have made to the society, and, in a conference held in 1957 on Mauritian entity ("l'Entité Mauricienne"), a representative of each group made the point that, without the group's involvement in Mauritian society, it would not have survived as a nation. Thus, the Franco-Mauritians

stress their economic importance in Mauritius, the Indians talk about their labour, which was essential for the survival of the cane-industry, the Chinese point out their contributions to commerce, and the Coloured and Creoles claim true 'Mauritianness' because they are a mixture of all the races and thus have a truly Mauritian identity. The idea involved in such claims is that, the more a group has contributed to a society, the more rights it has to it (Entité Mauricienne 1957).

Because of this intense need to preserve their 'rights' there is very little ground for any federation or amalgamation of the different groups. An attempt was made four years ago, in the formation of the Hindu Council of Mauritius, to create such a federation of the different Hindu groups, but it seems to have been a dismal failure. The Hindu Council of Mauritius was formed in 1978 after the visit of a Swami from India, who brought it to the notice of the main associations in the island that the Hindu community in Mauritius was too fragmented and had been divided into politically separate entities. He stressed the fact that Hinduism hardly had any meaning in the present context any more, and that it was up to the leading associations to bring together the Hindus as a social and cultural entity outside the sphere of politics. His suggestion of a Hindu Council was taken up after he left, and the main associations such as the Hindu Maha Sabha, the Sanathan Dharm Association, the T.T.F., the various Arya Samaj Associations and the A.M.S. all became involved in the setting up of the Council. (It should be noted that the Tamil Temple Federation only joined after the present Secretary was elected, and was the most refractory organisation before that. One of the Arya Samaj associations also needed some persuasion before it agreed to join). The Secretary of the H.C.M. said that they wish to convince all the different associations that they are all parts of a whole, and that, despite the different sub-groups they represent, they are still part of an over-arching Hindu identity.

However, such objectives were not easily accepted by everyone, in particular since they seemed to place the H.C.M. at the head of all the member-organisations with an aim at coordinating or perhaps even controlling their interests. Each organisation soon made it clear that it intended to remain completely autonomous as far as its own activities were concerned, except where it deemed fit to include the

H.C.M. into them. In fact, the Secretary of the H.C.M. is well aware of the difficulties involved, and, although he maintains that each association is free in its activities and opinions, he also realised that the H.C.M. has had so far very little influence on its member-associations. In particular, he deplored the fact that in the villages, people are not conscious of "the necessity to be part of a wider association such as the H.C.M".

The other, and obvious, point of contention is that, despite the fact that the Council is a non-political organisation, its Chairman is a Minister in the present Government. He is also the President of the Sanathan Dharm Association and the Hindu Maha Sabha, the two major North Indian religious associations in Mauritius. Although his religious activities may be completely separate from his political activities, there is no doubt that his chairing the H.C.M. inevitably gives it a political affiliation which is not liked by several of its member-associations. Further, on the executive committee, made up of eighteen members in all, there are only one Tamil and two Telugus. This again gives the Council a North Indian affiliation which weakens its credibility among its members. The idea of numbers and proportion has been disregarded in this situation, making the Council more liable to criticism from these groups. Finally, the sectarian division between Sanathanists and Arya Samajis, and the caste divisions present in most of the North Indian associations are further bases of division and conflict which the H.C.M. has not been able to resolve so far. In spite of the fact that each association cautiously reiterates that it aims at retaining its cultural identity and autonomy while uniting as Hindus, there is no longer much common ground, given all the separate identities involved, for any consensus to emerge.

This has perhaps helped to show to the Hindus of Mauritius even more clearly the absence of a Hindu identity as a unifying factor among them. There may be temporary cooperation in the face of hostility from non-Hindu groups, but this cooperation dissolves when it is no longer needed, and the primordial identities crystallise once more.

In the political sphere, there has been a constant preoccupation with having each group represented in each political party, so that it would

achieve an all-round credibility in the society. Thus, although some parties have been dominantly Hindu, there had to be an internal respect of all the Hindu identities, with one or two Tamils and one or two Telugus and a selection of different castes to encompass the whole Hindu community.
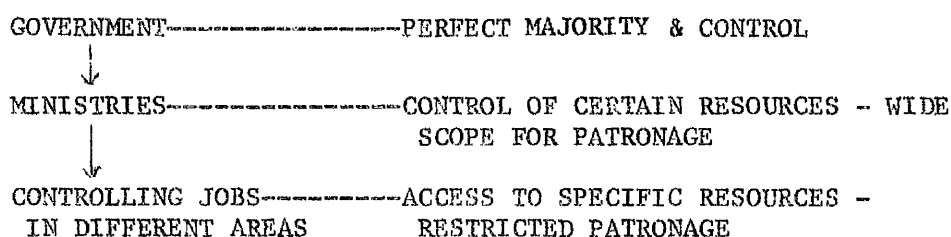
Ethnic identity is very much used as a resource in national-level politics, and, in recent times, increasingly narrower identities have been used for this purpose. Thus, not only are considerations of Tamils, Telugus, Coloured, etc. involved in choosing candidates for particular constituencies, but caste considerations are also involved. At the last elections held in 1976 some parties actually used low-caste candidates to rally up low-caste identities and votes. This led to the formation of more strongly organised caste groups, and a consciousness of caste was nurtured from the above, so to speak, i.e. from the higher level of society to the lower levels.

The power to organise and activate the different identities lies in the higher levels of the society, and it is at those levels that one can perceive the extent of the use of ethnic identity in the allocation of resources and perceived goods. The highest level which the groups can reach is the political governmental level: with access to Ministries and to the seat of power and decision-making, it becomes possible to further the interests of one's group by extensive patronage which opens up avenues of status and financial mobility for members of the group. The main aim in organising ethnic identity is then to gain access to the highest level of power; for if one does not have direct access to power and resources, organisation becomes the main agent of expression of the group's needs at national-level. There can be no merging of associations representing primordial identities - although there can be alliances between them - because they are all competing for the same resources.

This can be seen in terms of a zero-sum game, in the sense that each party's gain is immediately seen as another's loss. Access to Parliament is represented by a number of seats representing different constituencies around the island with different aggregations of groups in each constituency. The person elected from each constituency will be, by

virtue of communal voting, a member of the majority group from that constituency; thus the majority/minority dichotomy is present at the local level in that it determines who wins through to Parliament. In the same way, the return of a Party to Government will depend on the majority of seats won by any Party; this is directly linked to the ability of each Party in carefully situating its candidates and assessing the different identities to be used in its campaigns in various regions. There too, the majority/minority opposition is final and categorical: there can be no residual or in-between solutions. That is why there are temporary alliances made to ensure a majority, even though the parties or groups allying may have been originally opposed and may split up again later on; alliances are made between groups that are less opposed in relation to a third party or group, which may pose a stronger threat and has to be counteracted. This process has been periodically illustrated in the sphere of Mauritian politics, both in terms of parties and in terms of ethnic groups, and such alliances have always been formed on a temporary basis and split up again eventually. Access to seats and access to Government are both zero-sum games in which the majority always wins. Within the sphere of power, the number of seats, the number of ministries controlled by particular groups, the number of controlling jobs in any sphere of society are all perceived as such. This can be represented as follows:

SPHERES OF POWER

```
GOVERNMENT---------------------PERFECT MAJORITY & CONTROL
     |
     ↓
MINISTRIES---------------------CONTROL OF CERTAIN RESOURCES -- WIDE
     |                          SCOPE FOR PATRONAGE
     |
     ↓
CONTROLLING JOBS-----------ACCESS TO SPECIFIC RESOURCES -
  IN DIFFERENT AREAS           RESTRICTED PATRONAGE
```

The ways in which these are achieved are:

- playing with statistics (the number game)

- stressing group's contribution to the society

- communal voting and use of different identities

- alliances to win the majority

There can in this sense be no end to communalisme: as Barth observes,
"in a zero-sum game, persons are opposed to each other, in time
experience a series of victories and/or defeats, and in each case,
the victory or gain of the one means the corresponding defeat or loss
to his opponents" (1959: 15).

Further, unless people are prepared to lose their identity and become
convinced that even a person who does not belong to the same group as
they do will do as much for them in terms of patronage, it is not
likely that the use of identity in obtaining access to the goods
available in the society will subside. For, although in Barth's terms,
"the theory of games sees groups as forming through the strategic
choices of persons, i.e. the solidarity of groups spring from the
advantages which persons obtain from being members of the groups"
(ibid.: 19), in fact, the implication of primordial identities in
such games makes solidarity spring from a far more fundamental principle:
in Mauritius, the perception of the spheres of power in terms of the
majority/minority opposition and as a zero-sum game comes from the
deeply imbedded belief in qualité-patronage as a fundamental duty
linking each group internally. The very idea of communal voting
translates this belief that we should help our own, our propre qualité,
and that they in turn will help us because it is part of their code for
conduct as qualité members. There is a common saying in Mauritius that
"nation guette so nation, qualité guette so qualité" - i.e. each group
looks after its own. This feeling is highly prevalent in Mauritian
society and is not likely to be easily lost, since it is sustained both
from the inside and from the outside, as an internal order of
substantial identification and as an externally validated order of
allegiance that goes into the structural make-up of the whole society.

As Geertz points out, "multi-ethnic, usually multilinguistic and
sometimes multi-racial, the populations of the new states tend to regard
the immediate, concrete, and to them inherently meaningful sorting in
such 'natural' diversity as the substantial content of their
individuality. To subordinate these specific and familiar identifications
in favour of a generalised commitment to an overarching and somewhat
alien civil order is to risk a loss of definition (...) either through
absorption into a culturally undifferentiated mass, or through domination

by some other rival ethnic, racial or linguistic community" (1963:108).

The primordial identity is in fact allowed to surface at the higher level of society not only because of its substantial strength and significance, but also because, in Mauritius, it is significant as a structural element of the plural society and of the 'plural' system of government. This is in fact what allows these identities to solidify into what Freedman termed "ethnic blocs" realised as "structural entities" on a nation-wide scale (quoted in Geertz 1963). The plural system adopted by Mauritian society thus carries with it the preservation, perpetuation and intensification of the groups of which it is composed. The response it had to the internal plurality of the society was one of cultural distinctiveness leading to part-integration of the groups through mutual understanding, without loss of the various patrimonies which were imported along with the groups -- although this can be seen as an ideal only, for it is what Geertz has called one of the "diverse institutional and ideological responses to what (...) is essentially a common problem -- the political normalisation of primordial discontent" (ibid.: 129).

In this Section, I have looked at the reasons for which there is the need for a validation of identity at the higher level of Mauritian society. The answer can be found in the plural system of Government itself, and the fact that the Constitution provides for the maintenance of all religions, creeds and beliefs in the society, as well as the representation of minority groups in Parliament. The internal nature of identity, which sees it as a duty to protect one's qualité, also becomes translated at the higher level in the form of communalisme, where each group sees access to resources in terms of a zero-sum game.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has looked at the emergence of Telugu identity from a subterannean, underlying level, where it is sustained by deeply imbedded institutions of the group, to a surface level where identity is becoming more and more aggressively expressed in the global framework of Mauritian society.

This change has taken place first in the sphere of religious worship: the Telugus have for a long time adhered to different modes of religious worship, partly pan-Hindu, partly in common with the Tamils, and partly specifically Telugu in content; these could also be classed as vegetarian/ non-vegetarian, individual-oriented/collectivity-oriented and North Indian/South Indian rituals. With the emergence of a more defined Telugu identity, it became necessary to accentuate differences between North and South Indian rituals, and, within the context of South Indian rituals, between Tamil and Telugu practices. The local sociétés have now replaced the individual patrons of temples who used to hold village-wide rituals, and have therefore given a new meaning to collective, village-wide rituals as a basis for the cohesion of the group, and an objective 'emblem' of identity.

The validation of identity on a national level is largely achieved through the national-level associations which are representative of the groups. The Andhra Maha Sabha, for the Telugus, has become the main "porte-parole", and it is from this level that specific strategies are nurtured in order to make the collective-identity of the group more visible on a global level. This visibility is an important element in the process whereby identity becomes a major structural element in the whole society. It is achieved by emphasising specific emblems or signals of the group, such as rituals, spoken language, and a stronger identification with the country or region of origin which provides new cultural models which can further serve to identify the groups. The inner bases of identity which build up the code for conduct that underlies the group in a substantive sense, then become transformed, in a relational sense, into visible, overt symbols of identity and sustainers of identity, or codes of conduct. In this process, new elements are added -- such as cultural practices imported from Andhra -- which will probably be gradually internalised within the group and become part of their deeper identity.

Finally, the validation of identity at the higher social level can be seen within the framework of the plural society as part of the normative process where ethnic identity is seen as the main asset which can gain the group access to specific resources. The Constitution of Mauritius provides a foundation for the preservation of the plurality of the society, and the allocation of different resources is often made on the basis of numerical position and proportion, in an attempt to preserve the equilibrium of society in egalitarian terms, and restrain 'primordial discontent'. Ethnic identity thus both nurtures 'communalisme' in voting practices and the types of strategies adhered to in the political sphere, and is perpetuated and exacerbated from above as more and more 'rights' are articulated in terms of ethnic identities and the latter become more deeply ingrained in the structure of the society and solidify into nationally significant ethnic blocs.

In this sense, the Indian group can be seen as a microcosm of the plural society, and the different identities that composed it upon emigration to Mauritius have found in the situation of plurality an appropriate domain where they could be expressed and validated as fully independent ethnic identities rather than sub-identities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION: THE EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY IN THE PLURALIST SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

In the two preceding chapters, I have chosen to focus on one particular group of Mauritian society in order to elucidate the bases of its identity and the ways in which this identity could emerge at surface level as a component of the society's structure. I chose the Telugu group because one could look at it from a processual point of view as a group with an emergent overt identity and reacting to the present conditions of plurality in the society by strategies aimed at crystallising this identity into visible and hardened forms.

In this Chapter, I wish to draw out the implications of content and process as dual, parallel elements involved in the nature of ethnic identity and as defining the significance of the group in the whole society. Section One will look at identity as a substantial element, based on deeply-imbedded notions of shared substance and common ancestry, and passively expressed by such institutions as kinship and marriage. Section Two will look at the process of hardening of boundaries, in other words, the ethnicisation process that takes place at national level as another stage in the expression of identity in a multi-group context.

SECTION ONE: THE QUALITATIVE BASES OF IDENTITY

In Chapter six, we looked at kinship and marriage as primordial elements
in the constitution and maintenance of Telugu identity, in the sense
that they represented the "core institutions" of the group and the basis
of substantialisation of group identity.

This seems to correspond, broadly, to M.G. Smith's (1974) formulation
that the plural society is composed of groups that are institutionally
distinct. His definition of institutions was "collective modes of
action, organisation and orientation, both normative and cognitive", so
that "institutional differentiation correspondingly distinguishes
collectivities that differ in organisation, standardised procedures,
norms, beliefs, ideals and expectations" (1974: 206). One could hardly
find a more widely inclusive definition of institutions, but it has the
advantage of being vague enough to include almost any shared element of
the group without stressing any particular element overly. It also
allows for the fact that in multi-group societies, although the groups
are institutionally distinct, there are bound to be certain shared ins-
titutions, in particular law, property, political systems etc. Looking
at institutions in terms of a set of "normative, standardized and
sanctioned modes of collective procedure" (Smith 1974: 208), allows one
to see them both in terms of their peculiarity to each group and as
differentiating each group from the other, without overlooking the fact
that, in a single society, the groups are meant to share certain of
these standardized norms. Also, institutional diversity allows one to
avoid the pitfall of 'objective' or superimposed classifications such
as 'racial' groups, linguistic groups, religious groups etc. Ethnic
identity cannot be pigeon-holed into any one of these objective classi-
fications, but is made up of a selection of several categories that go
towards the creation of a subjective identity. Identity being first and
foremost a subjective, cognitive phenomenon, the institutional outlook
allows one to start from the inside, cognitive level, and move to the
outside, normative level without having to use the value-laden category
of race or the insufficient categories of language or religion as
determinants of groups in the society.

In the situation of plurality, it is not only necessary to look at institutions as collectivising agents and differentiating factors between the groups, but also as containing the deep-set substantial features that effectively constitute the notion of identity. As institutional forms, kinship and marriage have both an objective, normative function and a symbolic, cognitive significance. Among the Telugus, the defining features of kinship are, as we have seen, closely linked with the original Dravidian form from which their stem:;this close cultural correspondence seems to show that the survival of a distinct identity is related to survival of cultural features within the group's institutional systems. The resilience of cross-cousin marriage, of the alliance system and of the ordered nature of the kinship system as a whole was not a conscious choice but an unconscious attachment to features which are held to embody the group's specificity. Since in spite of the changing and disrupting influences that have been at work on the Telugu cultural identity since emigration, the basic principles and components of its institutional systems are still alive, this means that those survivals are in a sense the carriers of identity and the sustainers of a partly unconscious sense of difference within the group. As long as these survivals can resist trends of assimilation and integration, the basic heterogeneity of the society will be preserved, so that, in a sense, the situation of plurality, which can be seen as a politically maintained situation, is also incumbent upon the internal institutional heterogeneity, in M.G. Smith's terms.

However, apart from the differentiation that arises from the institutional systems, identity can be seen in terms of a symbolical notion of kinship, in the sense that kinship and marriage are the primary means by which the group is preserved and perpetuated, and, whatever the culture-specific elements that constitute their institutional forms, in their symbolical forms they are universal constructs creating a sense of identity in each group. This is because kinship is more than a relationship and an institution, it has to do with the immediate, substantial essence of the individual, and, although the anthropologist may often choose to separate the 'natural' from the 'cultural' meanings of such bonds as kinship and marriage, they are, in fact, cognitively as well as metaphorically linked in the minds of people, and the natural order can be made to extend in an infinite metaphorical universe to embrace cultural concepts and transform them into natural ones.

Kinship in particular lends itself to wide symbolical uses and to such transformations from nature to culture and vice versa. In Schneider's view, American kinship separates conceptually between 'relatives by blood' and '**relatives by marriage**', natural order and order of law, natural substance and code for conduct (Schneider 1968). The relatives by blood are linked primarily by natural substance and secondarily by a relationship or 'code for conduct' that regulates behaviour within that particular relationship. Relatives by law are linked only by code for conduct, and do not share natural substance. In this sense, blood relatives represent the natural order of kinship for American society, while relatives by marriage represent its metaphorical or cultural extensions in the order of law (ibid: 26). In most cases of pseudo-kinship, whether this is adoption or use of kinship terms to make a non-kinship relation approximate a kinship one, the metaphorical use of kinship is obvious and consciously sought in order to transform a particular state of unrelatedness into a state of relateness through code for conduct. People are constantly making use of this device, with neighbours, friends, people of one's parents' generation, people of one's children's generation, to place particular relationships on a specific level where the code for conduct adhered to is allowed to differ from that adhered to with 'complete strangers'.

However, the metaphorical use of kinship does not involve conscious manipulations of the relationship only, and there are cases where the relationships stated as kinship ones transcend the metaphorical, conscious order to become of a symbolical, partly unconscious order. The difference is that when people are using kinship as a metaphor, they are usually conscious of it; when kinship becomes a symbol, usage is largely unconscious, and the symbol can sometimes become completely identified with its meaning as its use becomes more and more entrenched in the particular culture where it is used. The sociocentric view of substance is closely linked with this part-nature part-culture amalgamation, as an unconsciously symbolical use of kinship is made to encompass relationships that may at first sight appear to be cultural rather than natural.

Schneider's definition of blood relationships is that two people related by blood "share in some degree the stuff of a particular heredity.

Each has a portion of the natural, generic substance. (...) Because blood is a 'thing' and because it is subdivided with each reproductive step away from a given ancestor,the precise degree to which two persons share common heredity can be calculated, and 'distance' can thus be stated in specific quantitative terms" (1968: 24-25). This definition of blood encompasses the whole genealogical chart of an individual, and, although his reckoning of blood relations may be shallow and only encompass his immediate family, in principle, the relationship by blood is infinite precisely because it is immutable, and, although one might not even know the names of one's forefathers, they still exist in an objective sense and the link between one and them cannot be denied or negated. Schneider further states that "the unalterable nature of the blood relationship has one more aspect of significance. A blood relationship is a relationship of identity. People who are blood relatives share a common identity, they believe. This is expressed as "being of the same flesh and blood". It is a belief in common biological constitution"(ibid: 25).

This definition of kinship identity based on natural substance lays the ground for the symbolical extensions of blood identity to encompass non-related people. It establishes a) an unalterable commonness of natural substance, b) an idea of distance which allows one to make differences between closer blood relatives and more distant ones, and c) an idea of common ancestry or genetic origin which can go back idefinitely beyond peoples' memory into the realm of symbolical kinship. These three fundamental premises upon which American kinship is based can in fact be seen as universal premises on which different cultural variations are based. What is more important is that we can perhaps see the notion of any identity that is based upon birth and ascription, as opposed to choice and achievement, as arising from this notion of substance and the symbolical use of kinship to establish this relatedness. In particular, the notion of race is very closely linked to that of kinship, and ethnic identity, which includes components of race, common origin and language, seems to arise from the same cognitive notion of commonness and shared substance as kinship.

In Mauritius, the concept of identity is expressed in the term qualité which I placed, in Chapter three, in the village context. We have seen

how qualité can be expressed in terms similar to blood and kin relations
as a moral order of relations, and can be intensified by the term
'propre'. This aspect of 'propreté' seems to bind the three types of
relation within the same conceptual order, giving them identifiable
degrees of strength and intensity. In the case of qualité, the use of
the term propre implies that in particular contexts, the qualité
relationship becomes more strongly binding than in others, and, although
qualité itself does not change, the behavioural code, or code for
conduct is more stringent in particular social situations and confirms
the bond more powerfully, as is the case in Plaine Magnien, where
'strong' groups are set into opposition. These degrees of intensity
can be seen as ordering the different relationships of substance, with
propre blood being the highest and strongest bond established by shared
substance, and qualité being the outer limit of the substantial
relationships. This is reminiscent of the natural classification of
the Tamils from Jaffna described by David, who classify all caste
members as sharers of substance, who subdivide into kin and non-kin,
where kin share substance whereas non-kin do not, and within the kin
group, patrilineal kin share substance while matrilineal kin do not
(David 1973). This does not imply necessarily that there are contra-
dictions in the classification of caste and kin members, but simply
that there are degrees of substance which subdivide into more intense
and less intense sharing of substance, in the same way as propre
qualifies the relationships as being more or less intense. Thus, caste
identity, in societies where it operates as a system, and ethnic identity
can be seen in qualitative terms as belonging to the same 'natural'
order as kinship. In most societies, racial identity, tribal identity,
caste identity or clan identity are expressed in terms of common origin;
in the case of the clan, the particular ancestor from which the clan
is descended may be known, so that kinship is 'objectively' established;
in the case of the tribe, caste or race, the common ancestorship may
pertain to a mythical concept, where the ancestor is a god, an animal
or a fictitious man. In all these cases, the objectivity of the common
link is not the significant factor, but the link itself. The nature of
the bond established does not differ whether the group is descended
from a deity, an animal, a legendary hero or a real person. The bond
is symbolised by the myth, but its reality *per se*, the fact that it is
felt to belong to the natural order and that substance is shared by all

the members of the group remains as unalterable as the biogenetic
concept of blood and kinship shared by modern Americans. A Mauritian
Telugu explained this fact to another old Telugu in the following
terms: "look at the Europeans: when you go to England or France, you
can see that all the English and all the French are whites. They all
have the same blood. But look at Mauritius: we are all different, we
will never be a real nation because we have too many different bloods,
different qualités." The notion of patriotism is perhaps directly
linked to this common origin and substantial identity, and the Telugu
man was perhaps right in his idea that there will never be a true
Mauritian identity because there are too many different primordial
identities.

Endogamy is the main device through which substance is preserved.
Without endogamy, the degree of untaintedness of the group will be
lost, and the group can lose its very identity through intermarriage.
This is why when people are asked why they wish to maintain endogamy
at all costs, they find it hard to explain. In this, Telugus in
Mauritius, and many people from other societies, in particular in
South Asia, differ from the Western notion of marriage as being solely
a relationship 'by law'. (In fact, even among Americans, there must
be a means by which a transformation is accomplished from the relation-
ship by law to the relationship by natural substance, since kinship
relies on *both* blood and marriage to function and preserve the natural
order. As Pitt-Rivers observes: "it is by virtue of the hypothetical
child of the marriage that affinal relationships are what they are
within the structure of kinship. (...) The full significance of
marriage alliance lies in the kinship it creates" (1973: 91). The
offspring perhaps represent this transition from law to natural
substance in American kinship). For Telugus, marriage is part of the
natural order as well, and, as we have seen in Chapter six, there are
mechanisms whereby the people who are related by marriage become fully
integrated as kin-members and eventually come to be regarded as propre
kin as well, mainly through the procedure of *alliance*. Together, kin-
ship and marriage create the primary blood ties that spread out to
encompass alliance groups that are in turn linked by affinal bridges,
and this creates a conception of the group as being actively and
objectively related by kinship. Thus, marriage serves not only to

ensure the continuity of the kin-group in a biogenetic sense, but as
endogamy, it also ensures the same continuity for the identity group.
There are then two ways in which the belief that Telugus are all
related can be seen: on the one hand, there is the metaphorical,
unconscious concept of alliances as eventually relating the whole
group through a wide-ranging network of marital links; this is given
a kind of moral and natural justification by the fact that, on the
other hand, the group is also believed to share a common substantial
identity through their common origins. The widespread kinship ties
provide the symbols through which this common substance can be cons-
tantly expressed, maintained, and becomes suffused with a feeling of
dynamism and objective reality, as part of the natural order.

As a minority group with fairly weak organisational features to sustain
its sense of identity, the Telugu group has come to rely heavily on
kinship as an institution, in order to maintain at a conscious level
the notion of shared substance which binds the people to a common
identity. Thus, the operative aspect of kinship, with its inherent
'Dravidianness' and specifically Telugu features, serves to differen-
tiate the group in a cultural sense from other groups and maintain its
distinctive identity. Further, its reliance on intra-kin and intra-
blood marriages and the incorporative nature of alliance groups provides
a basis for the reiteration of qualité identity as a substantial
identity preserved by kinship. Qualité is thus an extension of kinship
in a symbolical sense, and in the socio-cultural reality of Telugus it
is the very basis of identity.

This concept of substantial identity as a relation through common
ancestry or origin and perpetuating itself through endogamy, provides
us with a useful insight into the nature of groups in any society.
The cultural variants which emerge in the institutionalised forms of
kinship in different societies and in different groups are distingui-
shing factors which further serve to strengthen the identity of the
groups in terms of specificity. Thus, the behavioural codes regulating
the institutions of the groups serve actually as a differentiating
element in the multi-group context.

As we have mentioned above, the code for conduct, in Schneider's terms, is the regulating device which determines what a particular relationship enjoins and entails. Mother/children, father/children, husband/wife relationships are all governed by a particular code for conduct which cannot be infringed, and this allows for non-substantial relationships, such as foster-parent/foster-child, or step-parent/step-child to be conducted according to a code pertaining to a substantial relationship. This concept has been taken a step further by Marriott and Inden (1977) and David (1977), to denote the behaviour normalised within a group and peculiar to that group, whether it pertains to intra-group or to inter-group relations. Thus, the cultural variants imposed upon the natural order of substance are part of a group's code for conduct, and within the sphere of kinship generate marriage prescriptions and proscriptions, rules of behaviour between different categories of kin, terms of address etc. These are superimposed cultural constructs upon what each group conceives as the natural relationships of substance.

The notion of identity is then inextricably merged with the notion of difference. If we share substance with a determined set of people, this logically implies that we differ in substance from everyone outside this set. Sense of difference is then the logical converse of sense of identity or kind. The code for conduct further embodies the consciousness of this difference, and preserving institutional identity means preserving the basis of real and objective differences between the groups. Within the sphere of differentiation, not all the behavioural codes can be used to generate an active sense of separation between the groups. As institutions, for instance, kinship and marriage remain passive elements of identity in the sense that they are not consciously used or manipulated to create overt boundaries between the groups, but remain differentiating at an underlying, passive level. On the other hand, certain codes for conduct can be activated to carry communicative messages of separation and difference. These, such as religion and language, as we have seen in the previous chapter, can be seen as active codes which can be consciously used in group strategies. There is thus a distinction between those codes that are inherently, but not actively differentiating, and those that are both inherently and actively differentiating, and these can be seen as active codes and

passive codes. This difference is important in the context of boun-
daries, since the passive codes generate soft boundaries, and the
active codes generate hard boundaries.

We will now turn to the reactive and manipulative aspect of identity
in order to examine the ways in which these boundaries are created in
the pluralistic society.

Although the nature of identity in a substantial sense cannot be changed or altered, external elements can and do modify certain aspects of identity in different environments. We have seen how, at the micro-level, different village and economic environments created different manifestations of identity in each environnement (cf. Chapter five, Section One). Trois Boutiques and Plaine Magnien exhibit related, though contrastive situations, when the empirical variables of economy and environment allied with contentual variables in the groups in interaction to create two different configurations of ethnicity. At the global level, or macro-level too, the context within which the groups are set affects directly both their ways of expressing their identity and their ways of using it. We thus have a movement from an internal sense of identity to a conscious externalisation of identity that is meant to project a specific image of the group in the society and respond to specific social processes.

Change processes, then, do not all lead towards a loss of cultural-heritage and traditions. It is interesting that, on the contrary, change may lead to a revitalisation of identities and of the codes for conduct present in the group. As Barnett (1977) observes, in relation to caste change, theorists have either adhered to 'replacement' solutions, i.e. caste becoming class, or to 'additive' solutions, i.e. caste plus class. In any case, most of these observations of change tend to lead to the conclusion that caste as a basis of identity is weakening and, as it loses the internal regulations of pollution/purity, commensality, ranking etc., it is bound to lose its significance in Indian society. But this has hardly been the case so far. In South India, several political nationalist movements have taken as a basis the anti-Brahman feeling which is exhibited by most non-Brahmans, thus using caste as a focus for the expression of nationalism. The lower castes further contested Brahman supremacy in order to claim the same privileges for themselves. There is change, evidently, but it is still phrased in the idiom of caste, and the latter can still be seen as one of the main structuring elements of Indian society.

In the case of the KV caste described by Barnett, the changes that
were consciously nurtured within the group were aimed at achieving a
position in the society that would replace the Brahman caste in the
context of the anti-Brahman movement. Since they were the highest non-
Brahman caste in Tamil Nad, they considered this position to be justi-
fiable, but before they could achieve it, several major restructuring
processes had to be undergone by the caste as a whole. First, the KVs
felt that they should unite with other Vellalar castes in South India,
since they were a relatively small group and needed a stronger, wider,
and hence more visible caste identity to be able to replace the
Brahmans in Tamil Nad. Further, the KVs themselves were divided into
village clusters which subdivided into ranked alliance-groups called
vakaiyara, which did not intermarry or interdine. With such internal
subdivisions, a truly united KV caste was hardly possible. But, in
order to break from the hierarchical ordering imposed on the *vakaiyara*,
the KVs had to break a strong code for conduct which had been part of
the group's identity. What the leaders and reformers did was to stress
the idea of shared substance over and above that of code for conduct:
"a KV is a KV solely by virtue of his birth, because his parents were
KV" (ibid: 401). This implicitly denied the right or justification of
caste excommunication, and since new legislations were already denying
the right to Panchayats to excommunicate people from their castes, this
was in keeping with the general trend in the whole of Indian society.
As far as code for conduct was concerned, they tried to stress a general
KV way of life, which would preserve the basic rules that they had been
used to, while changing the separative or hierarchical aspects of the
code for conduct such as prohibition on inter-vakaiyara marriage and
commensality. The changes thus aimed at making the caste stronger as a
whole on the basis of shared substance, while undermining the divisive
codes that would prevent an internal unity from arising and hinder the
achievement of their socio-political goals.

Specific aspects of identity are then open to manipulation in order to
adapt to and make the best use of changing social conditions. In
particular, multi-group contexts engender such changes, since they are
basically dynamic, with constant competition and manipulation of
identities taking place in the society. The process of change affecting

caste-identities is what Barnett, following Dumont, has called the "substantialisation of caste", meaning that KV identity shifted to its substantial nature in a bid for unity, thereby becoming more akin to ethnic identity, while the code for conduct was played down in opposition to blood purity and common substance (ibid: 402).

It seems, however, that Barnett's view of the KV caste as becoming 'ethnic-like', or, in other words, as becoming ethnicised, is more appropriate than the view that the caste is becoming substantialised. After all, shared substance is one of the primary bases of identity, and the choice to emphasize it is part of a distinct process of ethnicisation. Whereas traditional caste identity relies heavily upon notions of purity and pollution and internal ranking determined by set rules of commensality and of food transactions, ethnic identity is primarily based on common origin and shared substance, with the codes for conduct being open to manipulation in order to stress the basic commonness or areas of cohesion of the group, or the differences from other groups. By stressing substance over and above internal ranking, and a code for conduct that encompasses the whole caste group, the KVs are in fact becoming ethnicised, and this has the advantage of accomodating the trends of change which are increasingly contesting the ideological premises of the caste system while preserving an overall caste identity among the KVs.

The ethnicisation process can also take place among groups already sharing an ethnic identity. As we have seen in Chapters three and six, the Telugus shared identity and the internal institutional elements that sustained it from inside and prevented assimilation of the group into other groups. But they have also in recent years, followed a distinct ethnicisation process which involved building up those elements that were visible to the other groups, and that would induce cohesion inside the group, a process which I described in Chapter seven. There had to be, as in the case of the KVs, an element of conscious choice in this process, an evaluation of the possible strategies and of the areas which should be emphasised or underplayed. They felt, for instance, that in order for the group to achieve cohesion, it had to emphasize religious corporateness, thus transforming the ideological aspect of religious identity into a manipulative

element. Among the Telugus, then, the revival of collective rituals and the emphasis upon spoken language can be seen as part of the deliberate 'fabrication' of an overt identity within the whole society (cf. Chapter seven, Section One). It seems that a reversal of the process that took place among the KVs is occurring in Mauritius: here, the notion of shared substance is already part and parcel of qualité identity, of the consciousness of kind; what is needed is a specification of behavioural aspects, of the code for conduct, so as to accentuate and demarcate the position of the group in the multi-group context. The ethnicisation process, rather than using substance to promote internal cohesiveness, uses code for conduct to produce both internal corporateness and external differentiation. This is because as a group, the Telugus have often been externally identified both with the North Indian group and with the Tamil group, since there were areas of similarity with both groups, and not enough areas of differentiation to express the specificity of the group in the society. The difference aspect of identity had to be strengthened in order to obviate the inter-group similarities. The institutional similarities existing between Telugus and North Indians, and Telugus and Tamils can be represented as a positive/negative chart, where similarities are marked by the positive sign and differences by the negative sign:

	NORTH INDIANS	TAMILS
Religious Practices	+	+
Language of origin	-	-
Language spoken	+	-
Kinship system	-	+
Political affiliation	+	-

Chart 3: Areas of institutional similarities and differences between Telugus and North Indians, and Telugus and Tamils.

We have seen that there are similarities with both groups in religious practices, since Telugus share pan-Hindu practices with North Indians, and Dravidian practices and religious forms with Tamils. In the context of language, apart from the Creole lingua Franca which is shared with all the groups, the language spoken by Telugus in villages tends to be bhojpuri, which assimilates them with North Indians. The kinship system has features of Dravidianness which they share with Tamils. And finally, in the context of political affiliation they tend to merge with North Indians, or have until now done so in all major political activities. In order to emphasise the group's specificity, all the plus signs on this chart should become minuses. We have seen that the Telugus are reverting more and more to Telugu-specific practices, so as to increase both the North Indian/South Indian opposition and the Tamil/Telugu opposition. This process tends to underplay the pan-Hindu practices, which are not identity-sustaining elements, and stress the group-specific one. In the case of language, since language of origin already differentiates them from the two other groups, by making it the spoken language - as opposed to Bhojpuri - the plus sign can then be transformed into a minus sign. The kinship system bears simi-larities with the Tamil kinship system, but the Tamils have increa-singly tried to stop the practice of cross-cousin and cross-generational marriage, so that these institutions can now be more deeply identified with the Telugu group. Finally, the latter are also changing their political affiliation, setting themselves more and more in opposition to the North Indian group rather than alongside it, so that this again creates a greater difference between them. Thus, all the processes of change and strategies adhered to by Telugus are geared towards mini-mising inter-group similarities and maximising differences. When all the plus signs will have become minus signs, the maximal distance will have been created between these groups, and the "Hindu identity" will be almost completely meaningless. This maximal distance can be seen in terms of an ethnic boundary that has deliberately been hardened in the ethnicisation process, containing clear identity-markers which serve to express the groups' overt identity in the context of plurality. What is important in this ethnicisation process is that there is no predominant use of *one* component of identity to express the group's identity: all the different components of ethnic identity, i.e. region

of origin, language, religion, 'culture' are put to use and are all part of the ethnic boundary which is intensified. The Muslims themselves, who have a predominant religious identity, have since the creation of Pakistan identified themselves with it as a common territory, and used Urdu - and now, increasingly, Arabic - to demarcate their ethnic identity on the basis of language as well, as I mentioned in Chapter four, p. 185 . This is in keeping with the original demarcation of categories in the plural society as groups coming from different places - e.g., Franco-Mauritian, Indo-Mauritian and Sino-Mauritian - and having different racial, religious and cultural identities. The ethnicisation process uses the same parameters of identity to validate the different groups in the society by showing them as originating from different areas and having different linguistic, religious and cultural identities, so that they cannot be grouped under a wider encompassing identity. Since the boundaries are firmly established, the ethnicisation process is complete, and the group's ethnic identity becomes comprised in the plural system, if not officially, at least implicity. The significance of this is that, whereas before the process was actively started, the Telugus were considered as a sub-group of the Hindu community, and interacted with the other sub-groups as Telugus but with Muslims, Creoles, Chinese etc as Hindus, nowadays, they are becoming increasingly visible as a different group in the total society in the same way as the North Indians and the Tamils are. The setting up of boundaries within the Hindu category is thus essential for the group to become visible outside this category. So far, the soft boundaries of the group were sustained by qualité, by substantial identity and passive codes for conduct, which operated only within the Hindu category; the hard boundaries, using active codes for conduct are meant to operate in the wider society on a par with the other ethnic groups composing the society.

There are thus three stages of differentiation that take place in the emergence of an identity group in the plural society: the first two stages are part of the "soft ethnicity" concept, passively demarcating the group from the inside; the third stage is the actual ethnicisation process that activates the components of identity and transforms them into hard boundaries and "hard ethnicity". This can be represented

as follows:

ETHNIC

IDENTITY

```
                           ETHNIC
                          IDENTITY
                   /                    \
          SHARED SUBSTANCE          CODES FOR CONDUCT
                |                      /            \
        NATURAL ORDER                /              \
        OF RELATEDNESS,             /                \
        SYMBOLIC                   /                  \
        'KINSHIP'            PASSIVE CODES        ACTIVE CODES

                            KINSHIP AND          RELIGION
                            MARRIAGE AS          LANGUAGE &
                            CULTURAL INS-        CULTURAL MANI-
                            TITUTIONS            FESTATIONS


        PRIMARY STAGE       SECONDARY STAGE      TERTIARY STAGE
             OF                  OF                   OF
        DIFFERENTIATION     DIFFERENTIATION      DIFFERENTIATION
        _____/     _____/
                         V
            SOFT ETHNICITY                     HARD ETHNICITY
```
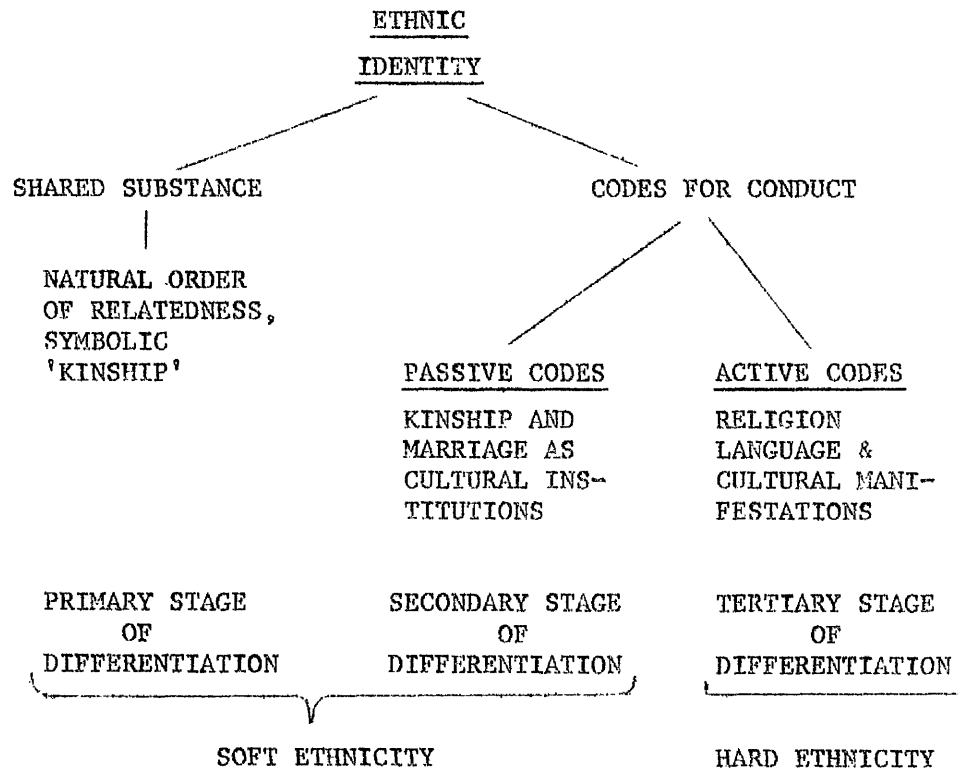
Diagram 23: Components of soft and hard ethnicity

The primary stage of differentiation represents the primordial
identity, the sense of kind which springs from an ascribed order of
being and which is part of an immutable substance present in the indi-
vidual through his ancestral origin. It is universal and non-relational,
i.e., it exists in itself as part of the individual's socio-cultural
personality, and only differentiates in the sense that the sense of
identity shared with a given set of people automatically excludes those
outside this abstract boundary.

The secondary stage of differentiation is that which is sustained by
certain core institutions of the group that are part of its internal
make-up. These institutions are part of the passive codes for conduct
in that they are inherently, but not purposively differentiating: in
other words, they are an intrinsic 'shared' cultural component pecu-
liar to the group, and are in this sense a differentiating element,
since other groups do not have the same cultural elements in their
institutions, but they are not used as a separative instrument in the
society.

These two first stages make up the soft component of ethnicity, which we have examined in Chapters three and six.

The tertiary stage of differentiation is that which is the conscious, manipulative, reactive element of identity, where groups in multi-group contexts actively use certain features of identity to manifest their presence in the society and to bid for and obtain specific privileges. The conscious use of identity leads to the strengthening of ethnic boundaries and to a deliberate process of ethnicisation whereby the group is made visible in the plural society. This is essentially a reactive and relational process, in that the strategies adhered to by each group are closely scrutinized and responded to by the other groups, so that, in the dynamics of pluralism, identities are constantly impinging on each other, responding to each other and sometimes clashing with each other, as we have seen in Chapters four and seven.

The emergence of the identity group at the global social level can be seen as the structuralisation of identity. From a mainly substantial, latent order of identification, we have seen Telugu identity slowly crystallising into an active and overt element which aims at carving out a niche for itself at the higher level of society, on a par with the ethnic categories constitutionally accepted as composing Mauritian society. This means that the group is surfacing at the level where it can be seen as part of the total group-based structure of the pluralist society as opposed to a sub-group that is encompassed by a wider Hindu identity. Being a Telugu is now becoming meaningful not only within the plural microcosm of the Indian community, but within the macrocosm of Mauritian society as a whole. Telugu identity has then become suffused with a new significance as it passes from the substantial dimension to the structural dimension, from the passive to the active, from the latent to the overt, and from the non-relational to the relational.

CONCLUSION.

In this thesis, I have looked at the process undergone by ethnic identity as it moves from a soft, internal phenomenon, to a hard, externally visible one. This has been set into two dimentions, the micro-level and the macro-level, in order to show the manifestation of ethnicity at different levels of the society, and its variations.

In Part One, we dealt with the micro-level, describing a village-environment, Trois Boutiques, which was framed-in by the sugar estate, and another village-environment, Plaine Magnien, which had a more open-ended structure in terms of avenues of mobility. In Trois Boutiques, where more 'traditional' values were at work, the non-moral solidarities of work and space, i.e. the labouring sphere and the neighbourhood sphere, operated at the surface level of society on the basis of codes borrowed from the moral solidarities of kinship and qualité. Ethnic identity thus remained muted and covert, with its codes functioning at an underlying level.

In Plaine Magnien, the economic structure laid an emphasis upon indivi-dual and familial enterprises, giving rise to class strata where privacy values were advocated, conducive to ethnic separation. The two groups in opposition, Hindus and Muslims, were thus able to *manifest* their ethnic identity openly in the religious sphere and on the local political level where they acted as competing interest groups, because there were no cross-cutting allegiances to stifle the expression of ethnicity. The polarisation of groups, enhanced by the strong organisation of the two groups, allowed ethnicity to harden as an overt phenomenon where the codes for conduct solidified into visible and divisive boundaries.

In Part Two, we looked at Telugus as an institutionally separate group and as a group undergoing the process of ethnicisation at the macro-level. Chapter six dealt with kinship and marriage as embodying the cultural specificity of the group and perpetuating its identity, both objectively, through the system of *alliance* and subjectively as the symbol of their substantial identity.

Chapter seven looked at the group in the pluralist context, where identities are set into focus by political strategies aiming at using them to obtain specific rights and privileges in the society. Telugu identity has to be made visible by transforming the internal codes for conduct into operational codes of conduct, in other words, activating the codes to create boundaries and express overtly the bases of identity of the group, repeating thereby the hardening process seen in Plaine Magnien.

This represents the structuralisation of ethnicity, where it is transposed from a substantial level to a structural level, following a normative system which is part of the dynamics of the pluralist society.

In Chapter Six, I described certain phases of Telugu marriage, in
particular those leading to the marriage-ceremony proper, which
represented a movement of each kin-group towards the other. I have
not described in the text the actual marriage ceremony, and I will
do so here, mainly for the purposes of cross-cultural comparisons
that might subsequently be made, or of a comparison between
different marriage ceremonies in Mauritius itself. I would like
to point out that there are variations in the marriage ceremonies
observed, where certain rites are omitted, and others included.
I have described here those which are constantly included, since
the variants are more or less subjected to the whims of pandits
and do not represent structural divergences as such.

Marriage rituals

On the day of the ceremony, at dawn, a small ritual is held at
the bride's place: a barber is called over to the house; the bride
is made to sit outside the house, and her younger sister, or a
younger parallel cousin holds a handkerchief under her hands and
feet while the barber clips symbolically her finger- and toe-nails.
The clippings are not meant to fall on the ground, and the 'sister'
is given a small sum of money for having held them. An elder
sister-in-law or cross-cousin then takes the bride round the
house three times, and after this the latter enters the house
by a back-door in order to bathe herself.

The wedding takes place either under a marquee in front of the
bride's house or in a hall rented by her father. The bride's kin
have to be there earlier, in order to receive the groom and his
kin. When they arrive, the two fathers embrace, then seven of the
bride's kinswomen perform *aarti* in front of the groom. They all
go inside. When the groom comes onto the podium where the ceremony
is to be held, the bride steps forward and they exchange flower-
garlands. The bride then perform *aarti* in front of the groom,
followed by her mother and her father. The bride's younger brother
stays by her side throughout the ceremony. The bride and groom
then sit down in front of the priest, who starts reciting the *mantras*.

The priest gives the bride and groom a little water from a leaf to
drink three times. He makes them touch their own mouth, nose, ears,
shoulders and feet, and blesses them. The bride and groom then
light some camphor on a copper tray (*tambalom*) with which they
perform *aarti* in front of the fire-place – as yet unlit. Then the
two fathers hold the copper-tray, a coconut is placed in the cupped
hands of the bride, and the groom pours milk over the coconut into
the tray. By this, the fathers vow that they will protect the
couple.

The fire is then lit, while the priest recites a *mantra* for Vishnu.
As he recites, the bride and groom pour some ghee into the fire on
the word *swaha*.

The groom and the bride remove each other's *kanganum*, which is made
of a piece of saffron wrapped in a mango leaf and tied around the
wrist with a turmeric-smeared string. The groom then gives the
bride water to drink, by which the bride vows that she will always
help the groom. (The vows are not said by the couple but explained
by the priest to the audience). The groom in turn vows to protect
the bride. He then drinks water which the bride gives him three
times. She also gives him a mixture of milk, honey and ghee to
swallow. The groom takes a pot of milk and swears on the milk that
he will protect his in-laws.

The bride's father and mother give presents to the groom,which usually
consist of a suit, some money, something in gold and flowers. Even
very poor people try to make a present of gold to the groom. The
bride's mother places her hands in the bride's father's hands, the
bride in turn places hers in their joined hands, and they place her
hand into the groom's. This is the *kanyadhan* gift ₁of the bride,
The groom and his father and mother then give presents to the girl,
which can sometimes be quite considerable, but which have to consist
of two saris, a set of gold jewellery and flowers. They vow that
they will be responsible for her. (In certain cases, the bride and
groom exchange rings, which can perhaps be seen as a borrowed custom
from Christian weddings).

The bride then places her foot on a stone and vows that she will not
let adversity move her from her husband's side and from her home.
Both hold hands, first the bride holding the groom's,then the groom
holding the bride's. The priest says that the bride places herself
herself and her family in the groom's care and he is now responsible
for them. He also says that the two families have now become one,
and there must be no distinction between them.

The bride's brother comes between the couple, holding the *dhan* or
cereal grains. They take the *dhan* from the bag and pour it into the
fire as the priest recites another *mantra*. The groom gives a
present to the younger brother. The bride and groom then hold hands
and circumambulate the fire four times. They stop and pour the
rest of the *dhan* into the fire together.

They take seven steps towards the sun. The priest tells them that
they must not move from each other's side, and the bride must be
like Sita. The groom then attaches the *tali* around the bride's neck.
The priest tells the parents to throw flower petals upon them in
order to bless them both as their children. The audience also throws
flowers upon them. The *Shanti Pat* prayer is recited by everyone, and
the wedding ceremony ends with the distribution of sweets .

Ram Bhajan
————————

Ram Bhajans in general follow the same pattern, and do not show many
variants, except in the holding or not of the Seemadree Appanah Puja.
The one attended in Trois Boutiques took place as follows:

The preparations started early on the day of the ceremony, with
kinswomen arriving at about nine o'clock in the morning to help in
the cooking. There were also Telugu women from the village to help,
and the société provided the huge containers needed to cook the food

in. First, the cooked offerings needed for the puja itself
were prepared, then the vegetables and rice for the guests.
The puja offerings were 'jawa' a kind of rice-pudding, a
'halwa' made with ground cereals, and fried sweetmeats. Once
these had been cooked, they were placed in a room inside the
house which was especially reserved for the puja. It had been
decorated with light-bulbs, garlands of flowers and ferns. In
one corner, on a straw-mat, all the material needed for the puja
were placed: one earthen pot ('pannel') one copper pot, vessels
containing incense, copper trays and banana leaves on which the
offerings were placed. The cooking took place outside the house.

At around four o'clock in the afternoon, the priest ('pussari')
arrived with a female assistant. He came into the puja room and
started preparing the pannel for the puja, which was going to be the
the test for the success of the Ram Bhajan: there were nine things
to be put into it - cow-milk, ghee, honey, 'til', sugar, 'tulsi'
leaves, raisins, pieces of coconut and a little crushed banana.
Finally, one rupee and twenty-five cents were put into it, and
the pannel closed securely with a leaf and placed on a mound of
rice.

After this, the Bhajan singers arrived, all young men and women.
The singers brought with them a beautiful lamp from their
village-temple. They chose a place under the tent where they
would light the lamps, and drew a rectangular design with chalk
on the ground, in the middle of which they placed the lamp they
had brought and the other two lamps on each side. By that time,
a number of guests .had arrived and sat down under the tent.
While the singers were lighting the lamps, the pussari started
the puja inside the house, which was only for members of the
shop-owner's family. He lit the incense-sticks, camphor, and
"sambrani" and invited each member to prostrate himself   in
front of the ceremonial place while he recited the prayers.

He then lit two heavy iron-torches filled with boiling-hot oil
for the Seemadree Appanah ritual. Outside, the singers, having
lit the lamps, started to sing. The shop-owner's brother-in-law,
(wife's brother) picked the torches. In principle, it should have
been the shop-owner himself who performed the ritual, but I was told
that his brother-in-law stood for him every time he performed the
Ram Bhajan. The man concentrated for a while, holding the torches,
then started to sway about slowly, then more rythmically as he
entered a kind of trance. The bhajan singers gathered near the
door and sang louder to encourage him and "call the saint". The
pussari, holding a bamboo stick, asked him a question in Telugu.
The man did not answer. The pussari threatened him with the
stick and asked him the same question again. He still received no
answer. The guests told me that the saint, who had now entered the
man, should have answered back, and frequently did. But the man
started to dance about and came out of the house, grimacing under
the strain of the heavy, hot torches. The singer followed him,
singing more loudly, and the pussari, shop-owner, his wife and
children followed. They all circumambulated the lamps seven times.
Then the man stuck the torches into the earth in front of the lamps,
stood up and quietly went back into the house.

The bhajan singers lined up in front of the lamps and went on
singing. The women guests started queueing and making their way one
by one towards the lamps, each one holding a tray with offerings of
coconut, a bottle of oil, a few flowers and silver coins. Each one
in turn poured a little oil into the lamps, gave the pussari the
offerings and waited while he broke the coconuts and gave them back
the parsad. When all the women had given their offerings, they went
back to their seats, and shortly afterwards, dinner was served.

After dinner, a number of North Indians who had come with their
children - and who did not bring any offerings - left straight away.
Some guests commented that they had only come to get a free meal.

The singing went on for the whole night, with a group of singers
performing dances intermittently. Most of the guests had left by
eleven o'clock, and only a few close relatives stayed all night.
Early in the morning, at sunrise, the men went with the pussari and
the singers to a nearby river, taking the lamps with them in procession.
There, they put the lamps off and said a prayer to the sun. When they
came back, the pussari opened up the *pannel* to see if the ceremony
had been successful. If the *pannel* has become coated with a thick,
moss-like substance, it means that the deity has not accepted the
ceremony. If the mixture has remained 'uncoagulated', it means that
the ceremony has been accepted. In this particular case, there had
been no coagulation.

Ammoru Panduga
_____

In 1981, a large-scale Ammoru ceremony was held in Rivière-du-Rempart,
to which Telugus all over the island were invited. On four consecutive
Tuesdays before the ritual was held, three children bearing copper pots
("ghatâlu") on their heads were sent from house to house in the village
and in neighbouring villages to ask for donations of rice, ghee, money
etc. Ten days before the ceremony, young men from the société again
went round the village, beating on a drum and announcing that the
ceremony was going to be held on such a date. (Since everyone already
knew about it, it was just a question of sticking to the rules, and all
enjoyed the slight 'theatricality' of the practice). Then the young
men started building a "pèva", which is a small bamboo structure that
has to be carried to the temple as an offering to the deity. It was
decorated with leaves, ferns and colourful flowers. One of the young
men had volunteered to carry the pèva. He had to observe the purificatory
restrictions for this task, such as fasting, sleeping on a mat on the
ground etc. On the morning of the ceremony, the pussari came to the
société hall where the young men were gathered. The latter heated up
their drums and started playing, and people gathered round the hall.
The man lifting the pèva had to be put into a trance by the others:
he was given a piece of cord to hold, and the young men began to sing
and dance around him, beating their drums, then led the way into the
village, following a pre-determined path. All the Telugus from the
village and those that had come to attend the ceremony followed the
progression while villagers of other communities stood outside to see.
When they came to a cross-roads, they stopped, and the priest cut onions
to discard the evil-eye. They moved out of the village, still in
procession, towards the Kali-mai temple a few miles away. This ritual
has to be performed in a Kali temple, and cannot be performed in any

other. When they reached the temple, they went round it seven times.
Then the priest went into the temple and started his prayers and the
ceremony itself. Instead of killing goats, the pussari cut seven
lemons in front of the ceremonial .place where offerings of flowers,
fruit, cooked sweet food .had been placed. After the 'sacrifice' of
the lemons, one for each goddess, the man who carried the 'pèva'
from the village to the Kali-mai temple, was allowed to bring it down
and place it in front of Kalimai. The pussari went on reciting his
prayers, and after that *parsad* was distributed to all the villagers
and gathering of people.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ASSOCIATION DES AHMADIS DE L'ILE MAURICE. *Les Ahmadis sont Musulmans.* Port-Louis, 1951.

BAKÈR, P. 'The language situation in Mauritius'. *African Language Review,* Vol. 8, 1968: (73-97).

BARNETT, S.A. *The Structural Position of a South Indian Caste: Kontaikkatti Vellalar-s in Tamil Nadu.* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1970.

_____ 'Identity Choice and Caste Ideology in contemporary South India'. In K. David (ed.). *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia.* The Hague, Mouton, 1977.

BARTH, F. (Ed.). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.* Bergen, Scandinavian University Press, 1969.

_____ 'Segmentary Opposition and the Theory of Games: a study of Pathan Organisation'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute,* Vol. 89, 1959: (5-21).

BEEJADHUR, A. *Les Indiens à l'Ile Maurice.* Port-Louis, La Typographie Moderne, 1935.

BENEDICT, B. 'Education without Opportunity: Education, Economics and Communalism in Mauritius'. *Human Relations,* Vol. XI, 4, 1958.

_____ *Indians in a Plural Society.* Colonial Research Studies No. 34, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961.

_____ 'Caste in Mauritius - Stratification in Plural Societies'. *African Affairs,* Vol. 64, 6, 1962: (1235-47).

_____ 'Capital, Saving and Credit among Mauritian Indians'. In R. Firth and B.S. Yamey (eds.). *Capital, Saving and Credit in Peasant Societies.* London, George Allen & Unwin, 1964.

_____ *Mauritius - The Problems of a Plural Society.* Institute of Race Relations, London, Pallmall Press, 1965.

BISSOONDOYAL, B. *The truth about Mauritius.* Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968.

CHAUDENSON, R. *Le léxique du Parler Créole de la Réunion.* (T. I et II), Paris, Centre National de Recherche Scientifique, 1974.

COHEN, A. (Ed.). *Urban Ethnicity.* A.S.A. Monographs, London, Tavistock publications, 1974.

_____ *The Politics of Elite Culture.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981.

COX, O.C. 'The Question of Pluralism'. *Race,* Vol. 12,4,1971: (385-400).

CROSS, M. 'Introduction' and 'On Conflict, Race Relations and the Theory of the Plural Society'. *Race,* Vol. 12, 4, 1971: (vii-x, 477-94).

DAVID, K. 'Until Marriage do us part: a Cultural Account of Jaffna
Tamil Categories for Kinsmen'. *Man*, Vol. 8,4,1973: (521-535).

_____ 'Hierarchy and Equivalence in Jaffna, North Shri Lanka'. In
K. David (ed.). *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South
Asia*, The Hague, Mouton, 1977.

DE SORNAY, P. 'Slanders against Franco-Mauritians - Refutation'. *Le
Cernéen*, 2nd of May 1953.

DESPRES, L. 'The Implications of Nationalist Politics in British Guyana
for the Development of Cultural Theory'. *American
Anthropologist*, Vol. 66, 1964: (1051-77).

DUMONT, L. 'Dravidian Kinship Terminology as an Expression of Alliance'.
Man, Vol. 54, 1953: (34-9).

_____ *Une Sous-Caste de l'Inde du Sud*. Paris, Mouton, 1957.

_____ 'Marriage in India. The Present State of the Question':
Part I - "Marriage Alliance in South East Asia and Ceylon".
Contributions to Indian Sociology, Vol.5, 1961: (75-95).
Part II - "North India in relation to South India".
Contributions to Indian Sociology, Vol.9, 1966: (90-114).

_____ *Dravidien et Kariera - l'Alliance de Marriage dans l'Inde
du Sud et en Australie*. Paris, Mouton, 1975.

_____ *Homo Hierarchicus*. London, Granada Publishing Ltd., 1972.

EMRITH, M. *The Muslims in Mauritius*. Port-Louis, Regent Press, 1967.

EPSTEIN, L. *Ethos and Identity*. London, Tavistock Publications, 1978.

FISHMAN, J.A. 'Language and Ethnicity'. In H. Giles (ed.) *Language,
Ethnicity and Intergroup Relations*. London, Academic Press.
1977.

_____ 'The Sociology of Language'. In P. Giglioli (ed.). *Language
and Social Context*. Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd., 1977 (1972).

FOSTER, G.M. 'Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good'. In J.M.
Potter, M. Diaz and G.M. Foster (eds.), *Peasant Society -
A Reader*. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1967.

FURNIVALL, J.S. *Netherlands India - A Study of Plural .Economy*. Cambridge,
CambridgeUniversity Press, 1945 (1939).

_____ *Colonial Policy and Practice*. New York, New York University
Press, 1948.

GALBRAITH, J.R. *Economics and the Public Purpose*. Middlesex, Penguin
Books Ltd., 1973.

GEERTZ, C. 'The Integrative Revolution'. In G. Geertz (ed.) *Old Societies
and New States*. London, The Free Press of Glencoe, Macmillan, 1963

GLAZER, N. & D.P. MOYNIHAN. 'Why Ethnicity?'. *Commentary*, Vol. 58, 1974: (33-9).

_____ *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience.* Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1975.

GOOD, A. 'Prescription, Preference and Practice: Marriage Patterns among the Kondaiyankottai Maravar of South India', *Man* (N.S.), Vol. 16, 1981: (108-129)-

GOUGH, K. 'Brahmin Kinship in a Tamil Village'. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 58, 1956: (826-853).

HART, G.L. 'The Nature of Tamil Devotion'. In M.M. Deshpande and P.E. Hook (eds.) *Aryan and Non-Aryan in India.* Michigan Papers on South and South-East Asia, No. 14, Ann Arbor, Center for South and South East Asian Studies, University of Michigan, 1979.

HAZAREESINGH, K. 'The Religion and Culture of Indian Immigrants in Mauritius and the effect of Social Change'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.8, 1965/66: (241-57).

HAZAREESINGH,K. *Histoire des Indiens à l'Ile Maurice.* Paris, Maisonneuve 1973.

HIEBERT, P.G. *Konduru.* Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1971.

HUNT, K.S. *Sir Lowry Cole, Governor of Mauritius 1823-1828.* Durban, Butterworths, 1974.

INGLEHART, R. & M. WOODWARD. 'Language conflicts and the Political Community'. In P.P. Giglioli (ed.), *Language and Social Context.* Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd., 1977 (1972).

JAYAWARDENA, C. *Conflict and Solidarity in a Guianese Plantation.* London, University of London Athlone Press, 1963.

_____ 'Culture and Ethnicity in Guyana and Fiji'. *Man*, Vol. 15, 1980: (430-47).

JAYAWARDENA, C. & R.T. SMITH. 'Marriage and Family among East Indians in British Guiana'. *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 8, 4, 1959: (321-77).

KAPLAN, D. & B. SALER. 'Foster's "Image of Limited Good": an Example of Anthropological Explanation'. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 68, 1966: (202-206).

KENNEDY, J.G. '"Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good": a Critique'. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 68, 1966: (1212-25).

KHARE, R.S. 'Prestations and Prayers: two homologous Systems in North India'. In K. David (ed.), *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia.* The Hague, Mouton, 1977.

KUPER, L. 'Political Change in Plural Societies'. *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 23, 1971: (584-607).

KUPER, L. *Race, Class and Power*. London, Duckworth, 1974.

KUPER, L. & M.G. SMITH. *Pluralism in Africa*. California, Berkeley, 1971.

LEBLANC, J.C. *La Vie Constitutionnelle et Politique de l'Ile Maurice, 1945-1968*. Annales de l'Université de Madagascar, Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Economiques, No.6, Paris, 1969.

LEONARD, J.G. 'Politics and Social Change in South India: a study of the Andhra Movement'. *Journal of Commonwealth Studies*, Vol. 1, 1967: (61-77).

LEVI-STRAUSS, G. *Les Structures Elementaires de la Parenté*. La Haye, Mouton, 1967 (1947).

MANNICK, A.R. *Mauritius: the Development of a Plural Society*. London, Spokesman, 1979.

MARRIOTT, M. 'Cultural Policies in the New States'. In C. Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States*. London, The Free Press of Glencoe, Macmillan, 1968.

_____ 'Caste Ranking and Food Transactions, a Matrix analysis'. In M. Singer and B.S. Cohn (eds.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*. Chicago, Aldine, 1968.

_____ 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism'. In B. Kapferer (ed.), *Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and symbolic behaviour*. Philadelphia, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976.

MARRIOTT, M. & D. INDEN. 'Towards an Ethnosociology of the Indian Caste System'. In K. David (ed.), *The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia*. The Hague, Mouton, 1977.

MATHIESON, W.L. *British Slave Emancipation, 1938-1849*. New York, Octagon Books Inc., 1967.

MAURITIUS TAMIL TEMPLE FEDERATION REPORT, 1980.

MAYER, A.C. *Peasants in the Pacific - A study of Fiji Indian Society*. London. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

MEADE, J.E. *The Economic and Social Structure of Mauritius*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1961.

MEHTA, S. *Hindu-Muslim Relationships in Delhi*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of Delhi, 1979.

MOOKHERJI, S.B. *The Indenture System in Mauritius, (1837-1915)*. Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1962.

NEEDHAM, R. *Structure and Sentiment*. Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1962.

_____ 'Terminology and Alliance'. *Sociologus*, Vol. 17, 1967: (39-53).

_____ 'Prescription'. *Oceania*, Vol. 42, 1972: (166-81).

NICHOLAS, R.W. 'Ritual Hierarcby and Social Relations in Rural Bengal'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S. Vol.1, 1967: (56-83).

ORENSTEIN, H. 'Death and Kinship in Hinduism: a Structural and Functional Interpretation '. *American Anthropologist*, Vol.72, 1970: (1357-77).

PITT-RIVERS, J. 'The Kith and the Kin'. In J. Goody (ed.). *The Character of Kinship*. London, Cambridge University Press, 1973.

REX, J. 'The Plural Society: the African case'. *Race*, Vol. 12, 4, 1971: (401-13).

ROY, J.N. *Mauritius in Transition*. Allahabad, Samelan Mudranalaya, 1960.

ROUILLARD, G. *Histoire des Domaines Sucriers de l'Ile Maurice*. Paris, RASIM, 1968.

SAHA, P. *Emigration of Indian Labour (1834-1900)*. Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1970.

SCHNEIDER, D.M. *American Kinship: a Cultural Account*. Englewood Cliffs, Prenticehall, 1968.

SCHWARTZ, B.M. 'Differential socio-religious adaptation'. *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 16, 1967.

SMITH, M.G. *Social and Cultural Pluralism in the Carribbean*. New York, Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences No. 83, 1960.

_____ *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*. Berkeley, University of California, 1965.

_____ *Corporations and Society*, London, Duckworth, 1974.

SMITH, R.T. *The Negro Family in British Guiana*. London, London University Press, 1956.

_____ Review of 'Social and Cultural Pluralism'. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 63, 1961: (155-57).

_____ *British Guiana*. London, Oxford University Press, 1964.

_____ 'Race and Political Conflict'. *Race*, Vol. 12, 4, 1971: (415-27).

_____ 'The Matrifocal Family'. In J. Goody (ed.), *The Character of Kinship*. London. Cambridge University Press, 1973.

SOORYAMOORTHY, M. *Les Tamouls à Maurice*. Port-Louis, Mauritius Printing, 1979.

STATUTS DE LA SOCIETE UNION TAMOULE DE MAURICE, 1954

TINKER, H.R. *A new system of Slavery*. Oxford, IRR. Oxford University Press, 1974.

_____ 'Odd man out - the career of Manilal Doctor'. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*. 1974: (226-43).

TINKER, H.R. *Separate and Unequal: India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1930*. London, C. Hurst and Co., 1976.

_____ 'Mauritius: cultural marginalism and political control'. *African Affairs*, Vol. 76, 1977: (321-38).

TITMUSS, R.M. *Social Policies and Population Growth in Mauritius*. London, Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1961.

TOUSSAINT, A. *Histoire de l'Ocean Indien*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1961.

_____ *Histoire de l'Ile Maurice*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1971.

TRAUTMANN, T.R. *Dravidian Kinship*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.

UNESCO. *Trends in Ethnic Group Relations in Asia and Oceania*. Paris, Unesco, 1979.

VAN DEN BERGHE, P.L. *Race and Racism: a comparative perspective*. New York, John Wiley, 1967.

VATUK, S. 'A Structural Analysis of the Hindi Kinship Terminology'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, N.S. 1970: (95-115).

VERS UNE ENTITE MAURICIENNE. Port-Louis, 1959.

WALLMAN, S. *Ethnicity at Work*. London, Macmillan, 1979.

YALMAN, N. 'On the Purity of Women in the Castes of Ceylon and Malabar' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 93, : 963: (29-   ).

_____ 'The Semantics of Kinship in South India and Ceylon'. In T.A. Sebeok (ed.), *Linguistic in South Asia*, Current Trends in Linguistics Vol. 5, Paris, Mouton, 1969.

OFFICIAL PAPERS

CENTRAL STATISTICAL OFFICE POPULATION CENSUS. Port-Louis, General Printing, 1972.

A CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE CONSTITUTION OF MAURITIUS

COPIES OR EXTRACTS OF CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN COLONIAL OFFICE AND GOVERNORS, October 1847, April 1848, London, Public Record Office.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN Mr. BACKHOUSE AND Mr. BRIXTON OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY. 14th of May 1938. London, Public Records Office.

DEBATES OF THE COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT 1947/48. Port-Louis, Archives of Mauritius.

ECONOMIC PLANNING UNIT REPORT. Mauritius, 1979.

FRERE AND WILLIAMSON. *Report of the Royal Commissioners appointed to enquire into the treatment of immigrants in Mauritius*. London, William Cloves & Sons, 1875.

MAURITIUS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. *Report of the Committee on Land Tenure*. Sessional Paper No.2, 1951, Archives of Mauritius.

MAURITIUS LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. *Report on the incidents in Chemin Grenier and Surinam*. Sessional Paper No.3, 1955, Archives of Mauritius.

MINUTES OF COUNCIL. *The Need for Interpreters in Indian Languages*. 1884/85, Archives of Mauritius.

MINUTES OF COUNCIL. *Papers relating to the question of the Education of Indian children in Mauritius*. 1890, Archives of Mauritius.

PROSI. *The Sugar Industry in Mauritius*, Port-Louis, Mauritius Printing, 1977.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY INTO DISTURBANCES WHICH OCCURRED ON THE SUGAR ESTATES IN MAURITIUS. 1944, Archives of Mauritius.

TROTTER, J.F. *Report of the Protector of immigrants on the Procedure connected with Indian marriages*. 1882, Archives of Mauritius.

WRIGHT, W. *Report of the working of the Indian vernacular schools*, 1978, Archives of Mauritius

---

NEWSPAPERS:

ADVANCE. 11th May, 19th May, 22nd May 1965.

LE CERNEEN. 2nd May 1953.

COMMERCIAL GAZETTE. 11th January 1877

L'ISLAMISME. 9th November 1906.

THE HINDUSTANI. 15th March 1909, 2nd March 1913.

MAURITIUS ARYA PATRIKA. 9th January, 24th January, 6th March, 13th March, 22nd May, 4th September, 2nd October 1925.

MAURITIUS INDIAN TIMES. December 1920 - January 1921.

ADDENDUM: JAYAWARDENA, C. & R.T. SMITH. 'Caste and Social Status among the Indians of Guyana'. In B.M. Schwartz (ed.), Caste in Overseas Indian Communities. California, Chandler Publishing Co., 1967.