Caste rank and verbal interaction in western Tamilnadu

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recent approaches to caste have been largely of two major and opposing kinds. On the one hand there are those approaches that treat the ideology of caste, and native ideas about caste, as central to an understanding of it; on the other hand there are those that are Marxist, or at least Marxistic (by which I mean inclined to economic determinism), which view the ideology and native ideas about caste as 'mystifications' of a dramatically exploitative economic order (see e.g. Meillassoux 1973; Mencher 1974).

I shall have little to say to or about the latter kind of approach for a number of reasons. First, if an ideology fits and reflects an economic order it is claimed that this proves the dominance of the latter, while if it fails to fit, the notion of mystification can be invoked to prove the same thing. There are thus no possible counter-examples to such a theory, and consequently it can have no empirical content. Secondly, while specialized ideologies may indeed be Malinowskian charters or Marxist mystifications and thus largely peripheral to an understanding of how a social system actually works, I cannot see how one can possibly relegate the entire structure of native concepts to the same peripheral status (cf. Harris 1968). While there undoubtedly are material forces that tend to shape human intents and beliefs, it would be impossible for a social theory to proceed profitably without according those conceptual structures their central importance as the templates of social action. It is the very basic facts about the subjective nature of the system in which South Indian villagers live that are the focus of this essay; and these subjective perceptions, far from being 'mystifications' of underlying realities, closely reflect the complex web of economic exploitation, power relations, patronage and alliance that can be objectively observed.

The other major approach to caste, now in the ascendant, takes indigenous ideology, or ethnosociology, as central to an understanding of Indian society. There are many sub-schools of thought that can be distinguished

here, but Dumont's writings are undoubtedly central (see especially Dumont 1970). By judicious selection from a wealth of indigenous and largely ancient textual materials Dumont has constructed a framework that can be successfully applied to a wide range of Indian materials, including, notably, empirical studies of village organization. Crucial to his scheme are two specifically Indian cultural principles: the opposition between purity and impurity, and the ancient Varna scheme. The first provides a source for the ranking and proliferation of castes, while the second allows (as its principal virtue) the accommodation of the importance of material power. The scheme makes some empirical predictions that seem to hold: for example, and most importantly, it predicts that there should be no local ranking system, in the great diversity of such systems, in which Brahmans rank lower than the often distinct and more powerful dominant caste.

The problem with this ingenious application of text to context (a strategy now followed by Tambiah 1973 and others, and most vociferously by Marriott and Inden 1974; 1977; and other members of the Chicago school) is that while some degree of 'fit' between the (highly selective) textual model and the observable facts is demonstrated, it is quite unclear what this proves. For a start the 'fit' is engineered: from the vast repository of Hindu texts a few themes are selected from which to construct a sometimes very abstract and synthetic metaphysic (see e.g. Marriott 1976a), while from the indefinite numbers of observable facts a few are selected as crucial (e.g. the supremacy of the Brahman). There are already rival metaphysics (cf. Dumont 1970; Marriott and Inden 1977), and there is no reason to believe that there is any limit to the number of alternative frameworks that would also fit the facts. I would hold that the 'fit' is only sociologically significant if the framework in question can be reasonably held to *govern* the facts and *because* of this to match them. Social life is so richly textured that any number of recurrent patterns can be found; we need to have some theory that will pick some of these out as determinative and show others to be epiphenomenal.

What we need, I believe, are ways of getting at the normal, everyday subjective perceptions of caste – the unconscious, unpremeditated maps of their social environment that members of caste society use to guide their actions. We can expect such maps to contrast with the prestige-motivated charters and models that the articulate informant can provide. The problem of course is how to tap this level of everyday belief and perception, and my argument will be that the study of language usage provides privileged access to it. There are other sociological payoffs from

such a mode of study too, but consideration of these may be postponed to the concluding section.

1.1. Ethnographic background

The linguistic work to be described here was done in precisely the same research locus as one of the most detailed ethnographic accounts of any Indian village, *Peasant Society in Koṅku*, by B.E.F. Beck (1972). In addition the linguistic situation is described in Levinson 1977. Here then I shall provide just the minimal background required for an understanding of this paper, and refer the reader to these sources for a full account.

The facts to be reported here hold for a unit of local administration called Kannapuram Kirâmam, a 'revenue village' in Coimbatore District in Tamilnadu, South India. The unit, which I shall henceforth refer to simply as 'the village', is really a collection of no less than 50 hamlets (agglomerations of contiguous dwellings) dispersed through the agricultural land, comprising an official recorded total of over 5,000 souls. There are two main kinds of hamlet: untouchable hamlets (*cēri*) where members of the Harijan castes live (usually one caste per hamlet), and touchable hamlets where one usually finds an incomplete set of the touchable castes living together (but concentrated in caste-wards, or distinct portions of each hamlet reserved for members of each caste). Touchables do not go, if they can avoid it, to untouchable hamlets, although untouchables frequent the streets and compounds of the touchable hamlets where they provide necessary services.

It is not a simple matter to determine the caste inventory of such a revenue village. Neither ordinary villagers nor local officials have a clear idea of how many castes there are, principally because of three factors: firstly, caste titles obscure subdivisions into a number of smaller endogamous kinship units; secondly, quite a few castes are represented by only a few or single families, which may come and go; finally, there are real transients, gypsy-like castes, selling wild honey, salt, charms, stone mortars, or telling fortunes. A full list of minimal endogamous caste units resident in the village at any one time would run to somewhere about 35 in number.

In this study I shall be concerned with just seventeen of these smallest endogamous units, usually termed 'subcastes' in the literature, but which I will simply refer to as castes. The selection came about partly for practical reasons: I was based in a particular touchable hamlet, Ôlappâḷaiyam, wherein members of all these castes were in frequent daily interaction

which could be observed, tape-recorded and analysed without difficulty. But there is also reason to think that these castes form the back-bone of village society; together they account for the great proportion of the local population, and historically form a stable and largely ancient core, with the consequence that they have clear rights and duties in the local ritual framework and the local analogue of the *jajmāni* system. This selection of castes corresponds closely to Beck's eighteen; sixteen are the same, while I have recognized a subdivision among the Mutaliyārs that she chose to ignore. I have therefore been able to retain her caste identification numbers, based on putative rank at a Brahman feast, with the minor modification that her caste 7 is my 7a, and its related subcaste of Mutaliyārs is labelled 7b. Cross-reference to her account of each caste is thereby facilitated.

Table 3, largely based on Beck (1972: 5, 58–9, 113), introduces these seventeen castes, and gives an indication of the traditional occupation of each (at which at least one family of each caste continues to work), together with approximate percentages of the village population contributed by each caste (it may help to know that 0.1% is very roughly equivalent to one family). From the population figures it is immediately clear that the population is very unevenly distributed across the castes. Over half of the total village population belongs to the dominant landowning caste 5, which is one reason for its continued hegemony. Another fifth of the total are Harijan leather-workers of caste 18, who provide the bulk of the permanent hired labour force. The remaining quarter of the population are distributed between fifteen main, and several other minor, castes.

Before passing to a brief summary of Beck's findings, a sketch of the politico-economic relations between the castes is in order, as this is one of the few areas not covered in detail in Beck 1972. Some idea of the distribution of economic interdependencies can be conveyed quickly if crudely by means of the diagram in Figure 4. Here each circle represents one of the seventeen castes, identified by the code numbers assigned in Table 3, the area of each circle very roughly in proportion to the population of each caste. Solid arrows indicate the major economic dependencies of each caste, that is, the source of the bulk of its members' income; the arrow head pointing to the left indicates those castes that derive the major portion of their incomes from extra-village connections or occupations. One can immediately grasp from this diagram that ten of the castes depend primarily on service to the dominant caste 5, the landowning caste, and that together with caste 5 they account for the great bulk of the rural

Table 3. *Inventory of castes by division membership, percentage of local population, traditional occupation, and native language*

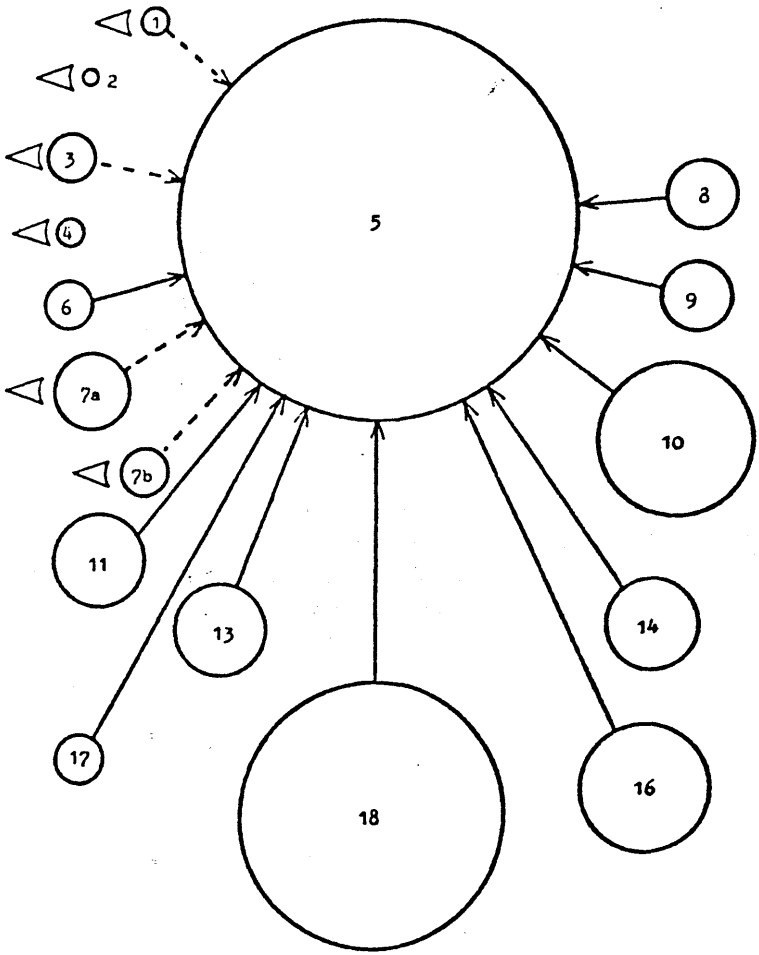
Left division	Neutral bloc	Right division
	1. Aiyar Pirāmaṇam, 0.3% Brahman priest, Tamil[a]	
	2. Karuṇīkar Pillai, 0.1% Accountant and scribe, Tamil	
3. Cōḷi Ācāri, 0.5% Artisan, Tamil		5. Koṅku Kavuṇṭar, 54% Farmer and landlord, Tamil
4. Kōmuṭṭi Ceṭṭiyār, 0.2% Merchant, Telugu		
6. Koṅku Ācāri, 0.5% Artisan, Tamil		
7a. Kaikkōḷar Mutaliyār, 1.5% Weaver and merchant, Tamil		7b. Ceṅkuntam Mutaliyār, 0.5% Temple musician and merchant, Tamil
		8. Okaccāṇṭi Paṇṭāram, 1% Cook and local priest
		9. Koṅku Uṭaiyār, 1% Potter and builder, Tamil
		10. Maramēṟi Nāṭār, 7% Palmyra-palm climber, Tamil
11. Vaṭuka Nāyakkar, 2% Well-digger and builder, Telugu		
13. Vaṭuka Vaṇṇār, 2% Washerman, Telugu		14. Koṅku Nāvitar, 2% Barber, Tamil
17. Kūṭai Kuṟavar, 0.5% Harijan basket-maker, Tamil[b]		16. Koṅku Paṟaiyar, 5% Harijan drummer, Tamil
18. Muracu Mātāri, 21% Harijan leather-worker and labourer, Telugu[c]		

Notes:

a. Another Brahman caste, the Aiyaṅkār, speak Telugu.

b. Related Kuṟavar subcastes speak Kannada. Two subcastes, Nari Kuṟavar and Uppu Kuṟavar, have native languages other than Tamil, the former an Indo-European language.

c. A related Mātāri subcaste speaks Kannada.



1 ⟶ 2 = caste 1 (etc.) largely dependent on 2 (etc.)
1 - - → 2 = caste 1 (etc.) partially dependent on 2 (etc.)

◁ = urban income and connections

Area of circles is in approximate proportion to population

Figure 4. Economic dependencies among castes

population. In contrast to these castes tied closely to the local agricultural production system, six castes represented by relatively few households each have some independence from this rural economy. These independent castes belong to the 'left-hand division', the significance of which will be made clear below.

Caste 5, the dominant caste, has an almost absolute monopoly over landownership (the only exceptions are landholders of castes 1 and 2, each represented by only a few families), as it has had for the last millennium or so. This absolute kind of caste-based monopoly is of course no longer a common feature of modern rural India, having been broken up in many areas by legislation and economic forces, and it accounts for the fact that the local caste structure preserves some of the well-defined interdependencies of earlier times. However it is important to realize that the great majority of households of this caste are impoverished or at a subsistence level: in one hamlet, for example, only 44% of such households actually made a living from their own land and two thirds of these were at a subsistence level unable to employ additional labour (Beck 1972: 192). The remaining 56% of households of this caste derived their livings from agricultural labour or transport or other small business.

The great proportion of rural capital or land is thus concentrated in the hands of just a few families of the dominant caste, and of these just a few of the most wealthy occupy a status of considerable prestige and power not unlike the gentry of Tudor England. While not themselves actually titled aristocrats, they are proud of connections to the *Paṭṭakkārar*, or traditional feudal lords who reside in distant villages and are themselves members of caste 5. They run manorial establishments with household servants, and have traditional rights over the labour of Harijans residing within their estates. They have managed to retain political control despite democratic processes in local government. Their traditional status is recognized and inherited by members of their families, while *nouveau-riche* members of the same caste are not (at least immediately) admitted to this status. All castes treat them with due respect, and most reserve the highly honorific title *ecamāṅka* for them, for their power is very considerable indeed. For these reasons, I have called them 'squires' or 'aristocrats', and they play an important role in the facts presented below.

Besides land and traditional authority, other important sources of power are wealth, and more surprisingly, simple numbers or manpower. The fact is that Koṅku is an area of violent crimes with one of the highest rates of homicide in South India. And the more able-bodied men of one's own family, lineage and subcaste in one's village, the safer one is, and the

more able to impose one's wishes on members of other groups. From this one may correctly surmise that the caste with the lowest ritual status in the area, namely caste 18, as second largest caste in the village, is by no means the least powerful caste, while a high caste like 4 with only two families is extremely vulnerable.

Let us turn now to the main substance of Beck's findings. After a great deal of study of the internal organization of each of eighteen castes, Beck found that every group has predictable internal customs and structure in relation to its place in the overall inter-caste system. In particular, she found that internal organization varied in relation to two dimensions of the overall system: the rank of the caste in the local caste hierarchy, and the membership of the caste in the left-hand, right-hand or neutral divisions. The caste hierarchy is what it sounds, namely a unidimensional ranking of local castes in a manner which will much concern us later on. But 'division-membership' is not a familiar concept in Indian studies. We might say that it was a sociological construct invented by Beck to deal with an added dimension of variation. But there is more to it than that. In the first place, historical documents make it clear that an explicit division of the castes into two political blocs named with the Tamil terms for 'left' and 'right' was an all-important feature of earlier South Indian politics (see Stein 1980). In the second place, Beck found a few elderly informants who could actually produce lists of such division membership. Thirdly, the distinction runs so deeply into the cultural life of castes, with ramifications from kinship structure to ritual to interactional style (Beck 1972: 8–15), that it must have at least unconscious significance for villagers, a conclusion that this study vindicates.

Some of the main differences that Beck found between right-hand and left-hand castes are these. In social organization, right-hand castes exhibit an internal structure that is closely tied to territorial units via caste temples and caste functionaries. Left-hand organization, on the other hand, is un-territorialized. There are different emphases in kinship too: right-hand castes favour matrilateral cross-cousin marriage with the consequent potential for great alliance chains, while left-hand castes favour the patrilineal alternative facilitating the formation of closed small marriage circles. Right-hand castes have extensive and functionally important patriclans and lineages, while left-hand descent-group organization is minimal. The left-hand castes maintain the shastric ideals of joint families to a greater extent than the right. They stress education and urban advancement and the worship of gods of the 'great tradition', in contrast to the tendencies of right-hand castes. Finally, in life-style and style of inter-

action, right-hand castes tend to value instrumentality and power, meat and liquor, force and swagger, while left-hand castes favour Brahmanical detachment, non-involvement, vegetarianism, and interactional circumspection.

The differences as here related hold only for the high castes of each division; as one descends the hierarchy, the distinctions become less marked. Beck suggests convincingly that these apparently heterogeneous traits typical of left- and right-hand castes become coherent and rival systems when one considers the two divisions as constituting alternative paths to social prestige. On the one hand we have the right-hand castes with their landed interests preoccupied with expressions of material power; on the other hand we have the left-hand castes with their wider-flung, often urban, connections concentrating on the prestige derivable from a Brahmanical way of life. The leader and model for the right-hand division is the dominant caste 5, while the model for the left-hand division is provided by the unaligned castes of Brahmans (and Pillais to a lesser extent). In short, although in the south of India the classical Varna scheme is not a conscious frame of reference as it is in the north, we find here an expression of the Hindu theory of the balance and hierarchy of different powers: the Brahman at the top, the king at his right hand, balanced by the merchant at his left, with the peasants and service castes below.

This analysis of Beck's fits well with the historian Burton Stein's analysis of the once overt bifurcation of South Indian society into 'right' and 'left'. Stein suggests that the opposition was essentially between those groups whose interests and powers were tied to the land, and those groups whose influence and strength were based in the towns, and who historically probably arrived later than the original land-settlers, remaining to some extent 'outsiders' (Stein 1980). There is more, then, to the local caste system than merely a linear ranking of caste groups. Nevertheless, as we shall show, villagers do operate with the notion of an overall hierarchy.

1.2. The language situation in the village

An important initial observation is that Tamil is by no means the only language spoken in the village and in those around. A very few educated persons can speak English, but apart from that there are a number of castes whose native language is Telugu or Kannada; that is, members of these castes speak these languages at home and to other members of their castes. And one quite obvious but interesting thing is that those castes that have a native language other than Tamil *invariably* belong to the left-

hand division. Table 3 shows how native languages are distributed among the seventeen castes selected for this study. We may mention in addition that two other castes with just a few resident families have native languages other than Tamil: one is the Naidu caste, who speak Telugu, and the other is a variety of Mātāri, closely affiliated to caste 18, who speak Kannada, and who provide the bulk of the Mātāri population in neighbouring villages. They may both be assigned to the left-hand division. There are some resident Brahmans (Aiyaṅkārs) who speak Telugu, and some Kuṟavars (possibly local) who speak Kannada.

The four castes included in this study who do not have Tamil as a native tongue, namely 4, 11, 13 and 18, all speak Telugu. But in two cases this is dying out: it is in fact no longer spoken in the homes of caste 13 members except amongst some elderly people, although members of the same subcaste speak Telugu in the local towns. And the children in at least one home of caste 11 are no longer brought up speaking Telugu at all. So Telugu remains the basic domestic medium for only castes 4 and 18. The Telugu spoken by these castes is mutually intelligible although clearly different, but they strongly avoid speaking Telugu to each other, for as the domestic language it presumably carries (as always in cases of code-switching) the connotations of solidarity. Members of 18 do, however, speak Telugu to each other in front of Tamil speakers, in a way that members of 4 avoid.

The correlation of non-Tamil native language with the left-hand castes fits perfectly with the view of Stein's, mentioned above, that the left-hand castes were late-comers to the area and continue to be viewed as outsiders. Notice that in the case of caste 3, Cōḻi Ācāri, even though they speak Tamil they continue to bear the designation that indicates they came from *Cōḻa* country to the east. In fact, they speak a dialect of Tamil that seems to contain less Western Region dialectal features. But this also is a general feature of the left-hand caste speech.

Concerning caste-differentiation by dialect, this is a feature that seems to have been exaggerated in the literature. In the region of this study only Brahmans could be held to exhibit a clear caste dialect, and even they avoided this when not talking amongst themselves. However, various clues, like traces of non-Tamil native tongue, strength of regional dialect features, avoidance of Brahmanical or English lexical terms, confidence of verbal expression and so on, can be used to guess with some success at a speaker's division membership and even approximate caste rank. Table 4 summarizes verbal clues to division membership, which are only strongly in evidence among the higher castes of each division.

Table 4. *Linguistic features associated with caste division membership*

	Left division	Right division
Native language:	sometimes Telugu	always Tamil
Regional dialect:	negligibly or weakly Western Regional; towards standard colloquial	strongly regional: Western Region features including lexicon
'Purity'	many English loans	avoidance of English loans
Brahmanical lexicon:	a few ritual elements, kin terms, and a few items of general vocabulary adopted by non-Brahman castes	non-Brahman alternates used instead

1.3. Caste categories and verbal interaction

What immediately strikes the visitor to the village are not the details of dialect differences or even different mother tongues (those being reserved for intra-caste affairs), but the general way in which social relations are dramatically expressed in social interaction. Rank differences and feelings of solidarity between persons drawn from different castes are immediately observable. An interaction between a Harijan and a member of the squire class of the dominant caste 5, for example, is often marked by an elaborate display of deference on the part of the Harijan: he stoops, puts his hands under his armpits, puts on a show of bumbling ineffectuality, speaks in a high-pitched voice, and generally is concerned to display his own insignificance; meanwhile the landlord expresses his power and position in brusque authority, swear-words, dishonorifics and sometimes benign paternalistic concern. Gestures, voice-quality, choice of expression, honorific and dishonorific terms in Tamil, and general demeanour all play a part in this. Similarly, relations of cordial alliance between members of two high ranking castes in the left division, say, will be marked by mutual intimacy, gossip, sharing of benches on the verandahs of houses, frank discussions of intimate topics and the like.

These features of the modality of interaction are sensitive enough to map out many different degrees of rank, respect, friendship and alliance. A full-scale study of these would indeed provide a map of the social

relations of the entire village, and thus a model of the social structure. But the features involved are often subtle, concerned with the way that messages are expressed, and a cataloguing of them is in itself a full-scale enterprise (Brown and Levinson 1978).

In the study reported here recourse was therefore made to some few features of interactional style that lend themselves to rigorous collection and analysis. The features in question are *forms of address* used in face-to-face interaction, that is, terms used to refer to or otherwise indicate the addressee. The local variety of Tamil offers a nice range of alternative forms of address to choose from: there are six alternatives for you-singular, a dozen or so common titles in addition to caste titles, there are hierarchies of summons terms (ranging approximately from *hey!* to *excuse me, sir*) and a range of ranked honorific and dishonorific particles that can be thrown in to indicate degree of respect for the addressee. There are also incidentally ranked series of terms, pronouns and titles, for referring to third parties not present in the speech event, but these show much variation in use and will not concern us here.

Linguistic items of this sort can be considered elements of *social deixis*, that is, ways in which social aspects or dimensions of the speech event are encoded directly in linguistic structure (see Brown and Levinson 1978: 183ff. and Levinson 1979 for a review of this field). I shall therefore sometimes refer to them as socially deictic items. They carry as part or whole of their meaning a social significance, typically a valuation on just two social dimensions, vertical social distance or 'power' and horizontal social distance or 'solidarity'. Brown and Gilman (1960) were the first to point out the general importance of these two social dimensions in connection with the European pronouns of address typified by the French *tu/vous* (T/V) distinction. We shall identify below two pronouns that function just like the European T/V systems used in medieval times.

Unfortunately space prohibits a full treatment of all the socially deictic items used in the village in daily interaction, including titles of address and honorific/dishonorific particles. The main focus of this paper is the usage of *pronouns* referring to a singular addressee. Table 5 provides a list of forms used in the village. It is immediately clear that in a sense there is only one 'real' second person singular pronoun, *nī*, the others being drawn from elsewhere in the pronominal paradigm. On a smaller scale this is a familiar fact: the *vous* of polite address in French is, of course, drawn from the plural second person pronoun. Here, although we have a confusing array of person-number switches to convey respect, the principles at work are quite systematic and universal (see Levinson 1978; Brown and

Table 5. *Alternates for second person singular pronoun in Tamil*

Form	Literal meaning
nī	you-singular
atu	it (distal)
nīr	archaic you-plural, now you-singular with connotations of respectful equality
nīṅka	you-plural (in written Tamil, *nīṅkaḷ*)
nām	we (inclusive of addressee)
tāṅkaḷ	themselves (third person plural reflexive)

Levinson 1978: 203ff.). In the table these pronouns are ranked from least honorific (top) to most honorific (bottom). In fact, this paper will concentrate almost exclusively on just two of these forms, *nī* and *nīṅka*, the T and V forms respectively.

In order to pick out the underlying regularities in pronominal usage, it is necessary to identify a number of factors responsible for special or 'marked' usage. Some of these special features are transitory or ephemeral and reflect specific facts about the situation of speech: for example, when people request things they tend to be more polite and thus may shift their pronominal usage, or there may be some overhearer present on whom a good impression should be made. Other factors are more stable, and the most important of these is any personal office or prestige that an addressee may have acquired above and beyond the status of place in the caste system he or she may have by virtue of membership in a caste. This effect is actually rarely relevant, and it rapidly becomes clear that caste is the major determinant of pronominal choice, so that personal office or prestige can be thought of as an extra factor redirecting normal pronoun choice.

There is isolable, then, something that we may call a *basic classification* of alters, on the basis of which standard unmarked pronominal usage is produced, and a set of secondary *reclassifications* that take into account any transient situational factors together with the particular secondary characteristics of the addressee. There is some very indirect evidence that these are distinct cognitive processes utilized by villagers in assigning pronouns appropriate to particular addressees (see Levinson 1977: Ch. 2). On this analysis, therefore, only *nī* and *nīṅka* emerge as pronouns assigned to addressees on the basis of the primary basic classification of alters. The other second person alternates are 'marked' forms, occurring in special

circumstances or to special addressees. Since in this paper we shall be primarily concerned only with the basic unmarked usage, the restriction to *nī* and *nīṅka* is in fact principled.

The existence of systematic but secondary determinants of pronoun choice hints at the difficulties attending data collection. It would not do simply to ask people how they address others; villagers are aware that much in the way of status and prestige hangs on such usage and they report accordingly. Nor would a few casual observations of actual usage simply serve to disconfirm their reports; the observations might be of the special 'marked' usage already described. What in fact was done here was to build up a composite picture based on self-reports, third-party reports, casual observation by the ethnographer, and a large body of tape recordings of casual interaction. Factuality in self-reports was increased by interviewing publicly in the presence of others with a vested interest in the correctness of the report, and especially by asking for usage between named specific alters ('How do you address Ramucāmi Kavuṇṭar' rather than 'How do you address anyone of caste X'). In these ways a picture was built up that is probably about as accurate as could be obtained by a single fieldworker in a relatively small amount of time.

From this mass of detail of actual usage it was then necessary to extract the basic underlying norms or expectations of usage. Once situational and other reclassifications had been allowed for, a relatively simple picture emerged: usage was primarily determined, between actors of different castes, by caste membership, and secondarily by the age of the addressee relative to the speaker. It was possible then to be quite precise in stating that, other things being equal (that is situational and personal factors not intervening), members of caste X would address members of caste Y in such and such a way, due allowance being made where necessary for relative age. It is on this possibility that the rest of this paper crucially depends.

2. LINGUISTIC INFERENCE OF INTER-CASTE RANK RELATIONS

2.1. Advantages of this method

There is a persistent problem for Indologists, namely that although there is general agreement that caste society is a holistic hierarchical system with specific properties, it is not at all clear how the system is to be objectively determined on the ground. If we ask people about the ranking of castes,

we will find that they will disagree or be uncertain in many crucial cases. If we measure the wealth, or the life-style, or any other attribute of castes, we will obtain no clear overall ranking. How then are we to determine what the local hierarchy is? And how do the inhabitants themselves, who claim that there is such a ranking, know what it is? (See Marriott 1959; 1968a, for a discussion of these problems.) What we want is a method for finding out how members of the society perceive it, given that they are unable to verbalize a consistent or complete model of it. The problem can be put in a quite general way: how is the sociologist to build overall models of a social system that retain the perspective of its members?

In the answer we offer here, we shall attempt to determine the ranking of local castes as subjectively agreed upon by members, and to discover further principles that organize inter-caste relations, by studying systematically the use of certain value-laden exchanges between castes. The method is not original, and is owed in most part to the work of Marriott. However, the application to linguistic materials is novel, and this extension we shall argue is important.[1] For linguistic interaction has a number of special properties: it is universal (occurs between all castes), it is public, it is indefinitely replicated, its social valuation is precise and independently testable, and it is the most frequent form of exchange. Consequently we can derive from it attitudes and opinions that reflect the unpremeditated viewpoints of actors, with a confidence we can gain from no other source.

As a preliminary to this method, what we wish to do here is to extract the pronominal usage to be found between each and every caste. Given that we have studied 17 castes, for each caste we must ask how it addresses the sixteen others: there are therefore $17 \times 16 = 272$ distinct pairs of different castes to be examined. The obvious format to represent them is the two-dimensional matrix, which with labelled columns and rows of 17 cells each will give us 289 cells including self-reciprocal ones.

However there is a further benefit of matrix representation. For we can manipulate it to produce a scaled matrix, or *scalogram* (Guttman scale) which will allow us to infer any inherent ranking in the data. Scaled matrices, introduced originally into caste studies by Marriott (1959) and Mahar (1959), are now standardly used to represent caste ranking in South Asian studies (see Dumont 1970; Mathur 1964; Orenstein 1965; Hiebert 1971; McGilvray 1974 and many others). The only element of novelty here is the treatment of linguistic data as just another medium of transaction wherein ranks are expressed.

2.2. Initial matrix: informal observations

We may start by taking an *unscaled* matrix that simply represents the kind of T/V usage that holds between each and every caste dyad. It should be remembered that this represents an 'idealized' usage, or rather a conditional usage where the conditions are fulfilled; and further that it is claimed that this represents a distinct level of information for users.

Now we could simply produce a matrix with randomly ordered axes. However, since we have the benefit of the ranking of these castes on quite independent ethnographic criteria as analysed by Beck 1972, we may as well use one such ranking scale along both vertical and horizontal axes rather than simply jumble up the castes. Since Beck uses rank at a Brahman feast (as ascertained by the order in which castes are seated and fed) as a basic rank order on the basis of which to assign numbers as labels for each caste (number labels that we have retained), this will provide a useful if arbitrary starting point for our discussion also.

Sociolinguistic analysis (Levinson 1977: Ch. 3) suggests the partition into three major kinds of mutually exclusive T/V usage: categorical T- and V-usage, and *either* T- *or* V-usage depending on the relative age of speaker to addressee, henceforth relative age T/V. We define these as follows:

(1) *Categorical T-usage* (or simply T in the diagrams):
If caste A gives categorical T to caste B, then every member of A uses *nī* to each and every member of B irrespective of age, sex, or any other attributes of speaker or hearer except their caste memberships – unless specific reclassification operations take place.

(2) *Categorical V-usage* (or simply V in the diagrams):
If caste A gives categorical V to caste B, then every member of A uses *nīṅka* to every member of B irrespective of age, sex, or any other attributes of speaker or hearer except their caste memberships (or membership in the squire class) – unless specific reclassification operations take place.

(3) *Relative age T/V* (or simply REL in the diagram):
If caste A gives relative age T/V to caste B, then every member of A uses *nī* to every member of B who is younger in years than the speaker, and *nīṅka* to every member of B who is older than the speaker. If the speaker and hearer (addressee) are equal in age to the nearest year or so, then usage is very sensitive to other factors (social closeness or solidarity being the most important). But the unmarked usage would generally be V to coevals as to elders. Note that many individuals do not know their own, let alone others', *exact* age, and the greater the age the less likelihood of precise knowledge.

Nevertheless it is an estimation of actual age in years and not social age-grade that is conceptually relevant, even if that estimation may in part be based on behaviour indicative of social age-grade.

The initial matrix (Matrix I) simply represents the facts about inter-caste T/V usage mapped onto an independent rank order, which derives from the ranking of guests at a Brahman feast (see Beck 1972: 159–60, 173, 178). Note that we have omitted Beck's castes 12 and 15, and added caste 7b. Before we begin an analytical dissection, let us informally note that a few dominant patterns are especially striking:

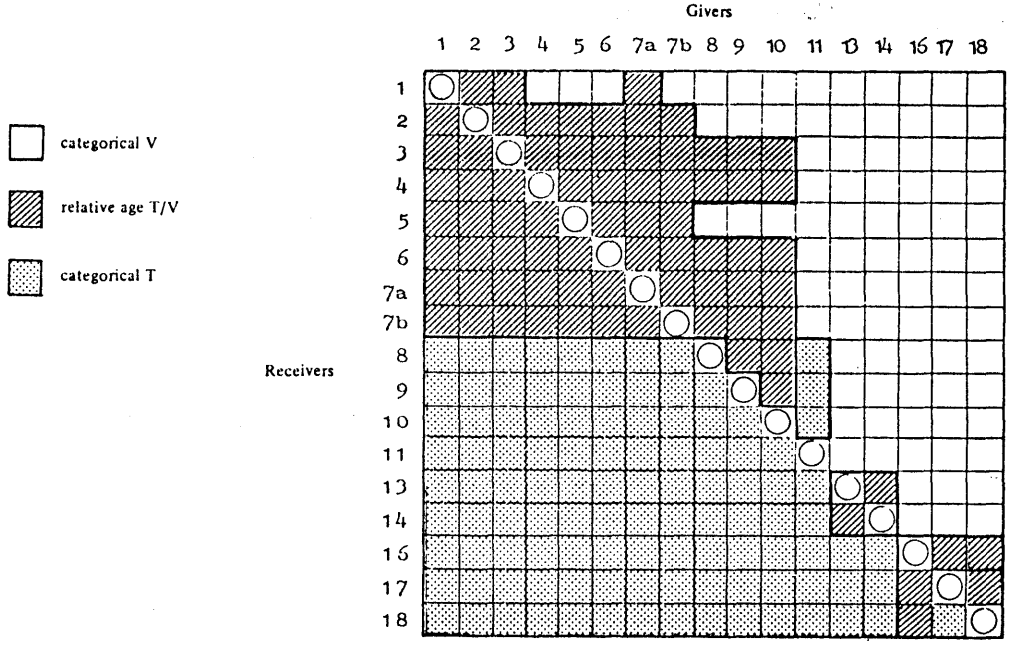
(1) Starting at the top left of the matrix we see that a large bloc of castes (with a core of 2 through 7b) symmetrically exchange relative age T/V. These represent over a third of the castes in the village who are, if we accept our single independent criterion of rank, at the top end of the local hierarchy.

(2) Beneath them is a large bloc of castes (in the bottom left-hand corner) who receive categorical T from the bloc of relative age T/V exchangers in (1) above.

(3) To the right of the REL-exchangers is a large bloc of castes, very roughly the same castes as those in (2), who give categorical V to a large group of upper castes – mostly those in (1).

Although the patterns on the giving and receiving dimensions are not quite the same, we have an immediate impression of a basic caesura between what we may call *the upper castes* (1 through 7b) and *the lower castes* (8 through 18). Note, however, a somewhat intermediate status seems claimed by 8, 9, 10 on the giving dimension. Turning to an ego-centred analysis momentarily, if we take, say, column 3, which represents caste 3's usage to castes 1 through 18, we see that an Ego in the upper caste category lives in a social world which is divided (as far as inter-caste relations are concerned) into just two important areas: those (inferior) groups one gives categorical T to, and those (superior or equal) groups one gives either T or V to, according to their relative age to oneself (seniors getting V, juniors T). On the other hand taking a column, say 16, from the lower category, we see that for Egos of this category the social world divides into two rather different important areas: those (rather few) equals or inferiors one gives either T or V to according to relative age, and those groups (the great majority) whose superiority warrants V irrespective of age (or any other non-caste) considerations.

If we look more systematically at the giving dimension in this way, we can see that columns 3 and 16 are just two extreme patterns out of five major types. The three that lie between the two extremes are the patterns



Matrix I. The initial matrix

of T/V giving by castes 5, 6, 4 and 7b, by castes 8, 9, 10, and by castes 13 and 14. The rest of the castes follow our upper caste pattern (1, 2, 7a are like 3), or our lower caste pattern (17, 18 are like 16) – except that 11 is closely similar to the pattern shared by 13 and 14 but is slightly anomalous.

We can then identify five major 'universes', or patterns of T/V giving from an egocentric point of view. We extract in Figure 5 typical columns for each universe from Matrix I which illustrate these five basic patterns. In the figure the sequence of caste identification numbers on the left is a rank order based on implications of T- and V-receiving, derived in a way to be explained below. Each column represents the spectrum of the T- and V-giving that each caste of a particular group indulges in. One caste in the group is taken as Ego for illustrative purposes, and heads the column, while the others are in brackets. In this manner an approximate indication is given of the way in which members of each focal caste treat members of castes above and below it in the caste hierarchy (as measured in one dimension).

However, we have so far begged the most interesting questions: we have been relying on an 'imported' ranking dimension which may not tally with any hierarchical order that inheres in the T/V data. Further, we have been drawing on an intuitive valuation of T- versus V-giving, the principles of which must be made explicit. We wish now to restrict ourselves to a purely internal analysis of the patterns emergent from T/V usage. In this way we shall get some idea of just how far linguistic data will take us in the understanding of an alien society.

2.3. The valuation of media and moves within them

Marriott in a series of important papers (Marriott 1959; 1968a; 1976a) has drawn attention to the extremely systematic patterning of Hindu transactions in food and services, and to the cultural presuppositions that lie beneath that patterning. Marriott (1968a: 141–6) has formulated the underlying rules of Hindu food and services transactions as follows:

For cooked food transfers

(1) If A gives to B, and B does not give to A, then A is *higher than* B. Diagrammatically:

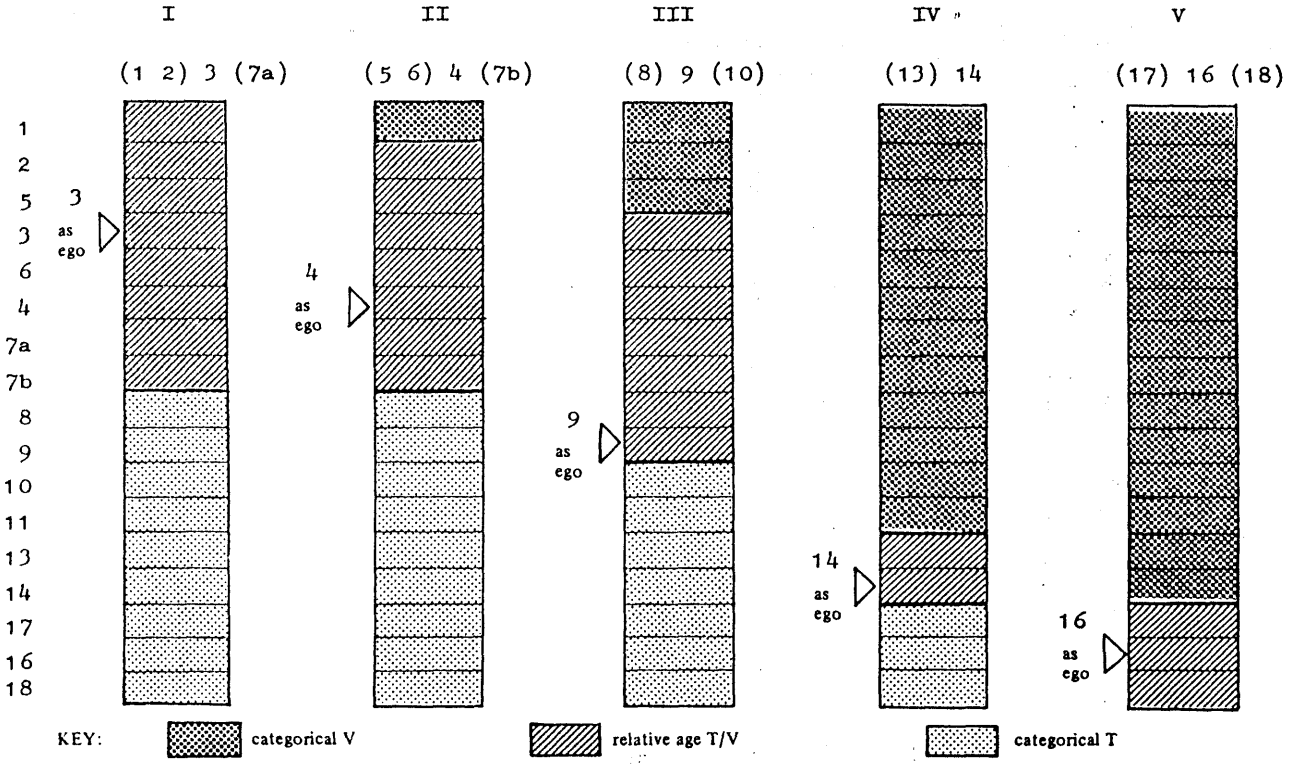
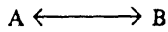
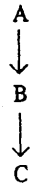


Figure 5. T/V universes, the five major types

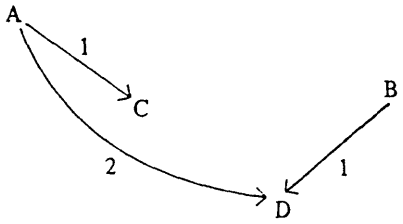
(2) If A gives to B, and B gives back to A, then A is *equal* to B. Diagrammatically:



(3) If A gives to B (and B does not give to A), and B gives to C (again without reciprocation), then A is *higher than* C. In short the relation 'higher than' is *transitive*. Diagrammatically:



(4) If A gives one way to C, and B does not, then A is *higher than* B. Or, if A gives to C (without reciprocation), and A gives to D (again without return), and B gives only to D and not to C, then A is *higher than* B. The relation 'higher than' is thus *arithmetically scored*, or diagrammatically:



A scores twice
B scores once
So A is higher than B

Marriott does not indicate how he derived this rule of arithmetic scoring, although it is crucial to his (and our) methods. Evidence that this is a rule of valuation used by villagers themselves is presented below (2.4) and in Levinson 1977: 246–50.

To these rules of Marriott's we may add another:

(5) The relation *higher than* (as intuition tells us) is asymmetric as well as transitive: thus there will be no situation where the relation is maintained and where A gives (asymmetrically) to B, B to C, and C to A.

The reader will probably want to know exactly what plane of measurement the relation *higher than* refers to: power, prestige, ritual or sacred

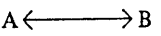
rank? But there is no straightforward answer – indeed the matter is contentious. For while the intake of food is avowedly related to the Hindu metaphysics of purity as Dumont 1970 insists, the provision of food is also an expression of the largesse of the powerful, and being fed a sign of subordination, as Marriott's villagers insist (Marriott 1968a: 143). Similarly, defiling services (the collection of soiled eating leaves, the removal of faeces), while clearly polluting by the same metaphysics, are also part of a broader spectrum of services that 'contribute to the refinement, aristocracy, good fortune and commanding appearance of the employer' (Marriott 1968a: 144). Further, Beck argues that different particular media of interaction may establish rankings on quite different scales: some to do with 'master–servant relations', some to do with 'dietary and ritual ideals' (Beck 1972: 162).

As Marriott notes (1968a: 142), 'the logic for deriving rank from service is the exact inverse of the logic for deriving rank from food transfers'. The rules are these:

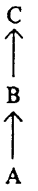
For the provision of services

(1′) If A provides services to B, and B does not reciprocate, then A is *lower than* B. Diagrammatically:

(2′) If A provides for B, and B provides for A, then A is equal to B. Diagrammatically:

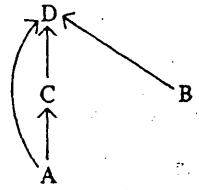


(3′) If A provides for B, and B provides for C, and neither B nor C reciprocates, then A is lower than C. Diagrammatically:



In short, the relation *lower than* is transitive.

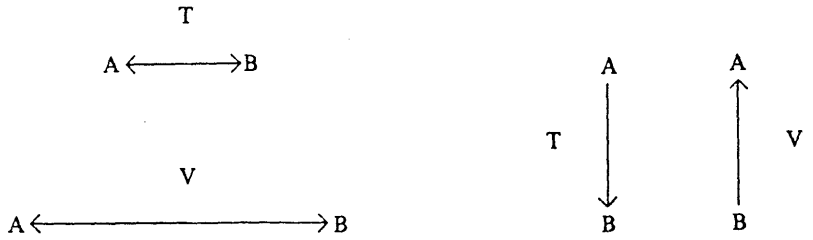
(4′) If A provides asymmetrically for C, but B does not provide services for C, then A is lower than B; if A provides asymmetrically for C, and A and C for D, but B only provides for D, then A is lower than B. Schematically:



The relation *lower than* is thus arithmetically scored: A serves 2, B only serves 1, therefore A is lower than B. Further justifications for this will be given below.

(5′) The relation 'lower than' is asymmetric.

Now let us turn to linguistic media, and in particular the giving and receiving of honorifics. Brown and Gilman (1960) suggested that the 'semantics', that is the social valuation, of the European T/V system should be interpreted in relation to two dimensions: 'power' and 'solidarity' or as we prefer, vertical and horizontal social distance. A symmetrical exchange of T marked solidary relations, a symmetrical exchange of V marked relations of social distance. An asymmetrical use of T indicated that the speaker was higher than the addressee, while an asymmetrical use of V indicated that the speaker was lower than the addressee. Or schematically:



Now we conclude that Brown and Gilman's insight was basically correct and has direct application to the South Indian material also. The reciprocal use of V is more or less non-existent in inter-caste interaction (but occurs intra-caste), and further complications are introduced by the fact that

there are more pronominal options in village Tamil than the European systems, at least as standardly described (but see Laberge 1976). Nevertheless the valuation seems essentially correct. A special note is required for relative age T/V. This is the pattern where the senior in years give T and receives V, a pattern that conforms to shastric familial ideals. Where this usage occurs *symmetrically* across castes, this then implies that caste is neutralized, is of less importance than relative age in determining the norms of interaction. It thereby implies a status equality, or near equality, in caste rank. It also connotes a sort of pseudo-familial inclusion, and it is worth noting that many of the castes who symmetrically use this pattern of pronominal usage also exchange kin terms ('fictitious' of course). Another way of looking at the symmetrical exchange of REL is that it is really a symmetrical exchange over a time dimension or from a group point of view, as Figure 6 illustrates. Nevertheless REL also occurs *asymmetrically*, from one group to another without reciprocation. The observable patterns in our data are reciprocations with categorical T or V. In these cases it still seems that the valuation of REL, with its inherent implications of the neutralization of caste in favour of age distinctions, must be *claims* (apparently not reciprocally felt) to some measure of equal caste status.

Now the remarkable but obvious fact is that the valuation of T-giving exactly parallels the valuation of food transfers, while the valuation of V-giving exactly parallels the valuation of service provision. Reciprocal exchange in both the material and linguistic media implies equality. In the media of food and T-usage, asymmetrical exchange implies that the giver is higher than the receiver. In the media of service provision and V-usage the reverse valuation holds. The parallelism between T and food, and V and services is thus precise (Levinson 1977: 240–1).

But this raises some fundamentally interesting equations. Let us begin by asking what there is that is similar in food transfer and the giving of T. One possible line of explanation may go like this. Food – especially in an Indian context – is intimate stuff: the most intimate, closed unit in village society is the *kuṭumpam*, the household as defined by the sharing of a common hearth. More than one *kuṭumpam* may live under the same roof and share the same sources of production – but unless they share the same food cooked at the same hearth, co-residents belong to different *kuṭumpams* (Beck 1972: Ch. 5). If food sharing is intimate behaviour, so is reciprocal T-exchange: this is the universal (pan-caste) language of mother–child relations, indeed of familial relations in general in non-hierarchized families. Mutual T-exchange is also the language of intimate

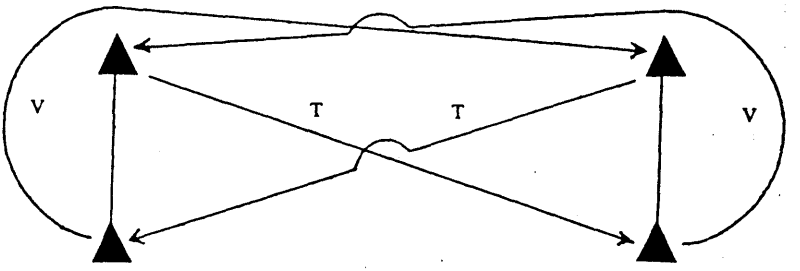


Figure 6. Symmetrical REL-exchange

friends (but not the language of spouses). In short, wherever we find islands of intimacy, where rank does not intrude from the highly hierarchized orders that structure most transactions in this society, we find mutual T-exchange.

Now if we take the valuation on the horizontal social dimension as basic, we can put our question this way: why should giving asymmetrical intimacy be an expression of superiority? And why should the giving of asymmetric distance (V – and possibly services too) be an expression of inferiority? The answer lies, I believe, in certain very general principles of social interaction: persons who are deemed to have high social rank have the right of access to the personal lives of social inferiors who relate to them, but the inferiors do not have the reciprocal right of access to the lives of their superiors. This seems to be a universal principle (see Brown and Levinson 1978, where an account is given in terms of the notion of 'face').

We have stressed the parallels between food transfer and T-giving, service provision and V-giving, because they hold out encouragement for some general theory of transactions that would encompass material and communicative transfers. However there are inherent differences between linguistic and material media that cannot be ignored. Perhaps the most important of these are the following:

(i) Material exchanges (e.g. food transfers) require two independent acts by different parties in order for a transfer to take place: an act of giving and an act of receiving; linguistic exchanges on the other hand can be delivered without the acquiescence of the other party. Thus a transfer of cooked rice at a feast requires that one party presents the rice, and the other takes and consumes it, while if one party addresses another with a T pronoun, the other party – unless it feigns hard-of-hearing – can hardly

avoid having received it. Of course these differences inhere not so much in the media themselves as in the rules that guide their usage. Thus there are cases reported from Melanesia where food transfers occur against the will of the recipient, and the food is simply dumped on his threshold (as reported for example by Malinowski); and on the other hand hearing what is spoken to you is not so much automatic as the product of powerful norms of attention (see Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; and Reisman 1974, for a case where such norms are claimed to be partially non-operative). Nevertheless given these cultural ground rules, if that is what they are, we can see that food transfers involve a larger measure of consensus by both parties to the transaction than a particular pattern of T- or V-giving.

(ii) One area of difference between the particular linguistic and food and service media here considered is that, whereas asymmetric food and service transfers, like T- and V-giving, empirically never flow in the same direction because of their inconsistent valuations, symmetric food transfers can co-occur with symmetric service provision. Thus every household of a caste will theoretically be willing to dine with every other household of the caste, and also to remove the eating leaves of every other member-household (as indicated by the self-reciprocal cells in Figures 4.8 and 4.10 in Beck 1972). Note, however, that symmetric food and service transfer obtains not between individuals but between households (*kuṭumpams*) within a caste. For no man will eat with a woman, nor will a man clean away the eating leaves of women: men rank higher than women and the asymmetric rules for such transactions operate within the household also. Similarly it is the most junior competent woman who will clear away the eating leaves, and eat last. But in that case, taking the same unit, symmetric T-*and* V-giving can be seen to co-occur. If we sum the overall transfers of T and V between particular members of each household, equal numbers of each kind of T- and V-transfer will be seen to flow between households (or at least households of the same demographic make-up). We can probably conclude, therefore, that this difference between the media is more apparent than real.

We now have in hand a *valuation* for T- and V-givings. It is important for the argument that follows that this valuation is seen to be at least potentially arrived at by a method independent from the observation of inter-caste behaviour, otherwise the inferences made below would be circular. But we can in fact produce independent empirical or theoretical sources for these rules and valuations:

(i) It is possible to give an account, on the basis of a theory of strategic

language use oriented around face-preservation (as in Brown and Levinson 1978), of why plural pronouns will be used to express deference to singular addressees. The same theory predicts that reciprocal use of such plural second person pronouns would indicate social distance on a horizontal dimension; and that asymmetrical and symmetrical usages of T would have the values they do.

(ii) Similarly on the basis of Brown and Gilman's theory one would expect the same valuation, and that theory intuitively extends to the Tamil data.

(iii) The valuation may be independently checked against data from another domain: intra-caste behaviour. Here we find that the same rules apply, although the rank thereby established has to do with hierarchical relations between kin (seniors, affines, cross-kin) rather than between castes.

(iv) The rules have an independent existence in informants' minds, and can be elicited from them. Similarly, on the basis of participant-observation the ethnographer intuitively built up the same rules, which were accessible to introspection.

The arguments that follow then can, I believe, be made on solidly independent grounds. One point that should be borne in mind is that these valuations are *inherently* interactional. If A says T to B, then the valuation of T depends crucially on what B says back to A.

2.4. Scaling as a members' activity

Many of those who have used scaled matrices in the study of caste seem to have been interested in the question 'is there any *objective* method for determining caste ranks?' (Hiebert 1969: 434, see also Freed 1963). But for us the question is 'is there any *subjective* method, used by members to determine their rank vis-à-vis others?' Scaling may not seem a likely subjective method, but in fact it only represents a determination of ranking on the basis of a simple set of numerical scores. In order to maintain a potentially subjective viewpoint, we must be careful to observe the following principles. First, the behaviour to be scaled must be accessible to public observation and knowledge. Indeed if it is to be assumed that subjective rank assessments are inter-subjectively available (as appears from behaviour we shall later call 'retaliative'), then all the relevant behavioural outcomes must be mutually known (in the sense of Schiffer 1972: 30–5). Second, the valuation of the atomic behaviour types must be shown to be subscribed to by members on independent grounds, i.e., the valuation must be

subjective. Moreover the subjective valuation must be consonant with the preconditions for meaningful scaling: in short it must be phrased – intuitively for members – in terms of some asymmetric transitive relation (in the sense employed in finite mathematics). We must now establish that each of these conditions is met. We will take them in order.

(i) *Public knowledge of the behavioural outcomes.* One problem with the 'attributional' theory of caste ranking (Marriott 1959; Stevenson 1954), which stresses caste attributes such as vegetarianism, is that members of society (in this case the village) do not have a detailed knowledge of these attributes and their distribution. For instance the Village Accountant, a reasonably intelligent man with administrative responsibilities, did not know that the two distinct castes of Ācāri (craftsmen: castes 3 and 6) were distinguished by the following culturally important attributes: members of 3 are *caiva*, that is vegetarian, while members of 6 are *acaiva*, non-vegetarian. And this despite the fact that the Accountant belonged to caste 2, a left-hand vegetarian caste like 3. Castes 3, 2, 4 and 1 were the only vegetarian castes in the village. Admittedly most persons of these castes did know this, but such knowledge of attributes does not seem to be a *sine qua non* for understanding and operating in village society. Only a full survey of the extent of such knowledge of attributes throughout the village would fully establish this point, but I believe that it would put paid to any attributional theory of ranking once and for all, assuming the aim of such theories is more than simply to obtain some 'objective', etic, culture-independent assignment of ranks by social scientists.

Compared with the public availability of attributional criteria (which are often private prescriptions of ritual), interactional facts are necessarily public, and matters of daily experience. Potentially, and I believe empirically, every adult member of the village will witness the interaction, at least occasionally, between members drawn from each and every caste. This is especially true for linguistic and kinesic interaction: for even those castes that would by preference avoid each other (e.g. Brahmans and Christian Paraiyars) are drawn together by mutual duties of a ritual, official or commercial kind. For instance, Brahman children are taught by a Paraiyar teacher, and at temple festivals Paraiyars still do their traditional service as musicians – and of course all such arrangements involve talk of one kind or another.

(ii) *Members' knowledge of the valuation of patterns of T/V giving and receiving.* One of the independent bases for this valuation is that it may be

directly elicited from members, and another is that it operates in another arena, namely intra-caste behaviour. Of behaviour in that arena members say:

> 'We give *māmā* (MB category) *matippu* (respect): we say "*vāṅka māmā*" (come-V MB). But he says "*vāppā, pōppā*" (come-T + dishonorific, go-T + dishonorific) because we are just young people.'

For them V-giving maps the direction of respect, T-giving maps the direction of disrespect. Similarly:

> 'One thing is important: to *māmiyār* and *māmanār* (parents-in-law) respect must be given. It is better for the groom to say nothing: but if he must speak then he must say "*vāṅka māmanār*" (come-V father-in-law). But *māmanār* must also say "*vāṅka, vāṅka*" to the groom. They must give each other respect.'

Thus, for members, reciprocal V-exchange establishes mutual respect. In the same way mutual T-giving establishes or expresses intimacy, or close friendship:

> 'They are good friends, nothing will part them. When they see each other they say "*vāṭā, pōṭā*" (come-T + dishonorific, go-T + dishonorific). A pair of rascals mind you!'

As for the asymmetric transitivity in rules (3) and (3′), what evidence is there that members make inferences based on the assumption that such a relation obtains? First and foremost is the fact that informants found it hilarious that the ethnographer did not find it obvious that T/V usage was based on such a relation, as instanced by an episode in which the ethnographer's question (whether, if caste 9 gives T to 11, and 11 gives T to 16, then does caste 9 give T to caste 16) was greeted with laughter. Everyone knows that 11 gives T to 16, so there is a chain of T-givings from 9 to 11 and 11 to 16, and *on the assumption of transitivity*, 9 must therefore give T to 16. What if 9 gave V to 16? The grave answer was cosmological chaos: it simply couldn't happen.

It is clear that the asymmetric transitive relation that underlies T/V usage is 'socially higher (more respected) than', and/or 'socially lower (less respected) than'. Further evidence for the strict asymmetry and transitivity of the underlying relation is provided by the fact that honorifics and dishonorifics can themselves be scaled by members. For instance the implicational scales shown in Figure 7 were elicited, and correspond to all the facts that were collected. That is, forms to the left imply the possibility of the usage of all forms to the right, to the same addressee. Thus if A uses *cāmi* to B, then A may on occasion use *nām, ṅka*, V and will never use B's name to B. (Further details about some of these forms will be presented

Scale of honorifics

$$\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{cāmi}\\ \text{ecamāṅka}\end{matrix}\right\} > \text{nām} > \left\{\begin{matrix}\text{ṅka}\\ \text{ayyā}\end{matrix}\right\} > \text{categorical V} > \text{name-taboo}$$

Scale of dishonorifics

$$\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{li}^{**}\\ \text{ṭi}^{**}\end{matrix}\right\} > \left\{\begin{matrix}\text{ṭā}^{*}\\ \text{ṭē}\end{matrix}\right\} > \text{use of name} > \left\{\begin{matrix}\text{-ppā}\\ \text{-mmā}\end{matrix}\right\} > \text{categorical T}$$

**used only to women, but ruder than forms restricted to men
*form used only to men

Figure 7. Scaled usage implications of verbal status markers

later.) But one cannot infer from the fact that A uses V to B that A may on occasion use *cāmi* to B; i.e., one cannot make inferences from right to left. This shows that whatever underlies the usage of honorifics is a strictly asymmetric and transitive relation. Similarly for dishonorifics: one can infer from the rudest that the least rude may be used to the same addressee, but not vice-versa.

Let us now turn to rules (4) and (4′) of the valuation, which assert that there is an arithmetic computation of rank: the more numbers of positively valued receipts (V's) and the less numbers of negatively valued receipts (T's) the higher the rank of the receiver (again treating castes as the units of giving and receiving). Informants spoke this way too: 'We Washermen, Barbers and all say "*vāṅka*" to the Brahmans: everybody does. They are the highest caste compared to all.' They also spoke in terms of rank estimates by least giving of valued outgoings (V): 'We Cōḷi Ācāri do not have to say *nīṅka* (V) to Brahmans: I for instance say "*vāyyār*" (come-T Brahman) to the *Kurukkaḷ* (Brahman priest). But the Koṅku Ācāri they have to say "*vāṅkayyār*" (come-V Brahman). Cōḷi Ācāri are a high caste.'

In a way the point of arithmetic scoring is that it takes into account not only the rank relations established by asymmetric exchanges, and thus the inferring of the asymmetric transitive relation of rank, but also the notable absence of such exchanges between particular parties. Rules (1) through (3) simply attach no valuation to the non-occurrence of some particular exchange: no rank is thus established, nothing is said. But for villagers this is patently not the case: if caste 7b does not give V to caste 2,

and neither does 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7a, then clearly castes 3 through 7b do not think 2 worthy of categorical V. (That this is confirmed by the alternative employed does not diminish the validity of this mode of thinking in terms of negative occurrences of V.) So members keep tabs on such non-occurrences: for instance a member of 9 pointed out that there is a big difference between members of 10 and 11, for 11 gives V to all the 'upper castes', while 10 gives V to only the top three. So 11 admits to more relations of social asymmetry, and this directly implies that it is lower in rank. Since this judgement can only be made on the basis of counting occurrences versus non-occurrences of the behaviour in question it does imply that arithmetic computation is involved. It may not take the fully specified form that our computations here will take, but it seems that it must follow at least some approximate analogue of these.

2.5. Two media and four scales

Having now established a cultural valuation of particular patterns of pronominal exchange, we wish to know what social inferences (to do with rank) members can make from the overall patterns of pronominal usage accessible to them. We here consider two media: (categorical) T-usage and (categorical) V-usage. These are independent media, for there is a third major option, REL (considered below in 3.1), that precludes the possibility of inferring T-usage from the non-usage of V. Nor, as the results will show, are the inherent patterns established in one medium totally consistent with those established in the other.

Within each medium the rules of valuation establish two potentially independent scales of rank: rank as givers, and rank as receivers. As was explained in 2.2, these scales are also not inter-inferrable. Consequently we shall take each dimension of evaluation one at a time, in the following order:

1. Rank as (most) T-givers
2. Rank as (least) V-givers
3. Rank as (most) V-receivers
4. Rank as (least) T-receivers

In each case we shall construct a *scaled matrix* or scalogram, and from this infer the rank order of castes in that dimension. One point of method does need to be explained. We here effectively ignore reciprocals in our computation of ranks inherent in the data. Our justification for this is twofold:

(a) In the first place, reciprocal usage of a form never *reverses* the

valuation that would be established by an asymmetrical usage, rather it can only neutralize the rank implications.

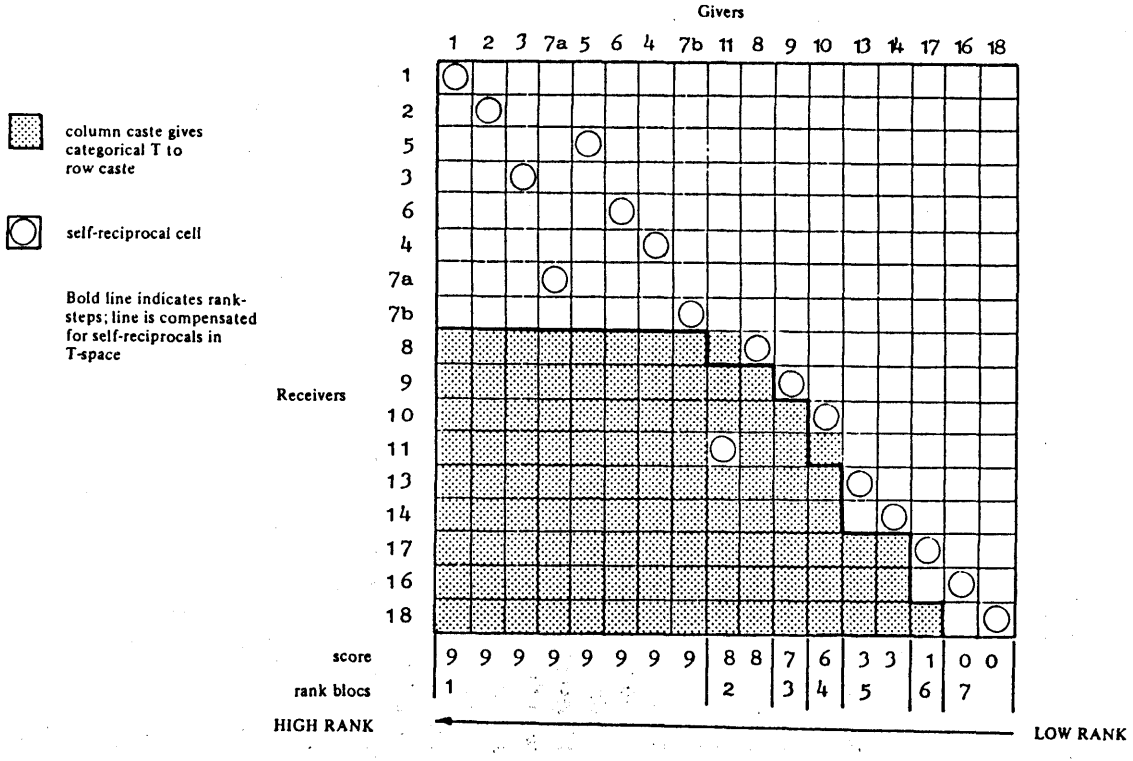
(b) In the second place, considering only the two media T and V, there are almost no cases of symmetrical usage of a medium in inter-caste usage (the single exception is caste 11's exchange of T with 8, 9 and 10), as the reader may check by scanning the basic matrix (VIII).

This treatment is, it is true, an idealization in the following respect. Asymmetrical use of V implies the use of T or REL in return, while asymmetrical use of T implies the use of V or REL in return. In our valuation of asymmetrical T and V we shall ignore the difference between a T or V and a REL return. This is an idealization which we make amends for in section 3. It is not a serious idealization for the following reason: if A gives V to B, and B gives back to A *either* T *or* REL, A is still unambiguously inferior to B; and similarly if A gives T to B, and B gives back to A *either* V *or* REL, then A is either way unambiguously superior to B. Given that virtually no cases of symmetrical exchange in one medium are attested, this ignoring of the exact nature of the reciprocal form used in each dyad will not lead to serious misrepresentations.

So passing straight away to our first dimensions of evaluation, rank as (most) T-givers, we have Matrix II. Here the castes that give most T are those with the longest *columns* in the space labelled T, namely castes 1 through 7b along the top of the matrix. These castes each give T to nine other castes, while castes 11 and 8 both give to eight others, caste 9 to seven others, caste 10 to six others, and so on, till castes 16 and 18 give categorical T to nil others. Let us call the count of T-recipients for each T-giver that T-giver's *positive score.*

All castes with identical positive scores form one undifferentiated bloc as far as each medium is concerned. Thus there are seven blocs, ranked from one to seven by the highest score. Without tabulating scores, exactly the same results emerge visually from the scaled matrix, with the highest ranking (longest) columns shuffled to the left, the horizontal edge of each step indicating rank equals, and vertical edges indicating distinctions of rank receding downwards. The heavy line delineating rank-steps has been compensated for self-reciprocal cells in the T-space (see Levinson 1977: 220–5 for detailed explanation).

For a shorthand, we can represent the rank that emerges from Matrix II as a vertical linear array of castes (labelled by numbers) from top rank at the top, to bottom rank at the bottom, where bars divide the ranked blocs and ordering within bars is arbitrary (as used by Marriott 1968a: 157; Beck 1972): we do this in Figure 8.



Matrix II. Rank as (most) T-givers

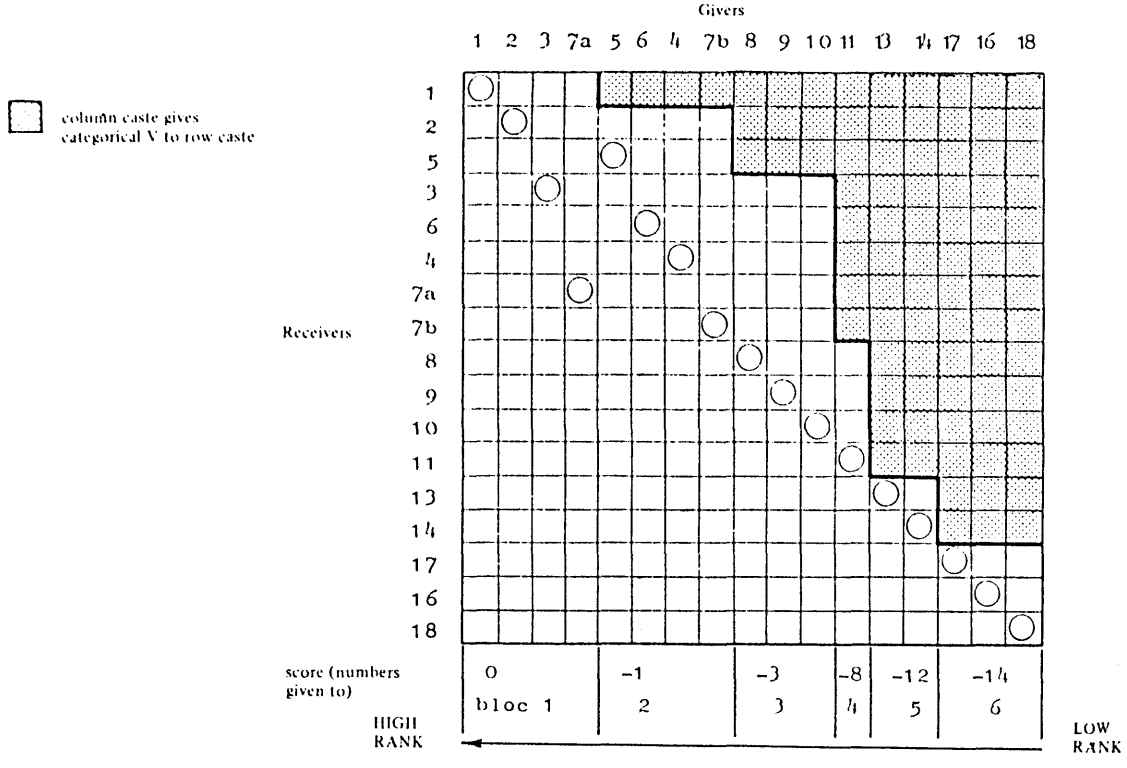
Highest rank		1
		2
		3
	Bloc 1	7a
		5
		6
		4
		7b
	Bloc 2	11
		8
	Bloc 3	9
	Bloc 4	10
		13
	Bloc 5	14
	Bloc 6	17
	Bloc 7	16
		18
Lowest rank		

Figure 8. Rank by T-giving

It is clear from Figure 8 that maximal T-giving does not distinguish among what we have called the upper castes (1 through 7b) at all, while it distinguishes six levels of rank among the lower castes (8 through 18). We may judge from this that success in maximal T-giving is of much more importance to individual castes of the lower category. We shall need some explanation of this.

Let us now turn to the second dimension of evaluation: rank as (least) V-givers. The scores for V-giving are negative: the more recipients of V a caste has the less its rank on this dimension.

The facts are as in Matrix III. Here all self-reciprocal cells lie outside the V area, so there are no compensations required to preserve geometrical perspicuity. Castes 1, 2, 3, 7a form the top rank-bloc with no (categorical) V-givings at all. Their score is zero (maximum on this dimension). There follows Bloc 2 composed of 5, 6, 4 and 7b, who give categorical V to Brahmans (caste 1) and thereby lower their rank by a score of 1 (hence they score −1). Then comes Bloc 3 (castes 8, 9, 10) who give categorical V to 1, 2 and 5 (hence they score −3). And so on till Bloc 6 (17, 16, 18), members of which give V to no less than fourteen castes (hence a score of



Matrix III. Rank as (least) V-givers

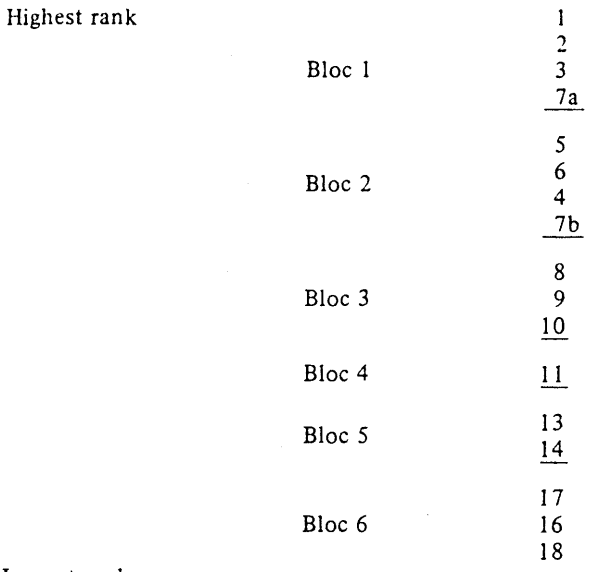


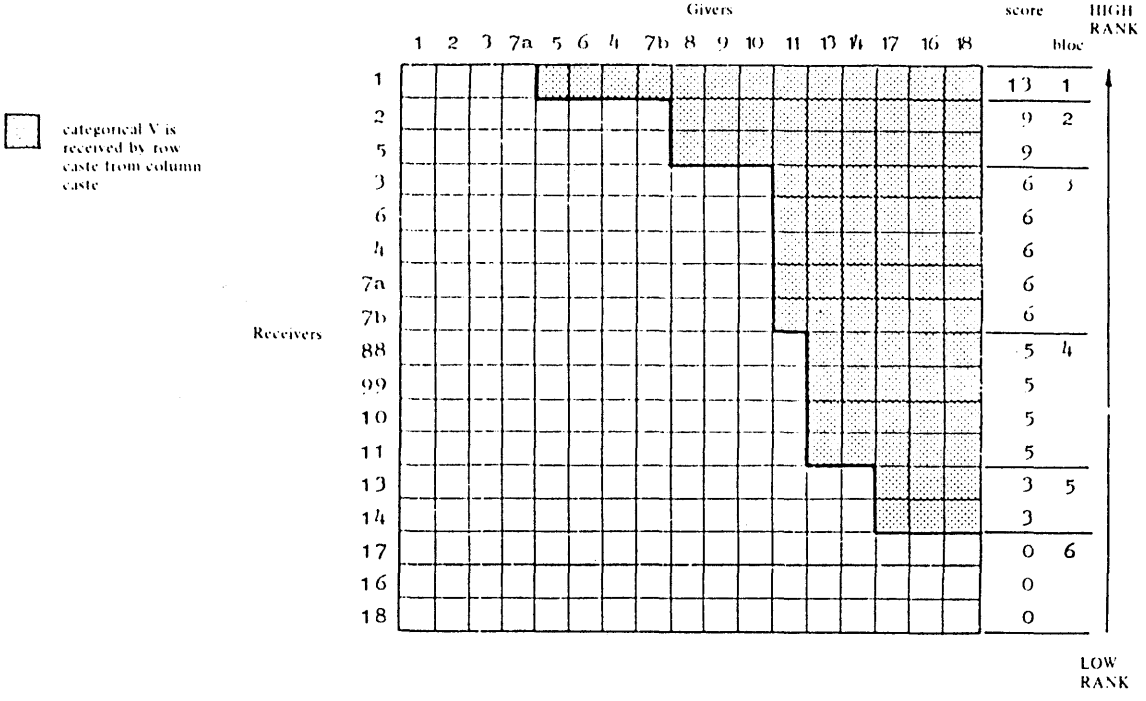
Figure 9. Rank by V-giving

−14). Once again we can easily extract a linear representation of rank, as in Figure 9.

Here we see that minimal V-giving makes one important cut in the array of upper castes, distinguishing Bloc 1 from 2. We may merely note here that its significance depends crucially on the usage that castes 2, 3 and 7a substitute for the V that Bloc 2 members give to Brahmans. Since that usage did not appear on Matrix II, nor on III, by exclusion we know that it must be REL, and we shall answer this question when we come to deal with REL (section 3.1). Note that again the lower castes (8 through 18) are finely distinguished into four grades of V-givers.

Now let us turn to the *receiving* dimensions. Here we have two, V-receiving, positively valued, and T-receiving, negatively valued. The facts are as in the scaled matrices, Matrix IV and V. Now, however, we are interested only in the receiving dimension, and thus in the *rows*, and their top-to-bottom scaling.

Turning to Matrix IV we see that Bloc 1, the topmost rank, has only one member caste, the Brahmans, and that Brahmans rank highest as receivers with a score of 13 categorical V-receipts from thirteen other



Matrix IV. Rank as (most) V-receivers

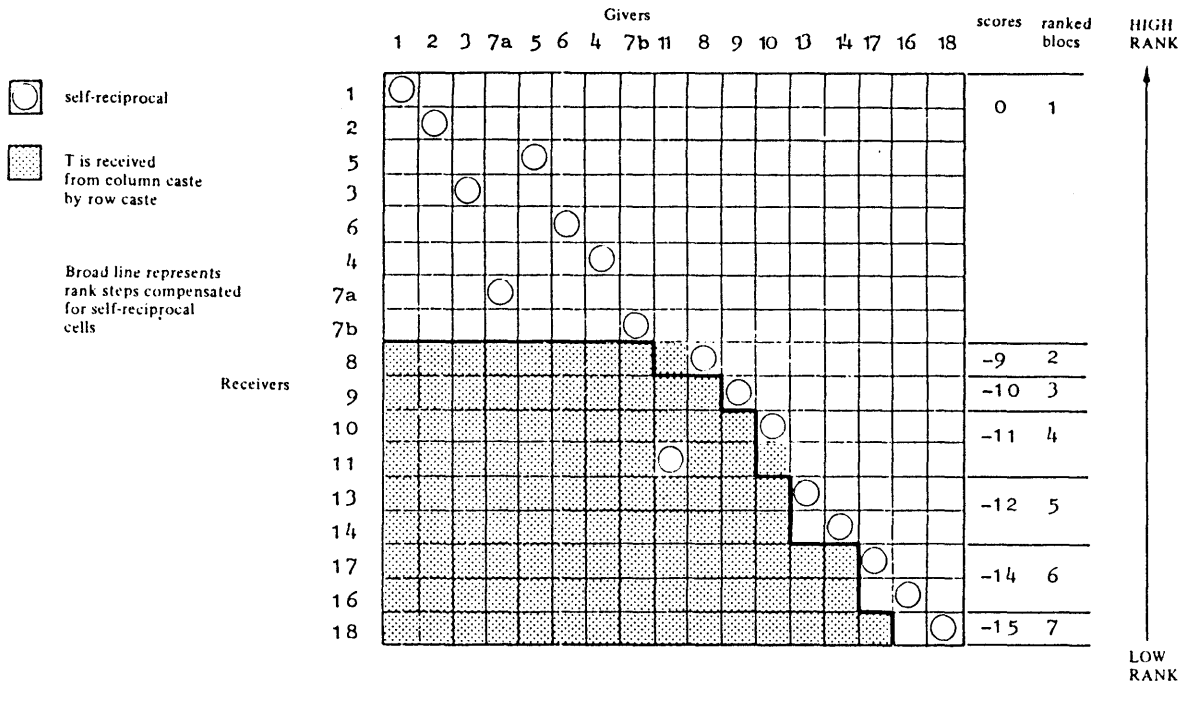
Highest rank	Bloc 1	1
	Bloc 2	2
		5
	Bloc 3	3
		6
		4
		7a
		7b
	Bloc 4	8
		9
		10
		11
	Bloc 5	13
		14
	Bloc 6	17
		16
		18
Lowest rank		

Figure 10. Rank by V-receiving

castes. Next comes Bloc 2, composed of castes 2 and 5, each with nine V-receipts; then Bloc 3, composed of castes 3 through 7b except 5, with equal scores of six receipts – and so on. The linear rank order thus established is then as in Figure 10.

Note that V-receiving cuts the upper castes into as many blocs as the lower castes. This is important: upper castes do not seem to attempt to distinguish between themselves very finely on giving dimensions, but somewhat finer distinctions emerge in their treatment by others. Also noteworthy is the position of caste 5, the dominant caste, on this dimension: it here ranks second only to the Brahman caste, sharing this rank with caste 2.

We come finally to T-receiving, a disvalued medium where scores will be negative. Matrix V repeats the facts in Matrix II, but now we are interested in the rows, scaled from top to bottom. We see that, when compensation is made for the internal self-reciprocal cell 11/11 as done in Matrix II, there are seven ranks. Bloc 1, composed of row-castes 1 through 7b, has a score of zero. But Bloc 2 (caste 8 alone) acquires immediately, and dramatically, a score of −9, while Bloc 3 has −10, Bloc 4 has −11, Bloc 5 has −12, Bloc



Matrix V. Rank as (least) T-receivers

Highest rank		1
		2
		5
		3
	Bloc 1	6
		4
		7a
		7b
	Bloc 2	8
	Bloc 3	9
	Bloc 4	10
		11
	Bloc 5	13
		14
	Bloc 6	17
		16
	Bloc 7	18
Lowest rank		

Figure 11. Rank by T-receiving

6 has −14, and Bloc 7 has −15. In terms of our linear representation, we have the situation in Figure 11.

The pattern here is very similar to that derived from Matrix II: in both, the upper castes are given a single rank, and the lower castes divided into six ranks. However, as we shall see, the rank order of castes on these two dimensions, giving and receiving, is not exactly the same. The dimensions make slightly different cuts in the linear ordering of castes, and one caste (11) has very different ranks in the two media. This will call for explanation.

Let us now compare the rank orders that we have obtained so far. We can do this easily by comparing the linear representations of rank, which are brought together in Figure 12. Here we compare the ranks established within the two dimensions of giving and receiving. Diagonal linking lines point to rank reversals. We can see immediately that there is only one such reversal, the relatively high rank that caste 11 has as a T-giver, is lost in the V-giving sweepstakes; that is to say that, whereas 11 manages to give a lot of T, it is not able to minimize its V-outlays. But apart from caste 11's reversals, we can see that *within* the dimensions of giving and receiving,

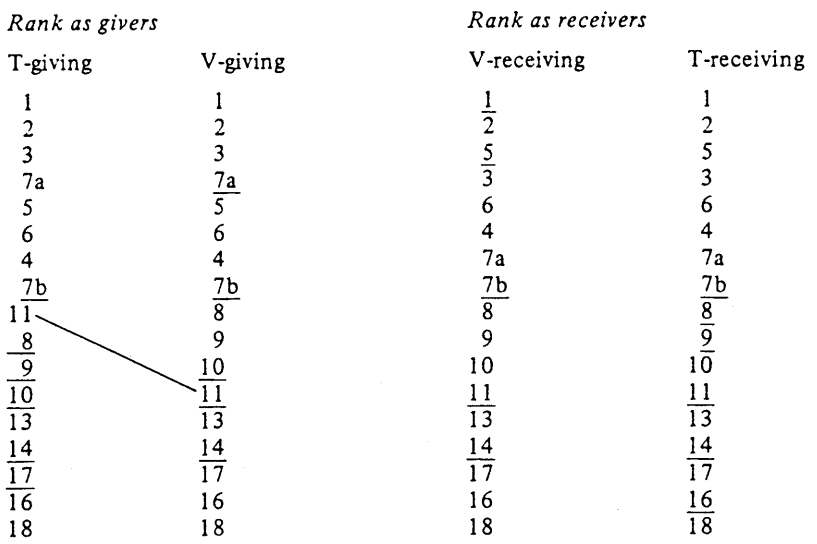


Figure 12. Rank on two dimensions compared

ranks established are absolutely compatible and consistent. That does not mean that ranks on V- and T-giving and receiving redundantly express the same hierarchical distinctions: for the ranks established in the two media (T or V) cut the hierarchy of castes at different locations. Thus V-giving makes five cuts establishing six rank-blocs, to which T-giving adds two differently located cuts, establishing eight rank-blocs *in toto*. Similarly V-receiving cuts the hierarchy five times, distinguishing six blocs, to which T-receiving adds three different distinctions, establishing *in toto* nine rank-blocs on the receiving dimensions. For a set of local castes only seventeen in number these are very fine distinctions of rank.

If we now turn to compare ranks *across* the dimensions of giving and receiving, far more intransitivities and inconsistencies appear. Figure 13 reassembles the linear representations of rank to make this visually apparent. Comparing first T-giving and T-receiving, we find that caste 11 slips from a position at the top of the lower castes by T-giving, to a position in the third rank down from the upper caste/lower caste boundary as judged by T-receiving. Comparing V-giving and V-receiving, a further case of rank reversal emerges, with 3 and 7a above 5 in V-giving, but 5 above 3 and 7a in V-receiving. We must seek explanations for these reversals: why is there this disjunction between ranks established as givers and those estab-

Summed rank distinctions

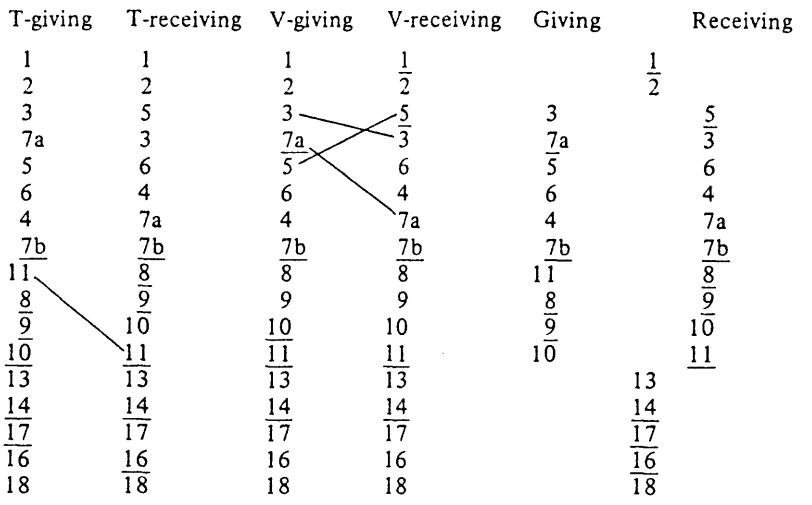


Figure 13. Giving and receiving compared

lished as receivers? This is a question that will occupy us for a number of pages below. But before we turn to the analysis of these materials let us complete the harvest, and look at one of the media in more detail, and some others in addition.

If we take V-giving and examine it in detail, we soon find that we have been oversimplifying. Categorical V-giving as we have treated it so far, is not in fact V-giving *absolutely* irrespective of the age of the addressee. Some high caste children are in fact addressed as T by some categories of lower caste adults. Note that this is not a matter of *relative* age between speaker and addressee: it is strictly a question of the addressee's absolute age in years. When a certain age threshold is reached, T-address ceases, and V begins; the speaker may still be 50 years or more older than the addressee. What then is interesting is at what age addressees of certain castes pass the threshold into V-giving for speakers of different castes. And this turns out to be a systematic variable dependent on the caste of speaker and addressee.

After a good deal of eliciting, six basic thresholds were isolated. These were:

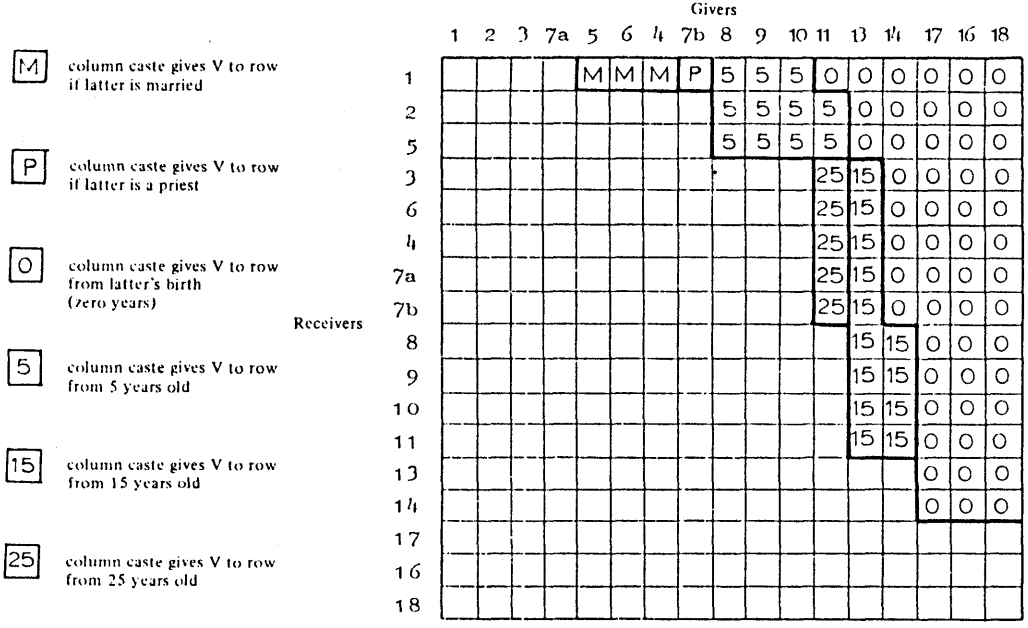
(i) 0-V: A gives V to B if B is 0 age (i.e., from birth)

(ii) 5-V: A gives V to B if B is 5 years old and over

(iii) 15-V: A gives V to B if B is 15 and over
(iv) 25-V: A gives V to B if B is 25 or over
(v) P-V: A gives V to B (where B is a Brahman), only if B has been initiated into the priesthood (anywhere from age 12 to 25)
(vi) M-V: A gives V to B if B is married

Now P-V and M-V are clearly social age-grades while the other thresholds are phrased in terms of absolute age, regardless of social grade. This distinction may well be artificial, that is, it could be that in all cases what is really involved is some measure of social maturity of which age is a cardinal determinant. This is further suggested by the fact that there was some variation from informant to informant, so that while one member of a caste, in response to the question 'when do you begin to call a boy of caste X *niṅka*?' would respond with 'at the age of five', another might reply 'at the age of seven'. In all cases, though, the relationship between the different categories of addressees remained constant, and so did the number of distinctions. It may well be (I think it likely) that 5-V really corresponds to the social age-grade of *viḷaiyāṭappiḷḷai* (literally 'playing child', that is a dependent child), 15-V with puberty, 25-V with manhood (the period after which a male can no longer be called a *paiyan*, boy). This last social threshold is associated with marriage (although the threshold would be passed by a bachelor after about 30 in any case), and would clearly be different for girls who marry many years earlier than boys: unfortunately all my questions about these thresholds were phrased only in terms of male addressees, and I do not know how they extend to female addressees. However, it should be stressed that my informants did not speak in terms of social grades, except in the cases of P-V and M-V, but rather spoke consistently in terms of actual age, and it should also be remembered that actual age is definitely utilized in our third T/V medium REL and cannot be ruled out here. Consequently we shall continue to use the idiom that informants do.

How are we to treat these six thresholds? As defining six distinct media? Or as a single medium with a sliding valuation? This second must be the correct treatment, for to treat each threshold-V separately would be to ignore the transitive patterning between them. If we turn to Matrix VI we see that these different thresholds are extremely systematically distributed. The basic pattern is that the lower the caste of the giver, not only the more V is used in general, but also the lower age thresholds for V-use become. And this corresponds with the intuition that derives from the valuation of V: since to give V is to admit inferiority of caste rank by giving V to all members of another caste, to withhold V till the addressee



Matrix VI. Thresholds for V-giving

is 5, 15 or 25 is to progressively diminish the respect in which the other caste is held. Conversely, the more unconditional the use of V (culminating in 0-V), the more respect is given.

On these grounds, then, it seems plausible that, in the eyes of members, the lower the age threshold at which caste A begins to V members of B, the higher the rank of B. We can then rank the values of the six kinds of V-giving, in the order already presented from (i) to (vi). We place P-V after 25-V because this social threshold can be achieved as late as 25, but in addition need never be achieved at all (although in the great majority of cases it is). Similarly M-V is a social threshold that can occur well after the age of 25: indeed males often seem to marry in the years immediately after that (cf. Beck 1972: 230). We place M-V after P-V because in general for Brahmans, marriage would occur after the passage into priesthood: it thus seems to represent a lower threshold. Let us assign decreasing unit-scores as values for each of these ranked types of V:

0-V	6 units
5-V	5 units
15-V	4 units
25-V	3 units
P-V	2 units
M-V	1 unit

In this way we can reflect the fact that receiving 0-V is more highly valued than receiving 5-V, 5-V than 15-V, and so on. What we have done, in fact, is discover that there are *degrees* of categorical V from absolute (0-V) to adults-only (25-V), and beyond to social maturity (M-V). It might be that a yet finer-grained analysis would break down our six types of V still further, suggesting an ordered continuum of V-types matching an underlying continuum of rank. However, if these six types are all anchored in fact to social age-grades, as I suspect, then there will in fact be a small set of distinct types.

It is worth mentioning here that my attempts to break down T-giving in a similar way were unsuccessful: informants were on the whole insistent that if one gave seniors of another caste T then one gave even very much older persons of that caste T too. There were just some exceptions to this on the upper caste/lower caste borderline. Thus, not all members of caste 7b received strict REL from members of 5; those members of 7b who were poor and uninfluential might receive T from junior members of 5 until these members of 7b reached the dignified age of 60 or so. Here, then, is a cell that is claimed to be in general REL in the initial matrix, but on closer examination seems to be REL for the upper *class* member of 7b only, and

under-sixty-T for lower class members of 7b. We shall treat this phenomenon as a reclassification of REL in relation to the personal achieved attributes of members of 7b (here negative attributes: dependence, sloth, etc.) but we admit that this obscures some similarity between varying thresholds for T-usage and varying thresholds for V-usage.

To return to the analysis, Matrix VII assigns scores to each cell in the area of each distinct type of V-usage, on the basis of the ranked unit-scores above. A caste's score as a receiver is here a sum of the unit-scores for each cell in its row, while a caste's score as a giver is the sum of the unit-scores for each cell in its column. So, for instance, caste 1 (Brahman) has a receiving score of

$(1 \times 3) + (2 \times 1) + (5 \times 3) + (6 \times 6) = +56$

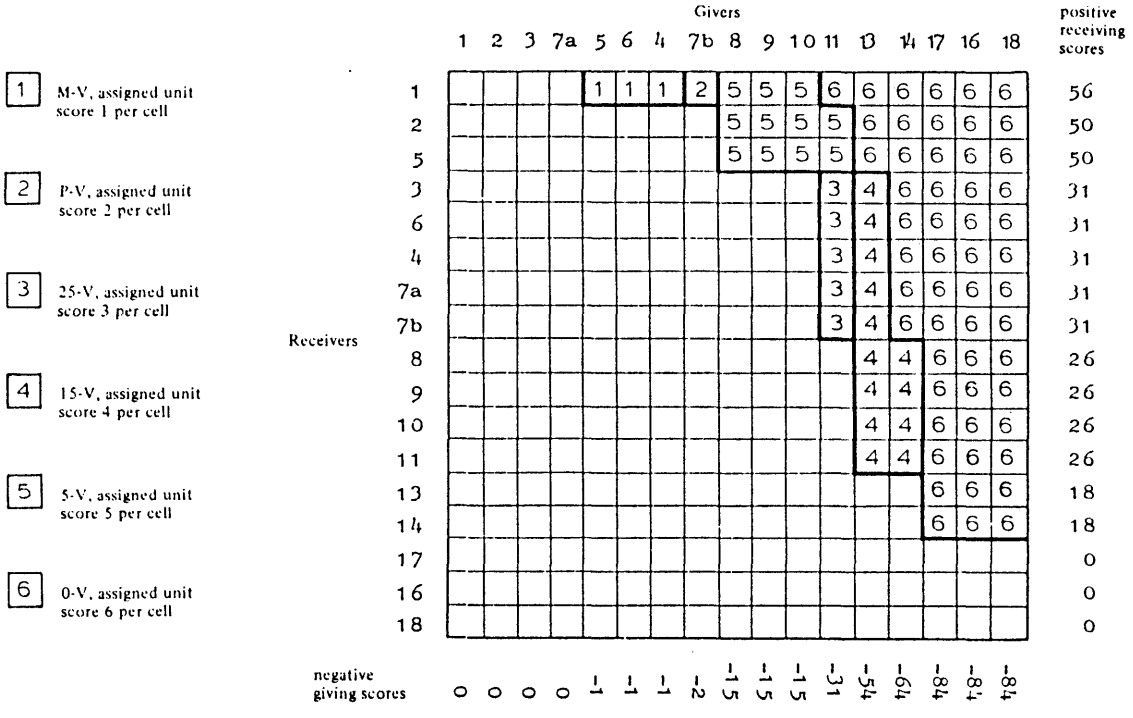
and a giving score of zero.

From the summed scores we may extract the linear representations of rank for giving and receiving as in Figure 14, below.

Note that the rank orders established in Figure 14 on the two dimensions of giving and receiving are not consistent with each other. On the other hand each is completely consistent with the rank order already established on its own dimension (giving or receiving), as we shall see in a moment. Note too that visually from the matrices one may observe that the diminishing thresholds are entirely consistent with the rank established on the basis of the first gross (unbroken-down) analysis of V.

Let us now gather together all the evidence on caste ranking that has been collected here. Figure 15 provides a simple visual array of the data. We can see that threshold-V distinctions add two differently located cuts on the giving dimension, but none on the receiving. Since within each dimension ranks established are overwhelmingly consistent, we may add the distinctions together to achieve an overall ranking that slices the caste hierarchy finely into eleven blocs of rank-status on the summed giving dimensions, and nine blocs on the summed receiving dimensions.

We may note in passing that such a fine discrimination of ranks within the caste hierarchy in Ōlappāḷaiyam is not achieved by the analysis of food transactions. For instance, curd giving chops the hierarchy into nine blocs, summing the distinctions in curd and rice giving achieves no further discriminations, while ranks as receivers of curd and rice together only sum to eight distinctions (Beck 1972: Figures 4.8 and 4.9). It may be noted that the maximum number of discriminations in any one transactional medium (excluding therefore ranks by opinion poll) reported from Indian materials seems to be nine, a figure reached by Marriott's *pakka* food transactions (Marriott 1968a), and Beck's curd transactions (Beck 1972).



Matrix VII. Scored thresholds for V-giving

Rank as receivers			*Rank as givers*	
caste	score	highest rank	caste	score
1	+56		1	0
—			2	0
			3	0
2	+50		7a	0
5	+50		—	
—			5	−1
3	+31		6	−1
6	+31		4	−1
4	+31			
7a	+31		—	
7b	+31		7b	−2
—			—	
8	+26		8	−15
9	+26		9	−15
10	+26		10	−15
11	+26		—	
—			11	−31
13	+18		—	
14	+18		13	−54
—			—	
17	0		14	−64
16	0		—	
18	0	lowest rank	17	−84
			16	−84
			18	−86

Figure 14. Ranks by thresholds for V-usage

(Marriott, though, sums his food transaction discriminations to reach twelve distinctions among 24 castes.) It appears from this that linguistic media are finer discriminators than any other media. Nevertheless there does seem to be some limit to the number of rank-blocs that are discriminated in any one medium, and it may be that this represents some basic cognitive limit on routine perceptual discriminations along the lines of Miller's 'magical number 7 ± 2' (Miller 1956).

We are now in a position to reassemble all our data on inter-caste T/V usage into a single, largely scaled, matrix. From Figure 15 we know that all the derived rank scales as receivers are consistent and establish an overall hierarchy in the receiving dimension. We also know that all the scales as givers are in agreement, except for the ambiguous position of 11 in the giving dimension. So we can take these two overall ranks as our axes for a

Rank as givers

T	V	Threshold-V
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
7a	7a	7a
5	5	5
6	6	6
4	4	4
7b	7b	7b
11	8	8
8	9	9
9	10	10
10	11	11
13	13	13
14	14	14
17	17	17
16	16	16
18	18	18

Summed rank distinctions

1	
2	
3	
7a	
5	
6	
4	*Overall rank*
7b	*as givers*
8(11)	
9	
10	
11	
13	
14	
17	
16	
18	

Rank as receivers

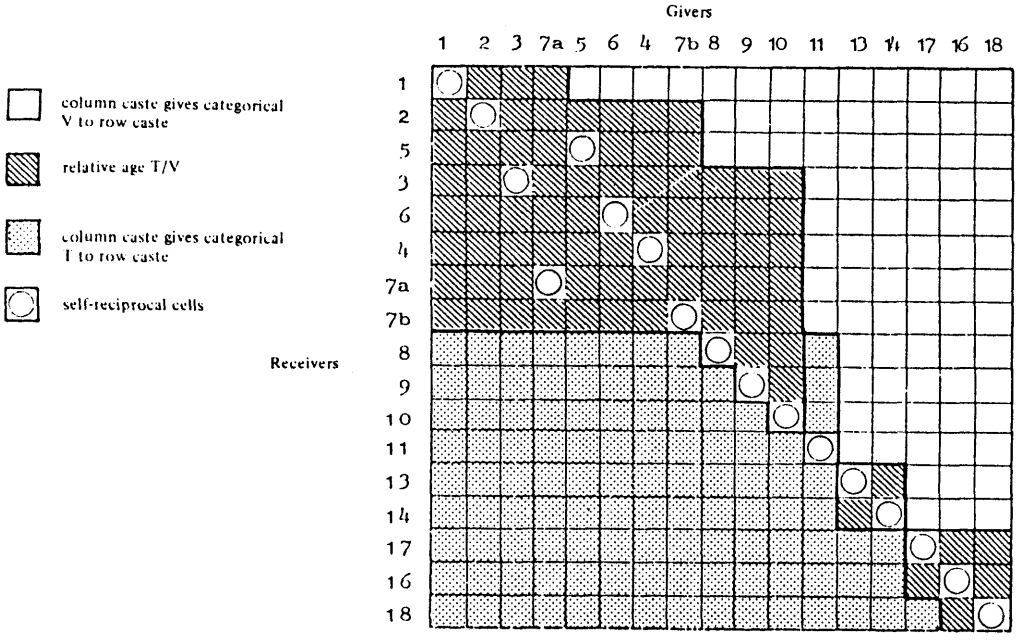
T	V	Threshold-V
1	1	1
2	2	2
5	5	5
3	3	3
6	6	6
4	4	4
7a	7a	7a
7b	7b	7b
8	8	8
9	9	9
10	10	10
11	11	11
13	13	13
14	14	14
17	17	17
16	16	16
18	18	18

Summed rank distinctions

1	
2	
5	
3	
6	
4	
7a	*Overall rank*
7b	*as receivers*
8	
9	
10	
11	
13	
14	
17	
16	
18	

Figure 15. Summary of derived ranks

combined matrix that will scale perfectly on the two distinct dimensions except for caste 11's transactions. The combined matrix is presented as Matrix VIII, and it encapsulates all our information on inter-caste T/V usage. Note that we know that REL (relative age T/V) must scale appropri-



Matrix VIII. The basic matrix

ately because being the residual option it has to fill the geometrical space between T- and V-usage. Simply for readability we will omit the facts about V-threshold variability from this matrix, which we will now designate *the basic matrix*.

We are able to combine all these facts into a single almost-scaled matrix in part because of the two-dimensional matrix format introduced by Marriott (1976a), which utilizes both axes (here giving and receiving dimensions) to establish independent scales. We cannot use Beck's 1972 double-matrix format here, designed to retain geometrical representations of rank, as this requires that allowances be made for self-reciprocal cells in each medium (which would then impinge into the other media represented on the same matrix). In using Marriott's 1976a format we therefore fall back implicitly on a scoring rather than a geometrical method, but in any case the two are inherently linked. Note that now the self-reciprocal cells are somewhat displaced from the diagonal – and following Marriott we shall make some capital of this very displacement.

But the major reason that we are able to combine all these facts into a single almost-scaled matrix is that there is an overwhelming consistency and agreement between the different ranking scales. This need not have been the case: T-giving and V-giving, though mutually exclusive, could have established grossly inconsistent ranking scales, because the existence of the third basic option (REL) ensures that the scales are not inter-inferrable. Not only are the bulk of transactions in all media consistent and/or redundant, but where intransitivities of rank in different scales do occur, they occur together consistently on the giving versus the receiving dimension. And this can be accommodated in our two-dimensional matrix. There is only one set of anomalous facts, namely caste 11's column which will not scale with the rest, to remind us that we are really dealing with potentially independent media. It is caste 11's behaviour that requires that the qualification 'almost-scaled' be used to describe the basic matrix. In an effort to compare the patterning of T-, V-, and REL-exchange with other linguistic media, five commonly encountered Tamil honorifics and dishonorifics (*ppā*, *ṭā*, *nām*, *cāmi*, and *ecamāṅka*) have also been analysed in similar fashion. Some of these additional media seem to reflect a clear social power dimension, rather than a dimension of ritual status, but the data are too lengthy to summarize here (see Levinson 1977: 293–321).

Let us now summarize our results. We find that no media are totally redundant, but are rather additive of rank discriminations. Taking all media and the scales extracted from them together, we find that there is a very high level of agreement between these independent measures of

rank: the details – which constitute our major results – are these:

(i) All rank orders established on the basis of *receiving* are absolutely consistent.

(ii) All rank orders established on the basis of *giving* are consistent – with the exception of the ambiguous position of caste 11.

(iii) *Giving scales are NOT consistent with receiving scales.*

The source of the disagreement between the receiving and giving dimensions is essentially an ambiguity about the relative ranking of castes 3 and 7a vis-à-vis caste 5. For on the giving dimension 3 and 7a rank higher than 5, whereas on the receiving dimension 5 ranks higher than 3 and 7a. In addition in the T-medium, but only there, caste 11's rank as a giver places it in the third rank-bloc above 13, while 11's rank as a receiver places it only one rank-bloc immediately above 13.

2.6. T/V behaviour: passive scoreboard or competitive game?

The patterns that we have collected could reflect one of two things: either they are determined essentially outside this linguistic arena altogether and then simply reflect the ranks obtained in those other areas of social life (the 'score-board' interpretation), or they could represent the outcomes of a rank-maximizing competition that is actually played with T and V tokens to establish a rank order of winners and losers *within* this linguistic arena (the 'competitive game' interpretation).

The leading proponent, and perhaps the originator, of the 'competitive game' interpretation is Marriott (1959, 1968a, 1976a). He talks about 'inter-caste transactions in any kind of food in Kishan Garhi as a kind of tournament among the 24 teams which make up this village's society' (Marriott 1968a: 154) and of 'game-like scorings', 'victories and defeats' (ibid: 155); and although he now adopts an 'ethnosociological' interpretation of the Hindu metaphysics of transactions, he still maintains that 'the tournament-like "total-prestational" models of exchange suggested by Mauss . . . and systematized by Homans . . . and Blau . . . can all be shown to depict part of such Indian talk and action about rank fairly well' (Marriott 1976a: 112).

But this is not the only interpretation of inter-caste relations. Leach (1960: 5–7), for instance, puts forward the thesis that one major distinction between *class* and *caste* systems is that whereas in class systems competition is endemic, in caste systems it is – by definition – rigorously excluded; for the caste society is a system of interdependent units *each* of which is guaranteed exclusive monopolies. Much of what Dumont says

may also be read as claiming that hierarchy is ascribed by the Hindu cultural tradition, not competitively derived, and that in so far as competition exists it occurs in a specially isolated arena of power relations – the Kshatriya varna, the domain of *artha* (Dumont 1970). And his discussion of Marriott (1959) indicates that at least in part he favours the 'scoreboard' interpretation (Dumont 1970: 89–91). The issue then is live.

How can we decide between these two interpretations? Let us ask ourselves what consequences one would expect if indeed T/V or other transactional media like food exchanges were truly competitive games. What game-like properties are there in the patterns that we have collected?

Informally, we may observe that there are some patterns of T/V behaviour that do seem indicative of the competitive orientation of caste-groups and of individuals. In the first case we have what we may call *countermoves*, including *retaliations* and *boycotts*. A clear case of retaliative behaviour is provided by the T-exchanging patterns between caste 11 and the caste bloc formed of 8, 9 and 10. If we refer back to Matrix II, we can see that 8, 9 and 10 give T to 11, and 11 also gives T back to 8, 9 and 10. The anomalous character of this bold usage by 11 shows up clearly in the basic matrix (Matrix VIII), where it is the only set of facts that obstructs a fully scaled two-dimensional composite matrix of all the types of T/V usage together. We have also noted that it is the only source of non-consistency in the giving dimensions (Figure 15). Not yet remarked upon is that it is also the only set of facts in the data that represents reciprocal T-exchange. By the valuation in section 2.3, reciprocal T-exchange establishes (more or less) equal rank. It might then indicate an island of inter-caste solidarity. However it is *only* in this T-giving that equality is asserted: on the other measures 8 and 9 at least are distinctly higher in rank than 11. Now, given that the valuation of T/V outcomes depends on a dyadic interaction, if caste A gives T to B, expecting to secure a V in exchange and thereby to assert A's superiority over B, it is in fact open to B to frustrate this assertion simply by returning T instead of the hoped-for V. And given that 8 and 9, and to a lesser extent 10, are recognized to be higher than 11 (see their respective *receiving* scores in Figure 15), it seems that 8, 9 and 10 would have little or no motive for claiming solidarity, and thus a measure of equality from 11. In that case in giving T, they must have hoped for V, and our interpretation in terms of a plan by 11 to frustrate this assertion of relative rank seems justified. If we allow a momentary departure from our restriction to internal analysis we can readily show that 8, 9 and 10 do indeed consider 11 uppish, and 11 does indeed think it is as good or better than 8, 9 and 10: both parties openly express their

indignation. In short, 11 is here acting competitively towards the other three castes: if they give T then 11 will give T back; if they extend the courtesy of REL, then 11 would probably reciprocate.

Absolute boycotts are not to be found in the T/V data. But boycotts in food-exchange media are widely reported, and are found in Ōlappāḷaiyam where Beck reports that the Cōḷi Ācāri (caste 3) and the Kōmuṭṭi Ceṭṭiyār (caste 4) are blacklisted so that as givers they rank almost as low as untouchables: this in return for minimal (rank-maximizing) receiving (Beck 1972: 164–7). Thus those who claim too high a rank can be effectively boycotted. In the T/V media, as one can readily imagine, this is more impractical: it would amount to avoiding any second person pronouns in the verbal interaction that for one practical reason or another would be impossible to escape. Nevertheless, although no group systematically maintains such pronominal boycotts, I know of at least three individual inter-caste dyads where precisely such non-usage is maintained. These have arisen in response to perceived violations of REL-usage, or V-usage or T-usage. One case, for instance, concerns a 55-year old man of caste 9 (call him K.U.), and a 45-year old man of caste 7a (call him O.S.). Referring to the basic matrix (Matrix VIII), one sees that the general expectation is that members of 7a give members of 9 T irrespective of their age, while members of 9 give 7a REL, that is T or V in relation to the relative age of speaker or addressee. By these norms K.U. can expect T from O.S.S., and O.S. can expect the same back, for he is younger than K.U. But as informants commented, O.S. doesn't want T back. O.S. is a successful merchant: he has the best cloth stall in the line of shops along the trunk road outside the hamlet, and in addition lends money at interest to many local farmers. He has also been the banker for some commercial ventures of various local squires (*periya Kavuṇṭar* families). In one way or another, without being especially popular, he has considerable influence in village affairs. Clearly O.S. has visions of social advancement, and since all other members of his caste in the hamlet are closely related to him, his visions extend to them as a body. In advancing himself he hopes to advance them. He remains obsequious to the dominant caste 5 – their patronage is the source of his influence – but he would like to detach himself (or so his behaviour seems to indicate) from those castes that straddle the upper caste/lower caste borderline, namely 8, 9 and 10. If he could get these castes to give him V he would have gained their acknowledgement of his superiority.

In contrast K.U. is simply an industrious respected member of caste 9 who carries on the traditional trades of his caste with a small margin of

profit, and maintains a tough self-respect. Although O.S. has let it be known that he expects more respect from K.U., K.U. will not bow to the pressures. He refuses to give V. But rather than give T (which might in any case risk measures from O.S.), K.U. as a measure of protest *boycotts* O.S. in pronominal usage: he uses *neither* T *nor* V nor any other second person form.

Faced with this protest by avoidance, O.S. has two rational strategies open to him: he may continue to give T to K.U., or he may likewise protest by avoidance. The only problem with continuing to give T is that it would seem to be an acceptance of a situation that O.S. does not in fact accept: the usage might stabilize with K.U. giving zero pronouns, and O.S. giving T. The only problem with boycotting K.U. reciprocally is that it would establish a symmetrical usage of zero pronouns with the accompanying presupposition of rank equality. Faced with the decision between these two equally unsatisfactory solutions, O.S. oscillates from one to the other. The whole affair is a matter of common knowledge and amusement to villagers (but I have the facts about the protagonists' attitudes from closer sources: K.U.'s son and O.S.'s nephew).

Despite pronominal boycott, there can be no boycott on verbal interaction: village affairs bring the two men together, and then the mechanics of second person pronoun avoidance are of interest. Instead of saying:

(1) *Eṅkēyō pōyiṭṭu vāriṅka?*
Where have you-V returned from?

one says:

(2) *Eṅkēyō pōyiṭṭu vārāppale irukkutā?*
Is there as if there has been a going and coming?

or instead of

(3) *Cantaikki pōyiṭṭu vantiṭṭiṅkaḷā?*
Have you-V returned from market?

one says

(4) *Cantaikki pōyiṭṭu vantāccā?*
Has there been a returning from the market?

and so on. The point is that impersonal phrasing makes T/V avoidance possible.

We have strayed from our self-imposed restrictions to internal analysis, but hope to have established the point that there are patterns visible both in the basic matrix and in the finer analysis of individual usage that are best interpreted as rational *counter-moves*, either retaliations or boycotts, to rank-maximizing moves by others in what is potentially a competitive

game. When we turn to external evidence these interpretations can be shown to be substantiated.

Let us mention one other piece of evidence, external to the data in the matrices, that indicates a measure of competitive rank-maximization. This is the fact that there are situational variabilities, particularly in relation to the composition of the audience. Where such variations occur they most often occur in the direction of speaker-rank-maximization. For instance, take a case where a male adult member of caste 8 is addressing a ten-year old boy of caste 5: the expectation here (as recorded in Matrix VII) is that the man will address the boy as V. And that expectation will be fulfilled wherever the audience includes persons who have a vested interest in the rank of caste 5 as a whole (e.g. the boy's parents, members of castes closely allied to 5, members of the other two highest castes, traditional servants of the boy's family, etc.). But outside those contexts, in the absence of any audience at all, or in the presence of members of caste 8 only, the man may feel free to use T to the boy. The interesting question then is why the man bothers to make his usage inconsistent, and one is inclined to the view that he would say T wherever he could and get away with it. Many other observations support such a view. No one seems to be inclined to give more respect than they can get away with: they attempt to maximize their rank vis-à-vis others.

Returning now to the facts internal to the matrices, two general facts about them lend some support to the competitive view of caste relations. One of these is the basic asymmetry between ranks derived from success on giving dimensions and ranks derived from success on receiving dimensions. For one possible source of this asymmetry might turn out to be that the rank that any one caste *claims* (by a certain pattern of giving) is not necessarily *accepted* by the set of all the other castes with which it must transact (this acceptance being reflected in a certain pattern of receipts). Since we examine possible sources for this dissensus below (2.8) in detail, we may simply say here that if such a system of competitive claims is one possible source it cannot be the only one. For instance it might explain that whereas castes 3 and 7a do better than 5 as givers in T/V media, when it comes to receipts there is a high level of consensus that 5 is higher than 3 and 7a (see Figure 15). However the assumption of competitive behaviour then makes 5's actions difficult to understand: why does it not challenge 3 and 7a on the giving dimension too? Other solutions are explored below.

The other general fact about the matrices that may lend credence to

the 'competitive game' interpretation of inter-caste behaviour is the fact that the ranks, and especially the distinctions between rank-blocs, are established with an apparent degree of independence in each medium. If all these behaviours were simply symbolic ratifications of a rank order established in some other medium, ritual, political or economic, then there seems no reason why they should be such erratic representations. In short, if these media are 'score-boards', why are they such poor ones? Not only are there discrepancies within T/V media (Figure 15), and within the other honorifics reviewed, but also between the facts in both arrays. Moreover, if we allow ourselves another glance outside our domain, such discrepancies occur in the local food transactions too: Figure 16 (derived from Beck 1972: Ch. 4) lines up linear representations of rank orders derived from scaled matrices of food and service transactions.[2] Lines connect castes with the most erratic fortunes across different media.

It is clear that if these media are score-boards of rank attained elsewhere, then they are not score-boards of the *same* external game. They must either be games within themselves, or be representations of rank in quite different social dimensions. It is this last interpretation that seems to be accepted by Beck; she argues that whereas the ranks that are derivable from transactions in food 'are heavily influenced by dietary and ritual ideals', the rank derivable from the offering of seats on informal occasions 'comes as close as is possible to a scale of the relative power and dependence of the various subcastes . . . on the Kavuṇṭar community' (Beck 1972: 162). Two external dimensions then underlie the symbolic expressions in transactions: purity and power. Since there are more than two rank-scales symbolically expressed, one must then assume that these others are derived from some partial fusion, or algebraic combination, of positions established in the two basic external social dimensions. This at least allows for the fact that there might be competitive claims about *which* basic social dimension (purity or power) was most relevant to some particular symbolic display.

This interpretation of the transactional patterns is not easy to substantiate nor easy to falsify. One would like to be able to derive independently two ranking scales corresponding directly to the social dimensions of power and purity, and then see whether all observed transactional rankings can reasonably be viewed as lying somewhere in between these two ideal types, as partial compromises in various degrees to both. But in fact there is only one clear way that Indians measure purity, namely by transactional discrimination, Hindu actors having (as has been argued by Marriott 1976a)

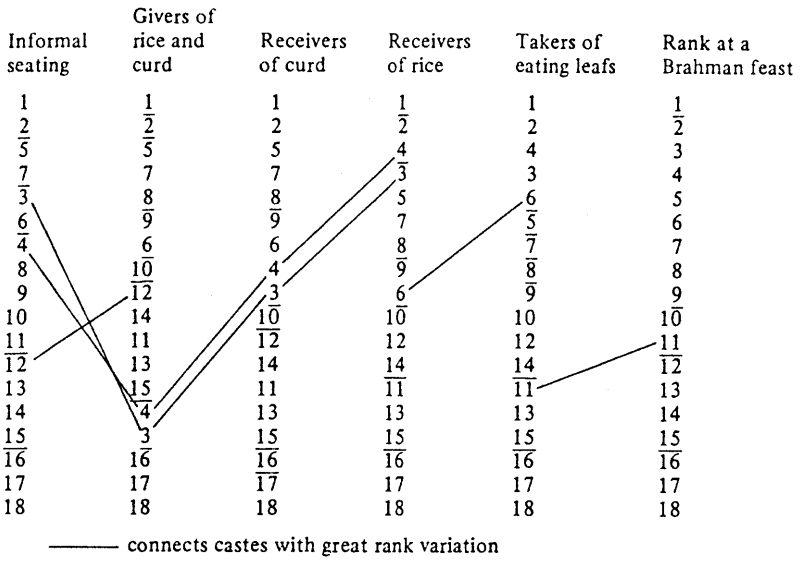


Figure 16. Ranks on a variety of non-linguistic media

as moral substance the sum of their dealings with the world. Even objective power, on a detailed search and survey, tends to evaporate into a large number of diffuse and different sources: political allegiances, connections to urban power structures, numbers of mobilizable kinsmen and retainers, economic clout, land control, etc. When we then ask which of these criteria of power assessment are actually important to members, and which castes are actually generally *judged* to have power (thus actually acquiring it of course), we find ourselves inevitably turning back to look at behaviour in transactional media. And there is every indication that members also turn back: 'he's powerful (I know because) everyone bows low before him' is the sort of reasoning presented. It seems that social dimensions like purity and power are not independent of the actions that ratify them. There are real stakes in these transactional games themselves.

So far we have argued informally that there are at least some elements in transactional inter-caste behaviour that favour the 'competitive game' interpretation. But in fact there is a formal theory of competitive behaviour, namely the mathematical theory of games. Let us ask whether T/V usage falls within the compass of that theory, and if so what predictions

the theory would make. If we can find some of those predictions verified in the behaviour then the competitive game interpretation would receive very strong support indeed.

It is sometimes thought that the theory of games has only normative applications, that is, that it seeks to prescribe rational optimal behaviour in competitive contexts. But it is also, of course, descriptive and does not assume optimal behaviour but rather attempts to determine this empirically (Morgenstern 1968: 62). The theory does make certain assumptions about the nature of the game and the participants: amongst these are that the game has a definite form that defines a set of alternative moves for each player, that each player has a consistent pattern of preferences among the possible outcomes of the game, knows the other player's pattern of preferences, and seeks to maximize his own (Luce and Raiffa 1957). Games can be classified usefully in various ways: they may include elements of chance (mixed strategies) or exclude them (pure strategies); they may have 'saddle points' in which case they are called 'specially strictly determined'; they may be strictly competitive so that players' utility functions sum to zero, in which case they are called 'zero-sum games'; they may have two or more players, and may be described in that way; they may be so arranged that coalitions will benefit players ('essential games') or provide no benefit ('inessential games') – and so on.

Now one thing worth trying is to take Marriott at his word, and interpret inter-caste relations as a particular kind of competitive game. The most straightforward model would be that T/V usage and food transactions constitute *zero-sum n-person strictly-determined games with pure strategies*, that may or may not be *essential*. The rules of the game together with the nature of the outcomes is stated by the valuation of atomic dyads in section 2.3, and the utility functions of all players are a simple maximization of rank. Examination will show that utilities are zero-sum, and there are saddle points in such a game. Now let us ask how players would behave. To make the simple point that we wish to make here, no formal development is necessary. Indeed we can operate with highly scaled down mini-games with just four players.

Taking food transactions first, let us ask what each player's best strategy is, given that (a) giving food raises a player's rank while receiving it lowers it, and (b) each player prefers the outcome that maximizes his own rank. The answer clearly is that the best strategy is to give as much as possible and receive as little as possible. Now let us suppose that all players chose best strategy. Then we have a total game outcome in which none of the four players receives, but as a consequence none manages to give! All

acts are abstentions: nothing takes place. However if we allow pre-game bargaining, there is another best strategy: one player can agree to receive from another, just so long as the other promises to receive from him. Then each partner in the coalition will succeed in giving, but only at the cost of some receiving. If all four players join in this coalition, agreeing to receive each other's food just so long as the others agree to receive theirs, then we have a total game outcome in which each player has three successful gifts but these are weighed against three costly receipts: the net gain is again zero. Thus although a player can do just as well by successful coalition, he can do no better than he would have done with the other strategy and no coalition. Therefore these games are *inessential*: there are no benefits to be derived from coalition. But nevertheless there are two *minimax* strategies (strategies that will guarantee the minimal loss): the one is total abstention – which we may call the *minimal* strategy – which is best in the absence of a coalition; the other is the *maximal* strategy of securing maximum gifts – but at the cost of maximum receipts, and this is only a minimax strategy in a coalition context.

If we now turn to the linguistic medium of T-giving we find a very similar pattern. This is not surprising because T-transactions have the same valuation as food transactions. However, as we noted in section 2.3, there are some differences between material and linguistic media; in particular it takes two separate acts for a food transfer to occur – an act of giving and an act of receiving – whereas for a linguistic transfer receiving is largely beyond actors' control. From this it follows that, whereas for food the best strategy in the absence of a coalition was abstention (no one being willing to receive), for T-exchange best strategy is on the contrary *maximal*: all players have no choice but to receive, so each player can maximize his giving. The outcome, if all players follow best strategy, has the unfortunate consequence that for each player his three gains (successful gifts) are neutralized by three losses (his receipts). Once again in a context without coalitions, best strategy can only yield zero-gains and zero-losses net. If coalitions are allowed, then each player can bargain to reduce his losses (T-receipts), but only at the cost of giving up a corresponding number of gains (T-gifts). If all players joined in such a coalition then once again net gains for each player are zero. So apart from the fact that maximal strategies and minimal strategies are best in different coalition contexts, food and T-transfers offer the same basic game to players: a game in which, if all players play best strategy, all players must come out with equal scores, and in which there is no advantage in coalitions.

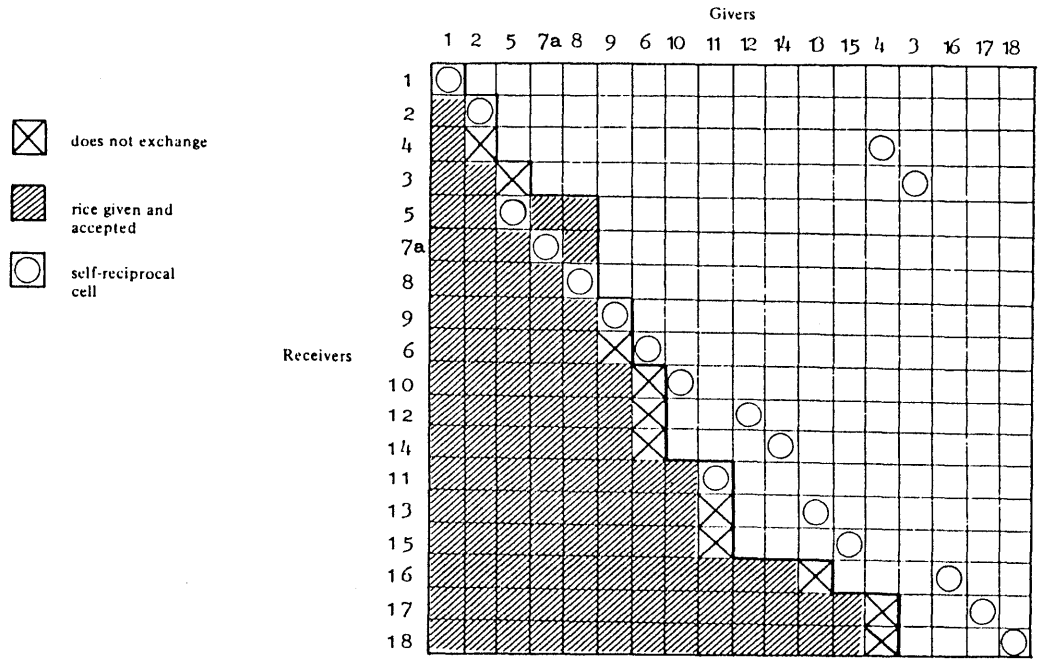
Turning to the media with the inverse valuation, service provision and

V-exchange, it can be shown that they also constitute the same kind of game with the same basic formal properties. Even in a game allowing a mixture of coalitions and non-coalitions, those players who make coalitions will do no better than those who do not (see Levinson 1977: 339–41).

What can we show by all this? First and foremost we can show that the patterns that emerge in the empirical T/V data (as encapsulated in the basic matrix) do not even approximate to the game-outcomes that we have generated on the assumption that players are free to pursue minimax strategies. For if they were free to do so, then, with or without coalitions, they would all do equally well. *In short, hierarchy would never be generated.* And the remarkable thing about the empirical data is that it scales so very well to reveal clear blocs of ranked castes. We can conclude that T/V exchange and food and service transfers *cannot constitute strictly competitive games*. The hierarchy must come from somewhere: there must be strong constraints on players outside the game, so that game outcomes are at least partially a passive score-board of ranks achieved in other arenas. Marriott's 'tournament' then is one where fates are at least partially already decided before the tournament begins.

How can we reconcile this conclusion with the evidence of competitive behaviour that we adduced earlier, namely the existence of retaliatory counter-moves (retaliations and boycotts), the asymmetry between claims to rank and general recognition of it, and the fact that ranks established in diverse media do not match? The obvious, and I think necessary, solution is to admit the possibility that each medium constitutes *in part* a truly competitive game and *in part* a reaffirmation of ranks derived elsewhere. Each medium would then be in part a passive score-board and in part an arena of actual competition.

If we now look more carefully at the empirical outcomes in the actual media, we can readily discover *areas* of the matrices which do indeed approximate to the models generated on the assumption of minimax strategies operating freely. Matrix IX is drawn directly from Beck's Figure 4.8 which represents the pattern of cooked rice exchanges on informal occasions between each and every caste in the local arena (Beck 1972: 163). Looking carefully at this figure one can detect an area of maximal strategy: 5, 7a and 8 give and receive cooked rice from each other. No other castes exchange this food reciprocally. This must in fact represent an area of coalition: each agrees to accept if the other takes. We can also detect an area of minimal strategy: castes 4 and 3 receive from only one and two others respectively (thus minimizing their gains). There is admittedly another factor here in that caste 4 and caste 3's failure to give even



Matrix IX. Cooked rice exchange

to the lowest castes (in contrast to, say, caste 9's relative success) is not based on the failure to receive directly from those lowest castes (caste 9 does not; it would in fact be culturally unthinkable). Rather there appears to be a coalition between other upper castes (like 5 and 9) and the lowest castes such that failure to take from 5 and 9 can trigger a boycott by the lowest castes. Whatever payoff the lower castes get for such a coalition does not appear within this medium itself. (For further details see Beck 1972: 164–70.) Perhaps a full-blown game theoretic analysis considering all payoffs in all media might in fact make a lot of sense of such areas of competitive behaviour.

Turning to T-usage, we have already found the real-life analogue of one of our ideal games. This is where in the absence of a coalition, each player maximally gives (and perforce receives) T. The empirical instance is the retaliatory T-usage of castes 8, 9 and 10 to 11, and vice-versa, to be found in Matrix II and already discussed in this section. Are there also any instances where, by means of coalition, T is mutually avoided? Of course if T is avoided, given the awkwardness of perpetual pronominal avoidance between whole groups, some substitute must be found. REL could be such a substitute, and areas of REL-usage in the basic matrix (Matrix VIII above) may in fact represent precisely such coalitions over T-avoidance. We will discuss REL below in section 3.1. We must conclude, then, that there are areas of truly competitive game-like behaviour in the patterns of transactional exchange between castes in various media. But there must also be some *external* determination of rank by sanctions or payoffs in other media. This is probably true for all media.

2.7. Consensus on hierarchy

In the study of verbally expressed opinions on caste hierarchy, where a sort of opinion poll is systematically taken within a village, rather precise measures of the degree of consensus on caste ranks can be obtained. For instance Marriott is able to produce the following figures: 93% of 6,463 opinions (given by 24 informants) about the relative rank of pairs of castes chosen from the local hierarchy were in agreement in a particular North Indian village (Marriott 1968a: 138). Can we produce similar measures from our data?

It is not obvious that we can. Is it appropriate at all to talk of consensus in *behaviour* rather than in opinion? Only in this sense: the behaviour we are examining is symbolic – its 'meaning' is clearly stated in the rules of valuation. The valuation states that different modes of treating others will

have different social values; and moreover that the value that an individual's act has depends critically on how the recipient acts back. If A gives a V to B, then only if B does not give V back is A higher than B. With the single exception of 11's use of T to 8, 9 and 10, there are no such symmetrical usages in our data. But this is itself a fact of interest: it means that both parties for each dyadic pattern of exchange concur in the valuation of it. We may say then that each case of V-giving records an agreement between the giver and the receiver that the giver is lower than the receiver. Similarly each case of T-giving (with the single exception mentioned above) records an agreement that the giver is higher than the receiver.

Everything that we have examined so far then is a massive set of agreements about the relative ranks of parties in particular dyads taken one at a time. But unlike opinion-poll data these judgements of relative rank are all egocentric: we cannot extract from the T/V data one caste's judgements about the relative rank of every other pair of castes. The most we can directly get is one caste's judgements about its *own* rank relative to every other caste. The maximum number of such judgements among 17 castes can only be 16 for each Ego, whereas opinions could total 272 for each Ego. So we cannot produce the same kinds of measures of relative rank as studies of local opinions.

What we can produce is collections of facts about how each caste treats each other caste (the columns in our matrices) and about how each caste is treated by all the others (the rows in our matrices). Now clearly ranks derived from receiving scores (rows) represent the collective agreement about the rank of the receiver in this medium – each caste has contributed to that overall assessment. The status of each caste's giving score is rather different: a column in one of our matrices represents that caste's view of itself, its own behavioural estimation of its rank. But note that whereas the Ts it gives are simply claims to higher status, the Vs it gives are admissions of lower status – and as such are likely to be concurrences in a consensus that the giver is lower than the receiver.

Receiving scores do then represent a general opinion about the receiving caste's rank. In so far as giving scores are isomorphic with receiving scores they represent the receiving caste's acceptance of the general opinion about its rank. We have already seen in Figure 15 that ranks as receivers in T and V (and threshold-V) were totally consistent. The 17 castes are only cut up into 9 rank-blocs, far less than the discriminations achieved in opinion polls (see for example, Marriott 1968a: Table 2; Beck 1972: Figure 4.15), but the consistency is absolute (unlike the opinion polls). It

may be argued that we have here a truer picture of a consensus about rank than those derived from variable individual opinions. And the level of consensus is impressive.

2.8. Dissensus in ranking

One source of non-consensus, non-agreement and non-transitivity in the data has already been described. This was the phenomenon of countermoves, and we saw that the behaviour of caste 11 towards 8, 9 and 10 in the T-medium was best understood as an instance of competitive retaliation. But the major locus of dissensus, the only thing that stops the entire T/V data reflecting one single uniform scale of rank, is in the fact that ranks as givers are not consistent with ranks as receivers. And given the generally overwhelming pattern of consistency, this particular area of non-agreement takes on a special importance. Why does it exist, what are its sources? In this section we shall review a series of sometimes ingenious explanations in terms of rank-oriented behaviour, but despite their ingenuity we shall finally have to admit that they do not necessarily provide the correct explanation.

Let us start with the simplest of the possible explanations. We have already hinted that one reason that rank as givers is not equivalent to rank as receivers is that they are different kinds of thing. A caste's receiving scores represent the sum of other castes' opinion about its rank, whereas its giving scores represent its own view of its rank. If there is an element of competitive behaviour in transactional media then it is not surprising that there should be some discrepancy. Each caste might project a somewhat rosier image than it knows itself actually to have in the hope that others might eventually buy the rosier image.

However there are overwhelming problems with such a simple explanation. In the first place it will not work for all media. For in food transactions, for instance, in order to give successfully one must persuade the other party to accept. So no caste can simply project an optimistic image in food transactions, for others must concur in the rank claims made in order for them to take place. Yet nevertheless there are dramatic reversals of rank in food media (see Figure 16). So an account that only had application to the linguistic data and not to precisely parallel facts in the non-linguistic data would not be particularly appealing.

A second reason for rejecting this solution is that it provides no explanation for those parts of the discrepancy in ranks that come about because the *receiving* rank is higher than the giving rank. Where the discrepancy is

the other way around (giving rank exceeds receiving) we can plausibly claim that a caste manipulates that rank (giving) that lies partially within its control. However there are discrepancies of the first sort also. For instance caste 5 does much better as a receiver of V than as a giver. (Admittedly these rankings are positional so that as 5 goes down in one dimension, other castes rise to fill the vacated position, so that one could explain 5's fall in terms of the others' (3 and 7a's) rise; but the question would still remain why 5 allowed its rank to lose one position downward.) Now to explain caste 5's fall in the medium it can manipulate, one would have to resort to some assumption of caste 5's *modesty*. But the whole theory only works on the contrary assumption that all castes attempt to maximize their rank.

We may now turn to the second explanation. This is Marriott's elaborate and very appealing theory of varna strategies (Marriott 1976a). It is attractive because it promises to integrate such diverse aspects of differences between castes as ideology, personality and transactional behaviour, all as concomitants of a single basic principle: the choice of an adaptive strategy in a hierarchical, partly competitive context. The basic idea is that groups operating within a set of groups, all of whom abide by the evaluations of transactions set down in our rules of valuation, have open to them a set of just four basic adaptive strategies. For a medium where giving is positively valued, like food, the strategies are these:

(a) the group can maximize status by *giving only* and not receiving ('optimal' strategy),
(b) it can assure itself of a median status by *both* giving *and* receiving ('maximal' strategy),
(c) it can assure itself of a median status by *neither* giving *nor* receiving ('minimal' strategy),
(d) it can minimize status (and perhaps maximize material benefits) by *receiving only* and not giving ('pessimal' strategy).

We can then go on to identify these strategies with the ancient varna categories. This is shown schematically in Table 6. The varna categories then are simply labels for an exhaustive set of inherently constrained adaptive strategies.

Now these patterns despite their abstraction are indeed realized (so Marriott claims) empirically in village interaction. To illustrate for our village we can refer back to Matrix IX, the matric of cooked rice exchange derived from Beck (1972: 163). Here the castes most typically associated with each strategy are shown in Table 7 (read + as maximal, – as minimal). Now in the south, as is well known, the varna categories are incomplete:

Table 6. *Marriott's varna interaction strategies*

	Givers	Receivers	Strategy
(a) Brahman	+	−	optimal
(b) Kshatriya	+	+	maximal
(c) Vaishya	−	−	minimal
(d) Sudra	−	+	pessimal

Table 7. *Examples of varna strategies in exchange of cooked rice*

Caste	Givers	Receivers
(a) 1 and 2	+	−
(b) 5, 7a, 8	+	+
(c) 3, 4	−	−
(d) 16, 17, 18	−	+

there are no true Kshatriyas by tradition, and even paradigmatic Vaishyas are not clearly identified. Nevertheless it is clear from folklore, behaviour, ethics, language usage and social structural traits that in the south the 'dominant' landowning castes, where these are not Brahmans (as they are in Tanjore), are Kshatriya-like (Beck 1972; 1973). And these rural-based power groups were in the past distinguished from their urban counterparts by the ancient terminology 'right-hand castes' versus 'left-hand castes' (Stein 1968). I propose to identify these as the South Indian correlates of Kshatriya varna and Vaishya varna respectively (although since 'left-hand' can be a term of abuse in India, it is the opposition rather than the labels that are correlated).

Now Marriott points out that if we adopt the kind of matrix that we have in fact adopted, then which 'varna strategy' (my term) each caste is playing is directly inferrable from the matrix. The relevant property of our matrix convention is the distinction between hierarchical ranks as givers and receivers, their separate representation along the two axes, and the consequent abandonment of the necessary alignment of self-reciprocal cells along the main left–right diagonal. The player with maximal transactions and the player with minimal transactions both achieve exactly the same rank. And experimentation will soon convince that using *either* maximal strategy *or* minimal strategy will *guarantee* mid-level status. They are thus rival but equally viable strategies for achieving that rank. Of course one does better to give to the greatest number of others and to

receive from the least number of others: this is Marriott's 'optimal strategy' as approximated by Brahman patterns of interaction. Finally, one does worse (as far as rank is concerned) by receiving from the greatest number of others and not giving to anyone at all: this is the 'pessimal strategy' approximated by Harijan interaction patterns.

If we now construct a mini-matrix with six players, each with the following strategy sets

player 1 = (+5,0)
2 = (+3,–3)
3 = (+1,–1)
4 = (+3,–3)
5 = (+3,–3)
6 = (0,6)

then we have a playout as in the mini-matrix in Figure 17. This represents the sort of patterns associated with each varna category: player 1 plays Brahman strategy, players 2, 4 and 5 play Kshatriya strategy, player 3 plays Vaishya strategy, and player 6 plays Sudra strategy. Scores are as shown in Table 8. And the outcome really does approximate to empirical patterns observable. Now note that these patterns show up in a matrix on visual inspection: Brahman ('optimal') strategy achieves a location of the self-reciprocal cell of the optimal player at the top left of the main (left–right) diagonal, while Sudra strategy ('pessimal') achieves a location of the self-reciprocal cell in bottom right of the diagonal. For location along this diagonal indicates overall rank on both giving and receiving dimensions. But geometrical deviation of self-reciprocal cells from this main diagonal is a direct measure of the use by players of the strategies associated with the two middle varnas. The use of *maximal* (Kshatriya) strategy will cause deviation to the left of the main diagonal, while the use of *minimal* (Vaishya) strategy will cause deviation to the right of the main diagonal. So the use of particular strategies may be inferred directly from a visual appraisal of a transactional matrix. In addition, of course, one may simply count total transactions that players are involved in (as entered here in the self-reciprocal cells) in order to derive an assessment of minimal or maximal strategy use.

We may now put Marriott's theory more simply in the game theoretic terms we arrived at above. We may say that Marriott's theory amounts to the following: there are two distinct kinds of transactional behaviour (the difference between which Marriott underplays),[3] namely,

(a) rank-reflecting behaviour – the acquiescence of asymmetrical scores on the basis of external determinants,

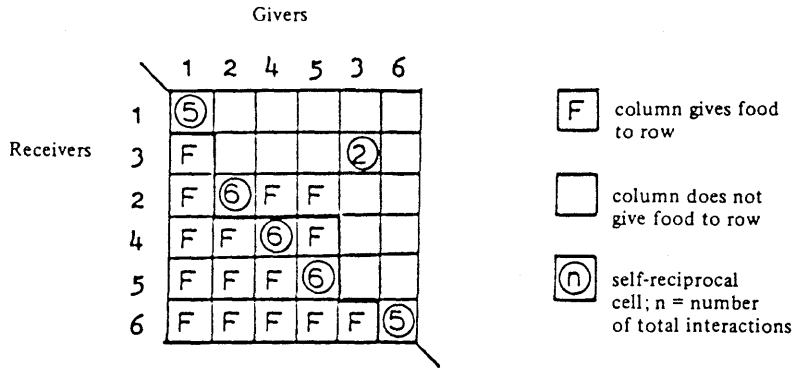


Figure 17. Mini-matrix illustrating hypothetical Varna strategies

Table 8. *Numerical interaction scores of players in Figure 17*

Player	Giving	Receiving		Net
1	+5	0	=	+5
2	+3	−3	=	0
3	+2	−2	=	0
4	+3	−3	=	0
5	+3	−3	=	0
6	0	−5	=	−5

(b) competitive zero-sum behaviour, where there are always two equally good minimax strategies (provided that necessary coalitions can be arranged) – what we have called *maximal* and *minimal*.

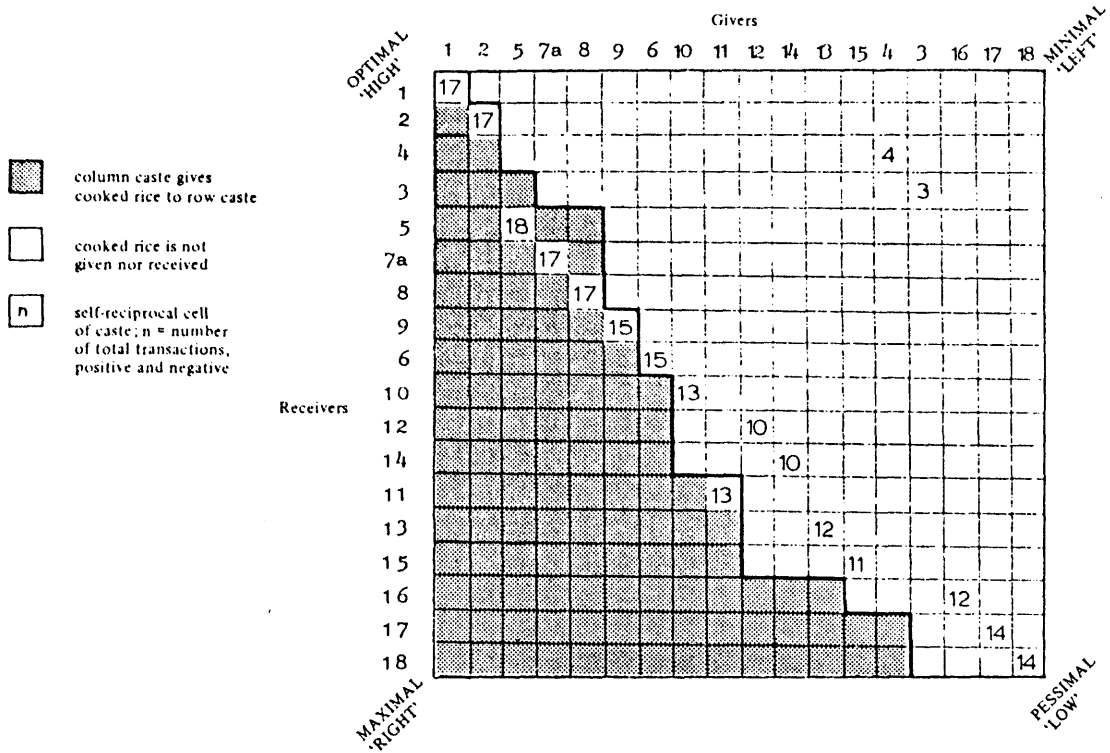
The type (a) is associated with the top and bottom varnas, and type (b) with the two middle varnas, where each takes a distinctive choice of the two options – options that are the only minimax strategies available in a caste system.

But to describe it as succinctly as this is not to belittle Marriott's theory, which has far reaching implications for understanding the distinctive styles of these traditional paths to Hindu prestige; it throws light on the distinctive ideologies of the Kshatriya/Vaishya opposition as well as the associated distinctive behaviour, and even makes sense of the personality-types that are associated with these two different paths (as Carstairs 1957 found, Kshatriyas are 'extrovert', instrumental exchangers, Vaishyas are 'intro-

verts' and minimize their dealings with the outside world; see also informal remarks in Beck 1972: 10–11). But in this context the important point is that Marriott's theory provides an account of why apparent anomalies in the caste hierarchy – areas of apparent dissensus – arise: ranks as givers and ranks as receivers are often discrepant because there are highly principled strategies that castes adopt (along with the adoption of a characteristic lifestyle) which generate these discrepancies as a natural consequence.

Let us now turn to the empirical material in which these abstract patterns are embodied. Marriott stresses that castes tend to use elements from all four of these patterns (Varna strategies) but that nevertheless emphases towards one or another tend to emerge empirically: he presents data from seven villages, including Ōlappāḷaiyam (after Beck 1972: 163). Taking the full data from the last source for exchanges of cooked rice, we have the following matrix (Matrix X: the same basic data has already been presented in Matrix IX). From this matrix, derived from Beck's Figure 4.8 (Beck 1972: 163), we may extract scores by counting the number of successful gifts to other castes that each caste accumulates (positive scores), and the number of receipts received by each caste (its negative score). These scores may be added to produce a series of net scores (à la Marriott 1968a), as in Figure 18, reflecting overall rank. The scores may also be added disregarding the negative signs to produce totals of dyadic transactions (more strictly numbers of inter-caste dyads between which the transaction in question may take place from time to time) which each caste enters into; these totals are here entered into the self-reciprocal cells for each caste in the matrix for handy reference.

Viewing Matrix X diagonally (so that the main top left/bottom right diagonal is vertical), we see that castes deviate somewhat from the central ranking line formed by the main diagonal. Vertical position on this indicates approximate overall rank (on giving and receiving dimensions) however far to the left or right of it castes may be. Two castes (3 and 4) stand way out of line as minimal givers and minimal receivers, that is as *minimal strategists*. Beck describes these two castes as belonging to the left-hand bloc, but castes 7a and 6 also belong by the same criteria. Nevertheless here 3 and 4 display the classic strategy of their Vaishya-like category, while 6 and 7a happily align with right-hand castes 5, 8 and 10. Note that the net scores of 4 and 3 are 0 and –3, comparable with the rank of 10 and 11, but their total transactions (as noted within the self-reciprocals) only sum to 4 and 3 (compared to caste 10 and 11's total of 13 transactions). It is interesting to note that, as Marriott also found (1976a: 123ff.), minimizers stand out more than maximizers. Note, though, that



Matrix X. Varna strategies in cooked rice

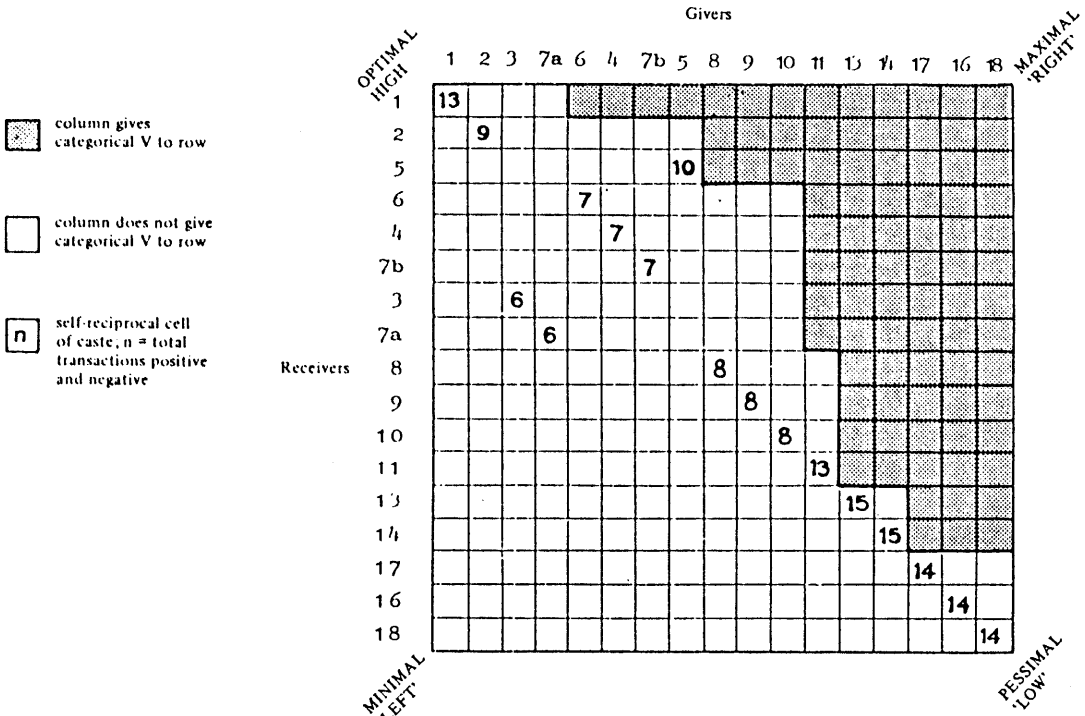
Castes*	Giving scores (G)	Receiving scores (R)	Net (G plus R)
1	17	0	17
2	16	−1	15
4	2	−2	0
3	0	−3	−3
5	14	−4	10
7a	13	−4	9
8	13	−4	9
9	10	−5	5
6	9	−6	3
10	6	−7	−1
12	3	−7	−4
14	3	−7	−4
11	5	−8	−3
13	3	−9	−6
15	2	−9	−7
16	0	−12	−12
17	0	−14	−14
18	0	−14	−14

*Castes are here ordered by their rank on the receiving dimension.

Figure 18. Scores in cooked rice transactions

had we displaced caste 5 to the bottom of its rank-bloc, its maximizing role would have been diagrammatically emphasized to tell us what its total transaction sum tells us, namely that it is the greatest maximizer of all the castes. Thus in this empirical case maximizers, and to an even greater extent minimizers, are clearly locatable – and these castes correspond correctly to the varna-like categories 'left' and 'right' as predicted by Marriott's theory.

Let us now turn back to the linguistic media, and look just at the medium of V-giving and receiving. Recollect that V-giving is disvalued and corresponds to food *receiving*, so the polarity of the scoring will be reversed to continue to reflect rank. If we now look at Matrix XI (the basic facts here were presented in Matrix II and III above) and view it with the main (left–right) diagonal vertical, we find that most castes line up approximately on the now vertical diagonal that measures rank. Some castes though lie markedly to one side (a pattern we have emphasized by moving them to the end of their rank-blocs): caste 5 lies to the right with a total of ten transactions (as marked in its self-reciprocal cell), while castes 3 and 7a lie to the left of the diagonal with the smallest numbers of



Matrix XI. Varna strategies in T/V usage

transactions in this medium, a total of six (composed of zero-givings and six receipts). Referring back to the similar matrix for cooked rice exchanges (Matrix X), we see that there 3 and 4 were in a precisely similar position to that in which 3 and 7a find themselves here in the linguistic medium; while caste 5 was there too a maximal transactor.

We now have a possible answer to our original question: why are the ranks as givers of T/V not congruent with the ranks as receivers? The possible answer is: because some castes make differential use of the two dimensions in their strategies to establish the overall rank they desire. One viable strategy is *minimal* use of both dimensions: since minimal use on one dimension will yield low scores, while minimal use on the other will yield high scores, this will guarantee a median place in the hierarchy. Another viable strategy is *maximal* use of both dimensions, which will yield high scores on one dimension and low ones on the other – again guaranteeing a median position. In V-giving 3 and 7a use minimal strategy, 5 uses maximal strategy; in food (cooked rice) 3 and 4 use the minimal strategy and 5 uses maximal strategy.

Let us deal at once with one puzzlement. We have suggested that the use of the minimal strategy is associated with the values of the left-hand bloc. Indeed there seem to be intrinsic connections between the minimal strategy and the socio-cultural traits associated with left-hand bloc membership: left-handers have relatively closed small marriage circles (associated with the patrilateral cross-cousin marriage preference in ideology) which serve to minimize the numbers of social units that are transacted with; in matters of daily interaction they are aloof and minimize their interactions with others. There is a consistent pattern here (Beck 1972: Introduction) of which Marriott's minimal strategy seems to be the core; while the other consistent ideological and organizational pattern (the right-hand model) has maximal strategy as a core. Nevertheless of the relatively high caste left-handers only castes 3, 7a and 4 seem to embrace thoroughgoing minimal strategy in interactional media. The others, castes 6 and 7b (and 4 in the linguistic media), align with the right-hand caste patterns quite closely. Why? Does this invalidate the correspondence between strategy and varna-like category?

If we turn to ethnographic observations the reasons for the 'treachery' of 6 and 7b, and sometimes 4, are fairly evident. Members of caste 6 in Ōlappāḷaiyam are the prosperous dependable carpenters and smiths for the dominant caste 5; they contrast in this with caste 3, also traditional carpenters and smiths, who do not work solidly to service village agricultural needs at all. Members of 3 tend to work on special jobs, house-building

and so on, travelling far, often into urban centres. Members of 6 have large well-equipped workshops in the village and clients go to them rather than summon them. In short, members of caste 6 are integrated into the rural economy and the set of village service interdependencies: their major clients are Kavuṇṭars (caste 5) whose interactional strategies and linguistic propensities (strong tough speech with local Koṅku forms) they tend to emulate. As for members of 7b, Kavuṇṭar blood actually runs in their veins (as all acknowledge): they are compromised left-handers if anyone is. Their ideals and interactional strategies seem Kavuṇṭar-like throughout. Caste 4 on the other hand has different reasons for not rigidly maintaining left-hand ideals in linguistic media: it is represented by a single family not well established in the village (and expelled only eight years ago from another) – its members simply cannot afford to make claims to rank that might be opposed. So among the higher castes only 3 and 7a are economically and ideologically free to pursue a left-hand strategy that will isolate them from the central right-hand patterns that are buttressed by the interdependence of the rural economy.

But perhaps looking at the left-hand category as a *strategy* should banish the puzzlement in any case. It is simply not a bloc of castes at all, not a club with a set membership. Rather it is a path, or varna, one of the four basic ones that the ranking system offers. Castes can use this path or strategy if conditions make it attractive: otherwise they can choose another. And indeed ancient lists of right- and left-hand castes display a flux hardly intelligible on any other view (see Stein: 1980). In so far as castes are intrinsically urban based or rural based by the nature of their traditional occupations, there will be a tendency for these castes to provide relatively stable foci for left-hand and right-hand blocs (Ceṭṭiyār and Mutaliyār for the left, Kavuṇṭar and Nāṭār for the right perhaps). But other castes may fluctuate from one strategy to another as the demands of a particular local ranking arena (urban or rural) make appropriate.

We seem then to have arrived at a satisfactory solution to the problem of discrepancies in ranks on the two dimensions, giving and receiving. We need (on this account) to appeal to no basic principles regulating inter-caste affairs except a concern with establishing rank. Then in terms of two aspects of this concern, namely (a) the symbolic expression of ranks established on the basis of external affairs, and (b) competitive rank-minimization, we seem to be able to account for the observable patterns in the matrices.

However our success is not complete. Various doubts and alternative explanations arise. In the first place, the equivalent nature of linguistic and

material media is open to question: there are no abstentions from T/V media altogether on a caste-wide scale, therefore talk of 'minimal strategy' may be here misplaced. In the second place, we underplay the source and significance of coalitions, for if we turn to media other than food or V, to T in particular, we see that large-scale coalitions are involved. In the third place, the dissensus which we are trying to explain involves only a few crucial cells. In linguistic media these are only 3 and 7a's non-giving of V to 1 (in contrast to 5's giving of V to 1). If 3 and 7a gave V to 1 then they would rank equally with 5, 6, 4 and 7b, and all inconsistency in the giving and receiving of T and V (other than 11's retaliative T-giving) would be dissolved. But if we can find alternative sources for the usages in these cells Marriott's elaborate theory need not be called into play – at least not for the linguistic media.

These three points of doubt converge in the following argument. The application of Marriott's theory to the linguistic data assumes the comparability of material and linguistic media in a number of important respects. But as noted already, there are differences: here the relevant difference is that whereas in a specific food medium total withdrawal from all transactions is possible, there cannot be (or perhaps just contingently is not) any such total withdrawal by a whole caste from the T/V media as a whole. Communication must go on, and pronominal avoidance, although possible (and practised) on an individual-to-individual basis, would be cumbersome in the extreme as a caste-wide practice. But whatever the sources, it is a fact that non-use of T implies use of V or REL, non-use of V implies T or REL, and non-use of REL implies use of T or V. It follows that *minimal* strategists cannot minimize their dealings in all three of these media simultaneously: in minimizing total transactions in one medium they will end up maximizing them in another.

It does not necessarily follow from this that castes 3 and 7a's non-use of V *cannot* be seen as an application of minimal strategy, just that it *need not.* For it could be viewed as an application of the strategy in the more important of the two media. In other words 3 and 7a could be willing to increase their use (be indeed maximal transactors) in the more neutral medium of REL in order to maintain minimal strategy in the strongly valued V-medium. However, due to the necessary (or at least empirical) interdependence of T, V and REL, this is not the only possible interpretation. The other is that 3 and 7a do not use V to 1 because they positively wish to use the alternative they do in fact use, namely REL.

If we turn back to Matrix VIII (the basic matrix) we find that 1, 2, 3 and 7a symmetrically (reciprocally) exchange REL. Now we know from

our discussion of the valuation of symmetrical usages above that these are potential expressions of solidarity or even intimacy. It could then be that what underlies these few crucial cells which are the source of the dissensus, is that 3 and 7a have some special relationship, some form of coalition, with castes 1 and 2. And the general importance of such coalitions may be gauged by referring again to the facts about T-giving. In the basic matrix (Matrix VIII) we see that T-giving does not fill a triangular area in the matrix in the way that V-giving does. For there is an area that extends all the way down to 7b in the receiving axis, where no T's are given at all; in fact we may say (given our definition of the 'upper castes' as the bloc from 1 through 7b) that no upper castes give T to any other upper castes. From our discussion in section 2.6 we know that a pattern of reciprocal T-avoidance will not emerge in a competitive ranking game without a coalition (whereas reciprocal *usage* of T would emerge in the same context without a coalition). If the area in question were not a competitive area, but rather a *rank-ascribed* area, then we would expect a pattern of T-usage from superiors to inferiors; and indeed in other media, like V, the 'upper castes' are cut up into two or three rank-blocs. Nevertheless what we in fact have here is an area of T-avoidance. We conclude then that some sort of coalition or alliance must underlie this abstention from T-usage among all the upper castes (and moreover that this will not readily be explained in terms of bargains made within the game – the T-medium – itself).

Now if such alliance relationships exist in any case, they would then provide an independent and alternative account of how the dissensus in giving and receiving arises. For although some slightly higher castes may make pacts with slightly lower ones (as judged by behaviour in other media), castes outside the pact may not accord the lower-rank members of the pact equal treatment with the higher ones; moreover high ranking castes outside the pact may do less well on the giving dimension than those within it (who may have secured favourable terms), although when it comes to the mass of opinion reflected in receiving scores they will remain higher in rank than some members of the pact. Thus a special pact between 3 and 7a on the one hand and 1 and 2 on the other will not necessarily prevent other castes from distinguishing between them, which in fact they do, judging 5 higher than 3 and 7a (but lower than 1 and equal to 2).

There is then the possibility of a rival explanation for the discrepancy in giving and receiving ranks in the T/V media, along the lines that the few troublesome cells involved arise not from a concern with caste ranking within the V-medium but rather from a positive preference for REL (with consequent impingements on V patterns) in accordance with quite

different concerns. Let us now turn to explore these concerns. And although we will there find reasons to find this alternative explanation convincing, we should remember that we have not ruled Marriott's theory out as a possible additional and supplementary explanation. Moreover for those media like food transactions where abstentions from one medium do not automatically imply usage of another, Marriott's theory has no rival of the sort we are proposing for the T/V media. It remains, then, the more general theory.

3. INFERENCE OF ALLIANCE RELATIONS

So far we have operated as if there were only one principle that regulates inter-caste affairs, namely a concern with relative *rank*. But even within that framework we have seen that the possibility of an alternative account of dissensus in ranking presents itself, which presupposes reference to another dimension of inter-caste relations, namely *alliance* as the source of particular coalitions. We here turn to explore this second principle regulating inter-caste relations, find that its operation in the linguistic media can be shown to exist, and indicate that its importance in other media in other village studies has been underestimated or entirely overlooked. A side benefit of the analysis is the alternative account of dissensus in caste-ranking (along the lines already outlined above).

A few remarks of clarification will be useful at the outset. We understand the notion 'alliance relations' in such a way that it is *reciprocal exchange* in media that is their basic expression. This is of course a more restricted sense of the phrase than that associated with Lévi-Strauss's theory of kinship and marriage (Lévi-Strauss 1949), where asymmetric exchanges are also specifically included. It is also not always equivalent to the notion of a coalition in Game Theory, although it is so in the particular games we have looked at. The extra constraint that we incorporate into the notion of 'alliance relations' is that these should constitute relations of solidarity and rank-equalization. In our area of interest at any rate, this rules out asymmetrical exchange relations and coalitions with differential payoffs to members.

Now given our definition of 'alliance relations' as those relationships of solidarity and rank-equalization expressed in symmetrical exchange, we can say at once that in the T/V media it is only in REL-usage that 'alliance relations' manifest themselves. For we have already seen that there is no symmetrical V-exchange at all (inter-caste), and only a few cells of reciprocal T-usage (from 11 to 8, 9 and 10) which we explained (on the basis of

external ethnographic evidence) in terms of retaliation in a competitive area of T-usage. REL then will be the focus of this section, although non-verbal and other verbal media will be considered. It should be remembered, though, that symmetrical exchange in a medium cannot necessarily be assumed to express solidarity or a caste neutralization: it may reflect a policy of retaliation, or it may indicate a wary admission of equality without solidarity.

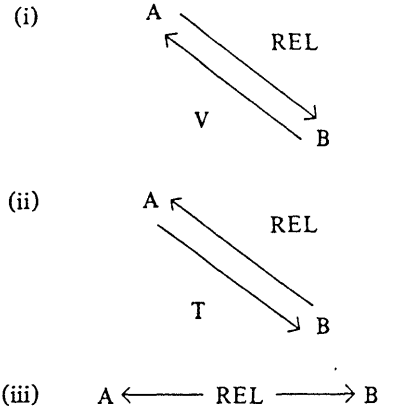
A second important point to bear in mind during the following analysis is that alliance relationships as here defined will be an automatic reflex of *maximal* strategy. For if a player maximizes gifts *and* receipts then he will find himself in a situation of symmetrical exchange with other players playing the same strategy. On the other hand, alliance relations can only be purchased at a cost by minimal strategists who are trying to cut down on both outgoings and receipts. It follows from this that if only maximal strategists were to form alliance relations together, then the additional principle here being introduced would be redundant. But if erstwhile minimal strategists are to be found engaging in alliance relations, then an independent principle is necessary to the analysis and this turns out to be the case.

3.1. REL: patterns of exchange and blocs of allies

So far we have given short shrift to the third basic option in T/V usage: the use of both T and V to members of other castes depending on the relative age of speaker and addressee. The basic pattern is that older addressees get V, younger ones get T, and there is a certain range of usage one way or the other for near coevals, although V is generally preferred.

Hitherto we have treated this pattern as simply the residual category of usage, predictable from the non-usage of both categorical T and categorical V. But as we remarked earlier, this usage has more than merely residual social-semantic content: it is the basic ideal *intra*-caste usage (and indeed the ideal intra-familial usage), and its use across castes is likely to carry the connotations of these other usages. Certainly to use REL (relative age T/V) is to imply that caste as a determinant of interaction is here neutralized, in favour of seniority by age.

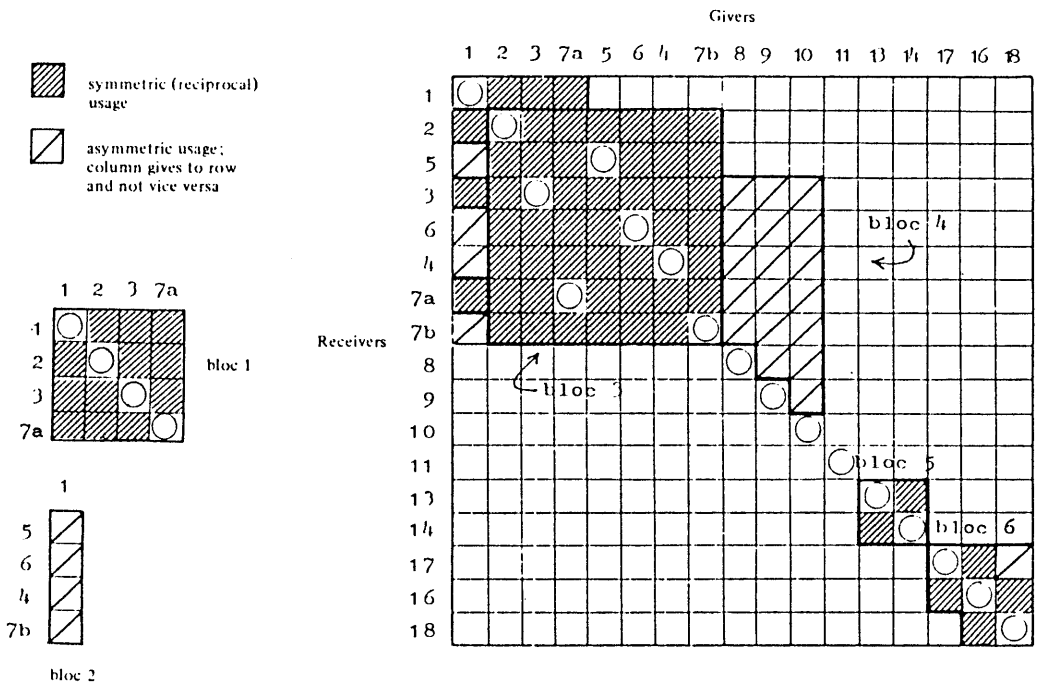
However we must emphasize that despite this intrinsically caste-neutralizing, solidarity-claiming valuation, REL is *not* necessarily reciprocally exchanged. There are a number of cases of REL in one direction, within a dyad, and T or V given in return. There are in fact three observable configurations (see diagram below). Whereas in (i) A apparently gives



REL downwards, and receives V in exchange, in (ii) B apparently gives REL upwards and receives T in return, and in (iii) A and B reciprocally (symmetrically) exchange REL. In other words if REL intrinsically neutralizes caste in one direction, a consideration of both dimensions (the reciprocals used) may reinstate caste-rank distinctions. However it remains true that the great majority (55 cases out of 77) of REL-givings are reciprocated with REL. Let us analyse the facts in detail.

Retaining the ranks established on the basis of T- and V-giving as in the basic matrix, Matrix XII presents the facts about REL-usage, distinguishing between symmetrical exchange of REL and asymmetrical usages of REL. We can see that there are six distinct areas or blocs in the matrix, of which four (with the partial exception of Bloc 6) are composed entirely of symmetrical REL-exchange, and two show REL being given in one direction only within a dyad.

Taking these two blocs of asymmetrical REL-usage first, we have Bloc 2 where caste 1 (Brahmans) use REL to castes 5, 6, 4 and 7b who reciprocate with V (as can be ascertained from the basic matrix); in short, Bloc 2 constitutes an area where our configuration (i) above prevails. The other asymmetrically exchanging REL-bloc is Bloc 4, where we find the use of REL by 8, 9 and 10 to 3, 6, 4, 7a and 7b – in this case reciprocated with T as in the configuration (ii) above. We may speculate immediately that there are fundamentally different sources for these two kinds of asymmetrical REL-usages: in the case of Bloc 2 it occurs because castes 5, 6, 4 and 7b feel obliged to express respect to caste 1, the Brahmans. In the case of Bloc 4 the asymmetry occurs because 8, 9 and 10 claim a neutralization of caste rank in favour of age – i.e. a measure of equality – a claim



Matrix XII. Symmetrical and asymmetrical usage of REL

addressed to 3, 4, 6, 7a and 7b; this claim is roundly denied by the REL recipients who reply with categorical T.

Turning to the symmetric blocs (where REL is reciprocated between members of each dyad), we have had to extract Bloc 1 from the matrix and reassemble it to the left because the disjunction between ranks as givers and receivers (derived from the basic matrix) disperses it (note that if we here gathered them together in the matrix we would disperse Bloc 4). What we find here (in Bloc 1) is a very significant pattern of caste-neutralization among the strategic leaders of the left-hand division. What marks this bloc off from Bloc 2 is the participation of the Brahmans; or rather, the symmetric claims of caste-neutralization and solidarity that include Brahman participation.

If we allow ourselves to refer to external ethnographic facts we can confirm that this usage in Bloc 1 is not just a reflection of accidents of propinquity and familiarity between the particular families who represent these castes in the hamlet.

For instance, a Brahman who spends most of his time in an urban *agrahāram* (Brahman street) but returns to dwell in the hamlet when his rotating duty as temple priest occurs, told me the following facts. Brahmans in this area, like other castes, but unlike Brahmans in other areas of Tamilnadu, distinguish their *vīṭṭuppācai* ('house language', here Brahman caste-dialect) from the language they speak outside (standard local colloquial). Brahmans in this region have complete fluency in the local colloquial dialect, while their *vīṭṭuppācai*, the language of the *agrahāram*, on the other hand has all the features of the Brahmanical dialect of Tamil as used elsewhere in Tamilnadu (see Bright and Ramanujan 1964; Ramanujan 1968; Zvelebil 1964). Now Piḷḷais (caste 2) and Cōḷi Ācāris (caste 3) and Vaishya Ceṭṭiyārs (not represented in Ōlappāḷaiyam) are regular visitors to the *agrahāram*, according to the Brahman informant, and when there they adopt the Brahmanical dialect – or at least some lexical and morphological markers of it, so that the Brahmans do not feel constrained to code-switch into non-Brahmanical standard Koṅku colloquial. The informant claimed moreover (and I have proof of this on tape) that Brahmans exchange kin-words in extended usage to both caste 3 and caste 2 who both reciprocate (although they do not use such metaphorical kin-words to each other: see Levinson 1977: 400ff. for details). Daily interaction in Ōlappāḷaiyam between these three castes is very close; members of 2 and 3 can often be found seated on the *tiṇṇai* (verandahs) of members of caste 1 (see Beck 1972: 158–61), while the women of caste 3 do the household work (other than cooking of course) for visiting Brahman priests.

These ethnographic facts do indeed suggest that the pattern in Bloc 1 in Matrix XII is highly significant: members of the left-hand division, or those whom we may now call the more extreme minimal strategists, here celebrate their solidarity with the top member of the hierarchy by means of a symmetrical exchange of REL. This suggests that Obeyesekere's critique of Beck's interpretation of the role that Brahman and Pillai play as models for the left-hand division is ill-founded: the fact is that the top-most castes and the left-hand castes are allied, and in this Beck is correct (see Obeyesekere 1975).

Now note that it is in a sense *because* of this alliance, which grants 2, 3 and 7a the privilege of REL rather than V to Brahmans, that 3 and 7a achieve their high ratings as givers of V. Whereas Kavuṇṭars (caste 5) give V to Brahmans and thereby lower their net scores in this medium, castes 3 and 7a exploit their privilege to rank higher than Kavuṇṭars in this medium. But this will gain 3 and 7a little on the receiving scale. And so we end up with that disjunction between giving and receiving ranks that occupied so much of our attention above. There we explained the disjunction as a direct outcome of 3 and 7a's use of minimal strategy in the V-medium. Now we are offering an explanation in terms of a special option open to 3 and 7a in the REL-medium, which happens to have a reflex in the V-medium – by virtue of the fact that the three linguistic media are alternates.

Now these two explanations can be complementary. In the first place they are non-contradictory and compatible so that they can both be correct simultaneously. Note that since the T/V media are an interdependent set of alternatives, Bloc 1's minimizing in one medium (V-giving) necessarily involves maximizing in at least one other (REL-giving). Secondly, the interdependence of the media requires an interdependent explanation along the following lines. Castes 3 and 7a refuse to give V where even the dominant caste (5) cannot refuse. But how can they dare to do this? Because they have neutralized the only groups with a primary right to object, namely the recipients (castes 1 and 2). Therefore by *allying* in one medium one can buy *rank* scores in another.

Let us turn now to the second bloc of symmetric exchange in Matrix XII. Bloc 3 is a much wider bloc than Bloc 1 and incorporates erstwhile maximal and minimal strategists in one great bloc of relative equality counterposed to the excluded lower castes 8 through 18. Here we have to face the fact that the motives lying behind this symmetrical usage may be different for different castes, rather than a solid bloc generated by uniform maximal strategies in this area. To see this we have to bear in mind the

related facts about categorical T- and V-usage. Let us map onto our REL-usage the rankings emergent from the T and V media. Relative to this independent (or partially independent) ranking scale (immanent in the known interactional facts), we may then roughly estimate which castes are giving REL to superiors and which to inferiors. This is significant because to give REL to a superior is to cheat him of a V, while to give REL to an inferior is to extend downward generosity of an intriguing kind.

Let us take as an approximate overall index of rank on T/V criteria the *net* scores for giving and receiving V (this is simply for convenience – no fine points will be made that depend crucially on this). The scores are shown in Figure 19 (see Matrices III and IV above). Here scores for giving are added to scores for receiving to yield net scores which in turn are expressed in the linear ranking line to the right. If we add rank-cuts between 8, 9 and 10 and between 17, 16 and 18 we approximate an overall ranking with the maximum number of cuts attested in the linguistic media (actually threshold-V-usage adds some more). We add these additional rank-cuts as dotted lines.

So if we now map this rank-order onto the central area of REL-usage we can get an idea of who is giving REL upwards and who downwards. This is visually represented in Matrix XIII, where the order of castes in the righthand column is the net rank-order in Figure 19, and where REL-cells are distinguished according to whether they are

(a) 'V-substitutes' : i.e., REL given to superiors,

(b) 'T-substitutes' : i.e., REL given to inferiors,

(c) 'REL to equals': i.e., REL given to those ranked equal in V-medium.

It is immediately evident from Matrix XIII that while all three kinds of cells are present, the majority are *not* cases of REL to equals, but are rather 'T-substitutes' or 'V-substitutes'. Giving REL to superior castes is to claim *upward solidarity* (and to cheat upper castes of a V); giving REL to inferior castes is generously to extend *downward solidarity* to them (and to abstain from giving a T). The number of castes that do each are listed in Figure 20.

Concentrating on the castes involved in the symmetrical exchange of REL in Bloc 3 of Matrix XII, on the basis of the table in Figure 20 we can say this:

(i) The castes at the top of the hierarchy display a remarkable amount of *downward generosity*, as indicated by the large numbers of inferior castes they give REL to.

(ii) Just below them this downward generosity ceases abruptly (where it ceases exactly will depend on the external ranking system used to judge

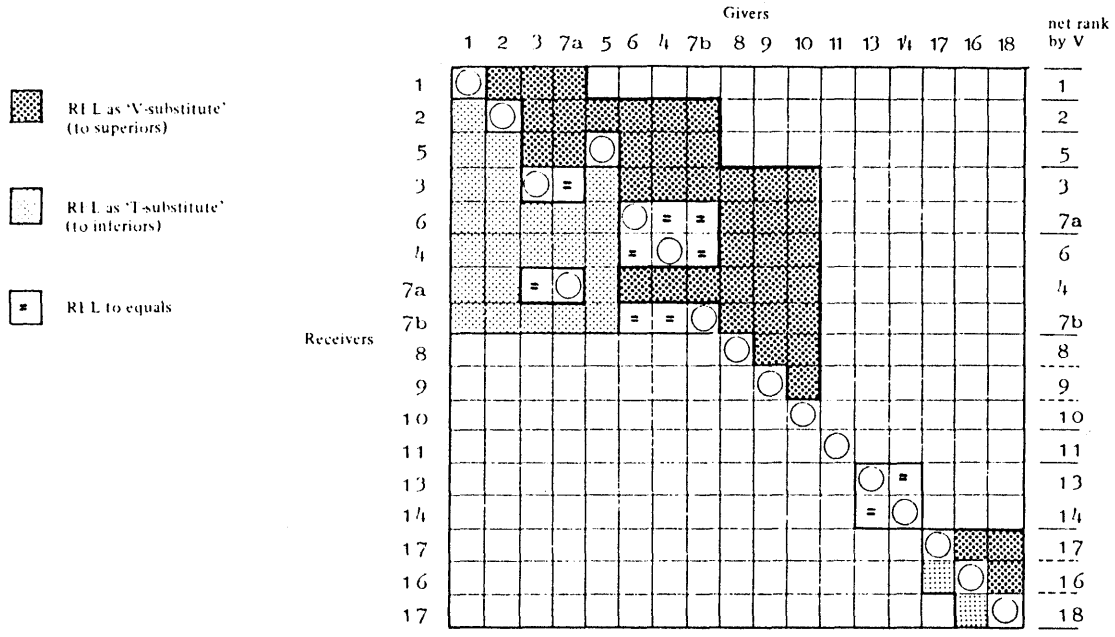
Caste	V giving (g)	V receiving (R)	Net (R+G)	Net rank order
1	0	13	13	1
2	0	9	9	2
3	0	6	6	5
7a	0	6	6	3
5	−1	9	8	7a
6	−1	6	5	6
4	−1	6	5	4
7b	−1	6	5	7b
8	−3	5	2	8
9	−3	5	2	9
10	−3	5	2	10
11	−8	5	−3	11
13	−12	3	−9	13
14	−12	3	−9	14
17	−14	0	−14	17
16	−14	0	−14	16
18	−14	0	−14	18

Figure 19. Net ranks by V-giving and receiving

which castes are inferior and superior, but by any of the available scales, by 7b generosity has ceased absolutely. In our ranking system it ceases at 7a, before 6, 4 and 7b).

(iii) As downward generosity declines, *upward claims to equality* increase, as indicated by the large numbers of superiors to whom REL is given. The lower the caste within our Bloc 3 of REL-exchanges the more castes that receive REL as a V-substitute from it. This trend continues into Bloc 4 (an area of asymmetric REL-usage) and all the way down to caste 10 where it abruptly ceases. Thus REL as a V-substitute accounts for about half of the usages in Bloc 3 and all the usages in Bloc 4 as Matrix XII makes clear.

Given the valuation of REL, REL to equals is the natural expression and recognition of social equality. REL as a V-substitute is easily understood in terms of rank-maximizing motives. But REL as a T-substitute is a different story. Whereas theories of caste-ranking prepare us for upward claims to rank, they do not in any way explain the downward generosity evinced by the use of REL to inferior castes. The question is what is it that leads all the upper castes to stand together and exchange REL, in contradistinction to the lower castes? For, referring back to Matrix XII, there is a remarkable *caesura* between the castes 1 through 7b on the one hand and 8 through 18 on the other. It is this solid use of REL within the upper



Matrix XIII. REL as T and V substitutes

Castes in net rank order	Total inferior castes given REL	Total rank equals given REL	Total superior castes given REL
1	7		0
2	6		1
5	5		1
3	3	1	3
7a	3	1	3
6	0	2	4
4	0	2	4
7b	0	2	4
8	0		5
9	0		6
10	0		7
11	0		0
13	0	1	0
14	0	1	0
17	1		1
16	1		1
18	0		2

Figure 20. REL to superiors and inferiors

castes that is responsible for the strangely truncated, table-topped matrix for T-usage that we analysed in section 2.5.

It does seem then that the study of inter-caste relations is in need of some principle complementary to rank, a principle we may call *alliance*. The principle must, like ranking, provide a motivation for behaviour and thus a set of predictable outcomes in a particular situation. But instead of upward claims to equality and downward expression of superiority, it must predict downward extensions of solidarity – not in all circumstances for then rank and alliance would be diametrically opposed (and what the one did the other would undo). And indeed in our data downward solidarity has rapid and abrupt boundaries.

We will return to the nature and distribution of alliance relations. Let us now complete the survey of the distant blocs of usage ascertainable in Matrix XII. Bloc 5 is the symmetrical exchange of REL between washerman and barber castes (castes 13 and 14 respectively). The two cells involved are also instances of REL to equals (note though that threshold-V did make some rank distinction between 13 and 14). The alliance of barber and washerman is expressed also in their exchange of kin-terms. For most purposes they form, in the eyes of villagers, a single unit of ritual and

social rank, and this perhaps ensures that they form a coalition and a solidary unit as far as the linguistic media are concerned.

The last area of REL-usage, Bloc 6, is composed of interaction between Harijans. In a way this area constitutes a microcosm of the larger whole: we find here both patterns of downward generosity and upward claims as we found in Bloc 2. In Figure 20 this same resurgence of patterns found higher up in the hierarchy can be seen, after a gap (between 10 and 17) wherein little REL-usage takes place. Here both caste 17 and 16 display downward generosity to the immediate caste below. Whatever explanation will do for the phenomenon higher up in the hierarchy will do here also, and indeed will be required.

Let us look at the facts implicit in Matrix XIII in a slightly different way: let us ask what role each caste plays in the generation of the REL-patterns, and let us also make some assessment of the distribution of solidary alliance relations. We can get some measure of the 'popularity' of each caste (as far as being a desirable ally is concerned) by counting the number of REL-receipts it gets, and similarly some measure of each caste's 'outgoingness' by counting the number of RELs it gives; and then we may count those RELs that are symmetrically exchanged to get some idea of 'alliance success'. The table (Figure 21) provides this information.

Looking at the columns for REL-outgoings and receipts, we see that caste 1 gives more REL than it receives, but that this pattern is already reversed by caste 5, to receiving more than it gives. Clearly at the top of the hierarchy one can extend REL generously without fear of exploitation: recipients will continue to give V in return. But castes further down have to be more judicious for they are likely to be swamped by receipts from those below. And those below, like 8, 9 and 10, are busy exploiting REL possibilities even though they receive few in return. So we end up with caste 10's massive outgoings without a single return. In short, although a distinct alliance principle is operative in the REL-medium, it is also true that the other principle, the principle of rank or hierarchy, reimposes itself in this 'caste-neutral' medium as pressures mount to exploit the equality implications of REL in order to maximize rank.

A remarkable feature of Figure 21 is the position of caste 11, which stands absolutely outside all alliance claims, neither giving nor receiving a single REL. This fits with other ethnographic facts about caste 11; these are the Vaṭuka Nāyakkar, a left-hand caste of traditional well-diggers and house-builders. Despite having a traditional occupation no more ritually polluting than that of agriculture, they rank consistently in this local

Caste	REL-receipts	REL-outgoings	Number of castes exchanging symmetrical REL
1	3	7	3
2	7	7	7
5	7	6	6
3	10	7	7
7a	10	7	7
6	10	6	6
4	10	6	6
7b	10	6	6
8	2	5	0
9	1	6	0
10	0	7	0
11	0	0	0
13	1	1	1
14	1	1	1
17	2	1	1
15	2	2	2
18	1	2	1

Figure 21. Symmetrical exchange of REL

interaction arena just one step above (and sometimes even equal to) the washerman and barber, which are polluting occupations (for interactional ranks in many media see Beck 1972: 171, 175, 178 and Figure 16 above). Yet, as informants reported, there are other local interaction arenas about thirty miles away where members of 11 enjoy a rank close to caste 5; indeed there were even reported to be areas where some subcaste of Nāyakkar were the dominant caste. Given this it is easy to see why local Nāyakkars do not accept the superiority of castes 8, 9 and 10, a fact that showed up in the retaliative T-usage described above.

Less clear is how 8, 9 and 10 are able to maintain their superiority. The answer does seem to lie in the fact that 8, 9 and 10 are right-hand division members along with 5; and 8, 9 and 10 are bound by traditional service relations to the dominant caste 5 in a way that Nāyakkars, whose traditional skills are required only occasionally and can be imported for a particular task, are not. Even though this privileged position of 8, 9 and 10 is not reflected in the solidary extension of REL to them, they do nevertheless feel free to use REL to most upper castes. And 11 cannot do this. Indeed it is very noticeable in daily interaction that members of 11 give much more kinesic and linguistic deference to the upper castes in general than do members of 8, 9 and 10. In short, members of 11 are 'outsiders'

as far as this local area is concerned, and it is their isolation from solidary relations with any other castes that shows dramatically in their zero REL-usage.

Turning to the last column of Figure 21, note that the final column tabulates the number of other castes each caste symmetrically (reciprocally) exchanges REL with. From this final column we see that the only castes that achieve a massive level of solidarity-expression are castes 2, 5, 3, 7a, 7b, 6 and 4. And although this pattern could in part be seen as upward claims to near-equal rank by the lower members of the upper castes, there still remains the irreducible and astonishing fact of the downward generosity of 2 and 5, and to a lesser extent 3 and 7a.

The significant finding of this section is, then, that there are some castes, especially 1, 2 and 5, who are downwardly generous in REL. In addition we see that these three leaders in downward generosity include the models for *both* left- and right-hand divisions, and this rules out an interpretation in terms of left-hand solidarity, even though the majority of solidarity-expressors are members of the left-hand division. But the fact that left-hand members are deeply involved also rules out an interpretation of the REL-patterns as the automatic reflexes of massive use of *maximal strategy*, for that is a pattern associated with the right-hand castes. We must conclude then that the creation of solidary inter-caste relations is an important motive in the conduct of inter-caste affairs and that consequently these will never be understood without an appeal to a principle like *alliance* that runs alongside the much better documented principle of rank or hierarchy.

A problem however remains. Why is there the dramatic cessation of REL-usage at the point in the hierarchy formed by the 7b/8 boundary? One might argue, pointing to the absence of this particular boundary in many other media (see Figure 16), that this is of no great significance. Yet other media do not have the daily repetition of transactions and the caste-wide and population-wide participation that the linguistic media do; moreover there is (as mentioned) a keen interest and awareness of what goes on in the linguistic media. We cannot then dismiss it lightly. One should, though, recall that the boundary may be a little less abrupt than here described, in that (as discussed above) there is some minor variation in thresholds for REL-usage to castes like 7b so that patterns of interaction can move towards full categorical T-usage by degrees. However these are only marginal effects: the fact is that members of the top eight castes volunteered consistently that T-usage begins with caste 8 and not before.

One possible explanation for this abrupt boundary and for the down-

ward generosity evinced by the higher castes is that what underlies the great blocs of symmetrical REL-exchange is a concern felt by all the higher castes to erect an insurmountable barrier between the upper and lower castes. In order to effect this, the topmost castes are willing to extend their REL-usage downwards to include all those they wish to detach from the lower castes, while the latter are to be thus symbolically excluded from the brotherhood of the upper castes. Less metaphorically, this interpretation would amount to claiming that our alliance principle is nothing other than the familiar fact of coalition in a ranking game, but that the nature of the game is here a little different. In this game the topmost castes have some vested interest in the relative rank orders of those below them. This could have various sources: one might be a policy of 'divide and rule'. Another might be a concern with stability, and a desire to stop the steady upward creep of some ambitious and able group. In such a game context the topmost castes would be willing to barter downward REL in exchange for an agreement to give T to players still further down. Having then obtained the help of the middle castes in holding down the lowest, the topmost castes can then reassert their superiority over the middle castes in another medium (e.g. V-receiving).

Although such a scenario is not totally implausible, my informants never spoke that way nor I suspect ever would. I have then no way seriously to assess it. Another explanation of the caesura between upper and lower castes which suffers from the same sort of assessment problem has been given to me by Edmund Leach (personal communication). This explanation proceeds in the 'structuralist' vein, that is by assuming that there is a kind of cultural logic that guides performances, which consists of simple operations on binary sets. The argument goes like this. Dumont points out that the notion of *hierarchy* (at least as employed in Hindu materials) combines two separable ideas: rank as serial order, and the concept of serial dichotomous segmentation (where A 'encompasses' B + C, and B 'encompasses' E + F . . . etc). The classical Varna scheme is organized in terms of the second concept. The sequence of segmentations is:

(a) Twice Born *versus* Sudra,

(b) within Twice Born: Brahmans *versus* the rest,

(c) within 'the rest': Kshatriya *versus* Vaishya.

We need one other cultural presupposition: that Kshatriya alone are also somehow opposite in kind to Brahmans. Then since both Vaishya and Brahmans are opposites of Kshatriya, in a cultural 'logic' based on operations on binary sets, they must be similar to each other. Now if we introduce a caste category that is socially defined as opposite to Brahman,

and opposite to Kshatriya, and is not *like* Brahman (therefore not Vaishya), it *must be* Sudra. Suppose we now identify caste 1 as Brahman, caste 5 as Kshatriya, caste 7 (both 7a and 7b) as Vaishya, then caste 8 is neither Brahman nor Kshatriya. But being assimilated to the Kshatriya style (right-hand division), it is not *like* Brahman. Therefore it must be Sudra. Hence the caesura in the hierarchy at the 7b/8 boundary coincides with the first and fundamental Twice Born *versus* Sudra dichotomy, (a) above. And that is why the abrupt cessation of REL exists.

Although the 'cultural logic' deployed in this argument may be a pretty wonky logic (failing to distinguish oppositions at various levels – hence the equation of Vaishya = Like-Brahman), that does not definitely argue against it. That could be the way it works. The attractive aspect of it is this: Vaishya is really merely a residual category of castes who are neither Brahman nor Kshatriya but are nevertheless respectable. But they are *like* Brahmans. There is therefore no category for respectable castes who are Kshatriya-like: they have to be Sudra (unrespectable). Consequently there can be no high ranking 'right-hand' castes other than the leader of the division itself (here caste 5). And this is empirically the case: 8, 9 and 10 are the next highest right-handers and they fall far behind the left-hand castes 3, 4, 6, 7a and 7b. On the face of it this is curious: how does it come about that the caste with the key command of patronage (caste 5) is unable to reward its loyal followers (8, 9 and 10) more adequately? Some explanation, perhaps along these lines of Leach's, does seem required.

3.2. Symmetrical exchange in other media

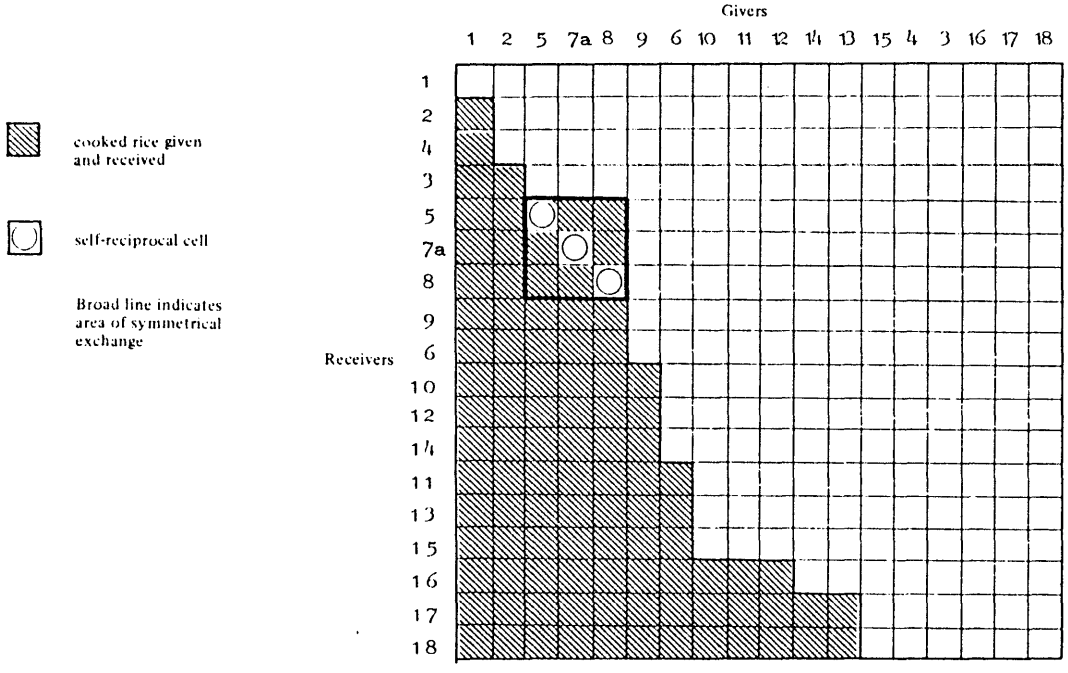
Here we briefly describe patterns of symmetrical exchange in other media. Our purpose here is simply to point out that the principle we have dubbed *alliance* plays a role in inter-caste affairs that has been overlooked or underestimated, and we do this by showing that symmetrical exchange can be found in many media. Of course, as pointed out, symmetrical exchange can have a number of different sources, of which the most obvious are the expression of equality (plus or minus solidarity) and retaliative abuse. The last is clearly not possible in media that require a separate act of acceptance in order for a transaction to take place, that is in material transfers. There are other problems of interpretation that we shall touch upon as we proceed.

Mayer seems to have been the first to encounter and describe relations of symmetrical transactional exchange: he distinguished a set of 'allied castes', grouped around the dominant caste in a Malwa village, who

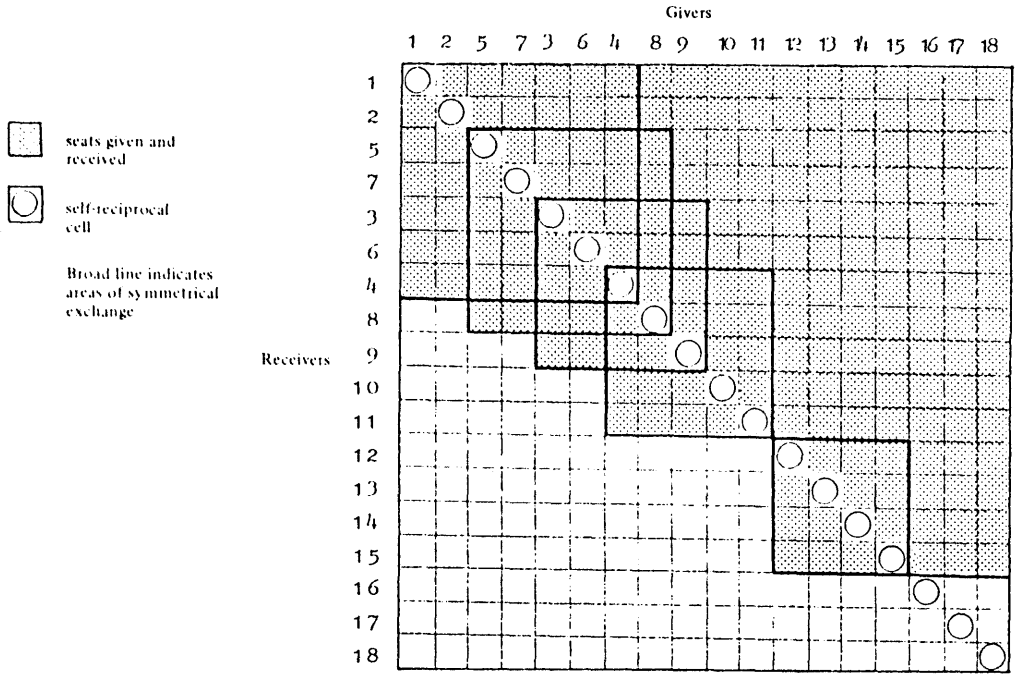
exchanged *kacca* food together (Mayer 1960: 33–40). Dumont hailed this, and the high rank gained by the allied castes, as 'unique' (Dumont 1970: 88). But in fact an over concern with *ranking* has led to an underestimate of the very general role that this other dimension plays in inter-caste relations. Matrix representation can help to obscure it too. For instance Beck (1972) provides matrices for cooked rice and curd exchange that hide within them a crucial area or bloc of symmetrical exchangers – our castes 5, 7a and 8. The redrawn matrix in XIV illustrates this for cooked rice exchange, and curd exchange exhibits an almost identical pattern. Another of her interactional media, informal seating on the verandah of a house shows symmetrical reciprocity on a much larger scale. This is illustrated in Matrix XV, drawn from her Figure 4.7 (Beck 1972: 161), where each superimposed square is a bloc of symmetrical exchange.

Passing on to linguistic media, Matrices XVI and XVII display some blocs of symmetrical exchange in two dishonorific media.[4] There is, perhaps not surprisingly, no symmetrical exchange of various super-honorific items, e.g. *nām* and *cāmi*, but here in the dishonorifics we find fairly extensive symmetrical exchange blocs. There are no facts that occasion surprise given our earlier findings about T/V, but there are a number that independently support those findings and are worth pointing out. Note that, in Matrix XVI, caste 3 is able to exchange reciprocally the dishonorific *ṭā* with caste 1 and 2 (provided, for all castes, the addressee is under fifteen or so in years). We see here a facet of that familiarity and caste-neutralizing solidarity between caste 1 and 3 which was one source of the dissensus on giving and receiving dimensions in the T/V data. Another repeated pattern is the retaliative symmetrical usage of *ṭā* by caste 11 to 8, 9 and 10, just as in the T-medium. A pattern that is distinctly different from that found in the T/V data is the partial inclusion of 8 and 9 into a group of upper castes (3, 4, 6, 7a, 7b) in the matter of reciprocal under-fifteen *ṭā* usage. In Matrix XVII *ppā* usage also displays some partial blurring of the 7b/8 boundary between the upper and lower castes that we were concerned with in the previous section. But this is still more apparent in the food transfers in XIV (where 5, 8 and 7a symmetrically exchange).

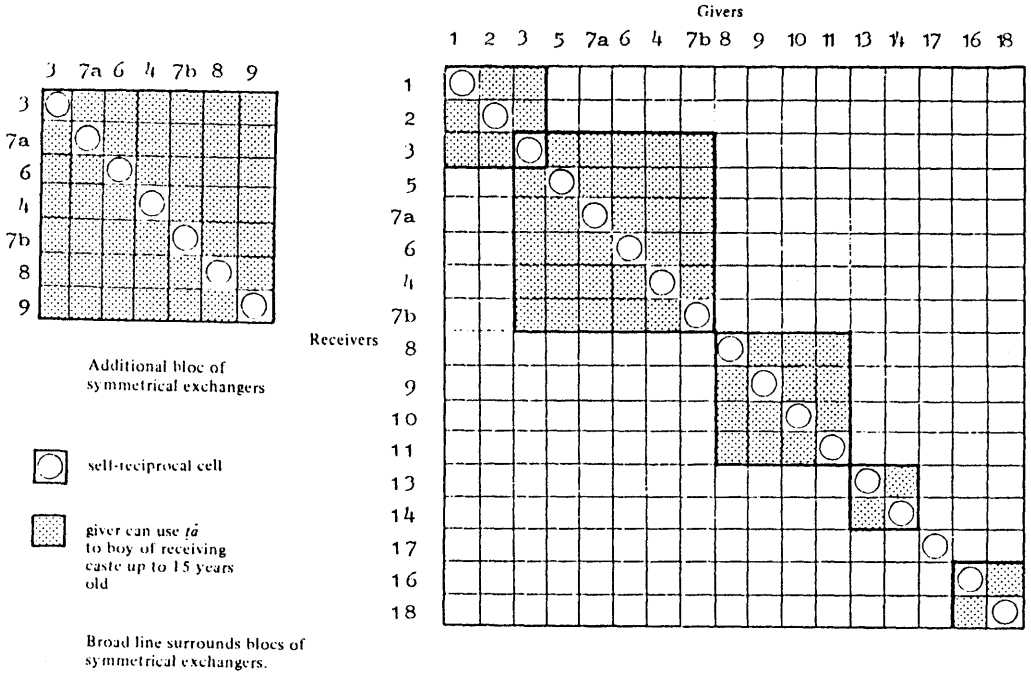
Since the interpretation of these facts would take us too far afield, we leave them here. Additional data and analysis concerning the use of fictive kin-terms between members of different castes reveals further complexities in inter-caste alliance behaviour, but there is not sufficient space to discuss them here (see Levinson 1977: 400–25). Nevertheless, it is clear that symmetrical exchange is a far more prevalent pattern in inter-caste interactions than seems to have been realized.



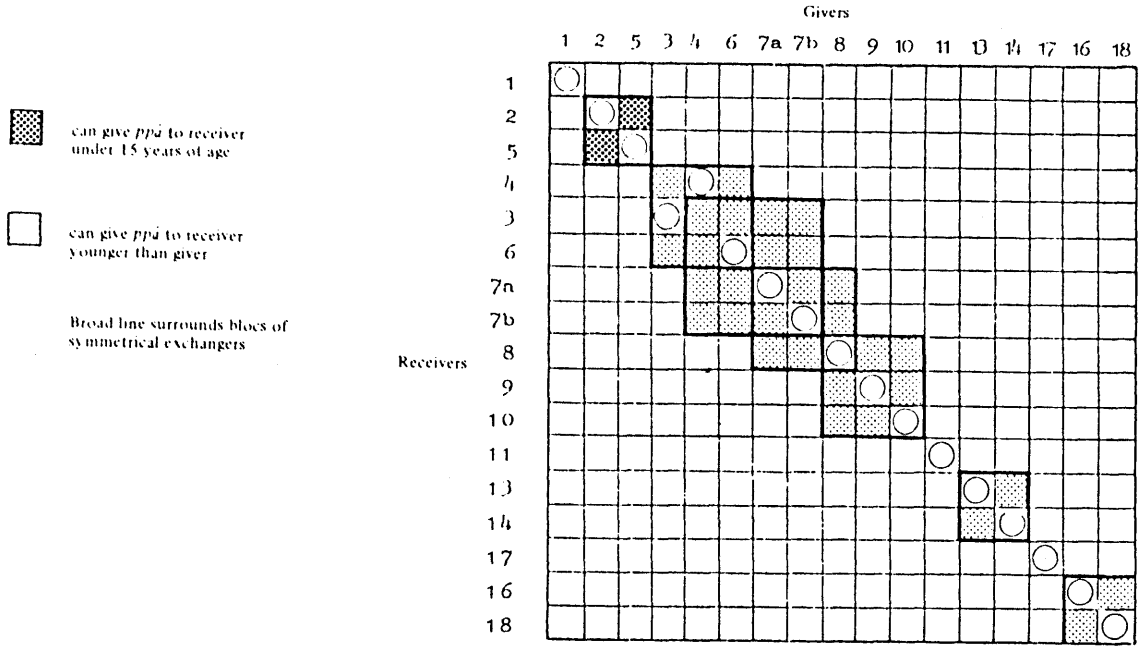
Matrix XIV. Symmetrical exchange of cooked rice



Matrix XV. Symmetrical exchange in informal seating



Matrix XVI. Symmetrical exchange in the dishonorific, *ṭā*



Matrix XVII. Symmetrical exchange in the dishonorific, *ppā*

4. POWER AND CLASS

So far we have almost entirely ignored the effect on honorific usage of sources of rank other than those based on caste. Our assumption has been that assessments based on caste membership are basic for members, while other sources of rank (wealth and office, for instance) are secondary, though not unimportant. One reason for treating non-caste sources of rank as secondary is that they are attributes of individuals, and exceptional in the sense that most individuals do not have attributes such as significant wealth or office.

But one non-caste-based source of rank simply cannot be dismissed in this way as secondary. This source is membership in the *periya kuṭumpams* ('big families') of caste 5, that is membership in what we have called the 'squire class' as described in section 1.1 and elsewhere. In the first place, membership in this class of wealthy landlords is not an individual attribute, but seems rather to be an attribute of a lineage segment that is handed down through the generations. Thus the children of *periya Kavuṇṭars* ('big Kavuṇṭars') are not treated like the children of a self-made wealthy landlord, but rather as the heirs to an inheritable authority. Membership is then technically inclusion in what Weber calls a status group rather than an (economic) class. And it appears to be a well-defined and closed group.

Moreover, the squire class forms a cohesive unit from an interactional point of view. Members are treated in a very special way by all other members of the village regardless of their caste. For example, if one such aristocrat is positioned by the side of a road, all passers-by must dismount and give a formal and respectful greeting. Conversely, when such aristocrats approach people, they may do so with an arrogance and boldness that takes no cognizance of higher caste rank.

Honorific usage fits this picture neatly; indeed one could pick out the class of aristocrats on those grounds alone. Thus in an analysis of the use of *nām* or 'super-V', members of the squire class of caste 5 came out as the highest ranking group on the receiving scale: castes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 and 7a (i.e., all the highest castes) give *nām* to such aristocrats without reciprocation. Also one caste (11) claimed to give *cāmi* (title meaning literally 'God') only to Brahmans, aristocrats and the incumbent *karṇam* of the Piḷḷai caste. But most clearly there was one title of address, *ecamāṅka*, almost (but not quite) reserved for members of the squire class. Brahmans and Piḷḷais would only use this to the highest titled members of this class, but others would use it to all male members of the squire class. Members of lowly castes (13 and 18) extend this usage to ordinary non-aristocratic

members of caste 5, but even here the recipients would either be 'squires' or lesser landlord patrons for the most part.

However we have ignored the effect of such aristocrats on standard T/V usage, and taking this into account now will yield a radical revision. The facts are given in Matrix XVIII. The startling thing about this matrix is that the ritual superiority of castes 1 and 2 (in particular) is here superseded by the secular power of the great families of caste 5: both Brahmāṇs and Piḷḷais give the members of these families categorical V (the threshold here seems to be low: the addressee may be no more than fifteen years old). It is true that in turn the Brahmans receive a similar treatment from those of the squire class, but that this is a courtesy is shown by the fact that there have been aristocrats who chose not to extend it (thus the elder brother, now dead, of the head of one of the leading families is consistently said to have used T to adult Brahmans). In any case Piḷḷais (caste 2) cannot expect V from aristocratic Kavuṇṭars, although the *karṇam* (village accountant, hereditary office held by head of the local family of caste 2) does seem to receive V.

The picture, then, is that everyone of all castes gives V (or super-V) to members of the squire class providing that they are fifteen years old or so (the lower the caste of the giver the lower the age of the threshold of transition from T to V). In turn, members of the squire class give T to all other castes with the single exception of the Brahmans (and they also appear to make exceptions of influential office holders like the *karṇam*).

There are only three families of this order in the revenue village, but if we take them into account we must make an important revision to the description of inter-caste T/V usage described in the sections above. Essentially, we must superimpose on that earlier picture another one, where landed power backed by traditional authority achieves a standing that is second to none and equal with the Brahmans.

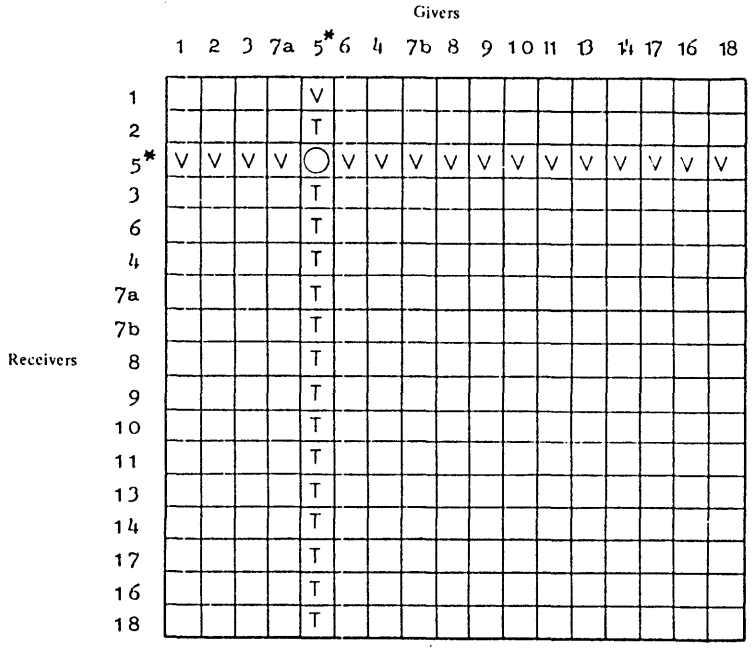
A final point of some importance is the relationship of these great families to the lesser families of their own caste (caste 5). In the matrix we have not specified the T/V usage exchange by 5* (the squires) and 5 (ordinary Kavuṇṭars), because this cannot be so simply described. Typical would be the following tape-recorded usages, where a woman aged 23 and married to a squire (aged 55) addressed (i) a 45-year old member of caste 3 by T, receiving V, (ii) a 50-year old member of her own caste 5 with T, receiving V, (iii) another 45-year old male member of her own caste with T, receiving V. In the case of (iii), the addressee was employed as a bailiff, and had no land of his own, while in the case of (ii) he was a poor man

5* members of squire class

V = categorical V

T = categorical T

◯ = self-reciprocal cell



Matrix XVIII. T/V usage to and from *periya Kavuṇṭar* squires

with a little land, temporarily employed. Both were therefore employees with little capital of their own.

However there is another side to the picture: members of the squire families will not use T to older men of substance of their own caste, at least not generally. To some extent this is attributable to the real or potential kinship connections between the squire families and other men of substance: the 23-year old woman mentioned above was herself, for example, from a prestigious but decayed family that is no longer of clearly squire status.

5. SOME CONCLUSIONS

We started with an initial problem that has beset the analysts of Indian society: members of the society clearly believe that in a local situation there is a well-defined caste hierarchy, but how the sociologist is to isolate this turns out to be problematic. This is also a more general sociological problem: how is the sociologist to build overall models of a social system while retaining the perspective of its members (which, after all, is a predominant factor in the system being the way it is)?

Our answer has been this. First locate some media in which all members of the society transact. Then see what social valuations are attached to particular configurations of these transactions by participants. Next exhaustively collect which configurations occur between each and every distinct category of persons in the society. Finally make inferences from this distributional map and from the valuations, to the value attached to each category of persons by each other category.

In our case the application of this method yielded some positive results. In the first case we found that the distribution of honorifics (as used across castes) provided a very fine-scale *ranking* of castes, thus providing an answer to our initial problem. The rank orders can be shown to be implicit in the materials and thus available to members, and much more discriminating than any ranking that can be derived from caste-dialects. This suggests that the emphasis on the individual speaker's dialect in current sociolinguistic theory is misplaced: far more sociological information resides in patterns of usage *between* individuals.

We were aided in our inferences by the very substantial consensus about caste rank that emerged from the materials. But the consensus was not absolute, and in seeking an explanation for divergences we were led to further inferences. We were able, for example, to explore to what extent active competition for status underlies the patterns we found, and to con-

clude that (contrary to some views of Indian society) competition is not always a prevalent feature. More importantly, we located an entirely different principle of inter-caste organization, *alliance*, which seems to have been ignored in most of the literature. Inter-caste relations are visibly structured on more dimensions than just that of rank.

Finally, attention to honorifics allowed us to isolate a distinct principle of power and authority that picked out a clearly defined category, the *periya Kavuṇṭars*, or squire families of caste 5. This principle crosscuts caste rank, and indeed supersedes it, and the results indicate that these families have an importance that has not been appreciated in the ethnography of the region.

All these inferences derived from the usage of honorifics amount to some substantial sociological results. Many of them could no doubt have been obtained in a more traditional manner by careful general ethnography. But an approach through language usage is at once more direct and simple, and has the great advantage of providing us insight that conforms to members' views. This *verstehen* perspective seems to be the most important contribution that sociolinguistics can make to sociology and to social anthropology.

However, language is not the only area that provides important *verstehen* insights. Marriott, working with other media of transactional exchange (food and services), had already seen the importance of interactional materials to problems in Indian sociology, and indeed we have utilized a great deal of his method here.

So it remains for us now to clarify the relation of linguistic to non-linguistic media of interaction. The relation is important because the results on different media are not entirely coincident. Fortunately, Beck (1972: 154–81) provides much data on interaction patterns in the same village in non-linguistic media, some of which is summarized in Figure 22. With reference to the figure, the linguistic media of T/V usage provide the first column, with the top column representing ranks by giving and the bottom column representing ranks by receiving, and the non-linguistic media follow. 'Seating' here indicates rank determined by the willingness to offer and accept a seat on the verandah of a house belonging to a member of another caste; 'eating leaves' represents the rank determined by willingness to 'give' the service of disposal of leaf-plates to another caste, and by the number of castes willing to do this service for each caste (determining its 'receiving' rank); 'curds' represents ranks by the giving and receiving of milk products; 'rice' by the giving and receiving of cooked rice on informal occasions. The first two non-linguistic media (seating and leaf-

	T/V	Seating	Eating leaves	Curds	Rice
Giving ranks	1	1	1	1	1
	2	2	2	2	2
	3	5	3	5	5
	7a	7a	4	7a	7a
	5	3	6	8	8
	6	6	5	9	9
	4	4	7a	6	6
	7b	8	8	10	10
	8	9	9	12	12
	9	10	10	14	14
	10	11	12	11	11
	11	12	14	13	13
	13	13	11	15	15
	14	14	13	4	4
	17	15	15	3	3
	16	16	16	16	16
	18	17	17	17	17
		18	18	18	18
Receiving ranks	1	1	1	1	1
	2	2	2	2	2
	5	5	5	5	4
	3	7a	7a	7a	3
	6	3	8	8	5
	4	6	9	9	7a
	7a	4	6	6	8
	7b	8	10	4	9
	8	9	3	3	6
	9	10	4	10	10
	10	11	12	12	12
	11	12	14	14	14
	13	13	11	11	11
	14	14	13	13	13
	17	15	15	15	15
	16	16	16	16	16
	18	17	17	17	17
		18	18	18	18

Figure 22. Ranks in linguistic and non-linguistic media

removal) have the same valuation as V-exchange, while the second two (rice and curds) have the same valuation as T-exchange. A point of difference between Beck's ranks and ours is the different inventory of castes: she includes caste 12 and 15 excluded in our discussion, and does not distinguish 7b; but comparison is not seriously affected.

Now the most remarkable thing about behaviour in these different transactional media is the fundamental similarity in the rules of valuation and the patterns of ranking that emerge. These results hold out great promise for some *general theory of transactions*, or principles of interaction. We have already hazarded some guesses at why the principles should be the way they appear to be, and concluded that, *pace* Marriott (1968a, 1976a), the reasons do not appear to be peculiarities of Hindu culture but rather general properties of interaction systems. Specifically, we suggested that the valuations have a natural source along the following lines. Taking the reciprocal exchange of intimate material (food, T-pronoun) as a basic and natural symbol of solidarity, the one-way transfer of intimate material can be shown to have a natural interpretation as a symbol of asymmetric rank. The universal principle seems to be that the higher one's rank the more privacy, the greater the inviolability of one's preserve, while the lower one's rank the greater access others have to one's preserve. So one-way intimacy establishes a rank disparity. And this explains the universal facts about the use of T as both a pronoun of solidarity and of superiority, and the use of food both as a symbol of equality (commensality) and as a symbol of dominance (the feast provided for the servants).

However, differences of rank on the different media do emerge and these need to be explained. Beck suggests two theories. One, somewhat lame but no doubt in part correct, is that different media measure different criteria of rank: so, for example, behaviour in offering and receiving seating is essentially about power and material status, while the exchange of cooked rice is essentially about ritual status (Beck 1972: 162). The other theory, which I shall call the *conversion theory*, is adumbrated thus:

> it is my impression that when changes in ranking occur, they occur first in informal seating arrangements and only later in the realm of informal food exchange. Once these informal changes become generally accepted, they will be ratified at a formal feast. Thus we see a possible ordered progression of any particular innovation through several contexts and media (Beck 1972: 172).

In other words, actual rank is first established and recognized in everyday interactional media, and this rank then slowly passes through more ritualized, conscious and carefully guarded media. For a caste trying to maximize its rank, then, the optimal strategy is to *convert* rank recognized on the highly unstable and ephemeral media of everyday interaction to the stabilized ritual media resistant to change. In this way it can gain a measure

of security for its achieved rank. Covert in this theory is the Durkheimian view of ritual as a celebration of existing social structures, and the notion that some media of interaction are more ritualized than others. Both of these premises seem well founded in this context.

In relation to these two theories the linguistic media play a special role. With respect to the first theory, the special property of the linguistic media is that they are *not* tied to any particular dimensions of social rank. We can show this by demonstrating, as we have above, that honorifics are sensitive both to overall caste rank, alliances between castes in the ranking arena, and to rank based on traditional power and authority. The linguistic media seem to be sensitive to virtually all social dimensions at once.

With respect to the conversion theory, the linguistic media again play a special role. For they are *par excellence* the media of everyday ordinary interaction. Linguistic media are one of the few areas where it is not possible in practice to abstain, with the result that we have universal exchange between all parties. Moreover, nearly all parties are aware of the details of this exchange, which contrasts with the details in other media. This follows from the public and endlessly replicated transactions in linguistic media. It seems likely then that the linguistic media are *the* primary arena in which actual overall caste ranks are achieved and recognized. Other daily interactional media like kinesic display, seating and touching (during delousing sessions, which occur across castes) would also have a primary significance, but they occur less often, less universally between all parties, or have less clear rank implications (valuations), and would thus be of less interest both to members and ethnographers.

If the conversion theory is correct in essentials, we could expect there to be some lag in the recognition in ritual media of ranks newly achieved in the everyday media. Some confirmation of this can be gained from charting the fortunes of castes 3 and 4. Returning to Figure 22, these castes have a high rank in the linguistic media, and also in the other everyday medium of seating. Their rank begins to be less certain in the more pollution/purity sensitive medium of eating-leaf removal, and has a positive fall in curd exchange transactions. And this low rank does not rise significantly in informal rice exchange, perhaps the most sensitive ritual medium. A reasonable interpretation of this is that castes 3 and 4 have in fact established a high overall rank for themselves in everyday interaction, but are now experiencing the built-in resistance and lag in the ritual or purity-related media where acceptance of high rank would be more permanent. And certainly caste 4 does seem to be in general in the region attempting systematically to up-grade its status (Den Ouden 1969).

We may conclude with the observation that the linguistic media, as represented by our honorifics, do seem to provide the most direct access to indigenous views of the overall general rank of local castes. They do so because they are media unattached to any particular social dimensions (secular or religious rank, for instance), and constitute everyday *de facto* recognition of the actual state of affairs. They are, moreover, media in which all parties exchange, with usages that are generally known to all parties, and where the valuations are particularly clear and can be non-circularly assigned. In short the study of language usage between castes seems to be amongst the very most important sources of information on the nature of the caste system.[5]

existing instances of *taṭṭumāṟu* in the Kokkaṭṭiccōlai area, the shareholders are said to be members of many different *kuṭis*. For other accounts of shareholding and joint cultivation see Leach 1961 and Obeyesekere 1967.

42 The expression *urimaip pen* may also mean a man's 'rightful marriage partner' in many Tamil areas (Beck 1972: 237; David 1973a: n. 15; for Sinhalese equivalent see Yalman 1967: 113n.), but this usage was not noted in Batticaloa.

43 My high caste Tamil landlord in Akkaraipattu, a man of the prestigious Maḷuvaracan kuṭi, summed up his disdain for the modern arrogation of *varicai* honours by saying, 'Only the little people bother with it nowadays'.

44 Stirrat (1975a: 592) reports another unilinear deviation from the model of bilaterally-ascribed caste in a Catholic Karāva caste fishing village in the bilingual (Sinhalese/Tamil) zone near Chilaw on the west coast of the island. There, however, the rule of caste ascription is strictly patrilineal. A patrilineal emphasis is reported in Beck's Koṅku data (1972: 235).

45 In the past there seems to have been a distinction between the ritual duties of the two main Kurukkaḷ matriclans (see section 5.3). There is still today a pattern of Kōvilār caste temple duties which allocates specific tasks to certain matrilines within the caste. Moorish matriclan names include several titles referring to occupational categories, e.g. Ōṭāvi (carpenter) or Levvai (Lebbe, leader of mosque prayers), but these names bear no present relation to actual occupation.

46 Tamils in the Batticaloa region do not seem to bother with elaborate comparisons of the horoscopes of proposed marriage partners, in contrast with Sinhalese concern for these matters (Kemper 1979).

47 As an ideal characterization, marriage between Kurukkaḷs and Vēḷāḷars is said to be more common than marriage between Kurukkaḷs and Mukkuvars, but there is no empirical evidence for this in Akkaraipattu. In the Vēḷāḷar-dominated village of Tambiluvil, Kurukkaḷs seem to have married spouses of the highest ranking Vēḷāḷar clans no more than 25% of the time (Hiatt 1973: 248), yet Kurukkaḷ informants often told me that a Vēḷāḷar spouse was a very respectable 'second best'. The Vēḷāḷars in Tambiluvil, at any rate, often speak of the Kurukkaḷs as members of their caste, but they rank them below the most prestigious pair of Vēḷāḷar *kuṭis*.

48 Yalman (1960; 1967: 142) has discussed the importance of the possession and manipulation of hereditary names and titles in Sinhalese society. The manner in which even a conventional naming rule (e.g. patronymic) can encourage the development of a 'pseudo-unilineal' ideology with no empirical basis has been illustrated by Leach (1973), using material from the genealogies of eminent English Quaker families of the 19th century.

49 There are a number of functional similarities between this ritual and the annual Asala Perahara in Kandy, which 'enacted' the constitution of the Kandyan kingdom in visible form through a series of dramatic

processions associated with the sacred Tooth Relic of the Buddha. Also like the Kokkaṭṭiccōlai temple, the Temple of the Tooth is organized around the distinction between the ritual duties of an 'inner group' (*ätul kaṭṭalē*) of Goygama caste servants who assist the officiating Bhikkus and an 'outer group' (*piṭa kaṭṭalē*) of secular temple administrators. The chief of the 'inner group' is the Kāriya Karavana Rāla, who is also in charge of the temple store-room and who seems to occupy a role similar in many ways to that of the Vēḷāḷar temple chief at Kokkatticcōlai (Hocart 1931: 8–15; Seneviratne 1978: 26–37). The historical traditions of Batticaloa refer occasionally to the role of the Kandyan king as a patron of major temples, and it seems likely that there would have been some sharing of ritual conventions between the two regions.

50 Recent years have witnessed the development of patterns of sponsorship by new categories of participants, e.g. civil servants employed in government offices in the Akkaraipattu area. This corresponds to a trend noted also in Tamilnadu (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1976: 203–4).

51 Much more historical information is needed, however, before all the puzzles are solved. There remains the fact that the Timilar caste, which tradition recounts was driven out of the Batticaloa region in a war with the Mukkuvars, and which is found today in the vicinity of Verugal and Toppūr south of Trincomalee, follows a pattern of matrilineal clan organization substantially similar to that of the Mukkuvars, Vēḷāḷars, and other Hindu castes of present day Batticaloa.

52 Aside from the Vīracaiva Kurukkaḷs, the only group which appears to be unique to Batticaloa is the Cīrpātam caste (Raghavan 1953; 1971: 109–12).

Caste rank and verbal interaction in western Tamilnadu

This paper is based on Chapter 4 of my doctoral dissertation (Levinson 1977), where much further pertinent material can be found. The acknowledgements made there carry over to this paper, but I must specifically thank Brenda Beck for inviting me into her research locale, E. Annamalai for detailed linguistic help, John Gumperz for guiding the course of the research, O.K. Suntaram and family for embracing me within their family, and Suntaram, Baskaran, Balu, Subramaniam and Gopal for their field assistance, given with little or no remuneration. I am much indebted for significant corrections or additions suggested by E. Annamalai, Brenda Beck, Penelope Brown, John Gumperz, Edmund Leach, and Dennis McGilvray. Fieldwork was in part funded by the University of California, Berkeley, and the facilities of the Central Institute of Indian Languages at Mysore were generously put at my disposal. Colin Duly very kindly and patiently redrew the matrices. Finally, the editor of this volume put an immense amount of work into improving a rambling manuscript, and without his help this paper would never have appeared.

1 See, however, the work done independently by Den Ouden (1975).

2 There is a slight discrepancy between the caste inventory used by Beck and the one in Table 1.1. As noted, I have recognized a subcaste, 7b, related to her 7 (which is here labelled 7a). Beck also took into consideration castes 12 (a subcaste of washermen) and 15 (a subcaste of barbers), which I have omitted because they did not occur in the hamlet of study or its immediate environs. But castes 12 and 15 would almost certainly pattern very closely to the linguistic behaviour of castes 13 and 14 (the washermen and barbers included in this study), so little important comparative material is lost.

3 To be more precise, Marriott underplays rank-reflecting behaviour. As we saw, fully competitive behaviour simply cannot generate hierarchy, so his 'optimal' and 'pessimal' strategies are not, in terms of the theory of games, viable strategies at all (since the first requires prior acquiescence by others, and the second prior admission of defeat by self). In contrast, Marriott's 'maximal' and 'minimal' strategies are true game-theoretic minimax strategies, and it is this aspect of his theory that is the important contribution. It is thus only the two middle varnas that systematically treat transactional media as competitive games.

4 These matrices are extracts from the full matrices of dishonorific usage, just indicating areas of symmetrical exchange. They specifically do not include the full range of usage, which patterns very roughly like the area in Matrix VIII formed by adding the areas of relative age T/V to the area of T-giving (see Levinson 1977: 298, 304).

5 Curiously, perhaps, the study of intra-caste language usage also yields fundamental insights into the nature of the caste system. This is because, just as Beck (1972) found that the internal customs and social organization of castes were related systematically to their place in the caste system, so the detailed facts of honorific and dishonorific usage within castes (and thus between real or putative kinsmen) are finely attuned to both caste rank and left/right division membership. The implication is that the caste system does not just operate to organize the external affairs of an endogamous group, but penetrates deeply into its internal organization, affecting the very character of the most intimate social relationships, as expressed by the solidarity of T-exchange (typical of lower castes) or by the inequality of asymmetrical T/V exchange (typical of upper castes). See Levinson 1977: 503–89 for details. The caste system is not just a heap, not even a hierarchically structured heap, of unitary caste cultures, as early descriptions of Indian society (preoccupied with historical visions of castes as accreted strata) suggested. The culture and structure of each caste can only be understood by reference to its place in a many-dimensional caste system, within which its own internal organization can be seen to be in patterned opposition to that of its structural counterparts in the system.

Caste and politics in India since 1947

This paper owes a very great deal to conversations with André Béteille. But even his exceptional patience, knowledge and good judgement cannot extend to a responsibility for what it contains. I am also grateful to John Dunn, Edmund Leites, Mary Katzenstein, Dennis McGilvray, and John Thompson for their comments.

1 The 'Asiatic' mode has been and remains the least plausible even of these. Soviet scholars abandoned it in 1931 (Clarkson 1979: 202).
2 Dumont has himself reviewed and replied to the criticisms of his thesis in a new preface to a new edition of *Homo Hierarchicus* which I read after I had written this paper (1979: i–xl). He distinguishes these criticisms in the following way: as criticisms of his insistence on the encompassing power of hierarchy which come not from anthropology or Indology but from 'modern ideology' in general (vii–viii); criticisms of what is taken to be his hostility to materialist explanations (iii); criticisms from what he calls 'empiricism' of his indifference to much ethnography, his connections between precepts in old texts and practices in modern society, his emphasis on the constitutive importance of ideas and his analytical dissociation of 'infrastructures' from 'superstructures' (ix–xxv); and criticisms of detail (xxxiii–xxxix). Several of my own criticisms coincide with these. My central objection, however, owes nothing to political radicalism, analytical materialism, Marxism or 'empiricism'; it comes from a particular view of what 'interpretation' can and should be. In another recent essay which I did not read until I had finished this paper, Dumont makes his theoretical convictions clearer, in at least two respects, than he has done before. He explains that his emphasis on the importance of hierarchy in India is in part intended to restore a true sociological perspective to all societies (1978: 94–5). Modern 'individualism' and 'egalitarianism', as he thinks of them, are in his view an historical aberration and a real, that is to say distorting, 'ideology'. He also explains that the modern or early modern thinker who saw this most clearly and gives us the best perspective on it is Leibniz (1978: 90–1). It is interesting to see what this commits Dumont to. Leibniz argued in roughly the following way. All worlds are inhabited by individuals or singular things. Each individual is defined by its concept. This consists of a set of attributes exclusively satisfied by it and exhaustively constituting it. Only it satisfies them and it satisfies them all. Attributes are either 'simple' or 'complex'. Simple attributes are primitive and 'positive'. They are what we normally understand by 'properties'. Complex attributes are negative or conjunctive. They are properties too, but of a quite different kind, qualities and quantities that the individual has, not intrinsically, but through his relations with all other individuals at all points in space and all points in time, past, present and future. Individual concepts are 'compossible' if they are capable of being

realized together. Compossibility is a logical matter and an empirical one, a matter of logical consistency and empirical compatibility. Any world, therefore, including the actual world, this world, is a set of compossible individuals or singular things which by virtue of their attributes are peculiar to one world. Leibniz is accordingly committed to what might now be called the most uncompromising 'holism'. So, one presumes, is Dumont. It is, of course, a metaphysical commitment in the literal sense. And quite apart from that, it is at variance with the Enlightenment assumption, roughly speaking, that relations in the world may or may *not* be necessary, although it is not at variance with some other almost equally strong holisms that come, *via* Spinoza and Marx, from Paris. I take my characterization of Leibniz not from Dumont himself but from *Theodicy*, paras. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 34, 37, 42, 52, 58, 174, 225, 291, 310, 311, 349, 360 and 367, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, paras. 8, 9 and 13, *Monadology*, paras. 33, 37 and 38, the letter of 12 April 1686 to von Hessen-Rheinfels and the remarks on a letter from Arnaud written in May 1686. These can all be traced in standard editions.

3 Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is a text in which, as Drekmeier puts it, there is not 'a thorough going divorce of politics and ethics' (quoted by Tambiah 1976: 29) and in which ethics are not therefore grounded in *dharma* alone.

4 Max Weber argued that it was not primarily a religious matter. For the view that it is, very close to Dumont, see Stern (1971).

5 In an extended and exceptionally subtle defence of this view, on which I depend, Dunn (1978) suggests that we might begin with the question of what the putative truths of the human sciences are truths about. His answer (in what he describes as a 'shop-soiled but still serviceable phrase') is ' "real living men", past present and future, or more broadly human acts taken under intentional descriptions'. His reasons for this are both pragmatic and moral. If we abandon such descriptions, we are likely both to make predictive mistakes and to do the 'data', our subjects, an injustice. But since neither they nor we can in any proper sense *know* what they mean in these intentions (there is no acceptable theory of meaning) we cannot completely suspend disbelief and so may, with delicacy and discretion, supplement (but not replace) their accounts. The commitment to interpretation and the impossibility of a 'cumulative, convergent, self-vindicating . . . science of man' (Williams 1978: 302) are very plain. One should be clear, however, that the case for interpretation does not depend upon the kind of assumption that Dunn makes about the distinctively intentional or reflective character of human performances. It does not depend upon any assumption at all about these performances. It is, indeed, compatible with the most remorseless behavioural materialism. For an argument, and an excellent review of the whole issue, see Rorty 1979: especially 343–56.

6 The Rudolphs (1967) and Kothari's collection (1970b) each contain reasonably full reviews of the connections between caste and politics

as they were seen up to the late 1960s, and Kothari (1970a) is a more general account of Indian politics in the liberal pluralist manner. Carter (1974) contains one of the best of more recent reviews.

7 Not surprisingly, there is at least one report of a once-dominant group making such an appeal as it fell (Béteille 1970: 272). Marxists and those affected by *marxisant* analysis (such as Wolf and Alavi) have seen the agitation of 'middle peasants' as economically caused and potentially revolutionary. For a brief but critical review of this argument, its presuppositions and its truth (for South Asia), see Stokes (1978: 283ff.).

8 The Rudolphs are unique in the literature in political science in taking account both of the legal changes in the colonial period and of the evidence of what used to be called 'political behaviour' after independence. Whether this account, at variance with my own, is a plausible one may be judged from my own sources and from Fox's very critical review (1970).

9 But of course, 'the complexities of political response in Europe would warn of the difficulty of constructing some handy ready-reckoner on which the student of Indian political history could happily rely' (Stokes 1978: 288).

10 As President (formerly General) Branco of Brazil put it in a speech at the National War College there in 1967, nicely reflecting American theories of a modernized liberal pluralist policy, 'For a society to be democratic, it must have free expression for disagreement; for it to be viable, it is necessary that the areas of agreement outweigh those of disagreement' (quoted by Flynn 1978: 513 n. 25).

11 An indication of the success of these discriminations, 75 district collectors are now reported to be Harijans.

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