Language and Identity in Saurashtra

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Abstract: This article describes the necessity of various signs or "markers" that identify and distinguish a community from the others in Indian society. It points out that references to images or models are necessary to understand the language of identity as practised in Saurashtra. The author shows how Indian society provides a large scope for interaction that creates or maintains rank differences or "hierarchising transactions", and also how the rules of hierarchising transactions are better seen as implicitly structuring different kinds of such behavioural schema. It shows that the rules of interaction and the grammar of language of identity imply that people must share a number of presuppositions that link social categories and their stereotypes on the one hand, and a repertory of recognised types of situation on the other hand.

Indians, used to the caste system, are familiar with the necessity of identifying themselves and others by various signs or "markers" to borrow Barth's (1969) term for ethnic boundaries. Nevertheless, the veritable language of identification that results has seldom been described or analysed. It does, however, provide us with an angle to criticise simplistic or reifying notions of the "caste system." Ever since the publication of the classic work of Gumperz (1958), and an excellent article of Berreman (1972), the purport of such identification does not stop at caste. Rather, Indian social actors refer to various markers of rank and distinction, revealing a complexity of the social world which goes well beyond any simple notion of "system". Interactionist or sociolinguistic approaches have opened up new perspectives on Indian society, and relegated the idea of a "caste system" to one of several models structuring society and serving as a reference for the languages of identity in common use. Nevertheless, the work of Gumperz and other socio-linguists tend to ignore too many of the implicits rooted in such images or models. I try to show how reference to such images or models is necessary to understand the language of identity practiced in Saurashtra.

Rules of Interaction and Language

The approach used here is derived from the works of symbolic interactionists like Mead (1934), Goffman (1959, 1967) and Barth (1966, 1969), for whom an

interaction is framed by the definition of the situation. And the definition of the situation is a two-stage process particularly for Mead who defines emergence as the sum of knowledge – whether explicit or implicit – necessary for an actor while focusing (Esser 1996) or orienting himself/herself towards a new situation. The actor must recognise a certain number of typical situations, previously defined, as well as stereotypes linked to various categories of people. Both of them clearly refer to the kind of entities that cognitivists call 'schema' (D'Andrade 1995). Relativity, for Mead, is the process by which an actor situates himself in relation to others. One can follow Barth (1966) in seeing this process as basically transactional, with the possible transactions limited in each case by the definition of the situation.

Indian society provides a large scope for interaction that creates or maintains rank difference. I have elsewhere (Tambs-Lyche, forthcoming) stressed the importance of what Marriott (1976) calls 'hierarchising transactions'. They have their own rules, which are asymmetric in nature: A is showing deference to B (Goffman 1967). But Marriott shows that asymmetry does not exclude reciprocity, that is, when A defers to B, he may in fact gain status in relation to the outsider C - "I talked to a great man" - he may say. For him, such encounters do in fact modify A's rank as relevant "substance", just as prestigious marriages ameliorate the substance of the lineage (Inden 1976).

Types of such exchanges can be memorised as schema and the rules of hierarchising transactions are better seen as implicitly structuring different kinds of such behavioural schema. From the linguistic point of view, such rules are "constituents" (Searle 1972): they are necessary if the parties are to attribute to language acts the sense they are meant to communicate. Whenever an actor defers to another, s/he participates implicitly in a discourse concerning rank — to explicit ritual corresponds an implicit substantive act. And though the constituent rules are, in principle, distinct from the moral rules, they tend to merge with the situations we describe here, since it is impolite, in Saurashtra, to deny the other the respect due to his status. The various schemas constituted by these rules add up to nothing less than the hierarchically ordered image of society, what is usually meant by the "system" of castes. Playing this double game clearly depends on the interactional competence of the actors, which forms part of emergence (Mead 1934). In general, one tries to assure the other of one's own superior status while respecting the rules of politeness. To convince the other of one's own rank, one should avoid ambiguity, so the actors must try to produce consistent signs of status.

The Region

Saurashtra[1] is on the periphery of the Indian world, geographically as well as socially and economically. During the colonial time, there were more than 200 princely states in the peninsula. While the bigger ones, such as Junagadh, Jamnagar or Bhavnagar, had a proper and sometimes quite

progressive administration, the smallest units, often of one or two villages, were almost tribal in character. The notion of caste hierarchy is present everywhere in Saurashtra, but the complexities of traditional polity has left considerable variation in the actual rank order and organisation from one old princely state to another.[2]

For the Rajputs, who ruled most of the states, Rajasthan was the point of reference; kingdoms like Jaipur, Jodhpur or Udaipur served as models of state and society. The villagers from the small units outside the princely power were proud of their "independence," while regretting the absence of a prestigious court. This paradox runs through Rajput martial ideology and much of Saurashtra society. Love of liberty is mixed with respect for the rulers and the aristocracy. The quest for freedom was particularly strong where the Rajput power was absent, as with chiefs from other castes such as Kathi, Ahir or Koli, who had kept their domains in the poorest and most isolated parts of Saurashtra.

In local parlance, the villages are qualified as 'big' or 'small' — a distinction that refers not so much to the village's size as to its prestige. Small villages had few artisans or other specialists and what characterises them is above all the relative lack of stratification and division of labour. The big villages had a proper chief, Brahmin priests and most kinds of artisans were present. The individual's prestige was enhanced by hailing from an important village, in spite of the dependence on a chief, which the peasant from a small village avoided. Similar oppositions were found in the Muslim states, for which the Mughal Empire served as a model of reference.

Within each of the old states, several castes and caste groups competed for status. There was always an ambiguity in the relationship between Rajput and Brahmin. While the latter saw themselves as superior, referring to what we now would call a pan-Indian standard, Rajputs were jealous of their primacy in their own domains. Typically, the most powerful rulers, sure of their own prestige, were more willing to recognise Brahmins as more than their especially prestigious clients. The Nagar Brahmins, most prestigious of all the peninsula's castes, owned more land and enjoyed higher status in Muslim Junagadh than anywhere else, probably because the rulers did not see them as rivals in the way the Rajputs did.

Everywhere in Saurashtra, the old feudal lords, whether Muslim, Rajput or other, are opposed to the merchant castes like the Vanias or Banias, who differ fundamentally in their values of vegetarianism and non-violence. The merchants never seemed to have identified themselves with the princely states or their political order, and in this regard they stood apart from most of the population. For the Vanias, the point of reference had been the civil society of Gujarat's commercial cities situated on the mainland. These cities had powerful merchant guilds, united behind a "Nagarsheth" who may be compared to the mayor of many Western cities. Such organisation existed in Saurashtra, too, but with the possible exception of Bhavnagar, the power of

the merchants was stunted by the ruler's presence. The identification of merchants with the mainland is manifested in their language, for they use standard Gujarati, rather than the Kathiawadi dialect of the peasants and their lords.

Sociolect and Models of Society

Three traditional models – that corresponding to Muslim empire; merchant-dominated urban civil society; and the Rajput-dominated feudal order — serve as references in the regional discourse on the social order. Until quite recently, the modern influence tended to coincide with merchant views. These three models correspond to three language variants or sociolects: the standard Gujarati of the merchants, the Kathiawadi of Rajputs and rurals, and the Muslim sociolect influenced by Urdu vocabulary and pronunciation. All are recognised by the local speakers and serve as markers of identity.

The Kathiawadi differs from Gujarati in replacing '*s*' by an aspirated sound close to '*h*', or sometimes '*kh*'. The word '*saro*' ('good, fine, OK') so often heard in the region becomes '*haro*' or '*kharo*'. In a metonymical way the word serves to identify the Kathiawadi dialect for users of standard Gujarati that is, reference to Kathiawadi speaker is clear when they say '*haro*'. It is also said that Kathiawadi speakers tend to begin their phrases by '*i*', instead of '*ah*' or '*eh*' for standard Gujarati – in both cases, the interlocution has no particular meaning – rather like "I say" for some English speakers or '*eh*' in French.[3]

The Muslim sociolect differs above all in pronunciation, where the letter '*j*' becomes '*z*'; thus Guzrat for Gujarat, '*zari*' for '*jhari*', the gold embroidery of Surat or Jamnagar. This distinction is, of course, known from Hindi and Urdu, but the soft Gujarati sounds make the difference more pronounced. Yet let us note that '*jati*' for caste does not become '*zat*' or '*zati*' in Gujarat. The traditional term for caste, here, is '*kom*', ('*qoum*' in Persian) and the use of the term '*jati*' is a marker not just of the speaker being a Hindu, but one insisting on Sanskritic terms.

Thus vocabulary and pronunciation convey social identification, and the name of the peninsula is the most obvious example. Though the name Saurashtra is today acknowledged universally, its present use dates only from 1952, when it was chosen to designate the state of the Indian Union that superseded princely rule. The new state was dominated by the Congress elite based merchants and other members of the urban elite. Even today, traditional Rajputs and other rural groups prefer the term Kathiawar, used at the time of the Princes, and their use of the old name is metonymical of opposition to the new political and social order, which has seriously weakened the power and prestige of Rajputs. In fact, "Saurashtra" in Kathiawadi becomes "Haurachtra" — which sounds ridiculous and there is no Kathiawadi alternative to Kathiawad. A third name, "Sorath", is used for the region around Junagadh, but sometimes extended to cover the peninsula.

The Old Persian texts,[4] like the old rulers of Junagadh, use "Sorath" in both the senses, and it is no wonder that the use of the term today, for the peninsula, implies a reference to Muslim tradition, or, in some cases, to the tradition of Junagadh itself.

We might conclude that the three systems of reference structure discourse in and on Saurashtra were not for caste and regional variations, but there are other sociolects such as the Gujarati of the Parsi community.[5] Certainly, the total number of variants that a linguist might identify exceeds whatever an ordinary speaker would know or identify. However, regional dialects and caste sociolects tend to merge as caste parlance tends to be influenced by the regional dialect of their most important concentration, while whatever is seen as the dialect of a region is influenced by its most important communities. Still, people in Saurashtra do refer to the regional as well as the social variations. One may recognise the 'dialect' of Halwad (north-western Saurashtra) or the 'sociolect' of the Ahir caste, who are mainly concentrated around Junagadh, to the southwest.[6]

In a similar way, some "Islamic" elements are more strongly present, not least in vocabulary, in Junagadh than elsewhere — no doubt the influence of the Muslim elites is important here.[7] In Bhavnagar, close to the mainland, the trade and merchant communities have influenced both the city and the old state.[8] The standard Gujarati is stronger here but Kathiawadi marks the speaker as a rustic to a greater extent than elsewhere. On the other hand, the Kathiawadi is the norm in the most distant and rural areas and the standard Gujarati is strictly minoritarian. But one should note that the latter is accepted universally as the language of the educated.

Styles of Language

The Rajputs differ from other rural groups in their use of language. They use polite and elegant forms, like when showing their lands to a stranger, they say, 'this is your land', as if 'what is mine is equally yours.' The farmers of lower castes do not use these formulas.

The Gujarati language has three forms of address: '*tu*', '*tame*', and '*ap*', distinguishing inferiors, equals, and superiors. The '*ap*' is also used for polite address, but the aristocratic politeness of the Rajput is not to be confused with his servant's use of the same term before his master. There is a difference in tone, but especially in non-verbal gestures, magnanimous in the first case, servile in the latter. A Rajput keeps his body straight in all situations, and the gesture with which he shows 'your land' is measured. The servant, as also the vendor, in fact, bows before his superior, with exaggerated movements. You feel immediately, in Saurashtra, whether the man in front is servile or simply polite.

Then there is a speed of elocution; the standard Gujarati is spoken much faster than the Kathiawadi. Rajputs, especially, talk slowly, stressing each word, trying to employ modes of speech that are precise, elegant and

short. Chattering is highly unsuitable for a Rajput, and the mode of speech is easy to understand, as consonants are clearly marked and vowels precise. There is no merging of successive vowels into the kinds of diphthongs often heard in peasant speech, and in standard Gujarati. It would seem that this precision of speech is indicative of rank all over Northern India, with the notable exception of merchants, who speak much and fast in Saurashtra as elsewhere in Gujarat. I am assured, however, that the *haute bourgeoisie* of Ahmedabad speak more slowly and with a precise diction.[9]

The class difference, then, is differently manifested in Kathiawadi and in standard Gujarati. In the latter case, the higher levels of the bourgeoisie may be recognised by the high pitch of their voice, which would seem ridiculous and worse, to a peasant or a Rajput. This contrast, which sets the "real men" apart from the "feminine" merchants, is hardly specific to Saurashtra,[10] but the rivalry between merchants and the old feudal lords makes the difference doubly significant.[11] Merchants see themselves as "civilised" compared to the rurals, peasants and aristocracy alike, and we should not be surprised that standards of such elegance differ so clearly between Kathiawadi and standard Gujarati.

Dress as Signs

However, speech is only one among several indices of rank. Clothes, gestures, and the content of speech are all significant, and one quality of interaction in Saurashtra is soon apparent to the foreigner: all these kinds of indices must be made to fit a single, coherent picture.

Among manners of dress, we may first distinguish traditional from modern clothes. Modern clothes are not neutral, however: for at least 50 years now, they signify the urbanity and cosmopolitanism of a new dominant class, whose values are contested. Such clothes go with the use of standard Gujarati, and indicate the same values. But similar values may be signified by traditional dress provided that we are dealing with Brahmins or merchants. These two communities, generally urban, from which functionaries as well as traders come from, are often lumped together under the term Brahmin-Vania as if they constituted a single group. Among members of this category, traditional or modern dress often distinguishes generations rather than community: the old dress traditionally, while the young wear modern dress. In both cases, their dress differs significantly from Rajput or peasant dress,[12] except when, as one ex-ruler working in a bank put it, "I have to dress like a Vania".

The clearest sub-system of clothes is found in the traditional rural dress. It is still resisting modern influence among the Kathiawadi-speaking population. Men wear trousers very wide around the haunches and extremely narrow at the feet, with a Kurta-type shirt decorated with tresses in front. The headgear is a turban and all men dress basically in white. But once you start looking at the details, a host of little differences appear: the decor of the

shirt; the way the turban is tied; and a stripe of red colour in the headgear. These signs are easily read by locals, and identify caste precisely. Merchants stock clothes according to caste: Rabari turbans, Ahir shirts, and so on. What is hard to learn for the foreigners is the code of these differences, since clothes also vary individually. And then there are sub-regional variations, so that the difference that counts may vary slightly between the districts.[13]

New distinctions have probably appeared every time there is a significant social movement: informants tell me that they can distinguish, for example, a Vaishnava Ahir from a traditional devotee of the Goddess. Then there are the 'blue' Bharwads, who adhere to various reforms like vegetarianism and dress in dark blue, which sets them off from traditional Bharwad herdsmen, clad in white.[14]

Some caste markers are particularly clear. On buses, one is astonished to see Rajputs carrying their *kuvadi* – a battle-axe some two meters long – which is not exactly practical when the bus is filled to the brim. But the axe is a sign of status without any ambiguity; as such arms are a jealously guarded caste monopoly. Only Brahmins and merchants, for example, would refuse food offered by the bearer of a *kuvadi*.

Each caste, then, has its own traditional dress, Muslim and Hindu, rurals and merchants. Thus the Khoja and the Vora, important merchant communities among the Muslims, wear clothes close to those of the Brahmin and Vania, while Pathans and Baluch have their own particular ethnic dress. There is nothing in particular to mark Muslim dress as different from that of Hindus, while the long robes and beards of Islamic revivalists cut across various communities. Beards, in general, are reserved for Muslims and Parsis, but moustaches are found across the major religious divides. Thus, a large number of details may function as markers of identity, and each sub-region has its 'language' of traditional dress that defines each community. These distinctions are so elaborate that an individual passing from one part of Saurashtra to another will never know all the relevant distinctions though some main guidelines apply. In this, the language of dress is no different from that of speech.

Emergence and Identification.

For most people, the identification of others becomes, therefore, a process running from the most obvious signs to the more elaborate ones. Travelling in Saurashtra, I had to learn from other travellers, people in Saurashtra travel a lot, not only the signs but also the procedures of identifying them. The distinctions I describe here are, therefore, largely those actively used by informants.

In his description of urban encounters in Dehra Dun, Berreman (1972) stresses how people enjoy this game of identification, and sometimes cheat in presenting false indices for identification. If many Saurashtrians would recognise such quirks, most take, however, their self-presentation quite

seriously, and try to place themselves favourably in relation to others. This is true even of encounters that are quite temporary, as in trains and buses, where the people concerned may never see each other again.

When meeting somebody unknown, one tries by various signs to guess the general category to which the other belongs. From there, one tries to proceed towards a more precise identification, up to the point where the relative rank of the other is clear. Thus, one of the first 'questions' is to make a sign with two fingers, as if cutting with a knife. Sometimes the question 'do you cut?' is added for clarity, and the answer reveals whether the other is a vegetarian or not. This gesture is never made by non-vegetarians; so there is no need to reciprocate the question.

As I did my first fieldwork in the seventies, asking the other about his religion was not yet problematic. With increased conflict, it has become so now. But even then, a more polite question would be 'what do you do with your dead?' which of course distinguishes those who bury their deceased from those who cremate them. It may be noted, perhaps, that some Hindu castes – notably the Jogis and other castes of "born renouncers" — bury their dead.

When these preliminaries are over, one may ask '*Apna kom shun chhe*?' — which may be translated by 'what is your caste', but much more precisely by 'what kind are you?' or 'to what category do you belong?' For the answer is not necessarily in terms of caste. Quite often the other states his profession: "Teacher", "Engineer", and so on. Another possible answer is in terms of a larger category: "Punjabi", "Muslim", "Christian". The latter answer, in Gujarat, generally indicates a person of low caste. Quite often, low-caste people prefer to state their profession, and so one is a little suspicious of such answers, but had better not show it, since high-caste people may answer in the same way to underline their modernity and implicit criticism of traditional caste divisions.

But even if one arrives, here, at a specific caste, it is not impolite to go further. For Brahmins, Vanias and Rajputs, for example, it is quite in order to ask for further identification: the clan for Rajputs, the sub-caste for Vanias and Brahmins. The question tends to prove the cultural knowledge of the one who asks, but also serves as confirmation: no real Vania, for example, would be ignorant of his sub-caste. One seldom asks for subdivisions within the lower castes, for knowledge of them is not widespread among the higher castes, and so may reflect negatively on the speaker. Thus few people of higher caste know much about the several categories of Kolis, though this vast category forms perhaps 40 per cent of the population. Kolis, however, tend to be delighted if asked, as if such knowledge implied a degree of social recognition only too rare.

It is impolite, however, to ask for caste once the respondent has chosen to identify himself be a professional category, such as "Engineer." Here, too, one must proceed by dividing the category: what kind of Engineer? From which university? Working for which company? Geographical origins,

however, may be subdivided by caste – it is quite in order to ask a Punjabi if he is a Jat. But in such cases, one should always start relatively high up in the caste system – you do not ask a Punjabi if he is a Chamar!

We must not forget, of course, that rank also depends on age and family status. There is no problem in asking whether somebody is married, how many children, etc. But again, we do not start by asking a man if he is a bachelor.

Thus the process of identification is complex in Saurashtra, and a great store is set on the markers displayed. These are often ambiguous, and may be misleading, as when an untouchable Engineer in modern dress plays his professional rather than his caste status. But everybody knows these pitfalls, and so it is better to accept the other's claims for encounters that are temporary and without important consequences.[15] But don't accept food from an Engineer! The ways of refusing food are, in fact, a study in themselves, with the need to answer politely yet remain sure of avoiding food from an inferior.

Stereotypes and Rules of Coherence

In determining the status of the other, one implies a whole set of qualities. These stereotypes exist on the level of the broader categories (Vania, Darbar (feudal lord, member of a dominant caste), Maldhari (pastoralist), Khedut (peasant)) as well as for each specific caste.[16] For the larger categories, such stereotypes are known by all, while knowledge about the specific castes are unequally distributed. Whenever an actor encounters a member of a caste he does not know, he tries to assimilate, by questioning, its qualities to a category he already knows.[17] Such images of a caste resemble ethnic stereotypes (Tambs-Lyche 1980, 1991, 1993), but caste differs from ethnicity notably in the rank inferences that follow from identification.

When a man wears traditional rural dress, one expects by implication that he will speak Kathiawadi and that his discourse is in accordance with these signs. A young man dressed in Western clothes is expected to speak standard Gujarati marked by schooling. For a teacher, it is expected that he should represent modern values, such as opposition to caste and to 'the dowry system', and of course, he too should express these values in the standard language of the educationist. But if you meet the same teacher on the way to a marriage, he may be dressed in the manner of his caste and express the traditional values of his community.

These rules of coherence constrain the anthropologist as well as his interlocutors. In following friends and informants from one situation to another, I was often surprised by their apparent changes of identity.[18] Their language and discourse changed, and sometimes what was said and done in one situation seemed to contradict whatever had been held in another. Opinions expressed on dowry were typically dependent on the situation. And, progressive values tended to be expressed in standard Gujarati, while the traditionalist points of view in Kathiawadi.

It seems clear that what is at stake here is the coherence of the image one presents in a particular type of situation. Incoherent behaviour is comical, like Shri Rajneesh's "Brahmacharyas" who practise sexual freedom, or the "saheb" who struggles to move his own luggage. But contradictions separated by time are accepted: they prove, in fact, that the individual is capable of adapting correctly to any situation. And this, of course, enhances further the importance of defining the situation, and to find one's own place in it. A Westerner's insistence on 'being himself' at all times would be highly out of place here.

There is a term, '*sidhu manos*', used in Gujarati to describe the proper kind of coherence. This 'straight' or as it is usually put in English 'simple' man is, above all, consistent in his behaviour, adjusting himself perfectly to the circumstances.

The effect of these rules of coherence is to produce clear and easily readable messages about identity, which fit the stereotypes. The actor who knows the latter well can thus easily adjust to any definition of the situation, and find his own proper place within it. Still, since rank is so important, one has to pass through a stage of negotiation to establish the proper "relativity" (Mead 1934). To be a simple man demands knowledge, on the level of 'emergence', of the rules that define coherence.

Rank and Strategies

Since rank is important, one should try to avoid inferiority, while accepting it gracefully in the face of somebody really superior. In some context, the Brahmins' superiority is recognised by all, and there is no use contesting the pre-eminence of rich merchants in town or dominant Rajputs in the countryside. Such admissions do not affect negatively the relation one has to near equals, who constitute real rivals in terms of rank.

Inclusion and exclusion (Pocock 1957) are important strategies of rank. One tries to include oneself with superiors and exclude inferiors from the range of near-equals. But more surprising, perhaps, is the readiness to accord superiority to the other in certain cases. This is the point of hierarchising transactions: my submission to a really great man does not reduce my status in relation to third parties: the fact of entering into a real relation with a superior rather enhances my rank. This implies, however, that I shall have to let him excel: the more convincing his general superiority, the more my presence adds to my own prestige. If I submit to a *guru*, in other words, my *guru* should be really great. There is a symbiotic relation here, and any effort to reduce the superior's status would reflect negatively on myself.

In all cases, the strategy chosen must be coherent. What I want to stress here, is what these strategies at once imply and produce: an image of hierarchical ordering, which itself does not need to be closely defined. It is here, in my view, that Dumont (1966) put the cart before the horse: it is not the precise but abstract image of a caste system that produces the Indian

interaction, but competition for rank that implies, by presupposition, an ordering that may well remain imprecise.

In village life, relative rank becomes established as reasonably stable. But in town or while travelling, the other is often an unknown, and relative rank must be re-established each time a situation is defined. This is where the language of identity is developed and maintained.

Conclusion: Stereotypes, Typical Situations, and Folklore

The rules of interaction, the grammar of language of identity, implies that people must share a number of presuppositions which link two kinds of phenomena: first, the social categories and their stereotypes and second, a repertory of recognised types of situation. It is the linking of these two classes of phenomena that is so strongly evident when actors in Saurashtra meet and interact. It is responsible for what Westerners (Dumont, in particular) tend to see as an 'absence of individualism', since the straight or simple man is one capable of being different according to the situation, rather than persisting in a reified image of 'himself'. The stereotypes are central to our perspective here, for interaction takes place as if the stereotypes were real. We must, of course, not imply that Indian actors 'believe' in the stereotypes: it is the rules of interaction, not the beliefs of the individual, which are important here. Everybody knows, after all, that there are courageous merchants, contrary to stereotypes, or individual Rajputs who singularly lack the courage attributed to them. Stereotypes are a tool the actor uses, not a mysterious force directing the actor, and their utility lies in rendering coherent communication possible. The fixed nature of the stereotypes corresponds to the uncertainty in defining situations – they help to 'fix' such definitions. As Rex (1970) puts it, complex societies can only function if their members have at their disposal conceptual tools for simplifying that complexity in their minds. What I have tried to show here is that the demand for such simplification or ordering produces a whole language of signs and markers, in language, discourse, behaviour and dress, which makes for a rich folklore of social types and the means of their identification.

Notes

1. I did fieldwork in Saurashtra in 1973-74, followed up by shorter spells in 1978-79, 1990-91, 1991-92. The region was politically fragmented into more than 200 "princely states" during the British period (1807-1947), and this fragmentation has added to the complexity of castes and communities. See Spodek 1974, 1976, and Tambs-Lyche, 1992, 1997, and *in press.*

2. The main variation between sub-regions concerns the pattern of dominance, which implies a series of different alliances and conflicts between specific communities. (Srinivas 1962, Mayer 1958 and 1960, Tambs-Lyche 1992 and *in press*).

3. For this particular observation, I am grateful to Mrs. Rupi Shah, Paris.

4.   Like the Tarikh-i-Sorath, a regional history written by Ranchodji Amarji, son of a famous Dewan of Junagadh, towards 1820.

5.   The Parsis came to Saurashtra from Iran around 800 A.D. Later they moved to South Gujarat, to Surat, then to Bombay, where they played an important part in the development of modern Gujarati.

6.   We may note briefly some of these regional differences: the '*a*' becomes deeper, almost like an '*o*') in Halwad, in the north near Jamnagar, while it remains much lighter and sharper in old Bhavnagar state. Among rurals of lower caste, the '*a*' of Halwad becomes '*ao*' close to the Rann of Kacch.

7.   Junagadh was conquered by the Muslims in 1470. The presence of a Muslim elite has certainly influenced the language of its upper classes. Junagadh was the most powerful of Saurashtra's states until about 1800, and the language of its administration was Persian. All the time, Nagar Brahmins were part of the local elite. This does not seem to have influenced their religious practices but has certainly marked the more profane aspects of their behaviour.

8.   Bhavnagar city was founded in the early 18th century and soon became an important commercial centre due to the rulers' mercantilist policies and their alliance first with Surat, then with the British. In 1821 James Tod found its culture extremely mixed in comparison to the Rajput traditions of Rajasthan with which he was familiar. He makes fun of what he sees as a lack of taste in architecture as well as in elite custom. But he admits that if wealthy merchants make the beauty of a city, then "Bhaonuggur was certainly beautiful" (1971: 260).

9.   Here again I thank Mrs. Rupi Shah for these observations.

10. Thus in my town of origin, Bergen in Norway, also an old commercial centre, the rich merchants traditionally spoke in a very high-pitched voice and pronounced <u>s</u> with a lisp making it rather like <u>th</u> in English. Here, too, speakers from the lower classes ridicule the merchants for their effeminate style.

11. For this opposition, see Spodek 1974,1976, and Tambs-Lyche 1982, 1992 and 1997.

12. Merchants and Brahmins customarily wear a *dhoti* and a long jacket as well as a cap or a hat. The latter was traditionally the safest way to identify their caste. Thus the Bhatia of Jamnagar still quite often wear their black "pillbox" type hat. Parsis also had their own kind of hat. Today the Nehru cap, which used to mark Hindu Vanias are used by a large number of urban castes and so rather symbolises a general assimilation to urban culture and values. There is certainly a link here with the long period of Congress Party dominance.

13. This differentiation in garments has survived industrialisation, and proper caste clothing is available, factory-made, in the shops. Merchants are, of course, conversant with these caste markers.

14. The Bharwad are the only pastoralist caste who have succeeded in ameliorating their status these last years. Traditionally, they are often the village herdsmen and so were not "free" nomads like the Rabaris, who used to enjoy a higher status. But for the same reason the Bharwad are now seen as relatively "civilised" in relation to the "jungly" Rabaris, who were the traditional camel herdsmen. Many Bharwads now specialise in the milk trade and do well: they have a number of strong caste organisations.

15. The German sociologist Hartmut Esser explains the repetition of particular modes of action by the risks of trying out new strategies whose consequences are unknown (Esser 1996).
16. For these " estate " categories – I borrow the term from Max Weber – see Tambs-Lyche 1992 and 1997.
17. The argument here is that stereotypes of known groups function like socalled "basic categories" of cognitivists such as Rosch (see D'Andrade 1995: 116-17)
18. I oppose, here, the rules of behaviour in Saurashtra to those Goffman analyses for the West: he stresses how the individual, in engaging himself to follow a certain rule also tends to identify with a certain image of himself. He thus becomes for himself and others the person who follows that rule, who naturally acts in that particular way (1974: 46).

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