Urban configurations and merchant networks in South India: a workshop
Urban configurations and Merchant networks in South India:
The case of Tiruchengodu Town (Salem District, Tamil Nadu)

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FOREWORD

Social scientists working on urban India have understandably given priority to the study of the metropolitan cities. Yet a great deal of attention has also been given to small and medium towns, both under the form of micro-level case studies and of statistical or systemic approaches at the regional level. Nevertheless, some of the basic questions which prompted these town studies since the very beginning are still lurking in our minds. In particular, though attempts have been made to analyse the similarities and differences between rural and urban society in India, we are still groping for an understanding of the specific nature of the urban in the Indian context. The programme of the French Institute under which this workshop has been organized bears on Tiruchengodu, a taluk headquarters in Salem District (Tamil Nadu), and a small textile town in the Salem-Coimbatore cotton-weaving belt. Its object, at the most general level, is to contribute to this understanding, through the interdisciplinary effort of an Indo-French team of social scientists from various horizons.

Indian towns are usually classified into three main functional categories, namely "manufacturing", "trade and transport", and "services". A good case, however, could probably be made out for entering Tiruchengodu under each of these heads. It is in fact one of the aims of this programme to show how these various activities are interconnected through the agency of local actors whose social, economic and power links branch off into a variety of socio-economic levels and sectors besides their own. Among these actors, a key-figure stands out, the merchant-entrepreneur, who holds an important position in the papers that follow.

Who is he? It should be clear that this programme does not bear on the merchant castes, but on the role of the merchant-entrepreneur in society, whatever his caste status. The communities which are most prominent in the economic (and especially commercial and entrepreneurial) activities of Tiruchengodu are by traditional occupation
weavers or agriculturists (and this in itself poses interesting questions). The merchant-entrepreneur here is particularly considered as a man whose function is to connect people and places, and to stimulate and organize the circulation of commodities and money. As such, he operates at the intersection of economic and social links that are both horizontal and vertical. Horizontal because of the geographical dispersion of his business connections. But also vertical because he deals with different levels of economic activity, and also, in many cases, of the administrative and political set up of his region, and of the country as a whole.

Hence the emphasis which is laid in the papers on the notion of network. The word designates the varied, and ever fluctuating, systems of interconnections of which the merchant-entrepreneurs are, so to say, the focal points. There is nothing very new about the use of this notion in the social sciences. Robert Redfield was already quite loquacious about networks in his seminal Peasant Society and Culture - and of course sociologists studying matrimonial strategies in the wake of Bourdieu and others have made ample use of this conceptual tool. Yet it is interesting to study how this notion applies to an urban context, where the fabric of society is supposedly much more fragmented and so to say atomized. But then, of course, the distinction between rural and urban in the case of towns such as Tiruchengodu must be closely examined: this point will also be discussed.

When studying a process of urban growth, a researcher usually relies on at least two bodies of evidence. One is the published material, mainly of official origin, which provides information on the aspects of urban growth (demographic, economic, administrative, sanitary, as well as urban planning) with which the State is concerned. As far as Tiruchengodu is concerned, this work of compilation from official sources had only just begun when this workshop was convened.

The other source of information is fieldwork, and it is fieldwork which provides the mainstay of the papers which are being published here. This partly explains why these papers, in analyzing the process of urban growth, place a particular emphasis on sociological aspects. The phrase "urban configurations" which figures in the title of the workshop is to be understood not only as "urban morphology" in the plain sense of the word, but as the embodiment, on the ground, of a social dynamics, in which local groups of merchant-entrepreneurs have played and are playing the role of a motive force.
In a project such as this, the collaboration between social anthropologists and geographers is a necessity. It has long been recognized in the social sciences that these two disciplines have much to gain to work hand in hand, though this has to some extent remained a pious wish. Let me recall a small symbolic confirmation of this recognition: Lévi-Strauss, when he started his journal of anthropology entitled *L'Homme* in the early sixties, called Pierre Gourou, who was then one of the father figures of French geography (and, incidentally, a specialist of the tropical zone), to sit with him on the Committee of Direction. There are plenty of reasons why our Tiruchengodu Project should follow this example. The most obvious reason is that networks develop over space, just as trade does, and that the growth process of a town - a town being a sort of node of networks - is a spatial process. And of course anthropologists and geographers are all the more complementary as they both derive most of their data from fieldwork, which they carry out in different but mutually enriching perspectives.

Naturally, the collaboration of other disciplines is also called for, particularly economics and sociology. One of the main objects of this workshop was to start a process of interaction between these various disciplines over the case study of Tiruchengodu. This collaborative research is well under way now, as the proposed publications of the programme, it is hoped, will show.

Jacques Pouchepadass
FROM TIRUVANNAMALAI TO TIRUCHENGODU

M.L. Reiniche

The idea of undertaking a collective project on the town of Tiruchengodu and its development as an urban area came to my mind in 1989 during a fieldwork on trading castes that I had then taken up in Salem and Dharmapuri districts. I mentioned it to J. Pouchepadass, the Head of the Department of Social Sciences of IFP, who took my proposal seriously.

The decision to undertake the study of a town was, on my part, a kind of logical development of previous sociological questioning. However, had it not been a multidisciplinary project, its realisation would not have been possible for a single individual. As to the choice of Tiruchengodu, it does not result from some kind of statistical determination of the best location in relation to such and such criteria. At first, it was a personal choice, although not exactly made at random. Later, it became evident that this choice was not as subjective as it appeared, when both my colleagues, Philippe Cadène and Brigitte Silberstein, who are more knowledgeable than I regarding the field of development and urban studies, agreed on sharing and enhancing the basic questions pertaining to such a subject of research, and confirmed the potential interest of such a study after a short preliminary fieldwork at Tiruchengodu.

The primary aim of this paper is to offer an exposition of the sociological questions on urbanization born out of the study of Tiruvannamalai, a sacred place in North Arcot district, undertaken as a collective project of EFEO in the early 80s, and then to present Tiruchengodu as a town and as a possible subject of study for deepening our understanding of urban processes.

TIRUVANNAMALAI

The result of the collective project on Tiruvannamalai is a series of volumes of which only two will be referred to for the present purpose of this paper: one (vol. 4, 1989) concerns mainly the temple (a Saiva South Indian temple), its organization (present and past) and the sociological relevance of ideas and practices at work; the other (vol. 5, 1990) is a study of the town.
The main reasons of this study of the Tiruvannamalai temple were the following:

1) Tiruvannamalai is a sacred place well-known in South India for its annual Karttikai festival and pilgrimage which draws several thousands of people;

2) The temple is an ancient one with many stone inscriptions (dating from the end of the 9th to the end of 16th century); these have been stamped and translated by an Indian epigraphist associated with the project. Even though the reading (and understanding) of inscriptions is far from easy, it nonetheless throws some light on the social history of the area as well as on its political history;

3) some documents from the 19th century were available for analyzing the impact of the British administration on the temple organization and, also, on the society.

From this study, a few salient points or hypothesis may be briefly summed up:

1. The temple had been, at least in precolonial times, one of the places where supra-regional and local political powers encountered, negotiated their respective powers and legitimated each other. More than mere economic and political power, what was also at stake was the question of authority – moral as well as legal authority with regard to a divinity who is the image and embodiment of universal authority (moral and political from the Hindu point of view).

2. The fact that a temple like that of Tiruvannamalai has stood as a living organisation for centuries is due to very special circumstances:

a) one of them is the location: Tiruvannamalai was situated at the cross-roads of two main routes of communication, North to South (Tirupati, Kanchipuram, Srirangam, Madurai, etc.) and West to East (Mysore tableland to Tamilnadu plains through the Chengam pass);

b) this location may account for the fact that supra-regional powers (kingly and others) were interested in coming to Tiruvannamalai, to be acknowledged as such by making gifts to the divinity. The most important of these gifts, till the 13th c., were villages and lands. The management of the temple wealth (lands and villages) does not seem to have been in the hands of the Brahman temple priests, but in the hands of the locality, i.e. the local prominent peasants: these were mainly from the Vellalar caste.

c) the location of Tiruvannamalai also accounts for the presence and settlement of traders.
3. From these facts, I have drawn another hypothesis. When we read the inscriptions, emphasis is laid on gifts of food (food given to the god, to the pilgrims, to the sadhus, etc.). Even today, gifts of food are made inside the temple and are generally considered as meritorious deeds. As is well known, those who are able to give food, are mostly those who own land, and, in the bygone days at least, they were those who had agricultural production at their disposal, i.e. those who also had control over cultivators, agricultural labourers and other workers. In other words, the temple appears to have been more or less a centre for pooling agricultural resources and redistributing them. In that respect, we may also speak of a kind of political role, which lends credence to what has already been assumed above. The perfect king (as the god is supposed to be) is one who gives food and prosperity. Behind this image, there are human agents, and we have to understand the processes at work.

I do not wish to enter into the details here. However, taking into account another study (that of B. Stein on the Tirupati inscriptions), one thing is clear. If the pooling of resources and their supposed redistribution have been going on for centuries, centered on the temple (and on its agents whosoever they were throughout the centuries) as a centre of legitimate authority, then such a system could work only because it was not a closed one. Although the emphasis is explicitly and ideologically on agricultural production, the whole system was dependent on commercial transactions and trade. Of course, such a statement is commonplace from a modern point of view and for those of us who are doing research in economics. But it is a little different for studies undertaken from a social anthropological or historical point of view: we have to prove and document processes which are ideologically not relevant for the concerned people and which implicitly underlie what is explicitly told or explained about facts.

That is why I decided at first to undertake a new research on trade and traders, considering that social anthropologists have more or less neglected that field of study in India. However, more is to be learnt from the Tiruvannamalai study.

Another dimension of the project was the study of the town. C. Guilmoto, a demographer, has undertaken the demographic and economic study of Tiruvannamalai. (He also did a survey on the pilgrims based on questionnaires at the time of the festival in 1983.) I was myself interested in the boarding-houses for pilgrims ("choultries", numbering more than 100) which usually belong to some caste, or rather subdivision of caste, more or less precisely located in Tamilnadu,
which enables us to produce maps indicating the original places of the members of the choultries.

Thanks to Guilmoto's study, we have a survey of Tiruvannamalai town as it developed and as it is at present. From my point of view, one of the questions was the following:

- If we may ascertain that Tiruvannamalai is at present without doubt what we may call a town, at least since the days of the British who made it the administrative headquarters of a taluk, how can we ascertain whether Tiruvannamalai was, or was not, a town in pre-colonial times? In other words, what characterises an urban settlement in a given socio-historical context?

In order to answer this query, one has to realize that an urban settlement is not only defined by a cumulative number of elements and factors (population, activities, functions), but also by an extended area of relationship networks. This seems to be the case of Tiruvannamalai, considering a series of maps which have been drawn according to various criteria and which are the following:

1. a theoretical map drawn by C. Guilmoto showing the present demographical weight of Tiruvannamalai: what C.Guilmoto has called the Tiruvannamalai "umland"

2. maps of the places of origin of the pilgrims who have the right to stay in the Tiruvannamalai choultries;

3. several historical maps showing the location of the identified villages named in the inscriptions of the temple.

In all these maps, the area covered by the networks of relationships centered on Tiruvannamalai extends far beyond the present boundaries of the taluk. (We must note that, as regards the pilgrims, the territory thus drawn is discontinuous and has never been fixed on a permanent basis, as evidenced by the historical maps). The mere fact that the area centered on Tiruvannamalai covered throughout the centuries more than the present taluk territory seems worthy to be acknowledged as strong evidence in support of Tiruvannamalai as an urban settlement since earliest times.

However, the question was how to characterise more precisely such a type of South Indian precolonial urban development. It is not possible to enter into greater detail here. Moreover, we have to rely on mere hypotheses owing to lack of strong evidence. As a matter of fact, we have only the inscriptions to document the past. The information they convey is too scanty for our purpose, and not always very clear. Also it only gives the point of view of the temple. Anyhow, a few points may be recalled here.
There was the temple. Most important, as I have already explained, is the fact that it was symbolically and, if circumstances allowed, more or less concretely, a centre of authority (moral and political), both supra-regional and local, and a centre for pooling resources. However we have to be careful: I am very assertive about the fact that it is not the temple which makes the town in any case; other concrete conditions have also to be fulfilled. Among these conditions, was, as already mentioned, the importance of the location at a strategic crossroads of major communication routes - which also accounts for the presence of traders.

However, if these conditions were fulfilled, the temple as an institution may have contributed towards helping the surrounding settlement assume an urban dimension. The Hindu temple was, and still is to some extent, an unified cultural reference for various specific, local and regional, groupings, as well as for individuals who come to the sacred place seeking salvation in the next as well as in the present world. In that sense there is something definitely urban in the Tiruvannamalai of the past.

Considering these hypotheses and their plausible relevance in the case of Tiruvannamalai, it is then possible to define the latter as a town, even as regards the past, in so far as its settlement was characterized by factors which are specific as opposed to the face-to-face relationship. These factors are:

1) a level of centralized authority, moral and political, which is acknowledged more or less formally by lesser powers and the population of an extended area;

2) some kind of monopolisation of resources with some sort of redistribution (which corresponds in modern circumstances to the economic function of a city in relationship with its region);

3) movable wealth through trade exchange;

4) avenues open to individual initiative and a degree of social heterogeneity.

Please note that these factors are not specifically Indian; they can and did belong to any city in the world.

However, if the Tiruvannamalai of the past is one of the possible models, at least one of the South Indian ones, of what may be called a town, that model does not fit those models which have been acknowledged as characteristic of urban development of ancient and medieval European countries. I am specifically referring to the "free township" ("commune" in French), self-governing ("autonomous and
autocephalous"), which has evolved with the formation of associations of citizens ("bourgeois") joining together on an individual basis.

As is clear, I am merely quoting M. Weber, who wrote that such an evolution did not take place in India due to social fragmentation which prohibited interdining and intermarriage.

To carry this line of thinking a little further, I shall mention a few more points:

1. There is the question of social history. It is well-known that there were organised trade associations in ancient India. Why then has an evolution comparable to that of Europe in medieval times not taken place?

2. Despite social fragmentation, we may ascertain that settlements, worthy of being qualified as urban, existed in precolonial India. Today, despite bureaucratic legislation, despite some kind of levelling which is anyhow taking place everywhere in the world, social fragmentation is still there at least for the majority of the Indian population. Fragmentation exists in every society. But in the Indian context, it is somehow much more explicit.

In which case my contention is that such an explicit fragmentation is perhaps the very counterpart of a real fluidity - a fluidity which has not been acknowledged as such in sociological studies. There is in that fact something to be understood and studied from an anthropo-sociological point of view. To do that, the field of anthropological research has to be broadened.

TIRUCHENGODU

The idea of the Tiruchengodu study as a multidisciplinary project was thus born from two related sets of questions on the Tiruvannamalai project: some of these questions have bearance on mobile wealth and its place, past and present, in the economic and social processes, and require an anthropological study of trade in India; the others pertain to the characteristics, universal and local, which define an urban settlement and to the processes which help build it as such.

Tiruchengodu presents certain features comparable to those of Tiruvannamalai. It is an ancient and sacred place, important for the area with its temple on a hill overhanging the town, even though it is not so well known as Tiruvannamalai. It is located in the valley of the Kaveri about 20 km north of the river. Its sub-area is located to the South-West of the Salem-Dharmapuri region. The latter constitutes historically, as
well as geographically, an area adjoining the Mysore tableland of Karnatakta State, the South of Andhra Pradesh and the Kaveri valley and delta. A portion of the residing population of the area, mostly from the trading communities, is supposed to have hailed originally from Karnataka or Andhra and still speaks either kanara or telugu. But the Tiruchengodu sub-area also belongs to the socio-historical Kongu country and as such is also a part of the Coimbatore region.

Among the other towns which I visited in Dharmapuri and Salem districts (which I selected for reasons easy to understand for those who know Tamilnadu) in 1987 in connection with the preparation of my fieldwork on traders, Tiruchengodu distinguishes itself by several features. In towns such as Dharmapuri and others, one soon learns in the bazar after a few enquiries that the members of a major Chetti (trading) caste are settled there. In Tiruchengodu, something else happened. Somehow it was not very easy to meet traders by caste and to have at once a clear idea of the main trading castes of the town. Instead, I was directed to businessmen, belonging mostly to the Tamil traditional weaver community (Kaikkolars, known as Cenkunta Mudaliyars) and also to members of land-owning castes.

In 1989, while doing fieldwork on trading castes in Dharmapuri and Pennagaram, I re-visited Tiruchengodu two or three times. Then the differences in the level of activities between Tiruchengodu and Dharmapuri also appeared striking. Dharmapuri remains more or less a quiet town, even though a rapid development is taking place outside the town along the main trunk road leading from Bangalore to Salem. If we compare the population of Dharmapuri (1931: 28000; 1989: about 60000 estimated) to Tiruchengodu (1931: 12322; 1961: 21386; 1990: more than 77000 estimated), the rapid development of the latter appears puzzling to say the least.

An ancient tradition of cotton weaving is attested for Salem district and partly for the adjacent district of Coimbatore. Tiruchengodu, as a weaving centre, is interestingly located between the pole of Salem, a very large and industrial city and market, and, on the other side of the Kaveri, Erode (the cotton-cloth market, the importance of which is increasing with new opportunities for foreign export), as well as other industrial places, like Tiruppur (with its hosiery fabrics for export), and the other pole, Coimbatore, with its spinning mills and its diversification of industries.

Tiruchengodu provides an example of a locality which, in the past two or three decades, has worked its way up, not only as a weaving
centre among many others in the productive chain of woven fabrics for local consumption, but also in focussing on the opportunities opened up by the foreign export market as well as in diversifying to some extent its industrial and commercial activities. The obvious present dynamism of the town seems, at first sight, to result from the competition and complementarity of its main agents: i.e. some members of the local weaving caste and also of the agrarian castes of the surrounding area. The role, if any, in that evolution, of the trading castes and others remains to be assessed.

Taking into account these primary data, Tiruchengodu appears as a fitting field for an experimental collective project. The broad aim of the project is to focus on social processes (taking into consideration social history, environment, culture, and so on) in a developing urban milieu, which is sizeable but not too much expanded, and where it is possible to analyze how prominent individuals at different levels are able to seize opportunities for controlling economic, political and social networks which extend much beyond the town and its immediate surroundings. That is the reason why the project focusses on the question of the cross-articulation of the different networks, even though these notions remain to be analyzed and defined as part of the research itself.

It is also quite clear that such a programme can be fruitful if certain conditions are fulfilled: 1) it must be multidisciplinary; 2) the economic interrelations and their base have to be ascertained and studied very thoroughly (while keeping in mind the relationship between land wealth through agricultural production and movable wealth through trade and business).

Lastly, this project will be successful as an experiment if it evolves as an experiment in intra- and inter-disciplinary methodologies, and if it provides as such a kind of challenge:

- a challenge to me, considering the kinds of fieldwork I have already carried out, and considering the methodology of social anthropology and the scale and scope of its objects of study;

- a challenge to others (I mean scholars belonging to different disciplines), if we consider that the practice of multidisciplinary projects has become a "must" at the ideal level of research; however realisations which can truly be qualified as multidisciplinary are rare.
DISCUSSIONS

Dr. P. RADHAKRISHNAN

I am not sure whether your Tiruchengodu study is a study of merchant networks, or if the focus is on weavers and textiles. If the latter be the case, then we have parallels, like the recent study on Bengal by Hameeda Hossain (The Company Weavers: The East India Company and the Organization of Textile Production in Bengal, 1750-1813). It clearly brings out the decline of cotton textile industry in India, with particular reference to Bengal during the British Period.

Dr. N. TYABJI

There is probably no doubt that weaving, particularly on the powerloom basis, would be the core of any surviving and growing activity in Tiruchengodu. Some very interesting work has been done on the handloom textile industry in the 20th century, looking at the shift from cotton to silk, by Dr. Tirthankar Roy Relations of Production in Handloom Weaving in the mid-Thirties, CDS Working Paper no. 223, (Thiruvananthapuram, 1987). You may be interested to see how the merchant communities, particularly in the 1930s and 40s, survived by shifting to higher value yarns, to silk, to combinations, and so on.

The history of handloom production in Madras Presidency is really very different from Bengal’s. After a decline from about 1910 or 1915 onwards, there was a great resurgence in handloom weaving in Madras Presidency, which was not the case in Bengal.

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

Any economic activity, studied over a long period of time, experiences breaks as well as continuities, which are induced both by internal and by external factors. And both the Bengal handloom case and the case of Madras handlooms illustrate that quite well. In the case of Bengal handlooms, there was the disastrous impact of the import of machine-made cloth, with in fact reversed protection against Indian goods. The textile merchants had become greatly dependent on the East India Company, and the monopolization of all that had really done an enormous damage. In the case of South India, one of the major elements leading to the revival of silk was the activity of the Mysore Government, in Karnataka. In Bengal, silk was decimated by the filaroe disease, whereas in Karnataka they had a long history of protection of cocoon seeds through legislation, development of markets, and so on. And here you have a "native" State government doing something to provide a sustenance to the weaving community at one stage. Now processes of reproduction and processes of break surely would be within the purview of the study that Prof. Reinicke has outlined, and I do not see any reason for foreclosing any area of enquiry.

Dr. T. VASANTHAKUMARAN

Brenda Beck, while talking about the sacred geography of Kongu Nadu, was also trying to analyze the kind of social processes related to such sacred and geographical configurations. If you consider any trading or any transaction as a result of social interactions, weaving can be taken really as one representing a social process from which we could work out the mechanism of the network. Today at Tiruchengodu a great emphasis is given to the handloom industry. With governmental assistance, small producers are helped and are made traders as well. This gives a good idea of the political network in relation to the social network existing in the area.
PROCESSES OF INTEGRATION OF RURAL AREAS AND SMALL TOWNS: FROM THE FRENCH TO THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Philippe Cadène

For the past thirty years, rural France has undergone dramatic changes. This phenomenon is commonly understood as the development of a new stage in the formation of a global system extending its domination to the entire world. It can be defined as a process of integration operating at different spatial levels: regional areas, national territories and large socio-cultural units. It may affect them as a whole or in part, gradually or in a violent manner. But the direction and the rhythms of their evolution are said to be impelled by superior level dynamics (multinational concerns and international financial institutions), to which no social or spatial entity is supposed to resist.

This paper aims at briefly outlining the principal characteristics of these changes in France and in India and at proposing an approach for the analysis of the integration process, giving special emphasis on one of its essential components: the spatial dimension. Doing so, I shall argue that, in spite of the strength of this process, resistance to global integration takes shape at many levels. In fact, at the lower level, the local community (the French “commune”) constitutes a very decisive body. At this level, integration process and resistance take shape through the action of social agents.

This paper also purports to show how, in spite of the great differences that exist between both countries, an identical approach may be adopted for the study of France and India.

THE INTEGRATION OF RURAL AREAS IN FRANCE

The new process of integration of rural areas.

In France, the integration of rural areas by the global system resulted from a secular process. This process has undergone an acceleration and a considerable transformation during the last thirty years: French rural areas have gone through drastic changes. This
phenomenon, which is not limited to rural areas alone, has been described by the sociologist Henry Mendras as the second "French Revolution". It pertains to a transition from one social system to another, bringing into focus a new spatial organisation.

The former system corresponds to a society which is defined as industrial, because industry constitutes the roots of social dynamism, generating most of the employment opportunities. The spatial organisation of the industrial society is characterised by the division between town and country stemming from the accumulation of urban merchant capital since the Middle Ages. This division has been further accentuated by industrial development, which has started in the 19th century and has undergone rapid growth during the 20th century. Food, manpower and raw materials come from rural areas to the industrial towns. From the towns, a large part of the manufactured products go to rural areas. While urban areas are getting more and more busy, rural areas are not being used in an intensive manner.

The system which now prevails is called by some scholars post-industrial. Industry still occupies the main place in the economy, but the most dynamic sector in terms of employment opportunity is now the services sector. Development of new technologies in the fields of production and communication, increase of leisure times bring a deep change in the spatial organisation of the entire country. Division between towns and villages remains a major fact but the towns are not anymore the centre of their rural outskirts, while the entire territory of the country is now used for various economic and social purposes. The new spatial organisation is then characterised by a direct confrontation between a process induced at national or supranational level and a host of local communities, towns as well as villages, which constitute the lower level of social and spatial organisation.

This new organisation of the French territory generates differentiations inside the rural areas of the country. Several types of rural areas can be now distinguished according to the dominant activity developed in each of them. It is possible to distinguish five types of rural areas:

- The suburban rural areas, generally situated along the urban fringe, constituting new residential areas as a result of the building of individual houses. The dynamics this urbanisation implies forms the major feature of these areas.

- The tourist rural areas which border either coastal or mountain areas where tourism is the predominant activity.
- The agricultural rural areas found frequently in the great plains where a productive agriculture dominates at the expense of all other activities.

- The industrial rural areas which correspond to pockets in different rural spaces where small industries have existed for years or are in process of development.

- The remote rural areas which are marginalised, and left outside the main communication networks. As the population density is low, they are used for activities unwanted elsewhere such as military cantonments or mental hospitals. These are also areas where people who want to withdraw from ordinary society often settle.

Of course, this division of French rural areas constitutes only a theoretical framework for an understanding of the transformation process. It is not an attempt to delimit precisely rural regions in that country. The areas bordering big French cities certainly correspond to the definition of sub-urban rural areas. The great plains of the "Bassin Parisien" belong undoubtedly to agricultural rural areas. The coast of Languedoc and certain Alpine valleys are indisputably tourist rural areas. Some thinly populated districts of the "Massif Central" have the dubious distinction of being remote rural areas. But the delineation of areas under these broad categories can become a little blurred since some regions can possess two or more characteristics at the same time. These are regions where several types of activities are in conflict without any one among them succeeding in determining the social dynamics.

The local communities, main arenas for the conflicts caused by the integration of rural areas into the global system.

In fact, in the different types of rural areas which have been defined, the integration process faces stiff resistance in its development. Most often, these forms of resistance are perceived by scholars as conflicts opposing the rural communities to the global system. The integration process at work in the sub-urban areas or in the tourist areas is shown by them to be a perfect example of this phenomenon.

This vision is however simplistic. The conflicts inherent in the process of integration cannot be narrowed down to a local-global confrontation. In fact, people at the local level do not unanimously oppose the integration process. In one way or another, a fraction of the local population finds its own interest in the development of the new activity. This fraction enters into conflict with those who either oppose the development of the new activity or are desirous to regulate its
growth. Rather than local-global conflicts, the process of integration appears to me to consist of conflicts among the members of the local communities in relation to their insertion into the global system.

The local community constitutes therefore the typical place where the conflicts relating to the integration process occur. In the French context, these local communities correspond to the territories defined by the boundaries of "communes" which constitute the base of the politico-administrative organisation in the country. The agents in these conflicts are thus, chiefly, inhabitants of these "communes". Their attachment to the territory of the "commune" is usually deep rooted, even for those who are not actually resident of the place but who have got for one reason or another strong links with it.

The phenomenon of integration of rural groups results from the action of several agents. Those who are directly involved in the conflicts are the local agents of integration. They may be of external origin, as is the case with tourists. They may also be newcomers to the "commune", like the new residents who commute daily by car from their residence in sub-urban areas to their offices in the town. They may also belong to the local community. Such is the case of those agriculturists who have successfully mechanised their farms. These agents are acquainted with people living outside the local communities, who give them stimulus and assistance in their action. Defined as the external agents of integration, these persons can be, for example, property developers who want to extend their activities in the rural sub-urban areas and in tourist places. They can also be professionals of tourism or sales representatives in agricultural equipments or fertilizers.

At the "commune" level, the process of integration implies conflicts. These conflicts correspond to complex situations wherein the various agents cluster in groups. These groups can be more or less organised. Their composition can change according to the different stages in the integration process. Three broad types of conflicts may be distinguished, which are present simultaneously in most conflict situations but fall into chronological order when analysed.

The conflicts belonging to the first type appear at the time when the regional development planning policies are worked out. They unfold outside the rural setting, during the meetings of administrative agents and politicians concerned with regional policy. The participants in the meetings discuss and amend texts which will later serve as reference manuals for local politicians and planners. In these debates, the involvement of local agents is indirect. It takes place through the
mediation of their elected members who, by their presence in such meetings or by their influence in the regional political networks, defend the position of those groups which placed them in power. It is only when projects mooted for discussion imply violent disruptions in the rural areas, as in the case of the construction of heavy infrastructures (airports, highways, railways for fast trains) that local people can intervene. Interested parties manifest publicly their dissent, sometimes violently, with the aim to make their voices heard in open debates.

The conflicts delineated under the second and third types intervene from within the “commune”. In these conflicts, local agents are in the majority. Most often, the conflicts between the various groups involved arise for the control over the municipal council. The aim is to gain enough influence inside the local administration to be able to decide the making of planning policies or to satisfy the groups’ interests. The second type relates to the decisions in spatial planning taken at the municipal level: mainly allocations of land for various activities. In the sub-urban rural “communes” and tourist areas, the working-out of planning documents creates virulent conflicts amongst local agents for definition of land-use. In agricultural areas, regrouping of land and/or improvement of irrigation and drainage facilities become key-elements in the conflicts. The third type of conflicts relates to the consequences entailed by these decisions. The growth of sub-urbanization, the spurt in tourism, the development of agriculture or the multiplication of small scale industries are directly responsible for a higher cost of living which instigate rural people to oppose these trends. The accumulation of these dissatisfactions as well as the radicalization of social change threaten indirectly the municipal councils and force certain groups to modify their stance. In certain cases, it can produce a feed-back effect which goes on till the regional level policies are readjusted.

Such conflicts appear therefore as a privileged means whereby the people belonging to the commune are given a chance to express their views. They demonstrate the reality of a certain autonomy of the local community and prove the existence of local groups having the capacity to resist when confronted with the phenomenon of integration. If the dynamics at work at the global level is very rarely delayed, the actions led by the local groups can often alter the rhythm and modalities of the integration.

Integration processes and areas of resistance

To analyse the ability of the local communities to resist integration as a mere effect of local antagonistic interests is not sufficient. Factors
at work at higher levels have to be taken into account for an understanding of local situations.

These factors may be clustered under three different categories: socio-economic, politico-administrative and socio-cultural. Within the "communes", these factors combine to produce particular situations. At higher levels, some areas, constituted by groups of communes, share similar factors: in this case, the process of integration is more or less homogeneous. The analysis of these factors and their combinations is fundamental for all studies of the integration process of rural areas within the global system. However, we have to be aware that these studies are only relevant for a specific period, since this process is also responsible for the transformations of the existing factors and their re-organisation at other spatial levels.

-The socio-economic factors.

At the level of the "commune", these factors are generated by the particular clustering of diverse groups of local agents. The latter are, for example, constituted by agriculturists having a common structure of production or, sometimes, simply belonging to the same generation. The regroupings of agriculturists vary according to their mode of land tenure. In the rural industrial areas, persons working in the same activity or in the same industrial unit can also constitute a group involved in some specific conflicts.

The unity of such groups at the "commune" level is weak because socio-economic factors do not constitute a system in themselves. Cohesion in this matter must be found at another level. This level corresponds to an area which we shall name "pays", from the term created by Vidal de la Blache, the founder of the French School of Regional Geography. But in fact, the notion of "pays" which we use in this study is the one defined by Roger Brunet in the sixties. In Brunet's writings, the "pays" is an area where social structures are characterised by their homogeneity. The socio-economic factors operate in a similar manner within this area. The "pays", as defined above, thus appears as a relevant level for the analysis of spatial dynamics. Nevertheless, other levels are more frequently taken in account—regional, national or even international. Unfortunately, scholars prefer to take into account for their analysis mechanically defined economic areas, such as regional, national, or even international ones.
- The politico-administrative factors.

The spatial repartition of these factors is far easier to define than in the previous case. These factors operate in the many administrative areas into which the French territory is divided. These administrative territories and constituencies constitute a hierarchical system, in which the lowest rank is the "commune" and the highest corresponds to the national state, nowadays included in the European Community. The intermediary ones are constituted by the "canton", the "département" and the "région".

The organisation of these political and administrative territorial grids is for the most part inherited from the reforms which accompanied the French Revolution and the establishment of the First Empire. From 1982, the "Decentralisation Law" has transferred a part of the decisional power from the administrative officers to the elected representatives, thus increasing the pre-eminence of the "département". Hence, it is undoubtedly at the departmental level that essential factors acting on the process of integration intervene. The action of politicians or administrative agents present in the "département" can therefore interfere with the socio-economic factors in the process of integration at the local level.

- The socio-cultural factors.

These socio-cultural factors relate to the cultural heritage which is common to most of the families residing in a particular rural area. This heritage derives its roots from the 19th century, a period beyond which, generally, the memory of families lapses. These factors stem however from a more ancient heritage, linked with the past existence of wide social entities, such as the former Provinces. These entities correspond to vast areas included in the national territory or some time overlapping its borders. They can be areas where some populations have settled in the course of the first millennium of our era, and where people still maintain some specific traits. They can also be socio-economic and politico-administrative areas dating back to the Middle Ages or to the Ancient Regime where some characteristics have perpetuated from certain practices.

Obviously, these areas are difficult to define since many factors imbricate and clear boundaries are difficult to find. In these areas, a majority of people carry identical values regarding inter-individual relationships and have a specific attitude when facing power or authority. This heritage can explain the functioning of contemporary social systems. It often gives the clue for the understanding of
affiliations and rivalries between members belonging to different groups at the level of a "commune" as well as at the level of an entire region. This heritage in all cases plays a determining role in spatial dynamics.

Some of these factors exercise a profound influence on the conflicting situations arising from the process of integration in rural communities. According to specific combinations of factors, "conflict areas" can be defined, in which the process of integration follows a homogeneous pattern. Most often socio-economic factors are crucial determinants in these conflicts. "Conflict areas" coincide with "pays" or parts of "pays" in which the particular phenomenon of integration is developing. Politico-administrative factors also play an essential role in the process of integration. In these cases, the "conflict areas" correspond to administrative areas or political constituencies which can include one or several "pays" or parts of "pays". But in some other cases, socio-cultural factors hold a preponderant place. Then, the "conflict areas" comprehend a generally vast region, marked by the dominant cultural traits which influence the phenomenon of integration.

THE INTEGRATION OF RURAL AREAS IN INDIA

The process of integration in less industrialized countries.

In spite of the spectacular success in many sectors of the economy during the four decades since Independence, India still remains a semi-industrialised nation.

The impact of colonial exploitation which has stifled the country of its potentialities for economic growth is still evident. It is colonialism which led to the integration of the Indian territory in the global system. As a result, large parts of the sub-continent were reorganized for the benefit of the dominant power. Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, the three important ports founded by the British merchants constituted the centres of economic activity. Towards these ports, agricultural products (cotton, flax, wool, jute) cultivated in the sub-continent were directed and shipped to be utilised as raw materials by the British industry. Conversely, it is also from these ports that the British industrial goods spread over the Indian market. This pattern of integration was made possible through the creation of a homogeneous organisation at the political, administrative, juridical and financial levels in large parts of the Indian territory. The construction of a wide communication network penetrating deep inside the country played a key role. Railways linked each of the ports constructed by the Britishers to its hinterland. As a
consequence, the diverse regions of the sub-continent have not been efficiently connected to each other. The big cities existing before the colonial period lost their importance. By virtue of being the seat of the Mughal Empire and the capital of British India since 1911, only Delhi occupied an important place in the new territorial organisation. Vast areas remained outside the process of integration.

In integrated areas, the development of commercial agriculture disrupted the organisation of the economy. Local crafts started disappearing from towns and villages, being replaced by the products manufactured in England.

Independence stopped this flow of British products into the country. The new power followed a policy of autonomous development. Foreign trade was subjected to close controls with a view to preserving the economic independence of the Nation. The process did not lead to the integration of the Indian territory into the world system. The aim was now the integration of the territory at the national level.

However, this new policy did not alter the previous spatial organisation.

During the first part of the post-Independence period, the new process of national integration has not been efficient enough. In the socio-economic sphere, the national system evolved principally out of the network of industrial towns, dominated by the cities which have developed during the colonial period. Only some heavy industrial complexes were newly built in remote areas, close to the location of raw materials and mines. Most of the rural territories were not concerned by the process of integration. Despite the progressive re-enforcement over the entire territory of politico-administrative institutions established by the British or created by the movement for Independence, a comprehensive integration was not achieved. If the academic institutions and the political parties have been able to create a wave of patriotic sentiments among an important section of the Indian population, a great number of social groups and local communities spread over vast territories have still remained largely unaffected.

From the seventies however, the process of integration gained momentum in several areas in the country. This phenomenon originated in the Green Revolution which greatly transformed some of the rural regions and which was accompanied by a general growth of the agricultural production. The local agents responsible for this
development belonged to the category of middle class farmers who were the leading beneficiaries in this movement. However, a great number of economic agents were involved. These agents used to stay in cities and large towns and work for agricultural industries, with international linkages. The Green Revolution was thus a phenomenon of integration of the Indian territory into the global system. It illustrates the first break in the tendency towards self reliance since Independence.

The process of integration of Indian territories was subsequently accentuated by the rapid industrial growth which took place in certain regions of the country in the eighties. This marks a second break. In fact, this phenomenon is closely linked with the previous one: the development and growth of the Green Revolution has produced gains liable to be invested in the industries or at least capable of boosting industrial production. This phenomenon, on the other hand, is largely influenced by a new State policy, favourably disposed towards a regulated opening of the Indian economy. This integration first concerns industrial cities. It corresponds to a multiplication of small and medium scale industries producing consumer goods for the affluent middle-class. In a great number of regions in the country, the small towns as well as nearby villages have also recorded a growth in the number of small or medium scale industries and are being influenced by the process of integration. The petty urban and rural entrepreneurs appear then as local agents in the process of integration in collusion with merchants and haulage contractors who ensure the circulation of consumer goods. These assume a very great importance in contributing to the strength of the Indian economy.

This growth of industrial production in the course of the eighties justifies India's inclusion in the category of semi-industrialised nations. In these countries, industry plays an important but not a vital role in social dynamics, creating only little employment. In spite of a considerable industrial growth, agriculture and allied activities remain still very important both in terms of productive value and employment opportunities.

The territorial organisation of semi-industrial nations is characterised, firstly, by a division between towns and countrysides and, secondly, by an integration process operating through networks of towns and villages, leaving most of the territory of the Indian nation unlinked. The territory integrated by the global or national system is composed of a cluster of points connected by axes of communication from which goods, capital and manpower circulate. The process of integration acts only in a selective manner by magnifying already
existing places as well as by creating new places which are linked by other axes of communication.

THE CASE OF RAJSAMAND: INTEGRATION INTO THE NATIONAL SYSTEM

The study of Rajsamand, in South Rajasthan, permits the analysis of conditions and consequences of the integration process operating since Independence. It concerns a small rural territory, comprising a small town and about one hundred villages. This corresponds more or less to the administrative Tehsil of which the town of Rajsamand, with a population of about 30,000 inhabitants at the beginning of the 1980's, is the headquarters.

Before Independence, the territory of the present Tehsil of Rajsamand was part of the kingdom of Mewar, one of the Princely States which was most effective in preserving the autonomy given to it by the colonial rulers.

At the end of the 1940's, Independence brought important changes.

The first phenomenon of change corresponds to the creation of a modern administration. As Mewar had been very reluctant to adopt the British system of administration, its merger with newly created Rajasthan State led to a complete reorganisation of the administrative set up. Thus, in the early 1950's, the Tehsil of Rajsamand was constituted from a small town incorporating the territories of two market-towns, situated on the border of an artificial lake, and some nearby villages. A Tehsildar assumed office in the town, under the governance of the District Magistrate of Udaipur. In the 1960's, an elected body, the Panchayat Samiti, was constituted with executive power, superimposed to the already existing administration. This body was entrusted with the task of economic and social development. The town of Rajsamand was thus the headquarters of a Development Block, extending its authority to the same territory as that of the Tehsil. The competence of the Tehsildar which is strictly of an administrative nature and that of the Panchayat which is politico-administrative are both complementary as well as contradictory. They both operate towards the integration of the local spaces into national territory. But, if the former is concerned with the implementation of state power at the local level, the latter, in many
cases, seems to work as a counter-power, giving to the local level a certain autonomy.

The second phenomenon of integration took place in the mid-seventies. It corresponds to the setting-up of a large factory producing pneumatic tyres, with nearly 2,000 employees, in the vicinity of Rajsamand. This factory was established with political backing for the development of the backward areas, and granted financial assistance by a Public Sector Organization, the Life Insurance Corporation. The setting up of this factory resulted from decisions taken at a high State level in relation with the private company which owns the unit. However, the idea of setting-up the factory at Rajsamand also met with the approval of the local politicians who viewed it as a means to extend their own influence in the area. The existence of the factory has created employment opportunities in this area which was not industrialised before. Hundreds of workers came from the surrounding villages as well as from other parts of Rajasthan and even from other States. With the development of transport, commerce and building sectors, the setting-up of the factory has contributed to the general growth of this area, favouring its insertion in the economic and migratory networks at the national level.

The third phenomenon of integration relates to the opening of several marble quarries on the slopes of the Aravallis since the mid 1970’s, and the establishment of small marble-cutting factories in the Tehsil during the 1980’s. This rapid development is due to the growth of the marble market at the national level, corresponding to the increase in the purchasing power of a small percentage of the urban population. But, at the local level, this development is marked by the arrival of investors from the big cities of North India in the Tehsil. These investors rarely act on their own and assume only in exceptional cases total control over all the stages of production. In fact, they have to turn for help towards some of the influential local inhabitants to facilitate dealings with the government officers or to get workers for quarries and cutting factories. However, some of the local members also participate directly in the dynamics of industrial development by opening quarries, or setting-up small marble cutting factories and allied activities.

From an analysis of the integration process at Rajsamand, three main hypotheses can be drawn.

First, this process has a national dimension only. For the setting up of a local administration, the establishment of a large tyre manufacturing industry, as well as the creation of marble-cutting
factories, the agents involved never act at a supranational level. The intervention of the supranational level exists however, but in a marginal and indirect manner. American technology is used for manufacturing tyres and imported machinery can be found in some marble cutting factories.

Second, the process is dominated by external agents. Neither the government officers, nor the regional politicians, nor the resident managers of the main industrial units belong to Rajsamand. Native agents play a role of minor importance. However, they should not be neglected, as they are apt to grasp the opportunities created by the newcomers. Though their contribution is modest, they seem to play an indispensable role in the development dynamics. The local agents of integration belong mainly to Brahmin or merchant castes, though there are also some Rajputs from Thakur families.

Third, although the role of the local agents of integration is subordinate, they benefit by it for maintaining their status in the local society in spite of the drastic change which has been taking place since Independence.

TIRUCHENGODU: A CASE OF INTEGRATION INTO THE GLOBAL SYSTEM

The study carried out in the town of Tiruchengodu and in the surrounding area provided invaluable supplementary data for the analysis of the integration process in India. For the past fifteen years, this region of Tamil Nadu has experienced an extremely rapid development based on a mushrooming of small enterprises. Besides several agro-based units like rice mills and oil mills which have been established since Independence, this development relates to transport activities and textile industry. Here, integration involves national as well as supranational levels, but the local agents of integration are mostly members of families who belong to the town or to the nearby villages. To understand the integration of Tiruchengodu and the area, the analysis should focus on the complex networks through which the process takes place.

Transport activities have expanded in several lines from the early 1970's. Many transport contractors have come up, operating with their lorries at the national level. From the Tiruchengodu area, borewell digging units have also expanded their activities into most of the Indian
States. In both of these cases, trucks can be assembled and repaired in many workshops in the town itself.

Tiruchengodu has also turned into a very active textile town in the context of the reorganisation of the Indian textile industry and the closing down of many large mills in the country. While more and more small cotton-weaving enterprises are created every year in Tiruchengodu or in the nearby villages, some industrialists proceed towards the initial stages of textile production such as sizing and spinning. The powerloom units produce grey cloth for national as well as international markets.

The case of Tiruchengodu appears dramatically different from the Rajasmand case. Its study proves to be an important step towards the working out of an integration process model valid for the Indian territory as a whole.

DISCUSSIONS

Dr. N. TYABJI

Anyone who has looked at the policies for developing industries in rural areas in India would be struck by the fact that there is absolutely no attempt to involve the local people in the new activities that are generated. An official evaluation was made in 1978 by the Planning Commission on the rural industries projects. The official report actually said: We end by asking the Government a question: is Government interested in merely wiping out traditional activities, or are they interested in incorporating the people who are already involved in some kind of productive activity into the new activities to be introduced? GOI, Planning Commission, Evaluation Study of Rural Industries Projects (New Delhi, 1978), p. 19. There is absolutely no doubt that things are done entirely from on top, and from outside, drawing in the particular agents that you mentioned.

No attempt is ever made to incorporate, or to upgrade, traditional industrial activities, to upgrade the living standards of the people. Usually there is a process of introducing new agents and new activities. If you look at the Charan Singh critique (and now the Devi Lal critique) of development policies, it is essentially because their traditional support base in the rural areas is being destroyed by a new competitive support base that is coming up. Charan Singh India's Economic Policy: The Gandhian Blueprint (Vikas, New Delhi: 1978). In other words, not only would I argue that what you described is a part of considered Government policy, but there has also been a 10 or 15 years tradition of a critique of that policy, by dominant groups in the rural areas, who feel that their interests are being threatened.

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

The processes of integration, globally looked at from Rajasthan, have been going on for the last four centuries. It is the Rajasthani trader migration which has provided the main matrix of trader networks all over North, East and North-East India
during the last four centuries (from the invasion of Bengal by Akbar Shah in 1576). The interesting question is: why there is so little feedback on Rajasthan itself? Rajasthan remained one of the most backward areas of India, industrially, agriculturally, for most of this time.

Another question. The same traders, while they were very adventurous within India, did not go outside until long after Independence. The Gujaratis, the Chettiaris, the Parsis went outside. The Marwaris did not. The Birlas in Calcutta became big jute exporters only in 1914, and they remained for some time the main big firms doing this business. In the 1920s and 30s others emerged. What was the sort of constraints on that? How did they perceive opportunities? Why have the Marwaris remained essentially traders? There are very few industries in which the Rajasthan traders have pioneered. Unlike T.V.S. group for example here, unlike the Parsis, unlike several Gujarati groups, unlike Bengali groups which have disappeared, there are very few industries in which they had a pioneering activity. What are the constraints ideologically, in terms of trading network, which have kept them far more oriented towards short term speculative profits than most other big trading groups? This has some bearing on the unevenness of the process of integration.

Prof. K.L. SHARMA

The kind of political system that existed in the princely states of Rajasthan was mainly responsible for the migration of traders, particularly the Vaisyas, going out from their native place for trading, particularly to the Eastern states of the country, namely, Bihar, Bengal, and Assam, and also in some parts of the Southern states, like Tamilnadu. For a long time they were discouraged from going out. Even some people were forced to remain in the village so that they could be coerced to cultivate, though agriculture was never a viable occupation because of the ecological and other factors prevailing in the State. That is why the Marwari traders have entered late in the industrial sphere. If one conducts a census, one would know that a good many of them, even in the Eastern part of the country, have graduated from trade to industry quite recently.

Now one or two comments on Philippe’s paper. There is certainly a long history, not only in France, but also in India, of the rural areas integrating with the urban centres. But in the case of India, it is not really integration, it is increased contact of the rural areas with the towns. And this increased contact is not uniform, even in the case of Southern Rajasthan. Selected groups of people have entered into some kind of relationship with towns and cities. Others have remained far behind. One has to really go into the process of the unequal, asymmetrical nature of the relationship between towns and villages. In certain respects, it has been more or less hegemonic, and in others it is more egalitarian. In some cases it has been traditional, and in others we feel it’s altogether new. Let me simply give you one example.

I have been in constant touch with my village in Rajasthan for all these years. When I last visited it, I found to my surprise that about 19 or 20 people had a television set. Only one person had bought it. All the rest had received their TV sets in dowry. So it is the institution of dowry which is bringing the television to the village, not the fact that people are interested in television as such. There are contacts with modern forces of change, with technology, science, urban centres, but we have to be very careful in using the word integration. The hinterland around the town is not really integrated. Even though thousands of commuters go to towns to work and come back everyday in the evening. One has to find out how these two sub-systems, the rural and the urban, have differential patterns of interaction.
If you look at the 1960s situation using district-level data, you’ll be astonished to find the lack of interdependence, which reflects an absence of interlinkage between urban centres and the rural areas. You do find that in the immediate neighbourhood of the big cities, some of the most backward districts of the state are located. The average level of development in the neighbourhood of big cities is much less than the average level of development in the country. During the colonial period, these urban-rural linkages were disrupted systematically through government policies. They were developed only for some very specific purposes. The attempts to create new urban centres during the 1950s and the 1960s resulted in the same kind of “lack of relationship”. All the new towns created through location of public sector projects did not have much interdependency with their hinterland. When we looked at the 1960s and even the 1970s data, we find that class 1 cities were connected only with the national market and their economic activities had nothing to do with the hinterland. They were buying raw materials from the national market, selling final products in the national market. Their average growth rate was much higher than the smaller other towns that were having some interdependence with the regional economy. Basically, the urban system, particularly the larger urban centres, had nothing to do with the regional economy. That is why the dichotomy between large and small towns comes out very sharply. The class 1 centres have on an average a higher growth rate and more stability in their growth rate. The disparity in their growth rate is much less. It is true that the number of small or medium towns, specifically the density of the urban centres at the district level (and also at the NSS regional level) have a positive relationship with rural or agricultural development, industrialization and all that. But here I would perhaps agree with Prof. Sharma’s point that asymmetry exists, in the interdependence. For two districts of Tamil Nadu, one ICSSR sponsored study has analyzed the linkage between the small urban centres and the rural areas. It has shown that most of the relationship is in terms of buying agricultural output and selling the consumer products, which is basically consumed by the top 10 or 20% of the rural population. It is not a relationship of buying and selling by all people; it is very much withdrawing the agricultural produce and selling some small amount of finished products and consumer durables for the rural rich.

During the last 7 or 8 years we do find that industrial and commercial activities have come up in the rural areas, and their growth is quite significant. We observe that the lack of interdependency, which did exist in the earlier decades, has undergone some transformation. In the regions around the metropolitan cities in the last 20 years, the growth rate of industrial workforce has been very rapid. There is something like a limited spread of industrial and commercial activities around the big centres. The non-agricultural activities growing in the rural areas are not really for local consumption. This limited spread in the rural areas supports basically urban development. The growth of the urban per capita income continues to be very much higher than the rural per capita income. This fact would emerge as the major factor in this process of limited integration that we are observing.

There has been no real integration, there only has been some contact. When we talk of integration or even of contact, which is a superficial contact, it is mostly in terms of economic and commercial networks. But from the social point of view, there has not been much integration between rural and urban. As has been pointed out by Devi Lal, there are urban biases. Dichotomy still exists, and the only place where the dichotomy breaks is when there is a supply at a commercial level from the rural area to the urban area, and the linkages stop at that level. They do not penetrate into the social level.
Prof. P.K. MUTTAGI

Voluntary agencies have played an important role in Rajasthan in helping the poor particularly since 1970. They are concentrating on both rural and tribal areas. These NGOs are motivating the local people to improve their quality of life. Some very successful experiments in the country have been made in Rajasthan. That is an important dimension which should be taken note of, while discussing process of integration. Further, Finance Corporations have set up backward area development schemes. A lot of money has been pumped in and efforts have been made to bring about socio-economic changes. These need to be studied.

Dr. P. CADENE

For my studies in India, I have deliberately chosen the same approach as the one I have experimented in France. It was interesting to do so due to the differences between the situation of the two countries. The process of integration of the Indian territory, I mean the link between the Indian economy at the local level and the world system, is far less advanced than in the case of France. In such a developed and industrialized country, every part of the territory is linked to others by economic and social networks. In India, the networks are loose and uneven, and the phenomena of integration are unevenly dispersed over the territory. Even in the case of these places, there is a gap between the degree of economic integration and the cultural integration.

Dr. T. VASANTHAKUMARAN

When we speak of the interdependence between rural and urban areas, we always speak in terms of industries. We say that there is an enormous flow of people towards the urban areas. But at the same time there is also an enormous backflow of money, remittances, from urban areas. I wonder really whether there is no interdependence in terms of social relations. This question of interdependence must not be looked at only from the point of view of industries, but also from the point of view of social relations, especially from that of migrations.
FROM AGRICULTURISTS TO INDUSTRIALISTS:
Social and economic agents in the process of agrarian change and the development of Small Scale Industries in Guntur District (A. P.)

Dr. Brigitte Silberstein (CEIAS - INALCO, Paris)

This paper draws on three years of fieldwork effected in a sample district, Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, with a view to identifying the major factors and leading actors of rural change, the stages of transformation of agrarian structure and agricultural production - shift of the cropping pattern towards long staple cotton as major commercial crop and paddy as dominant food crop under Nagarjuna Sagar Project (NSP) Command Area - , as well as to study the spread of Small Scale Industries (SSI) in this area.

Most of the SSI localised in Guntur district maintain organic links with agriculture and only a few are linked with the local or supra-local durable consumer goods market; the remaining units are devoted to servicing, repair and spare-parts services.

As a result of the increase of cotton production in Guntur and Prakasam districts, many SSI producing inputs for the cotton growers or output for the textile mills located in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, or Gujarat States have sprouted since 1971-72 in some big villages of the cotton belt located on the main roads to Guntur, adding their number to the factories devoted to tobacco grading or redrying and to the fast-increasing number of rice mills. The owners of cotton ginning mills - a new and important industry for the district - are mostly members of the Kamma community, the local dominant peasant caste; but a third of them are members of the Komati community, the local trading caste.

The object of this paper is to analyse the mechanisms and the various socio-economic agents at work in the development of SSI in rural areas as well as the way in which they operate within the framework of supra-regional networks. This study of interactions between local entrepreneurs, the socio-economic environment, government policies and their implementation, political changes and international market variations, aims to understand the mechanism of growth processes at the local and supra-local levels.
Our analysis focuses on the agents of change through a methodology based on direct enquiries and interviews to answer the central question: who is in a position to handle opportunities and how? We will first analyse the processes of change in agriculture since the completion of the NSP, secondly we will show the ability of local entrepreneurs - mainly from the agriculturist side - to control a certain level in the trade of cotton as well as in the very first step of the textile line. Thirdly, we will focus our analysis on the role played by local agents, external government agencies and external agents in the mechanics of regional development.

THE NSP AS AN OPPORTUNITY OF CHANGE IN CROPPING PATTERN AND AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

The cropping pattern before the completion of the NSP

Before the completion of the NSP, the cropping pattern of Guntur district was closely related to three contrasting natural entities:

- the western and south-western parts of the district, the Nallamalai off-shoots, are often covered with a poor type of red soil. 80% of the net area sown was used to grow major millets - jowar, bajra - and most of all to grow small rustic millets - such as korra, varagu, samai. All these food crops were grown extensively as crop mixtures of short and long duration varieties. The average yields per hectare were rather poor. A commercial crop, deshi type of cotton, had a place in the cropping pattern - in the crop rotation with jonna, pulses, groundnut and chillies or tobacco with jowar, cotton, coriander and chillies - in the most infertile taluks. Cotton was mainly grown as rain-fed and mixed crop. These short staple cottons named "red cotton" with low spinning counts of 15 to 20s gave yields not above 100 kg of kappas per hectare;

- the central part of the district, Guntur and Narsaraopet taluks, is covered with sediments resulting from the erosion of the Deccan trap which give the famous deep regur or "black cotton soils". From the start of the century, tobacco - Virginia or Flue cured varieties of tobacco used in the manufacture of cigarettes -grown in the rabi season as a rain-fed crop progressively replaced deshi cotton. Its cultivation covered more than the cotton had occupied and, in the sixties, it came to cover up to 12 to 17% of the net area sown;

- the delta of the Krishna river shows a marked contrast with its level tract of alluvium and younger sedimentary rocks which allow, when they are not too sandy, fertile alluvial soils. The first systematic
irrigation works date from the mid-19th century. The Krishna anicut completed in 1855 brought about a revolution in the extent of irrigation and the complexion of the deltaic part of the district. From then on two crops a year could be grown in Tenali, Bapatla and Repalle taluks: wet paddy cultivation followed by groundnut on sandy soils and by pulses - red, black and green gram - elsewhere. This new asset inaugurated a period of development and prosperity which was accentuated by the rise of agricultural prices at the end of the 19th century. From 1925-30 the general rise of the foodgrain prices made investment in land property all the more attractive.

Once the Prakasam barrage at Vijayawada was completed in 1961, the sanctioned ayacut has increased from 121 500 hectares at the beginning of the century to 206 500 hectares in 1965-66. In the monsoon season the delta looks like an unlimited openfield, a monotonous but beautiful green flat paddy field which yields not less than 4000 kg of paddy per hectare under the best conditions of cultivation. In the rabi season pulses, chillies, or groundnut, are grown to an increasing extent and High Yield Varieties are used.

The local economic conditions were upset and the agrarian structure widely modified by the NSP and its double canal system

The Nagarjuna Sagar Project across the Krishna River whose construction, decided in 1955, was completed in 1967-68, introduced a drastic change in the area under the NSRC - Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Canal - which has a planned length of 204 kilometres serving water to Guntur and Prakasam districts. At present, under NSCR command areas, 245 000 hectares are irrigated in Guntur and 70 000 in Prakasam. The localisation pattern for cultivation in the command area is 1/3 wet irrigated and 2/3 irrigated dry.

The western and northern parts of the district included in this operation have seen a sharp rise in the price of irrigated land. Heavy investments to transform dry patches into flat paddy fields have allowed cultivation of paddy followed by pulses or groundnut; the exit of tobacco was compensated by the increase of areas under irrigated varieties of long staple cotton. Local economic conditions were thus upset and the agrarian structure widely modified.

The western and northern areas have seen a very large increase in population due to the arrival of migrants of roughly two types:
- landowners from the districts of West and East Godavari or Krishna, who bought land before it became too expensive or later from speculators. They brought with them know-how as well as some capital. The general tendency in land transactions shows a movement of splitting for the large landholdings and of concentration for the small ones that leads to the establishment of middle-sized holdings managed personally by the farmer or the head of the joint family. The tenancy system is losing its hold and is being replaced by the direct owner farming system which signals a change in the nature of agricultural labour.

- agricultural labourers, who came from the dry areas of inner Deccan as seasonal migrants, worked on the construction of the dam and subsequently settled there even though they are seen by inhabitants as a floating population. In addition, as in every part of Coastal Andhra, seasonal migrants arrive in teams under the direction of a mistri at the time of paddy transplantation and harvesting, or cotton plucking, grading and ginning.

Paddy has become the prominent crop among cereals within the district, accounting for around 40% of the gross cropped area. New varieties of paddy grown with fertilizers and pesticides have enabled farmers to reach the level of 40 quintals of paddy per hectare. All landowners are using new inputs, though in reduced quantities by some of the small farmers. But looking at the indices of value of rice per hectare in the district, with the triennium ending 1972-73 as 100, the triennium ending 1980-81 shows a level of 146 only.

The main change in the pattern of commercial crop is the shift of the cropping pattern towards cotton as against other commercial crops, tobacco and groundnut, including foodgrain crops in Guntur and Narsaraopet taluks. Cotton cultivation, grown mostly either on irrigated or irrigated dry tracts, occupied 33% and 28% respectively of the net area sown, and above 80% in some villages in Narsaraopet as is shown on the maps. In the taluks of Sattenapalle and Palnad, cotton is less important but still very significant; no cotton is grown in the deltaic taluks of Repalle and Bapatla.

The average yield per hectare of cotton (lint) in Guntur district is about 450 kg whereas the corresponding average yield rate in Andhra Pradesh coincides with the all India level of 160 kg lint per hectare. The best quality of long staple cotton MCU5 covers 80% of the area devoted to cotton in Guntur, the remaining 20% is shared by Varalaxmi and Suvin (extra-long staple variety of cotton). The cultivation of long and extra-long staple varieties of cotton requires huge expenditure, 8000 Rs
per hectare in 1980-81 - inclusive of 4,000 Rs for pesticides, insecticides and fertilizers alone. Enormous risks due to highly fluctuating trends in farm harvest prices and an uncertain climate have to be faced by peasants.

In the cotton belt of Guntur, the crop is grown by farmers owning all sizes of land holding. But the investment in pesticides, insecticides and fertilizers, often too heavy for the small land owners - below 4 acres -, does not allow them to get the same quality and the same yield as the biggest farmers. Much of the development of cotton cultivation in Guntur district is due to the agricultural development policies pursued by the State government. The large response of the farmers, especially the wealthy ones, is directly linked to the spectacular increase in the value of cotton lint per acre during the period 1970-71 to 1980-81. Looking at the price index of lint in the district taking the triennium ending 1972-73 as 100, the triennium ending 1980-81 shows a level of 382.

THE PHENOMENON OF AGRICULTURISTS TURNING BUSINESSMEN AND THEN INDUSTRIALISTS

Through individual life-histories, we may get a comprehensive picture of the different sources of wealth gained from and through socio-economic linkages by some families among the Kamma community - as Milton Singer (1972) wrote, it is "not an entire community that develops specific lines of economic activity but only a small number of families and individuals..."

Taking advantage of being members of the dominant caste

The Kamma community is the dominant and biggest landowning caste in the central tracts of black cotton soils of Guntur district, while the local traders are the Komati. From the beginning of the century, the Kammamas have habitually practised a speculative type of agriculture: major commercial crops account for around 20% of the total cropped area. Some have taken to various commercial activities once reserved for Vaysias who have thus become competitors (village brokerage of tobacco, pulses, chillies, onions, paddy and so on). Others provide for agriculturists the fertilizers, the pesticides and the seeds for the future harvest on a basis which is very unfavourable to the buyer: the credit and output markets are interlocked.
During the construction of the N.S.P., the Kammas used their social network to provide the labour force and their political network to gain the contracts. To build the huge masonry dam of the N.S.P., the highest masonry dam in the world, and the network of the N.S.R.C., many contractors were to tender for civil works. Good political relations - both national and local - were needed to have the government's invitation to tender. An important number of these contractors were from Guntur district itself and were Kammas. The contractors were allotted tremendous amounts of scarce raw materials such as cement, and given access to a huge black market. They jumped into a much higher level of wealth and extended control over a larger number of small farmers through money lending or selling of inputs.

Before the completion of the N.S.P., there was extensive speculation on the future irrigated perimeter. Land transactions accelerated the profit of those who, with the aid of officials responsible for works, knew exactly the future layout of the canals and who could also have the layout changed. Some land would be bought in the name of wives and daughters to increase and consolidate the holdings.

Even though the land ceiling was from six to twenty four acres (according to the category) of wet lands, and from thirty six to seventy two acres for dry lands, certain Kamma landowners held more than two hundred and indeed three hundred acres. The biggest landowners organized their land for tenant farming before growing cotton. Since then, the direct owner farming system has prevailed, some rich farmers even rent land from small farmers.

The Right Canal command area offers much scope to increase the production of import-substituting superior long and extra-long staple varieties of cotton like MCU5, Varalaxmi and Suvin on irrigated dry land watered by the NSP. MCU5 was first cultivated in Krishna district as a second crop in rice fields, then introduced in Ganapavaram (Guntur district) in 1971-72. Under the centrally sponsored "Intensive Cotton District Programme" and with the efforts of the State Government, the farmers received improved seed, provision of timely credit, and education through demonstration. Within Andhra Pradesh, Guntur district occupied in 1981-82 the leading place in MCU5 production.

The peasants, all cultivating cotton whatever the size of their holdings, were not all on an equal footing because of the high cost of production of this crop. Government aid has not decreased the inequalities. Seed is not supplied to everyone by the Department of Agriculture - only to the most influential. The situation was similar for
inputs and equipments. During the seventies, the government provided subsidies to a few fortunate cultivators to buy power sprayers.

To grow cotton successfully, all the inputs and therefore the necessary credit must be available in time. Since the Kammas control the panchayats and since the president of the panchayat is also very often president of the village cooperative credit society, the rich and the middle farmers could get credit without much difficulty. The small farmer was obliged to turn to the local money-lender and trader, the local agent of the cotton buyer. He would often receive low quality seed and adulterated fertilizers and pesticides. In exchange, he would agree to sell his harvest at the time chosen by the buyer and often therefore at the lowest price.

The small farmers found themselves socially and economically controlled in a captive market, while the rich farmers of the dominant caste would heap up the advantages of their situation.

The dominant caste and the marketing of kappas

The local traders, the Komatis, along with Marwaris and Gujarati Jains, are very important in the tobacco business and in grading and redrying activities. Tobacco growing never allowed farmers to make enough profit since the commercial agreements were very unfavourable to the growers. Many farmers have also been cheated by agents settled in Guntur town, who would come to the villages, take the tobacco harvest, and pay after months or years, or even vanish. Nevertheless, after Independence, some Kammas have managed to settle in the export market to socialist countries using political channels built at the time when they joined the communist party - as a result of the struggle between Reddys and Kammas. But none of these exporters have tried to enter the cotton business.

For agricultural outputs and subsequently inputs, the competition between Kammas and Komatis is still fierce. On the kappas market, since the Kammas are the biggest landowners and the most affluent in the best yielding part of the cotton belt, they have been able, after some initial difficulties, to defeat the Marwaris and to head the local kappas market. This was achieved for five main reasons:

- no regulated market was successfully organized for kappas...

The role of the CCI (Cotton Corporation of India) is negligible -less than 3% of the total market- and this agency buys kappas through village brokers who are mostly Kammas;
the farmers were aware of mistransactions done in the past by outsiders with tobacco. Village brokers were considered more trustworthy since they are Kammans. They are also linked with them through money-lending or credit advanced for the crop season. The harvested cotton is taken when it is the most profitable for the broker and paid for one or two months later;

- the wealthier growers of cotton have started an Association of Cotton Growers. A good knowledge of the quality of kappas, information regarding the tending of the crop, and data from all over the country are supplied by this association. Risk-taking in a highly fluctuating market needs a solid back-up. The president of the association is an educated Kamma, owner of a cotton ginning mill and other factories.

- different sources of income pooled together between the family members or business partners enabled them to buy a large quantity of kappas at the lowest price - a cotton ginning mill must be able to function nine months per year with a stock coming from different regions of Andhra. The skill of the Kamma lies in his manipulation of credit from banks: by pledging stocks unpaid to the local farmer, he can get working capital to buy cotton outside the district where he has to pay cash. The Kammans used the banking system better than the Komatis.

- making the best of the opportunities given by the government through grants and subsidies, some families have started cotton ginning and pressing factories at the very centre of the cotton belt - within a radius of twenty kilometers from Guntur town - where they control the best quality of cotton from Guntur and Prakasam districts and where they are in direct relation with the agents of the spinning mills.

INDUSTRIALISTS IN GUNTUR DISTRICT

Because of the legal ban on spinning mills directly buying the cotton harvest from peasants and because of government assistance to the SSI, many cotton ginning and pressing factories have been created to respond to the cotton boom.

The development of small-scale industry occupies an important place in the "basic-needs strategy" championed by ILO - the International Labour Office. This is not, however, a new policy for India whose government as early as the late fifties (the Industrial Resolution of 1956) had begun stimulating SSI outside major urban areas in order to create non-agricultural employment, balance industrial
development and reduce regional imbalances. India has developed a most impressive network of incentives and subsidies for the SSI sector as well as programmes for promoting entrepreneurial development. Numerous agencies, headed in 1977-80 by the decentralized DIC (District Industry Centre), are engaged in providing facilities for the SSI sector.

The authorities intervened in two ways:

- indirectly through infrastructures such as roads, railways, water supply and electricity connections;

- directly through incentives and subsidies, and through SSI promoting agencies, whose aim is to advise industrialists at all stages of production and marketing. They help them by providing finance through nationalized commercial banks. The small industries promoting agencies are represented in the field by Industrial Extension Officers who spot out innovators and broadcast an "industrial culture".

Small industrialists in Guntur

For the production of consumer goods, small manufacturing firms belong mostly to Komati merchants who became involved in production by controlling the product-selling channel (e.g. stainless steel utensils) or the raw material channel as wholesalers (e.g. pesticides). As we have seen, they are important in the local tobacco business - even if tobacco is no longer grown in Guntur district, the town is the central place for tobacco processing and trade within the entire country. They are also doing better than Kamma in the paddy and rice business: they own two thirds of the rice mills. But in the Krishna delta, though they were in complete control of the commercialization of grains until 1960, they have subsequently been obliged to associate themselves with Kamma to buy on the market with payment on the spot.

Out of 150 cotton ginning mills (in the district), all started after 1972, only a third belong to Komatis and two thirds to Kammans. The biggest and the better managed ones are owned by Kamma families or partners.

All the cotton ginning mills belonging to Kamma families are registered as SSI in order to get term loans at subsidized rates from banks and finance institutions - APSFC - and key loans or cash credit loans for working capital from commercial banks. They have frequent relations with the officials of the DIC whose powers they know how to use. After attaining a certain standard in their first venture - cotton
processing with the aim of getting better quality of lint while processing it with new and improved machinery - and having obtained a better price, a good reputation on the lint market and more orders through the mills' brokers, they diversified their industrial activities.

The Komati owners of cotton ginning mills deal with the Vaysia Bank for working capital and seem to avoid all registration and relations with officials. So they mostly buy second-hand machinery and are less scrupulous about quality. They take less risks and do not buy very large stocks. They run their business jointly with several other partners who have businesses in different fields at the same time. Since many traders found themselves in difficulties after the 1977 cyclone, some now rent their factories to companies working for the spinning mills of Hubli, Raichur, Coimbatore, Madurai or Bombay.

Kammis have concentrated their wealth in buying and processing cotton. Those who have diversified their activity are those who have the means to control from the beginning a large part of the kappas market and who have a strategic industrial plan. They are also the most educated and the richest. One finds among them people who are already shareholders in medium-scale factories of Andhra or real estate developers or film production partners in Hyderabad, after having made their fortune as road and building civil contractors at the time of the NSP, and who have assured their political power by becoming sarpanch or MLA, or being related to an MLA Congress on one side and to a Telugu Desam MLA on the other.

**Industrial strategy of the Kammis**

The leadership and the development of industrialization processes are in the hands of the Kammis. Perfect economic logic, political strength and social leadership lead these people to invest and succeed in two or three linked activities: high risk speculative activities, cotton trade on a very fluctuating market - but as we have seen, the risk is shouldered by the small farmers who are paid after the payment of the lint by cotton traders or the brokers working for the spinning mills -, cotton seed extraction plant and soap manufacturing within the district. Outside the district, they have a very precise spatial strategy. Some have developed their integration in the textile industry by creating a spinning mill, but outside Guntur, in order to take advantage of government incentives to set up business in industrially backward areas. The third sector of activities they have entered successfully is the export marketing of prawns: they have bought imported fishing boats of the
latest technology after 1985 encouraged by the New Export policies and government subsidies.

Land laws and the fixing of land ceilings have also had beneficial consequences for the "enterprising spirit" of the biggest land owners. After artificially splitting their family lands, they have invested in other economic sectors, so that they would not be affected in case the agrarian reforms were enforced. The high level of education given to their children since Independence has also helped them to enter industry and business (they are engineering degree holders, MBA, MBBS, lawyers, etc.). Their high level of education renders them eligible for the Educated Self-Employment Scheme or for the Technocrat Scheme in spite of the fact that cotton ginning was not eligible for these schemes.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the social constitution of the group of Small Scale Industrialists shows strong correlations between caste origin, ability to negotiate with officers in charge of industrial promotion and bankers, connections with political power, ownership of capital raised from agriculture and trade, educational level, and psychological factors such as ability to take risks and to innovate. In contrast with the numerous post-schumpeterian or post-weberian approaches, it is important to see that psychological and socio-cultural factors are of secondary importance. If the commercial climate is favourable, when there are market incentives and government subsidies, banking facilities and cheap capital, and transport facilities, entrepreneurship will surely develop. As the economist Gustav Papanek has very well shown, profit maximization and capitalist economic rationality are not to be considered problematic and may be assumed to be present in every society.

The NSP was a major historical turning-point. We have demonstrated how historical time and individual time re-align themselves to deeply modify the socio-economic situation and to allow a minority of individuals to ensure better economic, social and political domination. Several types of factors and agents, at different spatial levels, entwined in a complex and complementary manner, explain the success of the Guntur Kammas.

I hope this study may contribute, however modestly, towards the analysis of the processes of local industrialization and the mechanics of regional development.
DISCUSSIONS

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

The same point is made by George Baldwin's study on industrial changes in South India, which predates in fact Papanek's study, when he says that there are some people who achieve a high profile.

Prof. P.K. MUTTAGI

There has been a very interesting study conducted in Kakinada in early sixties on a somewhat similar theme. It was conducted by Mc Clelland and his colleagues in the area of achievement motivation. They have produced very useful literature. The book, "Achieving Society" is particularly useful.

Dr. B. SILBERSTEIN

The work on which this paper is based shows the pattern as it is in Guntur. Of course, cross analyses with other examples from other areas have to be done. Your first point relates to the unequal way in which water distribution is effected. I mentioned that in my paper, but I may have been unclear. I feel rather surprised at your second point. I find it hard to believe that people may not be interested in grasping the opportunities offered by water to increase their wealth. During the two years I spent in the villages, I never met, nor was I told about, any such case. In many parts of coastal Andhra, when the local dominant caste proved unable to handle the opportunities, migrants from other parts of coastal Andhra did so (such was the case in Macherla taluk with migrants from Krishna district). But I agree with your point that social structure and historical evolution have to be taken into account. In coastal Andhra, under the ryotwari system, the dominant castes have never been absentee landlords like the zamindars of Telengana. François Pesneaud, a French geographer and a specialist of Telengana, has written interesting papers on the recent changes in the agrarian structure of that region. He has analyzed the growing trend of land transfers in Telengana from absentee landlords to lower agrarian castes, who prove able to manage agriculture in a more profitable way.

Dr. Ph. CADENE

I find the comparison between Guntur district and Tiruchengodu interesting. In both cases, we have farmer communities taking to industry, but the ways they follow seem to be quite different.

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

Following Dr. Tyabji and Dr. Cadene, there is one interesting point that comes up to a level of generalisation. If you have a rural area where farmers have the freedom to gain from improved productivity and grow big enough, then those farmers will grow into small entrepreneurs, will become integrated in networks of trade and industry. You see the same phenomenon in Punjab and you see it in Guntur district. It is the socio-economic system which precludes farmers from doing that, and which will also preclude them from using irrigation water. Telengana was a land of landlords absolutely in the classic sense, whereas Godavari was in the ryotwari area. Guntur district was in the ryotwari area, and Guntur was a progressive area in terms of agriculture before Independence. The history goes back before 1947. This district was growing tobacco, its paddy production was increasing, and so on. You also have a different historical sequence. In Telengana, after the destruction of
the old landlord system, you will get a group of politically mobilized farmers who say "No, we want to use this water, we want to grow, and then go into other things". As a matter of speculation, one can say that, in Telengana, landlordism really persists in spite of farmer laws. That is the explanation. And it is also interesting that improving farmer communities have been able to displace a traditional trading caste as the major industrial and trading group there. That is different from Bihar, from Eastern Uttar Pradesh, where some development has also gone on. There are interesting contrasts to be made, generalizations to be derived.
AFTERNOON SESSION

Prof. A. KUNDU

Right at the beginning, Prof. Jacques Pouchepadass has mentioned that this project gains importance due to the fact that social anthropologists have not looked until now at the business communities as an instrument of urban growth. I just want to add one more point in the contemporary context which could add to the importance of the study. If you look at the trade and commerce sectors in the Indian economy, their contribution has not only come up in terms of the income share but also in terms of the employment share. The share of trade and commerce in the total urban workforce has gone up by larger percentage points compared to any other sector. There are studies on functional classification of urban centres that show that the number of trade and commerce-based urban centres have increased significantly during the 1960s and 1970s. This is for Tamil Nadu and other Southern States.

THE DYNAMIC ECONOMIC AGENT
IN TIRUCHENGODU TODAY

by Philippe Cadène and Marie-Louise Reiniche

While doing our preliminary fieldwork at Tiruchengodu, we came to realize that the people we were meeting were only too willing to speak about themselves and to recount how they had made their way in life. So we decided, as a method of approach, to conduct as far as possible systematical enquiries pertaining to their life histories. We have briefly analysed the main interviews we had with about 15 people as well as some relevant information collected from several others (such as shopkeepers whom we interviewed in the bazar as well as a few prominent peasants whom we visited in their native villages).

On the basis of these informations and of a few other historical sources we shall in the first part of this talk focus exclusively on the key events which have enabled individuals to make the most of the changing economic and political scenario during the last few decades in India and more specifically in the Tiruchengodu region. The second part provides an analysis of the life histories. It illustrates the general pattern of the socio-economic changes of the past decades, and it emphasizes at a different level the importance of the means offered by the underlying social networks for seizing opportunities.
THE PATTERN OF CHANGE IN TIRUCHENGODU:
A HYPOTHESIS

Many major aspects of the social history of the Tiruchengodu area, until the first decades of the 20th century and even later, are little known. Historical research has to be included in our project. Help from a historian is needed for a better understanding of the contemporary processes which explain the evolution of Tiruchengodu during the last few decades as well as the present situation. At the moment, we are forced to rely on a few available sources in English.

From the District Gazetteer published in 1918, as well as from Mattison Mines' book The Warrior Merchants and from a few other documents, we know that Tiruchengodu had 8000 inhabitants at the turn of the century and was a weaving town and an agricultural market place. Its chief community was, and still is to some extent, that of the Mudaliyar weavers, whose "pavadis", well shaded with trees, represented the picturesque features of the town.

It is not easy to conjecture why large colonies of the weaving caste should have settled down in this area. But they have been established in Salem district since a very long time. In 1792, a few months after the British forced on Tipu sultan the treaty which stripped him of half his dominions, including the whole of the present Salem District, we know that the Salem area was selected as a suitable field for establishing an "Investment", and it was decided to invest in the textile industry there. The weavers, especially those of Tiruchengodu, rebelled against the imposition of new taxes and the control of the British company. Due to these troubles, the Salem "Investment" ceased to exist for some time in the nineteenth century. These events indicate the importance of the textile activity and of the regional weavers' community. This importance is also highlighted by the Census of 1911 according to which, for Salem district, 88727 people registered themselves as belonging to one of the following weaving castes: "Sale, Devanga, Patmulkaran and Mudaliar". Of these, 83005 admitted earning their livelihood from this occupation. The Gazetteer explains that many of the weavers possessed looms of their own and that they took their finished goods every evening to the bazar for sale. A large number of weavers were also employed by rich men who owned three to four looms each. There was yet another class of weavers, comparatively small in number, who would take orders from cloth merchants and receive advance money to carry them out. All kinds of goods were manufactured in the District, but it seems that the Tiruchengodu area with its Mudaliyar community specialised in cotton industry.
Beside the weaving industry, the local grain production was probably equally important in Tiruchengodu. This locality appears as an important market place for the agricultural produce grown in the surrounding villages by the Vellalars who are the dominant farmer castes of the area.

Grain trade is said to have been concentrated mainly in the hands of the Komatis and Nagarattu Chettis, who combined money-lending with this business and made it perhaps one the most lucrative in the area. The Nagarattu Chettis were also dealers in oil and salt. From the data published in the Gazetteer, we can only presume, although it is an important issue, that grain trade was controlled by the local merchant castes. However we have no clear idea of which community controlled the textile trade in Tiruchengodu, specifically for export purposes. An information provided by the Gazetteer seems important for understanding the role played by the merchant caste: all the three banks existing in Tiruchengodu at the beginning of the century were in the hands of the Nattukottai Chettis, who were not natives of Tiruchengodu area.

How did things change from the first decades of our century onwards? Life histories and other data collected during our preliminary field work in the town suggested certain hypotheses concerning the main processes of change as well as the role of the important social groups operating in the town.

It seems that one of the first decisive steps towards modern evolution and for the weavers took place before Independence, more precisely around the thirties, with the setting up and the development of the co-operative movement in the area.

From the inquiries that we made in Tiruchengodu and in the surrounding villages, as well as from Mattison Mines' book, we get an idea of the importance of the handloom cooperative society for the Mudaliyar community. It seems that the setting up of co-operative societies offered to the weavers' community an opportunity for controlling the local market. It probably also offered to some of them the opportunity to take up important economic and political posts, not only amongst their own community but also among the entire population of the town.

During the same period, the creation of the agricultural co-operative marketing society opened to the Vellalar farmers a means of
escaping the clutches of the local merchant castes. The cooperative which seems to have been well managed from the beginning was probably a base of political control over the rural area.

During these years, some cooperative banks were also established in Tiruchengodu which helped reducing of the rates of interest.

Then, in the thirties, the success of the cooperative movement, in the fields of agriculture, textile and banking, was probably a dynamic factor in the redistribution of the power relationships between the communities. The local merchant castes began losing their economic hold during these years. We know, for instance, from the Gazetteer that in the thirties the Nattukottai Chettis closed their banking business, and that few members of other local communities took to banking. We also know from our enquiries that, during the same period, some Mudaliyars succeeded in entering into the grain business and that a few of them gained wealth and power in the process.

From the time of Independence, or may be even earlier, there took place a second phase in the development process. This period lasted for about two decades, up to the end of the sixties. Tiruchengodu was at this time a town with a population of about 20,000 inhabitants (19228 in 1951 and 21386 in 1961).

During these years, some members of the two main communities settled in the area, the Mudaliyars and the Vellalars, appear clearly as the leaders in the processes of development. The Mudaliyars established their dominant role in the town due to the size of their community. The Vellalars, owners of agricultural land in the villages, began entering the town with the purpose of establishing themselves as businessmen, trying to extend their dominance over the urban area. These two groups of people vied with each other, but also shared in this process similar business interests. In this manner, they managed to isolate members of other groups, mainly from the merchant castes, by trying to assume certain key-positions in the town which were earlier held by merchants and others within the local society.

Even if our present knowledge of the recent evolution in Tiruchengodu is scanty, we may safely assume that certain identifiable factors have had an important impact on the main development processes of this period.

One factor is the continuation of the cooperative movement which contributed towards helping the Mudaliyar weavers or the Vellala
farmers to control their market, as well as towards opening business opportunities for some entreprenring individuals who were given financial aid. This factor is mainly local in its dynamics, but it is part of a national movement which was reinvigorated after Independence.

Another factor is more directly related to the national situation just before Independence and after this decisive event. It lies in the opportunities which were offered to some people to establish political positions at this time. In Tiruchengodu, the organisation of the Indian democratic State first benefited some leaders of the cooperative movements. These politicians were members of the two dominant communities of the area: the Kaikkolar Mudaliyars in the urban setting and the Vellalars in the villages. These political positions have enabled some people belonging to these communities to control public contracts or to derive benefit from State exemptions from certain taxes and regulations. In the course of our enquiries, we met, for example, Mudaliyars who had obtained monopoly over rice selling during the post-war period or who were acting as building contractors within the town. We have also met Vellalars acting as public contractors for building roads and infrastructures within the taluk. The rice business, which has not been included in the activities of the cooperative marketing society and which was at some time closely controlled by the State, seems to have been an important means of acquiring wealth.

With the sixties begins the third phase of the local processes of development. This phase is still going on. During these years, Tiruchengodu has experienced a very rapid demographic growth. The population which numbered 21386 inhabitants in 1961 increased to 36990 inhabitants in 1971, that is at a rate of growth of nearly 73% for the decade. During the seventies and the eighties, the population continued to increase: it reached 53941 inhabitants at the time of the census of 1981 and 77200 inhabitants in 1990 (figure provided by the local municipality), which gives a rate of growth of about 45%. This growth of population can be explained by the important economic growth experienced by the town during this period, which was accompanied by drastic social changes.

Two factors seem crucial for explaining the development during this period. The first one, or at least the one which produced the most visible changes in the town, comes from the progressive decentralization of organised textile industry from the main centres of production in India. Powerloom units belonging mostly to Mudaliyars were established in the town. This phenomenon increased drastically during the eighties due to the growth of international demand and the
closing down of the weaving sections in Bombay and other centers after prolonged strikes.

The second major factor is the increase of political control in the hands of some members of the Mudaliyar and the Vellalar castes. This control seems then to operate at the State level and even more so at the level of the Central Government. The situation benefited at first some members of the Vellalar caste who were able to assume leadership in the bore-well business in Tamil Nadu as well as in other States. Started at the beginning of the seventies, this business is responsible for rendering many of the Vellalars of the area prosperous. The secretary of one of the two Associations of the rig owners of Tamil Nadu, a member of the Vellalar community, has explained to us that, out of 2000 rig owners of Tamil Nadu, more than 500 are from Tiruchengodu taluk.

This factor as well as the wealth of some Vellalars who became rich due to agriculture, explain the reason for their migration to towns and their establishment as businessmen and shopkeepers in the bazar. They also explain the recent boom in textile production with the creation of many small scale powerloom units scattered in several villages owned by members of this community.

SOME LIFE HISTORIES

The very fact that people are ready to speak about their lives is in itself revealing, since this is not what scholars undertaking social anthropological enquiries in India would usually expect. In Tiruchengodu, most people have something to say, in connection with their own occupations, something which happened during their lifetime, and which, they feel, never occurred during the time of their fathers and forefathers. This is precisely what is so fascinating in the life histories that we collected: among the details of every individual life, there is something comparable with the others, to the extent that it relates to the same series of events. It is important here to understand how individuals, from their own points of view and from within their social and local ties, have been able to perceive the opportunities provided by history and to make the most of them.

The cases analysed in this part concern mainly the weavers of the Kaikkolar caste, generally known as Cenkunta Mudaliyars. The reason is that our preliminary enquiries were at first centered on the textile industry, i.e. the most important industry of the area, which remains to
some extent in the hands of the Mudaliyars of Tiruchengodu. Correlatively, the Mudaliyars present themselves as genuine inhabitants of the town, while the members of the peasant castes were relegated as simple newcomers, even though the demographic composition of Tiruchengodu cannot be simplified in such a way. In this study, as a counterpart of Mudaliyar histories, the case of the local peasant caste members is exemplified by the interesting history of a Kongu Vellalar. Among the biographies that we gathered, some can be considered as exemplary and we have followed their line of development, by clustering the information gleaned from the other biographies, in order to outline the chronological sequence of the local development.

Before entering into the details of the life histories, it would be interesting to note the general stereotyped pattern followed by all informants while explaining why Tiruchengodu has developed so well. It may be summed up in the following manner:

- we have come from nothing and moreover we were practically uneducated;

- because we had nothing, we worked very hard - the proof being that the sons of those who were then wealthy were not used to hard work, and consequently their family fortunes are today dwindling;

- if we have worked hard, it is also because the Tiruchengodu people are hard working people: the area is a dry area without much rainfall and the people are used to struggle for survival;

- it is only by dint of our work that we have been able to gradually better our lot, by saving every penny, and without any help from outside: no one admits to ever having received any help from the Government;

However, the older ones among those whom we interviewed claim that success in business is due to honesty and to some luck linked to devotion to God, while the younger ones tend to attribute it to education and knowledge.

There is something fascinating in these statements. They underline at the same time an inherited qualification ("we are hard working") and personal merit (personal hard work and savings + honesty + devotion + quest for knowledge), while it denies any helping hand from outside. Such a statement which stresses inherited qualifications linked to personal merit is part of the cultural background of the Indian caste society. However the notion of "hard working" emphasizes the value laid on modernity in its aspect of economic development. Another point is equally noteworthy. It is the wording:
"we, people of Tiruchengodu, are hard working". As a positive statement, it reveals a kind of identity consciousness in relation to the town: it is a consciousness which encompasses the strictly community point of view (of the interviewees) in acknowledging the fact that the uplifting agents of the locality belong to different castes. This does not signify in the least that everyone in Tiruchengodu is supposed to be included at the same level under the pronoun "we".

Bearing in mind this general statement, which denies interference from outside (i.e. which denies history to a certain extent), we may now have a closer look into the life histories of some of the prominent inhabitants of Tiruchengodu. We shall begin with the members of the weaver caste, the Cenkunta Mudaliyars. It is possible to regroup them into four main categories, depending on the turn of events which appears to have taken place during the 40s.

Mudaliyars whose fathers (and sometimes grandfathers) were "Mudalali".

The term Mudalali (mudalali) is, in the case of the weavers, translated as "master-weaver" and refers to a handloom weaver who is also a trader, first buying the yarn and then selling himself the finished products: not only did he buy the yarn for his own handlooms (usually operated by salaried weavers), but for the handlooms owned by several other weavers working on a job basis. It seems that, before the 40s, about ten such Mudalalis and their families were quite well-off while several others at a lower level of trade also had a good economic standing. These families of Mudalalis did not involve themselves in the cooperative movement, since one of the purposes of the latter was to break the control and the power of the Mudalalis and of the yarn and cloth merchants (from trading castes). For the Cenkunta Mudaliyars coming from such a background - which was not so poor - the evolution is mitigated, as we shall see from the three following illustrations.

1. Please note that, for this preliminary paper, the informations gathered from life histories have not been thoroughly checked. And even when they have been so, we have not corrected them in order to maintain for the moment the point of view of the informants. Consequently, the dates which are given are often approximate, and such information as the price of land seems sometimes fanciful. People also are more concerned with their own life story. What they do know of their father's life, or their grandfather's, is very general and to some extent even stereotyped. Many of our informants are between fifty and seventy years old. If for them individually, the 40s was a turning point as they were young men, the 40s were anyhow internationally and nationally a turning point. However at the regional level, it was prepared some decades earlier by the development of nationalist politics and, specifically, the co-operative movement which has had some importance for the weavers.
a) One is the case of a well-known Cenkunta Mudaliyar who is no more. Before the 40s, he was controlling hundreds of handloom weavers all over the area. In 1935, he started with shareholders the first spinning mill at Tiruchengodu. After his death, his sons were unable to keep the mill running (this is the case of the sons of wealthy men who had turned lazy, see above). The spinning mill passed into the hands of a Naidu of Coimbatore (who seems to have been involved in the making of counterfeit money), and then into those of one of three brothers of a family of Devangars (a weaver caste from Karnataka settled in Tamilnadu), who are running three spinning and weaving mills at Komarapalayam (a weaving place 20 km to the West), and whose management of the Tiruchengodu mill is highly criticised. Beside the failure of the present generation of a Mudalali family, it is interesting to note here that no other spinning mill was set up in Tiruchengodu until the 80s.

b) The second case is an example of rising fortunes of a Mudalali family in the weaving business. It is the case of a Cenkunta Mudaliyar who founded a spinning mill in 1984 and managed to run it with the help of one of his sons (all of them had been technically educated). This Mudaliyar’s father owned only four handlooms and went from fair to fair selling the cloth pieces. From the 40s till 1957, he was able to possess on his own first 30 handlooms and then finally 120 and was acting as a Mudalali. In 1957, his capital totalled one thousand rupees. In 1960, he bought four power looms; at present he owns three hundred power looms scattered in several workshops. In 1968, he built a warping and sizing mill, which is now managed by his younger brother: this is an important step in the cotton process for feeding his own power looms as well as those of several others, the production of which he is then eventually able to control. In 1980, he bought about 50 acres of land in three plots just outside Tiruchengodu for 47 000 Rs. per acre (one acre amounting today to some 500 000 Rs). On one of the plots of land, he started in 1984 a spinning mill whose turn-over is 5 crores (1 crore: 10 millions), part of the remaining land being planted with coconut trees (a good income, when they are irrigated, as they are, by bore-wells). In 1990, he started modernizing his spinning mill in order to be able to spin the finest quality of cotton, and has even begun building another spinning mill (of more than 50000 spindles) at Avanasi in Coimbatore district. The whole process is aimed at the foreign export market.

The jointness of a family, which lives without any undue ostentation, plays an important role in its business success. We may add that this family is related by consanguinity to another which is also
wealthy, and that two of its daughters have been given in marriage to some close relatives of another Cenkunta Mudaliyar, who is the present Municipal Chairman.

c) The third example is the reversed story of the previous one. It is provided by a Cenkunta Mudaliyar still residing in a traditional type of house in the ancient settlement of the weavers in the town. This Mudaliyar's grandfather owned lands (which have since been sold) and was a money-lender. His father had six handlooms in his house, run by salaried weavers, and was acting as a Mudalali. He himself disposed of his father's handlooms, but was not able to buy power looms. He is still a Mudalali, but at a very residual scale, providing yarn on a job basis to 20 handloom weavers scattered in the surrounding villages, and selling the finished handloom products ("dhoties") at the Erode market.

Mudaliyars who have been associated with the Cooperative Movement (and with the political leaders of the Congress). This category includes the weavers who have been registered as members of the local Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society (founded in 1938 at Tiruchengodu).

The Cooperative Movement, particularly in the case of the handloom weavers, has been quite important, due to the direct involvement of the Government and the local Congress leaders, and it is worthwhile to assess its impact on the Tiruchengodu area (even though M.Mines's study, The Warrior Merchants..., 1984, has already brought to light an interesting point of view and documentation on this subject). In the context of this paper, it is sufficient to give only a few informations, as related by the local weavers. Briefly, from their point of view, the cooperative for the production and marketing of handwoven cloth was set up in order to provide work all year round to handloom weavers on an equitable basis with some sharing of benefits, which would enable them to be no longer dependent on the masterweavers especially through indebtedness. The cooperative society was helping them with loans and by providing different kinds of facilities, one of them being the foundation of a Weavers Housing Colony in the northern limits of Tiruchengodu in the 50s: this enabled fifty to one hundred weaver families, living in very poor housing conditions in the centre of the town, to have their own house in the colony with a very long-term credit facility basis.

During the 60s, something interesting happened. The Handloom Weavers Cooperative Movement received (and is still receiving) a great deal of support from the Government following some of the Gandhian
ideas favouring the promotion of home industry and the protection of handloom production by several provisions, one of them being to restrict the licensing of powerlooms. But in the 60s, under pressure from its members, the Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society of Tiruchengodu decided to acquire its own powerlooms, which it got in the 70s with the help of certain politicians. At first, six powerlooms were given by the Society to selected weavers of the area.

Today the Cooperative Society at Tiruchengodu, as elsewhere, is still working thanks to Government support, but it has lost the dynamics it had earlier acquired due to the strong involvement of local personalities with the Congress political leaders. Some of our informants claim that the Cooperative Society began to collapse from 1967 onwards - which must also be related with an increased number of powerloom small-scale units (the production of which is as such considered as handloom fabrics). From the local point of view, the fatal blow was delivered to the Cooperative Society in 1976, when the AIDMK Tamilnadu Government dismissed the local bodies from every kind of cooperative societies and replaced them with Government appointed officers.

To come back to the weavers whom we interviewed at Tiruchengodu, it does not seem that the members of the Cooperative Society have benefited much from the development of the textile industry in the area. The life histories of those who were directly involved with the Congress party and the Cooperative Movement are closely associated with the hopes and struggles of the nascent nation that was India. Only a few of them are still alive. They are respected people with a Gandhian outlook and a modest manner of living. They usually own a few powerlooms, at best less than a hundred. However one of them was able to build a sizing mill in 1972 and went on to become the Director of the Handloom Weavers Cooperative Society from 1974 to 1976.

Mudaliyars who have given up weaving in favour of rice trade in the 40s and who made a come-back in the textile business in the 60s.

We have several examples of this type. Let us first note that paddy and rice trade at the very low scale of the household seems to have been a side-business for many weaver families in the 40s and maybe even before that: it was run by women who, after having bought some paddy, processed and husked it by hand and then sold the rice either in the local market or at home. In several instances and due to
local circumstances which we have yet to ascertain, the menfolk from weaver families took up the rice business on a larger scale, while giving up their less profitable weaving occupation. The following example concerns, if not the wealthiest, at least one of the most well-known Mudaliyars of the town.

This person, who is now 75, was the only son of a handloom weaver, who, it seems, was able to be independent of any masterweaver. He studied till SSLC. In 1935, he worked as a clerk for a wholesale grain merchant and then started his own rice trade two years later. Next he bought paddy from the villagers, had it hulled in a rice-mill and sold the rice. Later on, he was able to lease a rice-mill. In 1947, the rice business slumped. However, he was selected (through tender), and due to his own honesty, to be civil contractor for the housing scheme of the Cooperative Weavers' Colony - which emphasizes an indirect relationship with the Cooperative Handloom Weavers Society. In 1950, he came back to the rice trade, took a rice-mill on lease, opened his own wholesale shop at Coimbatore and continued with that business till the 70s. However from the 60s onwards, he became interested in the new opportunities provided by the textile field and opened in 1962 a sizing mill in partnership: one of his partners, a yarn business merchant, has been Chairman of the Town Panchayat (1950-54), Chairman of the Cooperative Handloom Society, and was the President of the Town Congress Committee, as well as his brother-in-law. He was, and still remains, a shareholder of the first spinning mill set up at Tiruchengodu in 1935. In the 80s, he opened his own spinning mill at Avanasi (Coimbatore district), for one of his sons, but had to sell it in 85. From 1970 till today, he has remained a yarn distributor and is ready to open a powerloom weaving section with his youngest son (three others being engaged in medical practice, each running a private clinic). As a prominent citizen of the town, he has held several honorary posts, such as head of the Panchayat of the weaver caste, chairman of the Rotary Club, member of the board of trustees of the Siva temples, etc.

The life of this Mudaliyar is without doubt exemplary. Many others have taken to the rice trade and rice-milling in the 40s-50s, at a time when the rice trade was regulated by Government rules. Some of them are still continuing with that business and very often combine it with textile business. Why and how the rice business came to be known to the weavers and turned out to be a profitable trade for them remains to be analysed.
Mudaliyars who are solely traders (in yarn, cloth or any other goods), or who have entered a totally different line of occupation

Among the latter cases, it is worth citing the instance of a Mudaliyar who is known for having introduced mobile rig units at Tiruchengodu. In 1946, this person bought a second hand cycle for 28 Rupees and 4 annas, after having pledged his mother’s jewels, and rented the cycle. Slowly he developed that occupation jointly with his five brothers. In 1949, he sold 15 cycles and bought a second hand car for 3500 Rupees and drove customers, going from fair to fair. In 1951, he sold the car and bought a seven-seater van for renting and three more later on. Then he sold them for buying a second hand lorry for 20000 Rupees and in 1959 he got 6 lorries more and used them mainly for carrying salt, on a brokerage basis of 5 Rs for 100 Rs worth of goods, from the port of Tuticorin to Mysore and Bangalore. In 1962, the joint family split up, each brother getting one lorry and 5000 Rs. He himself sold his own lorry and bought a new one with a bank loan of 60000 Rs and sold it after four years. He has been the Secretary of the Lorry Owners Association till 1962. Then he became kerosene dealer for ESSO and started a workshop for dealing in automobile spare parts in 1964, the shop giving loans ranging from ten to twenty thousand Rupees to well-known customers. In 1976, he was one of the first persons to introduce at Tiruchengodu mobile rig units for boring wells. He bought one for about 8 lakhs of Rupees, then five others, going for boring wells in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Orissa. In 1979, he started at Hyderabad a company for rig manufacturing with three partners: 40 rig units were sold, but he had to close down production due to a workers’ strike. Today, he has kept only one rig unit and the automobile spare parts business. His eldest son runs a bus company, the second one provides transport for a gas company.

For a Mudaliyar, this case is somewhat exceptional since it involved entering a line of occupation which is normally taken up by members of the agrarian caste.

Example of a member of the agrarian caste of the Kongu Vellalars

This example provides the counterpart to the instance of the Mudaliyar and symbolizes the many new fields of occupation which have been opened up to the rural Vellalars and to their abilities for seizing new opportunities.
This Kavuntar (title of the Vellalars in the area) was born in a village where his father owned 10 acres of land. He studied only up to the 5th standard. As a very young man, he started a milk trade with four other friends: going around the villages on a cycle, they fetched milk and sold it at Tiruchengodu. Later on, he undertook once again with some others a rice business, buying it from mill-owners at Salem, Attur and Tiruchengodu and selling it at Erode, Coimbatore and Tiruppur. In 1964, he had saved 20000 Rs and with a loan he was able to open with his maternal uncle a workshop with 7 powerlooms in his village. In 1969, he broke away from his uncle, settled four of the looms at Tiruchengodu, bought yarn and sold it for feeding other powerloom units. Between 1964 and 1975, he was weaving fibre-yarn, for which he received subsidies from the Government. In 1972, he owned 24 powerlooms and in 1975, he opened a sizing mill with several other partners, both Kavuntar as well as Mudaliyar. In the 80s, he purchased a mobile rig unit and opened four Finance offices registered under the name of family members. In 1984, as charity because he himself was not educated, he built and started a Technological Institute located some 8 kilometers away from Tiruchengodu and where about 700 students are trained. He also bought in 1989 a plot of land for opening a spinning mill. At present he employs about 1000 persons in different fields of occupation, and does business with 50 partners. Moreover, he has been elected as Chairman of the Panchayat Union, which supposes a strong involvement in local politics (the Municipal Chairman being a Mudaliyar). He has also been selected as the President of the newly founded Lions Club, where mostly Kavuntars are registered, while the Rotary Club is mainly in the hands of the Mudaliyars.

As to the Vellalars, their line of evolution is quite comparable to that of the Mudaliyars, with certain differences which tend to associate the Mudaliyars more to the textile line, while the Vellalars tend to seize opportunities in new fields (transportation and mobile rig units). However, the above examples show that there is no longer any clear-cut line of demarcation according to caste occupation. In all the cases, the 30s, then the 40s, the 60s and the 80s seem to have been very important periods for the development of the area. For the dynamic agent of the development, several factors have to be underlined.

Firstly, there is the role, with more or less direct implications, of local politics and of the political involvement of the agent. Secondly, the role of family ties (jointness), of community ties and of free partnership in business ventures and other kinds of association. All these factors have to be analysed and ascertained by further studies. The main question is to understand under what conditions and how historical
events and politics interact with the local networks of relationships in such a manner as to give them an impulse strong enough to mobilize and concentrate at different levels resources of every kind.
THE TEXTILE LINE OF PRODUCTION AS VIEWED FROM TIRUCHENGODU: CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST AND RECENT DECISIVE CHANGES

Brigitte Silberstein

Although the present structure of textile production continues to owe much to the past, it has recently undergone decisive changes. The textile industry is still the basic industry of the area, though some handloom production remains. But today’s major textile activities have come into being only during the last two decades and represent a clear deviation from previous production practices.

Prominent among these new features is the decentralized character of the organised textile-weaving sector and the spread of new spinning mills to feed the extraordinary growth of the "small" producer powerloom sector through its ancillary units the sizing mills. "Small" is within quotes at the moment: the fragmentation of the textile line is apparent but its integration into a complex world-wide textile industry is equally apparent even when viewed from the small town of Tiruchengodu.

In this paper, I focus on the agents of integration through an analysis of the processes of change and of integration into a new order. I try to demonstrate that the decentralized powerloom sector is a part of the integration process of the local textile industry into national and international networks marking a clear deviation from previous economic practices.

At the very onset of the study, using a method based on direct talks through cross examination with some of the entrepreneurs operating in powerloom units, sizing mills, and spinning mills in Tiruchengodu, we might have a sketchy or an incomplete picture of the situation. Our present statements have to be taken as working hypotheses which have to be corroborated with further study. Your questions, suggestions, and knowledge from other case studies will be of great help to enlarge our reflection.
CONTINUITY WITH THE PAST AND RECENT DECISIVE CHANGES

At the present time, some hundred handlooms and one to two lakhs of powerlooms, divided into one thousand units are operating within the taluk. Up until the last twenty years, handloom weaving was a full-time occupation for weavers from weaving castes who outproduced local and supra-local demands. The weavers in some localities specialized in producing particular textiles necessitating extra-local marketing but Tiruchengodu was known for its coarse count lungis and saris marketed mostly in Erode, but also in Salem. But Tiruchengodu was famous for the weaver's cooperative movement during the 1930s which was initiated by a local man, Kasiviswanathan a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Kaikkolars formed the first primary handloom weaver's cooperatives in Tiruchengodu and Salem by 1938. This cooperative served as a model during the 1960s for the establishment of a national cooperative structure supported by the Congress Party.

Today, the handloom weavers are no longer full-time weavers. All castes and communities are engaged in weaving. Living in villages, they divide their activity between agriculture and weaving according to the labour demand. With its very small number of workers and its substandard products, the sector seems moribund, perhaps even already dead?

Powerlooms are producing huge quantities of the same grey cloth: the town is crowded with lorries, bullock carts, bicycles, motorbikes and handcarts carrying beams of sized yarn and rolls of grey material.

The two processes of production must be described and analysed carefully to understand the nature and the intensity of change even if we must risk some truisms.

Let's first glance at the producer, the weaver

On Handloom
1) the weaver works at home, he is a skilled artisan (even for the little skill required for coarse lungis).

2) He was in Tiruchengodu a produ-

On Powerloom
1) the weaver is a worker, a semi skilled worker, working in a workshop, operating 4 powerlooms.

2) He is producing
cer of goods (lungis).

intermediate consumer
goods which have to be
finished before marketing:
grey cloth.

3) One pair of lungis was woven
per day with the help of the family.

3) 40 meters of grey cloth
are usually produced a
day by a worker during a
shift of 12 hours.

4) usually, weavers owned their own
looms but masterweavers (Mudalali)
were sometimes loom owners who
hired poor weavers as producers.

4) 20 to 40 powerlooms
under the same roof are
usually managed by a
mistri. But sometimes
only 6 or 10 are on
the same premises.

5) The masterweaver was a jobber.
For the members of the smooth
running Cooperative, the Society
was also seen as a jobber… Direct
relation with the Society or the
Mudalali (master weaver).

5) direct relation at work,
inside the workshop, with
the mistri, who is a
supervisor and a skilled
worker. The mistri is an
intermediate; the owner or
manager has usually no
relation with the worker.

6) Only Kaikkolar or Sengunthar
Mudaliyar are at work and mostly in
town. There are daily migrations
from surrounding villages.

6) All castes: Mudaliyar and
other castes including
Scheduled Castes

7) Loans from Mudalali, loans from
the Cooperative Society. Mobility is
rare.

7) Due to scarcity of good
workers powerloom
owners give advance
or loans or extra salary to
stable "good workers".
Workers are moving from
one unit to another.

In both cases, the salary is on piece basis
A powerloom is not a handloom using power

The technology used represents a rupture between the past and the present. The technology at work with the powerloom changes the structure of production.

For handloom production, sizing, warping and weaving were done by family members. In the case of powerloom, sizing mills are processing yarn to feed powerloom units. Within the process of production, sizing mills and powerloom units have direct technical linkages.

But the same yarn from the same spinning mills is used in hank form for handloom, in cone form for powerloom; the same yarn of low spinning count of 20 to 40 is woven: "powerloom production is marketed and exported under the name of handloom" explained a spinning mill owner; Mattison Mines (1984, p. 112) says: "Erode producers insist that as much as 90 percent of exported "handloom" textiles are imitation...".

The machinery used by the two sectors differs widely. It has improved for the powerloom only. The handlooms were and are built by the village carpenters; the frames of these looms are very simple. As for the powerlooms, six different types are used in Tiruchengodu. The first type is made of second-hand machinery bought from modernized composite mills and sometimes recycled out of scrap. The second type, the Sunrise brand, is built in Bangalore; the first licence given for powerloom production was given to the owner of Sunrise Enterprise who is himself a Mudaliyar. The third type is a second-hand powerloom coming from weaving sections closed after the 1983-84 strike and from the closing down of mills in Madurai. The fourth type - of low quality - comes from an assembling unit in Komarapalayam which works for the local market. The fifth type is represented by new improved powerlooms from Ahmedabad; faster and bigger in width, this type weaves the best export quality of grey cloth.

The structure of production: subcontracting or fragmentation inside the production organisation?

For the handloom sector, dyeing units were the only ancillary units. They still work on job work basis for the master weavers or the Cooperative. A hundred dyeing units were at work to feed ready to weave yarn to a maximum of 4 to 5000 looms within the taluk up to the 1960s, when the Cooperative Society was fully active.
In 1990, there are one to two lakhs of powerlooms and seventy sizing mills around Tiruchengodu; three spinning mills inside the town's limits but twenty in Erode and Komarapalayam. Many workshops within the town are devoted to servicing and repairing machineries and powerlooms. More than one thousand lorries, carts and bikes are devoted solely to the transportation of textile production.

The thousand powerloom units are divided into many workshops of 20 to 40 powerlooms each - to avoid labour problems, labour legislation, rules and regulations. But out of these thousand, 80% are working on job work basis for the sizing mills. The role played by sizing mills is therefore central. Are the sizing mills acting as modern Mudalalis?

The sizing mills are operating within four channels:
1) subcontracting basis with job work given by a powerloom owner to the sizing mill. The processing charges only are given to the sizing mill;
2) subcontracting basis with job work given by the sizing mill to a powerloom owner. Weaving charges only are given by the sizing mill;
3) direct production basis. The sizing mill and one or more powerloom units are owned by the same entrepreneur or partners but they produce grey cloth in different units, in different locations and under different names;
4) processing for other parties on selling basis: "independent" powerloom units are the buyers of beams of 50 kg of sized yarn.

But in fact a few among the sizing enterprises are following only one of the channels... And, adding to this complexity, out of the 70 sizing mills at work in Tiruchengodu, 50 are working on "job work" basis for traders, exporters and cloth merchants. But what does "job work" really mean? What kind of subcontracting is it?

Marketing of production: economic domination and captive market.

Handloom production showed the Mudalali’s economic and social domination over the Kaikkolars... A few among the Kaikkolars were able to buy yarn for themselves and sell their cloth at the fair (candai). Yarn merchants tied them with loans. From the first results of our fieldwork in Tiruchengodu, it seems that no yarn merchant was also a wholesaler in cloth. Masterweavers were directly selling the cloth on the Erode market or through cloth merchants based in Erode. This central
market-place has to be further studied to understand how the transactions and bargains were made.

The Cooperative Society received yarn from cooperative spinning mills and provided yarn to the members. The first spinning mill (Pullicar mill) started in 1935 by a Mudaliyar (Viapuri Mudaliyar) in Tiruchengodu was run as a cooperative with a membership of Mudaliyar share-holders. The cloth was marketed through the cooperative or "Co-optex", its brand name.

Weavers told us: "we all people were doing job work for the cooperative..." The cooperative is partially free from economic controls both up and downstream from the weaving. But, if it has sometimes increased their revenue by virtue of a better distribution of their work, it has not changed the dependent situation of the artisans. Was it no more than a change of master? Indeed not. In the first place, some have been able to free themselves from indebtedness to master-weavers thanks to loans made available by the cooperative; others, already master-weavers, have been able to consolidate their economic position because of the cotton yarn furnished by the cooperative and to free themselves from dependence on yarn merchants.

The change the Cooperative has made in relation to the market has therefore meant the overturning of economic and social dependencies. However, only a certain number of people have really benefited from it. Further study is required to answer precisely the questions raised by the apparent relation between the beneficiaries of the cooperative and the textile entrepreneurs (powerloom units, sizing mills and spinning-mill owners).

For the last two decades, as we have seen before, some sizing mills control the production of grey cloth from yarn to intermediate goods sold at Erode through brokers to cloth merchants. But most of them are working to fulfill export demands, through brokers located at Erode or Salem, from exporters in Bombay or Delhi. In the textile line, the brokerage system seems to have always existed but only for some specific kind of textile. At present, there is no transaction without a broker. It is the same situation as described in our paper on Guntur. For all the steps in the textile line, brokers are to satisfy the needs of both parties. "Known person in an unknown transaction" as a sizing mill owner said, he is a powerful integrating agent in the national and even international commercial networks.
Direct exporters, that is producer-exporters, are at work in the localities of Komarapalayam, Erode, Karur and Madurai. In Tiruchengodu there are two exporters representing the two types of exporters. One, M. E. P(Ltd), with its branch in Tiruchengodu, is the result of a composite mill’s decentralisation after a strike. In 1984, due to labour problems, the Krishna Mill of Bangalore chose to close down. Branches were opened in Tamil Nadu to produce the same grey cloth in the decentralised sector, under the same brand and for the same exporter, a foreign company.

The other, a newcomer in cloth export, is the owner of the L. S. Spinning Mill P(Ltd) started in 1984. Half of the shares belong to the same family. The grandfather was a master-weaver, owner of 30 handlooms, and a member of the Cooperative Society. The father was a master-weaver, owner of 50 handlooms. He bought 4 powerlooms in 1960 and ran 300 of them in 1976-80. Today he owns only 120, but controls at least 500 with the sizing mill - started in 1968. In 1990 the father and his three sons manage the different societies. The powerlooms are divided into six different workshops and names. They are now in a position to export directly and next year to export finer quality of cloth.

Subcontracting of different units and different firms belonging to the same owner (or partners) who is also an exporter has been described. This shows that concentration of capital, in spite of fragmentation of the process of textile production, as well as social domination, are reinforced. But the economic domination is not always as evident as in this example. The processes of integration of the local textile line with national and international networks are complex by nature and intricate. How might this study of the agents of change as seen from Tiruchengodu help the understanding of the processes?

A new concentration out of a decentralization: continuity and change

At Tiruchengodu, the town where the weaver’s Cooperative Society was the strongest and a model, we are surprised to hear talk about export of textile and to see some Mudaliyars sons or grandsons of handloom weavers running factories! As Marie-Louise Reiniche demonstrated in her paper, all the master weavers were not members of the Cooperative. But the cooperative movement might be regarded as a moment of social reorganization or rupture followed, through a network of economic, social and political influences, by a new social and economic order.
The first sizing mill in Tiruchengodu was financed by Mudaliyars in 1960. The subsequent growth of the textile industry was opposed by the handloom producers and their political supporters - the Congress Party and local politicians such as Kasivisvanathan. Textile exporters encouraged the development of the powerloom sector. Government policy favoured handloom production for export. The interest of the export market were different from the interests of the domestic market.

In 1972, in Tiruchengodu, 6 powerlooms where given by the government through the Cooperative to selected members of the weaver's Cooperative... after five years of repeated demands from Cooperative leaders. For the Cooperative members, one ideal view was behind their demand: a powerloom operator is a self-employed weaver! The first six powerlooms were to be used for training Cooperative members. Each member was to get a loom through the government channel. After two years, the only twenty powerlooms allotted were working with the yarn provided by the Cooperative but no massive self-employed powerloom weavers emerged from the scheme. This was the last battle fought by the Cooperative Society.

After 1970, the signing of general export agreements with some Western and South Asian countries resulted in the rapid growth of the export market in handloom textiles and clothing. Thus three cities in Tamil Nadu with large handloom industries - Erode, Karur and Madurai- have been deemed export centers and export licences have been facilitated for merchants, loans have been made available from nationalised banks, and ancillary industries have been encouraged.

After 1980, three factors have worked together to reorganize and reorient the Indian textile industry into its present framework:

1) - the New Industrial Policies of 1980 and mainly of 1985, which emphasized export oriented policies, have been framed and implemented in order to accelerate the growth of the national economy. The 1985 Textile Policy worked in the same direction: 80% of the new licences for spinning mills given by the Central government during the last three years are in Tamil Nadu. The licences are given for export only;

2) - the restructuration and redeployment of the international textile market have accelerated export production from India and other developing countries;

3) - the long strike in Bombay and its consequences on fragmentation of the Indian textile industry gave greater flexibility to the production system.
The textile line of production

The fragmentation of the textile production is better adapted to fulfill the fluctuating and growing demand of the world market as well as an easier way to get the cheapest labour while avoiding strikes, labour problems, rules and regulations. From a purely economic point of view (economics of scale), the fragmentation of the textile production seems to be regressive, but it is well suited to the requirements of social control. This indicates the flexible and adaptable nature of the structure of Indian textile industry.

Is a new pressure group born in Tiruchengodu?

In the 1940s, the growth of economic disparity between the handloom weavers, who were poor, and those who were becoming prosperous through the Cooperative, its ancillary units and some rice business created a first rift among the Kaikkolars. From the 1960s, handloom weavers benefited from the Congress party and from the Cooperative - employment, lending facilities and social welfare. The weavers on powerlooms, no longer only Kaikkolars, are also members of different castes - even Scheduled Castes. Now the CPI is locally seen as a party of great influence among them. Risks of social crisis and labour agitation are not negligible. The powerloom sector is the biggest employer of the town.

Mudaliyar leaders who gain control of the cooperative boards at the State level have lost their political power since the mid-1970s with the advent of the ADMK - the party that succeeded the DMK. Now they run most of the local textile industry and control part of the commercial activity of the town.

Some Gounder Vellalas, the local dominant agriculturist caste, are also involved in powerloom industry. They compete with the Mudaliyars for the economic domination on the town. They also compete with Mudaliyars for local and state political leadership. But will they be able to join together against outsiders?

The powerloom owner's Association was started in 1990. Its president, S. R. P...., son of one of the founders of the Cooperative Society at Tiruchengodu, is still living in the weavers' colony. He is the former local Congress leader and was an executive member of the Working Committee from 1977 to 1984. Since 1986, he was the president of the Congress local committee. His wealth is not patent, but he owns some powerlooms. He seems to be one of those politicians who entered politics moved by some inner faith and social ethics. Does his presence at the head of the new association signify the death of the
handloom weavers' Cooperative Society as well as of the handloom industry? Is it the onset of a new pressure group among the Mudaliyars? Is it the onset of a new political and economic organization to balance the domination of the new Mudalali - the sizing mills -, and of the international traders and their agents?

**DISCUSSIONS**

**Prof. A.K. BAGCHI**

I'll take up Dr. Silberstein's point. All economic systems are flexible. Whichever economy the economists are studying, the great flexibility is analysed from the back of the economy, except when the economists themselves are politically committed as pessimists. Take the Indian textile production. It is one thing as seen from Tiruchengodu. It is quite another thing as seen from Bombay. There, it was a disaster. It was an industry which at the end of the Second World War was perhaps the biggest textile producer outside the United States. Nowadays the small scale production has grown on the debris of large scale production. That debris has been produced not by just the New Economic Policy - I think this stress on the New Economic Policy may be a little exaggerated - but by the new Textile Policy. The 1985 Textile Policy is the more important one, when many of the protections were removed on foreign exchanges. That is an important point. This growth is partly the result of the decline of very large centres of production elsewhere. Not entirely because there are new things going on there. The strength of this sector is partly predicated on the decline of earlier concentrations.

**Dr. N. TYABJI**

Every single political connection which you mentioned was with the Congress. In Tamil Nadu, as we know, the Congress has not been in power for the last 23 years. This implies an important factor. Textile policies are made by the Central Government, and that is why people consider it worthwhile to remain with the Congress. That links up with what Amiya Bagchi said. Basically, there has been a controlled restructuring of the textile industry with the help of the Central Government.

That is why there is this continued connection with the Congress. Regarding the growth of handloom industry from the 1930s, there are two things that are interesting here. First, after the Indian textile industry was given tariff protection, there was a lot of concern in Madras Presidency with its effect on the handloom industry. The Government of India introduced a cess on textile mill production, the reasoning being that the cess would be used to help the handlooms. With the portion of the cess allocated to the Madras Presidency, a cooperative marketing society was set up in 1936.

One more interesting step, which E.F. Irshick in his book on Tamil revivalism in the 1930s hints at, occurred in 1934. The 1934 session of the Congress gave a lot of emphasis to khadi. That was also the time by which the British Indian authorities had realised that the Justice Party in Madras Presidency was running out of steam. There is some evidence, that Irshick quotes, that handloom production was deliberately given greater emphasis by the British Indian Government from the mid-1930s, because they knew it would boost the Justice Party ministry at
that point in time. A lot of the handloom workers were on the Justice side, but it was also to undercut the growing Congress influence in Madras Presidency, because at least the Gandhians within the Congress were not in favour of handloom, they were in favour of khadi. In other words, they were not in favour of handloom weaving based on mill spun yarn.

Another question concerns the growth of powerlooms. There was a Textile Enquiry Committee in 1953, that had suggested that there should be a phased transfer from handlooms to powerlooms, and that the powerlooms should be given primarily to cooperatives of handloom weavers. As usually happens, in 1963, ten years later, a Powerloom Enquiry Committee, found:

a) that of course far more powerlooms had been introduced than should have been; and

b) that they were largely not given to cooperatives, as had been decided on, but to individual entrepreneurs.

After the period of the 1930s, the Government has never really supported handlooms. At least from the 1950s onwards, it connived at the replacement of handlooms by powerlooms, and in fact, when it was pointed out to the Government that the Electricity Boards obviously had information about the number of powerlooms that were being introduced (because each of them would have to be given a power connection) the Textiles Department said that the Electricity Department refused to cooperate with them. So they were unable to keep any control. It would be interesting for you to look at the electricity connections. That would provide you with very reliable data on the actual growth of powerlooms, their concentration over time.

Prof. D. PALANI

I know the activities that are going on in Tiruchengodu, especially the handloom weaving. I am impressed by the way in which Dr. Silberstein presented her paper this afternoon. I want to add one or two things. I fully agree with Prof. Tyajbi's statement that the State Government has played a very vital note in promoting handlooms. The former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Mr. Annadurai, virtually carried handloom textiles to the streets and sold them, in order to encourage the handlooms. Khadi was the symbol of Congress, and the local party, the D.M.K. took the handloom as its symbol.

Prof. M. LAKSHMANA SINGH

Any urban centre, when it develops, is backed by its immediate rural area. Here in Tiruchengodu there are the dominant Mudaliar community and the numerically strong Gounder community. The latter has made an agricultural surplus of a magnitude which is nowhere to be seen except in Punjab. Part of that is ploughed back into non-agricultural activities. To give an example: poultry raising as a subsidiary of agriculture is present throughout Tamil Nadu, but it is nowhere as successful as in this belt. This surplus is also ploughed back into the urban areas.

In Tiruchengodu, traditionally a handloom weaving centre, the introduction of powerlooms gave a boost to the pannadi, because handloom weaving as such is a highly exploitative activity. But weaving is not directly a trading activity. Someone gets the yarn from different places, and gets back the finished products. Cloth merchants, dyers, yarn merchants, and even the loom spare parts dealers, are different kinds of intermediaries. These people have different shares in the benefits of the trade. At the bottom is the worker, at the top is the exporter or importer who deals
with people outside Tiruchengodu. In between are different agencies, which may be in the hands of the Mudaliar community alone.

Other trading activities have also flourished. Maybe the Gounders have ploughed back the money partly here and partly in other non-industrial mercantile activities.

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

What is the base of accumulation of this man in handlooms who in 1957 (or was it 1960?) had a capital of one thousand rupees and now owns several crores of rupees? Did he make it primarily through handloom weaving, or was he also engaged in trade, did he get help from banks, did he get help from others? Dr. Silberstein said that a piece worker in the handloom sector receives half of what a comparable person receives in the powerloom sector, and there is also a hint that there is a shortage of labour in the powerloom sector. Then what is it that binds the handloom worker to the handloom? Is it just tradition, or does he get more freedom? What are the other factors?

Dr. P. RADHAKRISHNAN

Itschick mentions in his book N.G. Ranga's report of 1930 on the decline of handloom weavers in India (N.G. Ranga, The Economics of Handloom, Bombay, 1930), in which Tiruchengodu is also discussed.

Dr. B. SILBERSTEIN

We have been told by weavers that a handloom weaver was able to weave two lungis a day, for which he earned 18 rupees. The whole warping, sizing and weaving work of one day brought in Rs. 18 for the family. With the powerloom, a worker can weave 120 metres of grey cloth on the basis of 0.25 Rs a metre. Which means he is able to earn Rs. 40 a day. There is a shortage of workers within the limits of the town, and one of the demands of the CPI leaders we met in the surrounding villages was for more bus stops in the villages to enable people to go to the town to work on powerlooms.

The handloom weavers who still remain are mostly in villages. They work part-time on handloom and part-time in agriculture. Weaving is a subsidiary occupation practised by all castes. Previously in this area, only Mudaliars and Devanga Chettiar used to work in handloom.

As regards the family who is now able to export directly to the foreign market, the figure I recall is that they have been able to invest 5 crores in 1984 to start the first spinning mill of their own, and 10 crores in 1990 for the spinning mill which is expected to open in January 91. For both these mills, they got term loans from a commercial bank - the Mercantile Bank at Erode. These entrepreneurs have a better industrial strategy than the others, and more connections at the right level also, which enable them for instance to obtain a licence within a month. Among the sons of the family, two are M.B.A. diploma holders and one is a textile engineer from Coimbatore University. So much regarding the way in which they operate, but this does not explain from what baseline they started off.
Prof. M.L. REINICHE

Regarding what happened with this generation in the 1940s, we have no accurate information as yet. One may guess that for those who were associated with the cooperative society, that might have helped. They say "We were working hard", but that does not explain exactly how they were able to get money, if the father was only a handloom weaver. Data remain to be collected regarding how in the 1960s they were able to buy powerlooms.

Dr. P. CADENE

There was a hierarchy among the Vellalars before they began going into industry. We can understand how the richer families among them became even richer. But as regards the members of the Mudaliar community, the process was more complex.

Prof. A. KUNDU

Regarding the existence of the low productive traditional activities in the rural areas, there is one study for two districts of Gujarat by the Gujarat Institute of Area Planning, which focuses on this question: what is the reason for the emergence of the low productive traditional activities? It looks at the National Sample Survey data for 4 rounds, which covers the whole year, and argues that these activities come up only in those months when agricultural activity is at the lowest level. So basically when agriculture does not offer enough opportunity, the agriculturists go to these activities. This is also being confirmed by the field based microlevel study which they have undertaken.

In all the three presentations, the observations were relating to the evolution of the textile industry over the past 30-40 years, and also to structural changes in the organisation of this activity. For analysing the impact of different governmental policies on this sector, could we bring in some secondary data? For example, on the industrial classification of the work force, we have the data for 1961, 1971, 1981. Similarly there are Establishments Tables. We have them for 1961, not earlier than that. Then we have the 1971 Establishments Tables, and in 1981 we have the Economic Census giving similar information. We also have the number of establishments using electricity, the number of persons engaged therein, classified by the nature of the industry. If you put that broad kind of tabular information, and then feed in all the observational input that you have got from the survey, I think that you might get some cross-checking.

Dr. B. SILBERSTEIN

As regards the data related to powerloom units, one may wonder whether they reflect the reality at all. We have been told by the owners themselves that they have not done any registration, neither with the Factory Inspector, nor with any of the regulation departments. Such findings always cast some doubts on the quality of the data.

Prof. A. KUNDU

The Population Census data is not based on the registrations. It is based on the household level enquiries. You ask people where they work and owner of the establishment regarding its use.
Dr. B. SILBERSTEIN

If people are able to avoid registration, they are also able to avoid Census Investigators. If the factories are not registered, they are not covered by Census operations.

Prof. A. KUNDU

I am not saying that this problem will not be there with the Census data. But let me tell you that the Census data reports, as far as the construction sector is concerned, 60% more workers than the registered workers reported by the Ministry of Labour. So if you have a larger number covered by that, there is no harm in putting it at the back of your analysis, so that you can cross-check the field data.

Prof. P.K. MUTTAGI

You have referred to the Mudaliar and other Hindu sects. What about the contribution of non-Hindus in textile production? Have you come across any Muslim handloom weavers?

Prof. M.L. REINICHE

The Muslim population is not very strong in Tiruchengodu. We met one Muslim cotton trader who bought raw cotton from the cooperative marketing society and sold it to Tiruppur or elsewhere. Further enquiries on that question are needed.

Prof. P.D. MAHADEV

I just wanted to ask whether there is no licensing procedure for powerlooms?

Prof. LAKSHMANA SINGH

For every powerloom you have to get a license, but in Tamil Nadu for every licensed loom there is one, or more than one, unlicensed loom, so that the statistics are unreliable. In the district industries registration, there is a number of registered powerlooms. Then if looms were physically counted in a particular area, you could estimate the proportion of recorded and unrecorded looms.
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC RE-DEFINITION OF THE URBAN SETTING

Philippe Cadène

We do not have much information about the spatial aspects of the economic development and the social change in the town. These aspects are even today extremely important for an understanding of the development process at Tiruchengodu. We would like to make a brief presentation of the urban land use and the architecture, in a historical perspective, before introducing certain questions which can rise from this empirical information.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF TIRUCHENGODU URBAN AREA.

From the Gazetteers published in 1918, we can get some ideas about the organisation of the urban space at the turn of the century. In those days, the town was a weaver’s locality and an agricultural market place with a strength of about 10,000 inhabitants. The heart of the town remains unchanged to this day. The Kailasanatha temple was at the centre of the town. The four streets which go around the temple and which constitute the bazar today were already the main streets then. But, it appears that the South Street, where many Brahmins were living at the time, had not yet become an important market area. To the North was built a large tank (kulam), which is presently dry. At the beginning of the century, the inhabited area had expanded only towards the North-East, and the South-East of the block was made up of the four streets. The caste structure of the society was strongly reflected in the social division of the urban space. An example of the latter fact is provided by the Kaikkolar weavers of the town who interest us particularly in this preliminary study. These artisans already constituted the main community of the town and lived in a very distinct area to the North-East of the bazar. In this area was located the "Pavadi", a big square which exists even today, and was then shaded with trees, in between which the weavers spread their yarn. From this square then started several streets, known as Pavadi streets. Here the Kaikkolars had their houses and carried on their weaving activities. This area of the town has not changed much to this day. The Kaikkolar families are still living there and the streets are still called "Pavadi streets". Another example
is provided by the Gurukkal Brahmins. They are mainly concerned with religious activities and live close to the temple, in South street and also in another street which is an off-shoot of South Street to the west.

Some of the information, collected from various sources, indicates that certain changes have been taking place in the Twenties and in the Thirties. The first change was the building of beautiful houses by some merchant families in the northern part of the bazar. North Street appeared clearly as the centre of the business activity in the town during these years. The second change occurred with the creation of some public buildings. A Higher Secondary School was established to the north of the Kulam, on the road to the Sankari Durg Railway Station. The taluk office was removed from the centre to a new building on Velur road, to the south, where it is located even now. Close to this office, the buildings of the Cooperative Marketing Society were established around a large open space where peasants brought their goods, just as they do even today. The third change was linked to the beginning of industrial activities in the northern part of the town. The first big factory, a spinning unit, which is still the biggest in Tiruchengodu, was established in 1935 two kilometres to the north of the present urban area, on the same road as the Higher Secondary School. The rice mills created in these years were also established to the north of the settlement, which has been an industrial area from this period onwards.

Then, in the Twenties and in the first half of the Thirties, a specialisation of the urban space appeared. This specialisation is about the same at present. Around the temple was the bazar. Towards the northern area of the town the industries were built. The public offices are located in the southern part of the town. At that time, the residential area was situated mainly to the east of the bazar.

From this earlier set-up, we cannot know precisely what were the main steps in the extension of the settlement. We can only deduce from the figures given by the Census as well as from our discussions during the fieldwork that the town began to really expand only after the Sixties. However, in the thirty years between 1931 and 1961, the population of Tiruchengodu almost doubled. According to the Census, the town had 12322 inhabitants in 1931, 15516 in 1941, 19228 in 1951 and 21386 in 1961. The rate of growth of the population was about the same as that of Tiruvannamalai, the town recently studied by Marie-Louise Reiniche in Tamil Nadu, on which an analysis of the census data has been done by Christophe Guilmoto, a French demographer. As in Tiruvannamalai, the population of Tiruchengodu has increased at a faster rate than that of
the State of Tamil Nadu or that of the rural area in Salem district in which it is included. The same hypotheses as in the former study can be advanced: first, the variations in the rate of growth are linked to the uncertainties of agricultural production in the area; second, Tiruchengodu was able to attract the flow of migrants from the area - from the Thirties, many members of peasant castes came from the villages to the town. During this period, it seems that the residential area in the town was moved to the north of the Pavadi streets and also slightly to the east. The industrial area was extended along the roads to the north.

As in Tiruvannamalai, the increase of population was extremely important in Tiruchengodu during the last two decades. The number of inhabitants was 36990 at the time of the Census of 1971, 53941 during the Census of 1981 and 77200 in 1990 according to the municipal office. The rate of growth is respectively 72.96%, 45.83% and 43.12% for the three decades. There again, this phenomenon is linked with migration. This rate is particularly impressive for the period 1961-1971. In these years, it is probably due to the rapid growth of the agricultural economy. The enrichment of the area would have developed the activities in the town, which is a rural market and a service center for the villages. A large part of these activities seems to have been undertaken by members of peasant families, who came to the town with some capital to invest. During the last decade, the growth was probably sustained by industrial development with a lot of people coming to the town to work on the looms or in the mills which have multiplied. At the end of these three decades, the built area has extended a lot, especially along the roads. It is this present situation of land use at Tiruchengodu that we will now describe.

LAND USE IN THE TOWN: PRESENT SITUATION.


As we can see in the following table, of the 2198 ha. of the planning area, only 1/4 (515 ha.) have been constructed. Map 1 shows the built area located in the middle of a vast agricultural land, extending, like a giant starfish, from the historical centre along the eight roads which leave the town in all directions. While going to Tiruchengodu, if we climb the hill to Ardhanarisvara temple, we have a clear picture of
MAP 1
EXISTING LAND USE 1985
TIRUCHENGODU LOCAL PLANNING AREA

RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL
INDUSTRIAL
EDUCATION
PUBLIC
AGRICULTURE

(MASTER PLAN - TIRUCHENGODU MUNICIPALITY 1985)
the area. In the distance, we see villages surrounded by trees, green spots on red dry land. All around the built area, we find the agricultural land, dry, rocky, rarely cultivated. In the built area, the differences between industrial areas along the roads with new residential colonies located at the periphery, and the historical centre, are striking, especially since the old houses continue to have tiled roofing while the new ones are narrow with high concrete terraces. This differentiation in the land use is precisely measured in the following table. Areas having a residential function occupy 3/4 of the 515 ha. that are built in the planning area. Land having an industrial function uses nearly 15% (76 ha.). Public, semi-public and educational account for 8%. Land having a commercial function uses less than 3% (15 ha.).

**BUILT AREA**

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<th>in ha</th>
<th>% built area</th>
<th>% total area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>74.37</td>
<td>17.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>14.76</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public and Semi Public</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>23.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**UNBUILT AREA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>in ha</th>
<th>% total area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wet agriculture</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry agriculture</td>
<td>1653</td>
<td>75.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land under water</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL UNBUILT AREA</td>
<td>1683</td>
<td>76.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL PLANNING AREA</td>
<td>2198</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visiting the town and going around interviewing people from one place to another, we notice more accurately the spatial differentiations of the urban area. Shops and business offices are concentrated in the very heart of the town, on the four Car Streets around the temple and some connecting streets. Surrounding the centre, there are some residential streets with old houses. Then there are the main roads leading outside the town. Along each of these roads, there is a certain specialisation of the activities. These differences of activities in the urban space do not seem to be linked with social disparities. While the organisation of the society between caste groups creates some obvious divisions in the urban space, the economic differentiation between the different parts of the town is not very clear.
The centre: the commercial and residential area.

As we can notice, the centre of Tiruchengodu can be divided into two parts.

The first one is constituted by the bazar, a perimeter defined by the four streets around the temple: the North Car Street, the East Car Street, the South Car Street and the West Car Street. Along these four streets, almost all the houses have at least one shop open on the ground floor. There are also many shops inside the perimeter made by these four streets, in the midst of which are the temple and a little square with several street vendors. This part of Tiruchengodu reflects by its architecture the historical development of the town which has already been briefly described in the first part of this paper. Many of the old houses which remain unchanged to this day were built according to the typical Tamilian plan. They correspond to the houses studied by the French architect J.Gaucher at Bhavani, a town situated 20 kilometres away from Tiruchengodu. They are generally built on a very long plot with a narrow front opening onto the street and with numerous courtyards. Today, they are very often divided between different families: the occupational pattern of the houses reflects the densification of the population in the town. Walking in the streets, one can observe the changes which took place during this century. The changes in the first half of our century are indicated by the large and beautiful houses built at that time by members of the merchant castes who had made a quick fortune during that period. These houses reflect today the economic hardships faced by these families during the past few decades. They are no longer properly maintained and have been divided into many shops on the ground floor and small offices or flats upstairs. The changes that took place in the years following Independence are also clearly evident in the architecture of the bazar. In the last twenty years, many of the houses have been rebuilt. They are concrete buildings, with two or three storeys and a terrace on the roof. As they are found on the same plot as the previous house, these new buildings look extremely high and narrow. One shop is generally open to the street. Sometimes only the upstairs floors are residential. But very often they are also occupied by several business offices or, in the case of the largest ones, by shops. In the last ten years, the rapid growth of the town has witnessed the construction of large houses in the bazar. These houses represent important investments and are built for commercial purposes. With their two or three floors rented by shopkeepers or businessmen, they are the centres of modern activities in the town. Businesses such as travel agencies, television stores, videoshops, or optical shops have sprung up here. These buildings are mainly located in North Car Street and West Car Street. Few changes have occurred recently in South Car
Street and to the south of East Car Street, where the houses very often look old and the shops are generally smaller than in the other streets.

The present residential area in the centre of the town is located in the streets surrounding the bazar. It extends to the north, the east and the south of the four Car Streets. There, lots of old houses remain unchanged and many small streets have maintained their traditional look. Some areas are still occupied by a high percentage of people belonging to one caste. As we have already mentioned, it is particularly so in the case of Pavadi streets, situated to the east of the bazar where many of the Kaikkolars are still residing. But it also holds good in the case of the Agraharam or streets to the south of the temple where the Brahmins live, as well as in the case of the south-eastern part of the bazar, which is occupied by lower caste people, and which has, for this reason, a bad reputation among the merchants living in the centre.

The three northern roads: the main industrial area of the town.

- The road to Sankari. This road leaves the bus stand, established in 1972 at the north-eastern corner of the bazar. It was on this road that the first spinning mill in Tiruchengodu was set up in 1935, about two kilometres away from the centre. In between this factory, which is still working, and the bus stand established in 1972, a little beyond the kulam and the Higher Secondary School, we find several workshops for lorry-body-building, rig assembling and repairing units and allied activities. These two kinds of activities are mainly located in this area. For more than one kilometre, we find workshops on both sides of the road. Each of them constitutes a plot within stone walls, with a shed in it, made of bricks and metal. These workshops have played quite an important role in the recent development of the town. We still have to study this aspect of the local economy. By interviewing some people in the town, we came to know that many of these workshops are owned by persons belonging to the Asari community, craftsmen involved in the building of bullock carts, and that Tiruchengodu is now an important place in Tamil Nadu for operating rig units.

- The road to Kolikalnattan. This is the place where the sizing and weaving activities were located when the development of this industry started in the town. This industrial area has in fact expanded between the centre and the weavers' colony which was built by the Handloom Cooperative Society in the 1930s to help the local weavers. As Brigitte Silberstein has already explained, the creation of this colony has paradoxically played an important role in the development of
powerlooms. Up to now, this area has been well maintained, with its small white houses built along orthogonal streets. Weavers are still living and working there. But powerlooms today are mushrooming everywhere. Very few people in the colony have remained handloom weavers.

- The road to Salem. A lot of traffic passes along this road. It is perhaps one of the busiest in town. This cannot be explained only by the importance of Salem and Coimbatore for the area. The traffic is also due to the several activities located on this road. It is in fact the oldest industrial area of the town, which has developed from the Forties onwards. The biggest rice mills and oil mills are located along this road. Today, this industrial area has extended to quite a large degree, the factories lining both sides of the road for more than a kilometre. On this road, there is also an agency of Kirloskar for rig units, which indicates that Tiruchengodu is located on the maps of the large Indian companies.

The two eastern roads: a new industrial area for small textile units.

- The road to Kanakkapat. Along this road, there are no large industrial units and the houses built are scattered on the dry land. But this is an area where many weaving units have been recently established. They are made up of powerlooms numbering four, six, eight, and sometimes even more, gathered inside one building. These small units are mixed with the houses located to the right or to the left of the road, sometimes even at some distance away from it. In spite of this dispersion, several units can belong to one owner only or at least to one single family. Such was the case in one of the places which we visited for our survey and where many units were concentrated. One single family was owning or at least controlling the majority of the units. And they have just started a sizing mill, which seems to be the first along this road.

- The road to Namakkal. This road which carries a lot of traffic is neither industrially developed nor residential. One comes across some small weaving units and houses, but these are scattered. In contrast to the earlier road, it is not sure whether this area has been affected by the process of development.

The two southern roads: public services and residential.

- The road to Vellur. This road is an exceedingly busy one. At the end of the bazar and at the beginning of this road, many of the public
offices of Tiruchengodu are located. Here are found the buildings of the Marketing Cooperative Society and the offices of the municipality, of the union panchayat and that of the tahsildar. A few hundred metres behind these public buildings are residential houses set close to each other, on either side of the road. This is probably the main residential area built since the time of Independence. Some of the houses are quite big with beautiful gardens, and are owned by the rich. But this is not the case of the majority of the houses, of which many are quite small. This area is in fact occupied by people of various income groups. The newcomers settle very often in new colonies with small houses built on regular plots. This indicates that land speculation is taking place and that the area will continue to densify in the coming years.

- The road to Paramathi. At the beginning, this road is the same as the Velur road. It starts only after a fork, about two kilometres after leaving the bazar. The houses are mainly built on the left side of the road. But this place cannot be considered as an important residential area. Some powerloom units are located there on the two sides of the road. Some kilometres after the fork, outside the limits of the urban area, an industrial estate has been established by the TISCO. A few factories are settled there. One is a jute factory belonging to a Bengali businessman. Another one is a small unit producing mango juice.

The two western roads: a services and residential area.

- Erode road: On this road is located the weekly market fair. It consists of an exceedingly large plot surrounded by walls in which some sheds have been erected for the merchants. It assumes importance at the time of the fairs. During our fieldwork there took place here a skin wholesale market every Tuesday. We were told that this market was one of the biggest in Tamil Nadu. Merchants came from far away to buy hides in Tiruchengodu. In front of the market place, there are many small shops which provide services to the merchants, truck drivers and workers. Just behind the market is the vegetable market with lots of colour and animation. From there begins a very large residential area which extends from either side of the road. There are new housing colonies which seem to be occupied by people from middle income groups. We have not made any special enquiries in this area, but it is quite possible that there are social disparities between the colonies. Many of them comprise modest houses and seem to be occupied by lower middle class people. But some of them are occupied by wealthy families with the same level of income as the engineers employed in big factories or the highest civil servants in the town. Furthermore, away from the planning area, about 7 or 8 kilometres
from the centre of the town, we come across the two new spinning mills built in the Eighties and several plots of land on which several other spinning mills have been planned. This appears to be certainly the place for the development of a new industrial area outside the town-limits and, most probably also, out of its area of taxation.

- The road to Kumarapalayam and Bhavani. The land use is very mixed along this street. It begins as a tiny street along the northern walls of the mandi. People driving to Kumarapalayam very often take the Erode road, and then only, one or two kilometres away from the town, they turn north to come to the good road. In fact, the road widens after the market and passes through several colonies. Some weavers are living there, which probably explains the presence of the small units of power looms that can be seen from the road. The newly built spinning mills have been set up on this road, but they are located far away, outside the urban limits. There is also an Institute of Technology established by the Pradhan of the Union Panchayat.

The land use and the architecture in Tiruchengodu strongly reflect the development process experienced by this town in the recent years. At the moment, spatial changes continue to take place at a rapid pace. Many issues arising from this situation can be pointed out now.

MAIN ISSUES ABOUT SPATIAL CHANGES.

Several important issues have to be raised after this brief analysis of the urban space of Tiruchengodu. Related to the social or economic uses of the space, these issues are an interesting means of study of the social system of the locality as a whole. They concern local political power as well as communal relationships or economic development, which constitute some of the many topics on which we intend to work during our next visit to the town.

The first issue concerns the local political power. It can be best expressed by the following two questions: Who are those who control the development of the town? What role does the municipality play in it? It is not only the work of the State administration services or of the municipality offices that we shall take into consideration, but also the relationships existing between these public offices and the different social groups in the town. The development of the economic activities appears to be tightly controlled by the local population and we know from the two earlier talks the important role played by the Mudaliar and
the Vellalar communities in it. In this context, it is interesting to note that the municipal chairman is a Mudaliar while the president of the Union Panchayat is a Vellalar, and that the local branch of the Rotary Club is controlled by the Mudaliars while the local branch of the Lions Club has been recently set up by some members of the Vellalar community. It is also important to know that the municipality has some projects lined up for the development of the town. There was the implementation of a Master Plan which was approved by the administration in 1985. Map 2 indicates the proposed land use for the extension of the urban activities. It appears clearly that the main tendencies of the present development have been taken into account in planning the future. The industrial areas are authorised to extend to the north, in between the already existing ones. The south of the urban area is kept for residential purposes. New commercial areas are planned to be established in some places. It is also proposed to extend the bus stand and to improve some public utilities. The eviction of small merchants for enlarging the bus-stand and the establishment of textile units in the new industrial area, all indicate that some of the projects are being carried out.

But we have also heard how important it was for the wealthy families of the town to maintain a good rapport with the administrative services and the municipality offices. We have been told about the links which exist today between the members of the municipality and some families who have set up textile units in the new industrial area. On the other hand, we notice the rapid increase of land values in some parts of the plan area. According to some of the people interviewed, the land value has risen tenfold within the span of the last 20 years. Our figures have to be confirmed of course, but we can safely deduce that the land value today is 1000 Rs by square-feet near the bus stand, 800 Rs near the main roads and 25 Rs on the outskirts of the town, figures which are far bigger that those provided by the Master Plan in 1985. We can imagine the importance of landed property in the present fortunes of some families as well as in their capability to invest in industry. Studying the links between social groups and public offices thus appears necessary for the understanding of the entire development process of the town.

The second issue concerns the changes which occurred in the spatial organisation of the bazar. The transformation of the bazar seems so indicative of the whole evolution of Tiruchengodu that we have made a survey of the shops of the four car streets and of the streets leading to the temple. A rapid analysis of the information gathered from various shops provides some indications regarding the stiff competition for the
business location, which corresponds in fact to a competition for the control of business activities. We have for example noticed that many portions of the four Car Streets are owned by Vellalars who, as we were told, were born in the villages and are newcomers to the town. But near the temple, in the very heart of the bazar, we have found a large area owned by one of the wealthiest Mudaliar families. As we have come across many Mudaliars established in businesses all over the centre, it seems worthwhile to study the ways in which the traditional complementary and competitive relationships between Mudaliars and Vellalars develop in the urban context.

This competition provides some clues regarding the cause and effect of the important changes which are taking place in the bazar. The changes started mainly during the 1960's when the bus stand was set up at the corner of the North Car Street and of the West Car Street. Prior to this, the bazar was organized according to specialised business activities as is customary in traditional towns. At the moment every shopkeeper wants to settle down in the North Car Street, and this area has lost its specialisation in the process. The wholesale grain merchants seem to have disappeared. We know from our enquiries that only very few of them remain today. At the same time, the Chetties no longer dominate the bazar. Although they still own some houses and shops today, new types of shops have come up that are owned by people who are not members of the trading castes. In the businesses which demand heavy investments, the owners are very often Mudaliars or Vellalars. In fact, members of these two communities have introduced in the bazar activities related to the evolution of the industrial business in Tiruchengodu: bore well spares, auto spares and also private finance corporations. They also commercialise new items of consumption such as TV, electronic gadgets, etc. They seem to be the more dynamic agents of the processes of change that are sweeping this area of the town. Studying spatial change in Tiruchengodu consequently appears to be an interesting method for analysing the social processes at work in the town.

The third issue concerns the dynamic Mudaliar community again. But, unlike the two other issues, it is not related to change. On the contrary, it is the permanence of the Mudaliar area inside the town which raises a question here.

As we have already explained, with the exception of the temple area, the part of the town traditionally occupied by Mudaliars is the one which has not experienced many changes in spite of the development of the town. Known as Pavadi streets and situated to the north-east of the
bazar, this area is still considered as a settlement area for the weavers. While many of them have shifted long back to the weavers' colony and the wealthy members of the community have constructed their own bungalows in the new residential areas at the periphery of the town, Pavadi streets seem to have remained in the hands of the Mudaliars. The old style houses have been maintained and the aspect of the whole area has probably remained unchanged since the turn of this century. The entire Mudaliar community, those who stay there as well as those who have moved out, shows a kind of symbolical identification with Pavadi streets. For the Mudaliars, Pavadi streets constitute a symbolic central place in Tiruchengodu as this town is by itself a central place for the area. The town is for the Mudaliar community the Panchayat head-quarters of seven localities. Every year, they meet in Panchayat at the time of the festival in the hill temple.

Explaining the permanence in Pavadi streets appears then to be the key issue for an understanding of the processes by which a community can maintain its identity in spite of being caught up in the vortex of important changes.

DISCUSSIONS

Prof. K.L. SHARMA

The setting in which the given town finds itself has to be taken into consideration. I am not referring to this town, Guntur, but particularly to a town in Northern India, Badoli, which is a carpet manufacturing town. There is published literature on that town. The social structure of the region is reflected in the structure of the carpet industry. The workers are mainly Muslims, illiterate Muslim men, women and also children. Muslims are not really part of the caste structure as such, but they are generally considered equivalent to a certain caste(s) in the local context. People from the castes which are slightly higher in the local hierarchy, either act as intermediaries, assign the work to the workers, or work on some kind of commission basis. The owners of these small scale carpet industries in the region belong to the upper castes. One can also see the country-town nexus in operation here, as most of the workers are from the surrounding villages. The carpet industry can be taken as a mirror of the social structure of the area. Castes are just there, and they occupy differential positions within the given economic structure.

The other point which we should take into account is that over a period of time changes in the economic structure bring about changes in the socio-cultural milieu of the area. This shows the flexibility of the socio-cultural structure. These two observations should help us to redefine what we call the urban situation today. A kind of unintended mix has evolved over a period of time between the traditional continuity, the rigidity, and also the flexibility, or the free areas, some of which are caste free and some really 'new'. One has to analyse this in relation to the macro-structural transformation of Indian society, particularly after Independence.
Dr. N. TYABJI

One or two points came out of the presentation. Firstly, when the case studies of individual strategies were being discussed, I noticed certain commonalities and certain differences. I was particularly interested in the case of the entrepreneur who bought 50 acres or 100 acres of land and used considerably less than the whole amount to put up a spinning mill. In the other case that you mentioned, the entrepreneur seems to have used most of the land for a mill. In the first case, quite a lot seemed to be left. The question is whether this was for land speculation.

If it was, it brings me to the second point. You have talked about the fact that these entrepreneurs held some kind of fairly prominent political position within the Congress. What usually happens is that a position within the Congress organization may help as far as certain facilities are concerned. But one may want representation of different kinds. For instance, does the entrepreneur have friends and relations within the structure of the Municipal Committee or within the Collectorate? Does he get some inkling that some developments are going to take place in the future, because one of his kinsmen is in the administration? Because, prima facie, these kinds of people are unlikely to lock up money in such a large amount of land and just leave it vacant for a considerable period of time.

Thus, quite apart from positions within formal political organizations, do they have any strategy of getting their kinsfolk well entrenched in the administrative structure? I mention this because one striking feature of Madras is that extremely large amounts of urban property are owned by Muslim families, and there is an extraordinary concentration of Muslims, particularly in the Revenue Department of the Municipal Corporation. It is difficult to believe it is just by accident. Obviously, it is a means by which those households who own urban property have done something to ensure that they have somebody in the Revenue Department to tell them in good time of any policy, if not head off that policy that might be inimical to their interests. I think that entrepreneurship goes along with long term steps which ensure long term interests through this kind of relationship.

My third point is about electricity connections. Electricity supply being extremely erratic in towns of this category, did you notice whether certain parts of the town are more highly favoured? For instance near Raj Nivas there are relatively fewer power cuts than in the other parts of the city. I would be interested to know whether in fact through contacts in the Electricity Board or the local unit, they can ensure that there is uninterrupted or relatively less interrupted power supply. This would be a thing which, under our conditions, is extremely important.

Dr. P. CADENE

It seems that it is so in Tiruchengodu. The owners of the powerlooms or sizing looms say that the Municipality manages to give them power as far as they can, and they seem quite satisfied with the Municipality on this account.

I wanted to say that this Municipality is extremely well run. We do not yet know exactly how it is managed - research will have to be done on this - but clearly there is a management. When you are in the town and when you speak with the people in the administrative bodies, it becomes obvious that there is a plan. For instance, there is a master plan for the management of the urban area, which, as far as we know, was made 3 years ago. The people who benefit are those who have connections with the members of the Municipality and other such people. Some parts of the town get a better power supply due to particular regulations of the Electricity Board. This is clear from the study we have done.
Prof. K.L. SHARMA

In a classical work long ago, a famous American anthropologist counted the relationships of a Western nuclear family. There were 8 primary relationships in the family (husband, wife and unmarried children), 33 secondary relationships, and about 253 tertiary and other relationships. So it should not be difficult to have many more relatives in a Municipal Corporation office in the Indian context. There could be innumerable relationships in our kind of society. Besides the planning, the management, the policies, this also could be a factor to reckon with. Kinship plays a very important role in entrepreneurial activity, not only in this part of the country, but all over the country.

Prof. A. KUNDU

Basically, the question that has been raised is related to the differential access of different sections of the town population to the services provided through the Municipalities, that are inputs in industrialisation, and electricity is one of them. But the inputs that are necessary for setting up an industry are mostly beyond the power of the Municipality, and even electricity in the case of most of the towns is beyond the scope of the Municipalities. The users pay a certain amount of money, and the State manages the supply. I am not sure to what extent in Tamil Nadu the Municipalities are responsible for supplying and managing electricity. I know that in the towns of Madhya Pradesh, power cuts are decided at the State level, and the Municipalities have hardly anything to do with it. I am not quite sure that the access to municipal decision-making through relatives could be a decisive factor setting up industries in the towns of Tamil Nadu.

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

This question of the use of revenue laws or municipal regulations to advance private activities is really that of the private use of public space. Is there any evidence at all of the other aspect, i.e. of the publicization of private concerns through an interest taken by the rich people in the planning of their town? One of the most depressing aspects of business magnates’ behaviour in most parts of India, with the exception of the Parsis’ behaviour in the 19th century in Bombay, followed to some extent by some of the Gujarati merchants in Bombay, and Gujarati merchants in Ahmedabad and in most big cities, is the total lack of concern of the rich people for the public space. That is part of the political culture of our business community. The normative concepts have to come in when people talk about prospering through dharma. Do they talk about prospering through public dharma? Or is it just a big blank? Is it just something forced upon them by PG bodies like Amitabh Kundu and his urban planning friends? Have you come across any voicing of that concern, and are you going to ask questions about that kind of concern?

Dr. J. POUCHEPADASS

Regarding this distinction between public and private, a lot has been written of course as far as the transition between medieval and modern times in the West is concerned. The terms of the question may be a bit different in the case of India. People like Habermas who have been writing on this question have shown that in Western countries this distinction became stronger from the 18th century onwards, when the modern state came into being in its present form. Now one can think of cases where the emergence of state institutions, being somewhat forced upon the local society by outside pressure or influences, doesn’t go along with the creation of a real public space or public domain, and where as soon as these institutions come up, they are so to say “re-privatised”, and become the domain of activities and
involvements of a private type. The so-called modern state, in this case, is in fact confined in a mere role of arbitration between particular interests, lobbies and pressure groups. The role of family connections in the working of a Municipality is a case in point. This might explain to a certain extent why those public institutions, while serving private purposes, seem to lack interest in such public concerns as, for example, the aesthetics of a town or city. Obviously, a number of other factors are involved, but this one may be worth considering in cases like the one we have just been talking about.
CONCLUDING SESSION

Prof. A. KUNDU

Should we request Prof. Marie-Louise Reiniche and Prof. Jacques Pouchepadass to specify a little more about the expectations from the discussion in this concluding session?

Dr. J. POUCHEPADASS

This is really for Marie-Louise, Philippe and Brigitte to answer. Let me simply state once again that the purpose of this meeting, which has been convened in the initial stage of the Tiruchengodu project, was to help in the maturing of the project, in the definition of the avenues of research which will represent the second stage of the project. So further suggestions would now be welcome regarding the utilization of the material which has been collected so far, the topics which should be looked into in a more systematic fashion, or the questions which have not yet been raised at all, but which it might be interesting to study. We might also begin to outline in the end a few perspectives of more formal collaboration.

Dr. J. RACINE

When you worked in the past on the Hindu problematics of action in the caste system, you focused on the relationships between action and ritual. Here, as far as trading castes and Tiruchengodu are concerned, the concept of dharma was raised twice during this workshop. I was just wondering at the beginning of the day if we shall have some discussion about the traders as representatives of the Hindu way of life, or of Hindu way of action, in the field of a town which is quickly modernising - whatever modernity could mean - and developing - whatever development could mean as well.

In other words, I wonder what is the share of your thinking about the position of trade and merchants in Indian society as a whole, and more particularly in an urban setting. This leads me to a second question, much more focalized on the town that you have selected, as far as traders are concerned. The justification for selecting a textile town is certainly very acute if we consider the importance of textile activity, traditionally, in Tamilnadu. But as the structure of the textile production and business is going, where do you put the limit between those that you may consider as traders and others?

Selecting a textile town means that you have also to focus on activities which are not just trade, but also production or industry. Is henceforth the rationale of your selection of Tiruchengodu looking for a much wider scope than the focus on trading castes in a Tamil town, which, as I understood it, was the starting point in the preliminary phases of this project, a couple of years ago?

Prof. M.L. REINICHE

This project does not aim at being a mere survey of a town, and the question of trade is relevant in any case, whether the town is merely a commercial centre or whether it is an industrial town. An implicit level of comparison is already given in the general title, "urban configurations", assuming thus that Tiruchengodu is one
possible urban configuration to be qualified among many others, and particularly in
comparison with the Rajasthan town studied by Ph. Cadène. The anthropological
approach has purposely been a little played down today. With Ph. Cadène and B.
Silberstein and their experience as geographers, we have just undertaken a
preliminary fieldwork at Tiruchengodu. That is why greater emphasis has been placed
on development and urban questions in the present session. It must be clear that our
project is not as such a socio-anthropological or geographical project, but a
multidisciplinary one, in which the discipline represented by each participant will be
given full scope to develop its proper questionings and methodologies.

Prof. SINGARAVELOU

I am impressed by the way the team headed by Prof. Reiniche has been able
to collect in such a short time period so many things in the field about
Tiruchengodu, and by what has been said since this morning about the theoretical
point of view, and this afternoon about what has been collected in Tiruchengodu. I
have just one or two things to say.

First, we don't question the fact (Prof. Reiniche has clarified that by now) that
Tiruchengodu has been chosen as a town. She had the right to choose, any choice
always is led by a certain number of factors, motivations, and of course the choice
may be criticised, by any means. Any choice may be criticised. The problem is not
there. She knows that she could have chosen maybe another town and it would have
been another configuration, as you rightly told. But one more thing is when you say
(but that's just a subsidiary point, it is not the main point), you look for trading
castes, even for your personal research, do you think that Mudaliars or Gounders are
really representative of the trading castes in Tamilnadu? It is not so, to my
knowledge. The trading castes mainly in Tamilnadu are represented by Chettiars,
may be Komuttis. By the way, other castes may come in afterwards. And the
question I am asking is: in Tiruchengodu, do you think that Mudaliars or Gounders
belong to traditional trading castes?

Secondly in your social anthropological approach, I did not see, except one or
two points raised by interveners during the session, any cultural anthropological
approach. One cannot separate social anthropology and cultural anthropology. One or
two persons raised the points of dharma, and the Hindu way of life; if you are to
tackle that problem, how it came into the scene to explain the development, internal
development of the urban setting? Do you think those two main dominant castes in
Tiruchengodu, Mudaliars and Gounders, are really representative of the true
traditional Hindu way of life? That question may be asked.

And the third thing, somebody has told today, this morning maybe, that
Tiruchengodu is at the crossroads of different ecological conditions, if I thoroughly
understood, at the junction of different ecological conditions. Do you think that it is
exact as an interpretation? And you added, through choosing Tiruchengodu, there is
something to learn. That is correct, I agree with you. But do you have, right now, a
sort of hypothesis about what kind of learning you expect from that choice, different
from Erode, Dharmapuri or any other town?

Last point. You know, we have already talked much about multidisciplinary
approach. You have also raised the point. It is a very tough and difficult business, all
of us know. My point of view is that there is no real multidisciplinary study as
such. There is always a leader of the team. There is a leading approach in a
multidisciplinary study. The leading approach of a multidisciplinary study may be,
anthropology, geography, or economy, and all other approaches may be subsidiary
approaches. That way, the leader of the team gives the main idea of what is the approach, and others are requested to come into the scene to help understand and substantiate this approach.

I'll finish with one point. We are already, with some of my colleagues here, and from other institutions in Tamilnadu, either from Coimbatore or in Madras, engaged in a work on a research project on Coimbatore area. Just one word on that, that is, how a big city, a one million city, is developing, for at least 100 years, a sort of equilibrium, a balanced regional development between city and countryside. How to explain that? A number of factors are involved: ecological, economic, historical, social, cultural factors... Then come into the scene the life histories you are talking about: genealogical stories during different generations; dominant castes and their behaviour.

Finally I really appreciate what, in a short time, as a team, you said and tried to develop in the field.

Prof. A.K. BAGCHI

I have always found methodology a bit dubious. People just do it, and then try to explain why they have done it, what they have done. In this particular case, let me give several statements. One, this town exemplifies the growth outwards from domestic production to export production, something that we economists have said generally succeeds. People do not always recognize that Indian exports are mostly small scale industrial exports. And maybe we can get at the root of the success if we can study places like Tiruchengodu properly. Second, what is the Hindu way of life? It may be that there are castes and so on, and with Prof. Reiniche in charge, I am sure there will lots of reflections about how these people think about their religion, about their practices and so on. But at one level there is total integration socially. Somebody raised the problem of social integration. What is the problem? In New York there is a temple run by very orthodox Hindus where chants are given in a very orthodox manner. They have all moved out from India all over the world. They are totally socially integrated as far as a conventional definition of integration into the Hindu way of life is concerned. And that is why I was talking of different levels of integration, different ways of integration. I have come across Indian merchants in Madagascar who have sent for the last two centuries all their sons to be married in the proper Hindu way in their proper clan networks, and this integration at a social level, with total disjunction at another social level with the other groups and castes, has been going on. So I would be fascinated to see how the same group of people, who on the one hand think of themselves as very orthodox, are doing very unorthodox things, and devising new ways of combining orthodoxy and lack of orthodoxy. I am very greatly interested to see how it comes out.

Prof. K.L. SHARMA

Regarding the approach, this study is both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. I draw a line between the two. Multidisciplinary research means in a way team research. It can be at the same time interdisciplinary. A man belonging to a particular discipline may have an interdisciplinary perspective. This study, as I look at it, is both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. Because research means freedom, it cannot be straitjacketed. You can't think of a study today as we did in the early 50s or early 60s in this country. So I admire this effort, it is absolutely unconventional, scientific, and objective. That is my reading of it, and this is how I have also been doing it in my studies.
Concerning the Hindu way of life, I think we can look at the reality from two points of view. We look at the structural reality from the viewpoint of the cultural perspective, and the other way could be that we look at the culture from the structural point of view. And there is no harm in the structural viewpoint taking into consideration the macro-structural transformation. The culturological perspective has done a lot of harm in ignoring the structural change, the structural transformation, the kind of change that has taken place in this country. I blame all of us. We cannot ignore the structural transformation which has taken place in this country. The agricultural castes are migrating to towns and cities, they are taking up trade in large numbers. Even Untouchables, have taken up all kinds of jobs and activities. The Baniyas and other traditional castes have also taken up non-traditional occupations. One should trace the history of the merchant tradition, but at the same time one should see the deviations, the departures, and this calls for the application of the structural approach.

Dr. T. VASANTHAKUMARAN

I don’t see any contradictions in the ideas put forward by the researchers. Do you think that we already have a theoretical basis from which we can speak in the context of a multidisciplinary research? If it is not possible to have one, can we generate one? We don’t have to generate one in this case at least. Each discipline has got its own concepts. We do have, in geography, the spatial organizational approach, which Cadène tried to explain very well.

Prof. P.K. MUTTAGI

I am looking at the study in a wider context of small town studies in India. Earlier, we concentrated on metropolitan cities - Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Not many studies on small towns were available. Today some literature on small towns is available and a large number of studies are being undertaken on small towns, medium towns and new towns.

It is in this context, I appreciate the studies conducted by these social scientists from France. However, there are some questions which need to be answered. One of the important questions the researchers can address is "what initiates an urban configuration?". Can they be a little more specific about the economic and social developments which contribute to growth of small towns.

The second question is: "Is urban development possible without the drawbacks of urbanization?". "Can we talk in terms of optimum development or desirable development?" We do not really know what optimum urban development is.

The third question is: "When there is socio-economic development, what happens to the local culture?". "When the urban culture is superimposed on the local culture, is there any retention or does the local culture disappear, does it get assimilated, does it get integrated?"

The fourth question is: "Is there any appropriate way to measure empirically the socio-economic conditions resulting from urban development?" A lot of work has been done on this, but it should be possible to identify more specific indicators. I am impressed by what Dr. Cadène has said about integration. In this connection, one can also try and attempt to explain the pattern of development in terms of whether it supports the convergence theory or diversion or whether there is any approach which combines both the conversion theory and the diversion theory, and
we can also explain the findings in terms of trickling down effect and polarisation. Dr. Cadene can take this question to its logical end. Every city in India contains developed regions, developing regions and underdeveloped regions. It is important to know what has happened to the underdeveloped regions as a result of urbanization. By underdeveloped regions in urban sector, I mean slums and shanty towns.

Dr. P. CADENE

Our aim is not only to study the processes of urbanisation in contemporary India through the example of Tiruchengodu. This project is inspired by the living tradition of research of the Centre d'Études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud at Paris, which was created by Louis Dumont and Madeleine Biardeau as a place of discussion between researchers from many disciplines. This study provides us with an opportunity to proceed further, to interact while the fieldwork itself is going on, and not only at the time of theoretical debate.

Dr. B. SILBERSTEIN

While conducting my research in Guntur district, I found myself rather short of theoretical tools well suited to the understanding of the structure of the industrialist family, and of the pattern of the industrial structure.

Prof. M.L. REINICHE

Regarding trading castes, a question has been raised whether we may consider Mudalairs or Gounders as such. Usually, a traditional occupation is ascribed to a caste and to its name: in the above cases, "Mudalair" is a title shared by different groups, but if they are Kaikkolar they are supposed to be weavers, and then artisans. "Gounder" is a title shared by several agrarian castes, but you have to know the caste name before asserting that the Gounders you are talking about are mostly landowners and of high status, or mainly land workers. From the point of view of common sense, agrarian castes have nothing to do with trade. But those among them who hold rights in land, who get agricultural products, have to put their surplus on the market. In Tiruchengodu, there is a trading caste known as Vellala (or Vellan) Chettiyar, which seems thus to assume an agrarian origin. In fact, the real question is: What do we imply when we use the word "caste"? This remains an open question, and so does the question of the influence of the Hindu conceptions at work in the society. Let me just repeat what I explained this morning: it is while studying Tiruvannamalai as a sacred place that I felt the need to take into account the economy, trade and power within the scope of my own sociological perspective.

Without underlaying society, culture and religion, we have basically to begin with a sound economic analysis for this project. As this is a preliminary working session, it was also better to give an account of important and basic facts which are explicitly open to question. Our project has to be a shared experiment in which every scholar brings his own ideas and sensibility. I am grateful to all of you for your critical and fruitful comments.

Prof. A. KUNDU

The discussion has been very useful from the point of view of the project. I personally think that if you build up some kind of a broad perspective with the secondary data that are available (with the limitations they have) it would give you some base to cross-check your primary data. Sometimes you might reject the secondary data. Nevertheless, the data collected through household schedule,
individual slips etc., by the Population Census give you some information about the workforce structure. Similarly, if you find the distribution of the registered units from the municipal offices, and then compare with the overall assessments that you are getting on the basis of your field survey, that might be quite useful. District Statistical Officers can provide you with some information about the distribution and the growth of the industries.

The second minor methodological point I wanted to raise is regarding the access to the decision-making with regard to the growth of the textile industry which Nasir Tyabji was mentioning. One can find out what are the local level institutions, what are the State level institutions and what is the differential access of the different communities to these decision-making bodies and their impact on pattern of industrialisation.

Dr. J. POUCHEPADASS

Before concluding this session, I would just like to add a very few words on representativeness and the role of the case study in the social sciences, things which we all very well know, but which maybe one should recall once again.

What does it mean to say that a town, or a social group, is "representative" of something? A group or a town, strictly speaking, is only representative of itself, because, as all human objects, it is of baffling complexity, and cannot be satisfactorily reduced to a limited number of characteristics. So what does it mean to say that it is representative in one way or another? It means that we are selecting some of the features of this object and ignoring all the others, and that we are implying that these features, being similar to the features which we can observe in other objects of the same kind, are more important than the differences which we ignore. Here, as is always the case in the social sciences, the object of study is not given, it is constructed (though the researchers themselves do not always realize that!). It is the perspective of the social scientist which gives shape to the object, and not the reverse. So then, Gounders and Mudaliars may not be representative from the point of view of the common sense definition of the trading castes, but they become relevant in the perspective of a study of the relationship between landed wealth and trade networks on the one hand, and urban configurations and urban growth on the other, a study to which Tiruchengodu is especially suited for a number of other reasons.

This leads me to the question of the case study. The object of this programme is not to compile a (seemingly) purely empirical Tiruchengodu Town Gazetteer. A case study does not lead anywhere unless its author has certain hypotheses in mind, and uses the study to test the explanatory value of these hypotheses, to enrich them with new parameters, to give them greater sophistication, etc. So that the particular location of a case study is valid as long as the field of study selected is relevant to the questions that are posed, and I think that this is the only relationship which is intellectually important.

It only remains for me to thank all our friends and colleagues who, in many cases, have come from distant places to attend this workshop. The Tiruchengodu Project being still in the preliminary stage, they knew that they would not have much to learn from this day's work, but that they would have much knowledge to give to the researchers who work in it, and for this we are particularly grateful. Moreover, not only have they brought a lot of knowledge and insights to us, but their very presence has been an enormous encouragement for us all, for this Department, and for this project particularly, to go on with the study with a new
series of questions and problems, which will serve as a basis for the second round of enquiries. We will keep in touch and, I hope, will be able to meet again at a later stage, in order to keep you all informed of what has come out of the study, and to receive from you, may be, new insights and new questions. Thank you.
Configurations urbaines et réseaux marchands en Inde du Sud

Ce numéro rassemble les communications prononcées lors d'une rencontre franco-indienne qui s'est tenue à Pondichéry le 10 août 1990, dans la phase initiale du programme "Configurations urbaines et réseaux marchands en Inde du Sud" de l'Institut Français.

L'objet de ce programme est l'étude pluridisciplinaire de la spécificité du fait urbain en Inde, à partir du cas de la petite ville de Tiruchengodu, un des centres de tissage du coton de l'aire de Salem-Coimbatore au Tamil Nadu. L'étude vise à démontrer comment :

- la dynamique industrielle et commerciale (filière du coton, réseaux d'affaires, rapports villes-campagnes, etc.), les politiques gouvernementales et la gestion urbaine concourent aux processus du développement de la ville ;
- le fait urbain se construit dans ses rapports à l'histoire et à l'environnement, dans la dynamique des mouvements de population et dans celle du recroisement des réseaux de toute nature.

Dans les six communications ici présentées, les chercheurs qui ont lancé le programme exposent la problématique de leurs travaux antérieurs et leur pertinence pour le projet commun, puis focalisent sur quelques aspects spectaculaires du développement socio-économique de Tiruchengodu tel que le révèlent l'analyse des histoires de vie des nouveaux agents économiques, l'étude de la filière du coton et de son évolution en relation aux réseaux nationaux et internationaux, et enfin l'examen de la redéfinition contemporaine de l'espace urbain.

Mots-clés : Inde, Tamil Nadu, Industrie textile, Commerce, Urbanisation, Sociologie urbaine

Urban configurations and merchant networks in South India: a workshop
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