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In what was both a theoretical and a methodological note, the French sociologist and indologist, Louis Dumont made the following suggestion:

'The time has perhaps come when the mirror which anthropologists direct at other societies should be turned back by them on ourselves, when we should try and formulate our own institutions in comparative language, i.e. in a language modified by what we have learnt of different societies, however incomplete it still is.' (Dumont:77).

Along this line of thinking, we might develop further the comment by the Indian sociologist, G.S. Ghurye that of all the social systems he has studied in the world, it is the classical English estate system that most resembles the Hindu varna scheme of caste inter-relationships.

Using the varna scheme of Shudra, Vaiysha, Kshatriya and Brahmin, I intend to apply this to an analysis of traditional British society as it is reflected in the currency system and in certain drinking habits as a system of signs (Barthes) tangibly representing attitudes in the formation of their social structure. At the end of the analysis, it will be shown how these systems relate and how the forthcoming D-Day (15 February, 1971) symbolizes recent changes in the traditional social structure.

The system of organizing units of money into a four-tiered system, related in unequal units is unique in the world. The three tiered units of currency is usual because these units are unrelated by any common divider. I propose the following alignment:

Shudra.....	Pence
Vaiysha.....	Shillings
Kshatriya.....	Pounds sterling
Brahmin.....	Guineas

The lowest of the English estates was the peasant farmer and he conducted most of his daily business in pence. The urban proletariat also used this as their primary medium of exchange. There is much historical evidence to show that the food and "luxury items" (i.e. tobacco and alcoholic beverages) purchased in previous times by this lowest rung of the social ladder in both India and Britain was calculated in pence since the next unit up, the shilling, was a large sum of money at one time. The British Shudra rarely saw shillings.

The Vaiysha or merchant class are often referred to by the Francophile (reluctantly) British as "those of the town" by a French term - the Bourgeoisie. These traders dealt in larger amounts and required larger units for their commerce.

This resulted in the shilling which was calculated, after the Conquest, to consist of twelve Shudra units. To this day, items appropriate to this merchant class, such as books, are still quoted in shillings.

The Indian Kshatriya varna of warriors and rulers finds its equivalent in the urban "civil servant" of Britain. This group, well-paid and dealing with the affairs of government, required a larger unit of currency with which to conduct their affairs and this resulted in the construction of a currency tier equal to twenty Vaiysha units.

These differential amounts may be explained as signs of separation. The threat of Shudra to Vaiysha was low and so the amount between them slight, while Vaiysha ambitions towards the Kshatriya were greater and so a greater difference was required. It is still not uncommon for British Vaiysha to attempt to boost their social prestige by attempting to find Kshatriyas in their ancestry.

The hereditary and spiritual heads of British society, the aristocracy, are Brahmin and would have liked to have put as much differentiation between themselves and the disliked but necessary Kshatriya. But, the Kshatriya, as military figures and powerful civil servants were too influential. All that was possible was to construct a fourth tier in the seventeenth century called the Guinea, only being equal to one Kshatriya and one Vaiysha unit. However, as the Empire grew and Kshatriya power increased, the Guinea was driven out as a tangible unit of currency and was last minted in 1813. The Kshatriya had triumphed in the area of their greatest competence and power - the formal running of civil government. But, in areas of ritual, the Brahmin were still dominant and until this day have maintained the usage of the Guinea when referring to the prices of prestige articles such as the price of paintings, prestige holidays, or other articles of quality ritually sanctioned by the Brahmin.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the Kshatriya have become more and more important. The national Panchayat, which formally was rigidly divided into Brahmin (Lords) and Kshatriya (Commons) consultative function is now to all intents and purposes, a single practical body, with the Brahmins being reduced to merely ritual functions.

With the coming of the change in the monetary system to a system of decimals, the last ubiquitous ritual power of the Brahmins is being threatened. The Kshatriya unit, the Pound sterling, is the basis of the new system. The old symbol of Vaiysha subservience, the shilling, is to disappear altogether and reflects their rising importance. The new penny, symbol of the Shudra, is to be revalued by two hundred and forty percent to make it a viable separation between Kshatriya and the Shudra as it never was before. The Guinea, with its dependence for symmetry upon both the shilling and the pound, will be made to look ridiculous, as recent publications on decimalization suggest.

A significant point here is that there were, from the Vaiysha, suggestions that it would be more practical for business affairs to base the new currency on the "new pound", or "old" ten shillings. The battle for symbolic dominance was brief but even though a vestige of the Vaiysha (the sixpence) will remain for a short, unspecified time, the Kshatriya victory was complete. It may be remembered that in other sterling area countries of the Commonwealth, where the Vaiysha tend to dominate, their unit of currency has been retained in the form of a "dollar" - that is, the shilling base, but without the name.

Now, we may shift to another important locus of attention in British society - the pub. Endless activities circulate around it, and the British will make any excuse to enter it and take refreshment. There may be something to the sharp division between Public and Saloon when applied to the scheme above, but it is the various different drinks served in these two sections which carry more luggage as a system of signs.

This most characteristic of institutions, where behaviour is ritually prescribed and circumscribed in a variety of ways has its own internal coherence or "boisonlogique". By carefully assigning certain characteristic beverages to the afore-mentioned four groups an obvious analytic paradigm emerges

ShudraBeer (Scotch)
VaiyshaCyder (Wine)
KshatriyaScotch (Beer)
BrahminWine (Cyder)

Processed	Beer(WC)	Cyder	Wine	Formented
Culture	Scotch	K	B(SE)	Nature

The first chart names various classes in British society and postulates the drinks characteristic and alternative (in parenthesis) for them. The second diagram interprets their inter-relationships or, "les structures élémentaires de la parenthèse."

The Shudra working class identifies itself with the nation's beer, but also latently enjoys the prestige of Scotch. The Viaysha merchants (especially of the characteristic south-western English) take cyder as their daily drink, but aspire to "the better things in life," with wine as its symbol. The Kshatriya civil servant is a firm scotch drinker, but will often take a pint of beer at his local. Lastly the Brahmin aristocrat has wine as his symbol, but for a sort of rustic sensibility will often drink draught or even bottled cyder.

The second diagram shows the inter-relationships (ornatures and axes) of the scheme in the first diagram. Wine and scotch are on the "strong and expensive" axis (SE axis), and reach their apogee in the Brahmin, whereas cyder and beer are on the "weak and cheap" axis (WC axis). The oppositions of scotch to wine and beer to wine are based upon both societal and digestive criteria. Cyder and wine enjoy the affinity, on the other hand, of being at once fruit products and also the result of simple fermentation, while beer and scotch are processed. This derives an "F" axis (Fermented) and a "P" (Processed) axis, respectively.

Further, it must be pointed out that there is a congruence in an "R" (for Regional) axis between cyder and scotch, whereas beer and wine are made in many places. A fuller statement, in more rigorous fashion of these relationships, is as follows:

<u>F axis</u>	<u>SE Axis</u>	
C = W	S // W	⇒ C :: W : B :: S (F + F axis)
	B // W	
<u>P Axis</u>	<u>WC Axis</u>	C :: S : B :: W (B + F axis)
<u>B = S</u>	C // B	

It is clear that the Shudra have an affinity for the Kshatriya and they swap beverages to symbolize this. They may also exchange women hypergenerously, while the Vaiysha look to the Brahmins in a similar manner. This may be symbolized as:

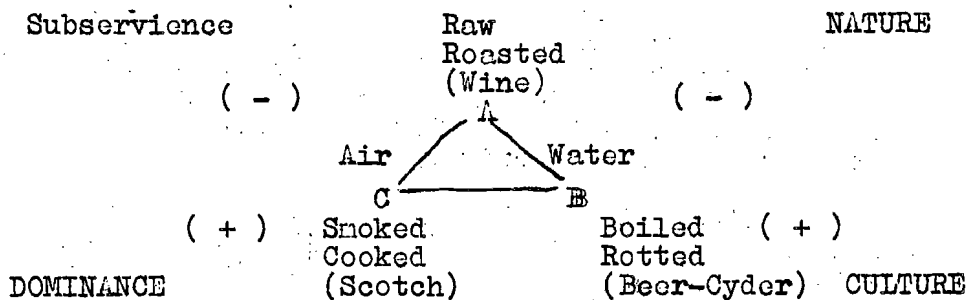
w/b : S/k ⇒ s : k : v :: k exchange

In terms of class origin, this is predictable and is what I would term the principle of alternative opposition. There is in the sociological literature (Cohen, Simmel) much to show that enmity exists between closely competing groups in a society and though traditionally the estate system in Britain may have functioned as a system of inter-relationships, conflict may have become greater in recent years due to influences from the West (principally the United States). While this enmity may be less noticeable in the urban British centres, where the system ceased to exist as a viable unit some years ago, it shows appallingly in village Britain. Therefore, to understand the operation of British social structure, it is to village Britain we must turn rather than the highly Westernized urban centres.

Our second figure can also tell us about attitudinal and stereotypic features of the social structure. As we saw, there is a WC axis centering on the Shudra. WC jokes, as most know, are of "low" character and are considered "dirty", which is precisely the popular stereotype of the Shudra. This lies in opposition to the SE axis of strength culminating in the Brahmins - the strongest group in the society. The R axis reflects the regionality of the groups from their characteristic drinks - the most regional products (scotch and cyder) are representative of Vaiysha and Kshatriya who, oppositionally, are the most mobile group in Britain, whereas the least regional products on the R axis (Wine and beer) are characteristic of Shudra and Brahmin groups most tied to the land in a particular region. The F axis, not yet mentioned, represented the relationship of the drinks to food and centres on the Vaiysha who, as the society's merchants, are most tied to this function as suppliers of sustenance to the social order.

I am, of course, not the first to show congruences between gastronomic preferences and social structure. (see Levi-Strauss: 411).

In order to see better how this works out in terms of social dominance patterns, I have drawn-up a "triangle boisonaire" from the previous data:



At the peak of the triangle is the wine-drinking Brahmin. He drinks a beverage which is made from a raw fruit which is not allowed to rot fully, as is the case with cyder. The "roasted" must be taken metaphorically as this refers to the carefully prepared and refined technique of the food of this group, but may also have something to do with a wine once characteristic of this group which is, in effect, roasted - Madeira. At angle B, are the beer drinking Shudra and the cyder drinking Vaiysha. Beer is boiled in its preparation, while cyder is the product of rotting fruit. The fact that these two groups are found here should not be surprising as they came historically from the same low rank and have only recently (the middle ages, perhaps) been differentiated.

At angle C, are the scotch drinking Kshatriya, whose beverage is slowly cooked in large vats and often poured into smoked casks for curing. Significantly, air (often smoked and cooked, therefore hot) is the only separation between the Kshatriya and the Brahmin, while water (a more solid and therefore more prohibiting agent) separates the lower Vaiysha/Shudra from the higher Brahmin.

Le triangle boisonaire offers the final confirmation for the hypothesis that the dominant caste, following Srinavas, among the British, is the Kshatriya, as they are in the most favoured and strongest part of the triangle, enjoying a complete plus dominance over the wine drinking Brahmin, who are, respectively, the "cultural" and the natural rulers of Britain.

It is also clear that the Kshatriya understand the significance of such a construction as they jealously hoard their strengthening beverage to themselves by a high tax. The relatively lower tax imposed on beer and cyder insures it for the masses, while Brahmin ritual power obfuscates the understanding and use of wine by others. It is clear, therefore, that while higher cultures organise their lives on the basis of preferences of taste and reason, "chez les sauvages" of Britain, things are done "to protect the purity of their beings." (Levi-Strauss: 419).

Further analysis of Britain reveals a continuing obsession with congruent primitive classifications based upon the four-part scheme:

	Land Divisions	Radio	Entertainment
Shudra	Ireland	Radio I	Television
Vaiysha	Wales	Radio II	Cinema
Kshatriya	Scotland	Radio III	Theatre
Brahmin	England	Radio IV	Concerts and Opera

	Pets	Transport
Shudra	Budgies	Public
Vaiysha	Dog	Taxi
Kshatriya	Cat	Private cars (parked)
Brahmin	Spec. pets	Private cars (unparked)

Two points ought to be made with respect to any judgement of the ideas and analysis contained in this paper. First, I have intended this effort to be suggestive of a point of view and I hope that I manage, (to give ...ideas even when (you, the reader, doesn't)..really know what (I an)... saying' (Leach:1967:xvii). Second, and with most particular reference to the unsupported correlations of British native, or 'practical' (Leach:1968:1) schemes of symbolic classification of experience as it relates to social structure, I would hope that the following point would be taken seriously:

'Generalisations on such a grandiose scale are likely to provide many easy targets for the hostile critic and there are some weak patches in...(the) argument but I cannot see that this really matters. In a comparable way it is easy to show that Freud was very often wrong on points of detail; this does not detract from the massive validity of Freud's major generalisations. Even if time should show that some of the items of evidence have been misplaced, the fundamental method of (the)...analysis is an innovation from which there can be no retreat' (Leach:1970:185)

Grant McCall.

Note 1. Motor cycles enjoy a somewhat less than respectable image and they serve extremely adequately as a symbol of defiance

by the young. They come between the Kshatriya and the Brahmin shared use of private vehicles, the former being 'parked' and the latter being 'unparked.' The Kshatriya, in spite of his being able to afford to purchase a private vehicle of great power and prestige is thwarted in the full expression of this ownership by having to park his machine, a most frustrating experience and one which the Kshatriya is willing to spend large sums of money on to facilitate even to the point of destroying beautiful urban features which obstruct his building plans for parking lots and multi-storey car parks. The Brahmin, on the other hand, owns a private vehicle, but it is chauffeur-driven - that is, it requires no parking space about which the Brahmin must be concerned. He is free to take his private vehicle (or to be taken in it) to where he wishes without being concerned where the machine will rest while he is not in it. When the Brahmin is ready to depart, his vehicle is brought to him at his will. As was shown before, the Brahmin and the Vaiysha share a number of affinities and the latter's taxis are entirely compatible with this as their appropriate form of transport. The motorcycle, is a non-chauffeur driven vehicle, but, on the other hand, requires no or minimal parking space! It is, in short, outside of the classification system and is, thus, polluting. (see Douglas). It is an abomination for most of the society as such and only those similarly "impure" for other reasons and thus outside of the system will find it appropriate for their use. Perhaps recent attempts of the Kshatriya to mark cycle parking spaces in large cities is an attempt to bring impure cycle owners into the system or, at least, to detract from their affinity with the Brahmins. It is probably no accident, in this line, that deviant cyclist clubs often take on names associated with royalty (i.e. The Knights, The Kings) or, in another vein, use names to symbolize their out-of-place and paradoxical conflicting low/high status within the classification scheme (i.e. The Hell's Angels).

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