Foreword

Jan Breman's present study originated in a research project carried out by a group of young Dutch sociologists and social anthropologists in southern Gujarat. Among the subjects were the effect of the abolition of tenancy (C. Baks), the impact of governmental planning activities at the local level (E. W. Hommes), and the phenomenon of hypergamy among the Anavil Brahmans, the dominant caste in a large part of the area (K. W. van der Veen). Although the researchers had their individual responsibility and did not operate as a team, yet their studies supplement each other in such a way as to present a more or less coherent picture of south Gujarat rural society.

All of them are highly indebted to the kind cooperation on the part of the Indian people and authorities, received throughout the period during which the researchers were in the field. Professors I. P. Desai and M. B. Desai, at that time both of them attached to the Maharaja Sayajirao University at Baroda, have earned our special gratitude through their never relenting interest in our project and their expert advice liberally given on many occasions. The studies resulting from the project were all accepted as doctoral dissertations at the University of Amsterdam, and published in Dutch in a limited number by the Department of South and Southeast Asia of the Anthropological-Sociological Center of that university. Efforts are being undertaken to make the other studies also available in English translation.

When, in January 1963, I visited the group at work in the area at that time, I once called upon one of the authorities, together with Dr. Breman. Asked about his project, the latter replied that he was concerned with the *hali* system. The official retorted that it was no use investigating that issue, since there were no longer any *halis*—the *hali* system had been abolished long ago. Not taken aback at all, Breman pursued his research project and found many data which are not generally known among Indian officials, and maybe not even among most of the Indian sociologists. I feel that Dr. Breman's study may substantially contribute to our insight into the dynamics of Gujarati society, and perhaps even of Indian society in general.

The "technique" applied by Dr. Breman looks very simple. He did not start with devising a questionnaire and administering it from a nearby city, but settled for several months among the villagers whose labour relationships he wanted to investigate. He followed, therefore, the observation "technique" usual among anthropologists. But in a highly stratified society like the Indian one, investigating a group like the Dubla land labourers presents an additional obstacle. Automatically, a foreign researcher finds his "natural" environment first and foremost among the members of the dominant caste, the patrons in the labor relationships. It is difficult for a researcher not to let himself be lured into looking at the relationships and at the opposite group mostly through their eyes. On the other hand, a researcher may be identified, by the servant group, with the people among whom he was mostly seen during the first weeks, and with whom he has several traits in common.

It seems to me that the way in which Breman approached the Dublas, and his serious attempts to complete his picture of Gujarati society by adding their perspective to the one representing the patrons' view, form the core of his "research technique." It is this aspect of his research which lends this research the character of a truly modern study.

I am convinced that as a pioneering approach to a society that has never been thoroughly studied, participant observation is a much more promising "technique" than administering questionnaires in order to collect quantitative data, which in such a situation mostly amount to a false pretense of exactitude.

Another aspect of the present study which deserves special mention is Dr. Breman's attempt to place his findings within a theoretical frame. Although it is not the first time that Indian land labor and jajmani relationships have been analysed in terms of patronage and clientele, it seems to me that Breman's sociohistorical analysis has added a new dimension to the way social change within Indian rural society should be interpreted in order to obtain a diachronic perspective.

A final point I would like to mention is the relevance of the crop pattern and of the general attitude of dominant caste members to employment alternatives among their land laborers. It is a highly interesting finding that despite the nearness of a small town the Dublas in one of the two villages investigated were not able to find the way towards urban employment, simply because the Anavils did not

want them to leave their village, since they needed cheap labor for their mango gardens.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research for the liberal way in which, from the very first beginning, they sponsored and financed the south Gujarat research project. I also want to thank my colleagues Dr. A.J.F. Köbben and Dr. S.C.L. Vreede-de Stuers for their assistance in setting up and guiding the whole project.

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