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Social Stratification and Economic Development

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I

One of the most readily visible differences between economically advanced and underdeveloped countries is the contrast in the kinds and complexity of economic organizations and productive units. In fact, part of the theory of economic development consists in identifying the decisive variables which account for the change in productive organizations and types of economic units as progress is made from the simpler to the more complex patterns of economic action. Yet little stress is placed in the analysis of these economic changes on the fact that the increasing complexity of productive activity must be associated with alterations in other fields of social organization and social structure, and, above all, with changes in social stratification. It is possible, and indeed likely, that these changes may have crucial effects at certain stages of the economic development process and it is, therefore, advisable to explore them somewhat more in detail. The purpose of this paper will be to attempt to single out a number of features and characteristics in the social stratification in economically little advanced societies and to describe their functioning and the change they are subjected to in the economic growth process.

The simplest description of alterations in social stratification is achieved by saying that for any set or any change of social structures the various roles are characterized by a differential application of social sanctions.

This definition can be made clearer by providing some further comments on the concepts of "structure" and "sanction". In doing this, I will merely present explicitly some quite common conceptions in contemporary American sociology, but it may be useful to do this, nevertheless, since all these terms are often used quite indiscriminately in the literature. In this regard, modern sociology is in a similar dilemma as was economics not very long ago, i.e., at a time when economists employed some very common everyday concepts (e.g., "capital", or "investment") in a special sense and thus enhanced rather than reduced the confusion produced by the use of these terms.

The concept of social structure designates some characteristic, recurrent form of interaction between two or more persons. If defined in this manner, social structures are related to the directional tendencies existing in social systems and raise the question whether social structures develop as a consequence of the need to meet the functional requisites of social systems. Though I share the view of those who hold to this interpretation, I shall not enter into a detailed discussion of these functional requisites, except to point out that in a relatively crude but brief form they may be examined by consideration of the discussion of the composite function of a social system as presented, for example, by Talcott Parsons.¹ Parsons divides a system of social action into four major subsectors, each of which may be regarded as an assemblage of structures designed to meet particular functional needs of the system. These

1. See Talcott Parsons, Working Papers in the Theory of Action, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1953, pp. 88 ff.; and Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, Economy and Society, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1956, chapter I. On functional requisites see Marion J. Levy, The Structure of Society, Princeton, N.J., Princeton Press, 1952, chapter III.

four subsectors are the adaptive sector in which primary emphasis is placed on productive, distributive, and allocation decisions; the goal-gratifying sector in which behavior satisfying the needs for control and coordination of collective actions affecting all members of the social system are located; the integrative sector, in which the principles of interaction between the members of the systems and groups of members within the system are regulated; and the value-maintenance sector in which action relating to transmission of the cultural values of the system and other types of behavior relating to the maintenance and passing on of traditionally established and newly developing values are found. This analysis explains in more detail which major functions need to be met and what structures have developed to permit the meeting of these functions. It should be noted that among the variables determining the development and establishment of a given set of structures are not merely the functional requisites which exist in a society, but also the resources over which the society already has control. In other words, different societies may be confronted in certain subsectors of social action with quite similar functional requisites, but since they control very different resources for the meeting of these needs they will have different structures. For example, in all societies food for the nutritional maintenance of the members of the society must be produced. But the social structures, i.e., the forms of interaction between persons concerned with food production, are very different in modern western societies and in the economically less advanced countries of, say, Central Africa. This difference is mainly due not to differences in functional requisites, but differences in resources (both human and physical) which the two societies control.

The concept of sanction is much easier to define than the concept of

structure. When talking about sanctions we usually have in mind both rewards and deprivations, and we infer that sanctions are usually employed to control or induce changes in the behavior of individuals within structures. Sanctions are imposed most often in order to induce persons to behave in conformity with norms established for action in a given structural situation. These norms and the sanctions imposed normally are derived from social values or are related to them, and the entire complex of structures, collectivities of social action, sanctions, and norms tend to become institutionalized, i.e., tend to be elevated to a level of understanding at which they provoke clear and distinctive expectations of action patterns through their combination into a single complex. For example, if we speak of the institutionalization of medieval guilds, we refer by this interpretation to a more or less long-lasting set of roles and collectivities (e.g., guild masters and specified associations of artisans), values (e.g., freedom of action within certain prescribed boundaries), norms (e.g., conformity with jointly established price and quality prescriptions, maintenance of contractual relations, voluntary limitation on scale of operations), and sanctions (e.g., profits of business, disciplinary action by special guild magistrates or guild assemblies). To the extent to which structures become institutionalized, they also acquire a particularly stable role in systems of social stratification and insure more or less the permanence of such stratification systems.

In past research on social change a few studies of social stratification systems in different societies have been undertaken concentrating primarily on more limited aspects of stratification. For example, in some instances studies of stratification of roles, of organizations, or of individual persons within a society have been undertaken. An example are the studies on occupational

ranking which were quite popular in the last decade.² In the older sociological literature the major emphasis in the study of stratification was placed primarily on class stratification, and here again we may distinguish between stratification primarily based upon occupational roles, such as the concept of class stratification in Marxian writings, and stratification based upon membership in a social group buttressed by the image of those who form the group as constituting a specialized collectivity and who, therefore, act accordingly. This second view of class stratification became more popular in modern American sociological literature and the work of W.L. Warner and R. Centers and others is built on it.³ Regardless of whether we interpret principles of class stratification to be founded upon occupational distinctions or the formation of groups of persons with close inter-group relations, the degree of institutionalization is higher, and the significance of sanctions, generalized norms, and more manifest values is greater than in stratification systems limited to a classification of occupational roles, a structuring of organizations, or a distinction between individuals. A social class is, by itself, a composite of structures, and since

2. Most of these studies have been undertaken on occupational stratification and its evaluation in economically advanced societies, e.g., National Opinion Research Center, "Jobs and Occupations: A Popular Evaluation," in R. Bendix and S.M. Lipset, eds., Class, Status and Power, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1953, pp. 419-420; and Alex Inkeles and Peter Rossi, "National Comparisons of Occupational Prestige," American Journal of Sociology, 61, (1956), 329-339. However some similar studies have recently been done in economically less advanced countries which have, perhaps not surprisingly, shown similar patterns of stratification as those in the more highly developed nations. See Bertram Hutchinson, "The Social Grading of Occupations in Brazil," British Journal of Sociology, 8 (1957), 176-189; and Edward A. Tiryakian, "The Prestige Evaluation of Occupations in an Underdeveloped Country: The Philippines," American Journal of Sociology, 63 (1959), 390-399.

3. See W. Lloyd Warner et al., Social Class in America, Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949; and Richard Centers, The Psychology of Social Classes, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1949.

class stratification normally requires a certain degree of stability within the social system, it presupposes also certain relatively well defined structural interrelations, at least within a social class, and usually also between classes. But these interrelations only acquire stability to the extent to which the structures themselves and the interaction patterns between structures become institutionalized. Hence when we deal with class stratification we must recognize that under different conditions of social organization and at widely different levels of economic advancement, we will encounter different patterns of institutionalization.

This means that one of the potentially fruitful approaches to the study of social stratification and its interaction with the process of economic development should concentrate on the following problem: Our interest in social stratification will concentrate upon class stratification rather than other stratification patterns. In addition we will attempt to determine these aspects of social behavior and socio-psychological action patterns which may be said to form the crucial or strategic variables in determining the forms and degree of stability of social stratification systems in societies on different levels of economic advancement. It is hoped that stress on these points may help in the task of evaluating the changes which must occur in social stratification systems in countries which enter into and pass through the process of relatively rapid economic development.

II

Among the most important aspects influencing, and in fact determining, stratification patterns in little industrialized countries are the following:

- (1) The general structure of classes is based ultimately on a dichotomy

between two principal groups: the elite and the mass. Membership in the elite usually implies control of political power, a relatively high degree of education, and direct or indirect control of sizeable portions of a society's wealth. Membership in the lower class, which is composed of the large bulk of the population, entails lack of political power, poverty and low income, and usually little, or more often, no education. Middle classes are rare, small and of relatively little significance in these societies. I shall return later to a somewhat more extended discussion of the more general social implications of this system of stratification and its possible alterations in a process of economic development.

(2) Non-industrial or generally underdeveloped societies are characterized normally by the principle of ascription -- as against that of achievement -- as the major force assigning social, economic, and occupational roles. In other words, a person is assigned a role and acquires a status in society based upon his birth, though there are some limiting cases in which, through the practice of adoption, this principle is somewhat modified. But it appears to be a widespread observation that ascription is a determining force dividing individuals between status groups and, indeed, social classes, and this principle affects not only the relative size and composition of each class within the stratification system, but also determines the facility of mobility within the social system.

(3) Non-industrial or pre-industrial societies are also characterized by a situation, in which as a result of the relatively little advanced division of labor, productive tasks are less sharply distinguished than in economically more advanced societies. But, in addition to this, the distinctions between economic roles and roles in other fields of social action are much less empha-

sized than in economically more advanced societies. A description of this type of social organization is provided by Robert Redfield in his description of the folk society.⁴ Redfield's description may be, and has been, interpreted as establishing an ideal type of the forms of over-all social organization at one extreme of social systems, i.e., that of a very small, normally kinship oriented society which consists essentially of one or a small number of groups each held together by kinship ties. In these groups status differentials are small, stratification in a meaningful sense is almost absent, and whatever role allocation does take place, is based entirely on ascriptive principles. But the main significance of these societies is that quite a few of them are now on the threshold of economic advancement, and are being drawn into a social framework with much more complex and more highly stratified structures.

I shall discuss these three points in greater detail in the remainder of this paper. But first it may be useful to point to two further general considerations which must be borne in mind in the discussion of forms or systems of stratification and their interaction with levels of economic performance. One is the problem of differentiation, a point which was already alluded to in the preceding discussion and the other is the problem of the control of sanctions, both those applied to behavior within a given layer of the stratification system and those applied to relationships between individuals or groups in different layers.

This second problem is of special importance in societies in which differentiation between the various layers of a stratification system is not large in certain spheres of social action. As an example we may consider some

4. See Robert Redfield, "The Folk Society," American Journal of Sociology, 52 (1947), 293-308.

African societies, where this situation appears to come up most prominently. A good description of this social situation was presented by Max Gluckman in a recent book.⁵ He describes Zulu society from the time of Shaka who, as is well known, was the most powerful and successful ruler this Bantu-speaking people ever had. Shaka's rule was based in the long run on the conquest of many other peoples and in a society with greater differentiation in stratification on all levels, the overpowering social and political position of Shaka and those close to him would also have resulted in economic stratification, leading in turn to economic changes. But according to Gluckman's account, the king "had fields worked by his warriors, and vast herds tended by them; and he drew tribute of cattle and grain from his subjects. This tribute he then mostly re-distributed among them. ...Nor, though there was no fundamental cleavage of the Zulu nation into classes differentiated by economic interests, the nature of social interests changed with each step upward in the hierarchy."⁶ This pattern of differentiation in the stratification system, confined to the social and political, but omitting the economic sector, is found in quite a number of African societies. For example, Gluckman describes this situation among the Nyamwezi, a tribe which resided in Northern Nigeria, whose king, Msidi, "would earn day in and day out, a miserable two yards of dirty calico and yet would give away, to the last yard, the bales upon bales of cloth brought into the country by the many caravans from east and west coasts."⁷ Similar egalitarian societies in the sector of economic action, upon which are built quite hierarch-

5. Max Gluckman, Custom and Conflict in Africa, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1955.

6. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

7. Ibid., p. 31.

ical political and social stratification systems are found in other parts of Africa, particularly in West Africa, e.g., among the Tallensi, and elsewhere.⁸

The widespread existence of these stratification systems is important especially because these societies are found in territories in which new political entities, i.e., new independent nations, are being formed. In addition these new nations have adopted, at least on the level of official programmes, certain economic development goals and thus are forced to introduce new patterns of political control and, added to them, a new emphasis on economic achievement as an objective of social action. All this conflicts with the existing stratification systems, since the sanctions to which the present structures are subjected are completely different from those which must be operative in a society which attempts to achieve national unification and economic advancement.

III

Concentrating on stratification systems which are relevant for societies in the early stages of industrial development or which are about to enter into a period of economic growth, we can observe the following patterns: (1) Societies, like those in many parts of Africa (and elsewhere, e.g., among Latin American Indians⁹), in which there exist essentially **egalitarian** features in

8. See M. Fortes, "The Political System of the Tallensi of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast," in M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard eds., African Political Systems, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, p. 250. Denise Paulme, "Structures sociales traditionnelles en Afrique Noire," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, 1 (1960), 16-18.

9. On the absence of a class or status structure based upon economic achievement in Indian societies of Mesoamerica, see Manning Nash, The Machine Age Maya,

the economic (adaptive) sector, but in which social and political relations are based on fairly rigorous hierarchies. These societies, moreover, have extended and quite carefully developed kinship systems which form the basis for social stratification and allocation of roles in the political sphere. This means that position of political leadership and social status are determined primarily on the basis of ascriptive norms, and though achievement norms may have some slight significance in the economic sector of action, their over-all importance is limited and stratification rests principally on social and political performance. But the political unit, though it has historically sometimes controlled an extended territory (as among the Zulu, for example), is now confined in most new nations to a comparatively small area and often stands in conflict with the newly arising needs of the emerging political structures. Hence the traditional patterns of stratification are in sharp conflict with the requirements imposed by recent developments and one of the main problems confronting these societies is the process of change which is possibly going to result in a complete reversion of existing stratification systems in these societies.¹⁰

(2) Apart from these societies we encounter others in which a highly differentiated stratification system already was in existence before the introduction of new economic goals and the beginning of plans for industrialization. These societies are found in the Middle East and in South Asia. They are located

9. (cont.) Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1958, pp. 107-108; and Sol Tax, Penny Capitalism, Washington, United States Printing Office, 1953, pp. 191 ff.

10. See, on this point, for example, S.N. Eisenstadt, "Changes in Patterns of Stratification Attendant on Attainment of Political Independence," in Transactions of the Third World Congress of Sociology, Vol. III, London, International Sociological Association, 1956, pp. 32-41.

in countries where well organized states have been established long ago, and where extended political power was exercised by rulers. The number of persons under the rule of kings or emperors was often very large, territories of unified government widely extended, and the political apparatus required to rule these areas considerably larger and more complex than that of the small indigenous "states" of parts of Africa. At one time in history many of these states were the centers of large empires, such as that of the Abbasids, the Mamelukes, the Moghul rulers of India, the various kingdoms of Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and other countries.

In these states, at the height of their power, extensive administrative staffs were needed and well-defined ties between the center and the provincial and other local headquarters had to be established. Economically these states were dependent primarily upon agriculture, though in the major urban center in which resided the political and intellectual elites, wealth and income accumulated which made possible the development often of extensive markets, handicrafts, and even industrial enterprises on a limited scale. Some individuals in mercantile or industrial leadership positions could acquire a good deal of income, but in terms of social status they were on a low level, in some cases even lower than peasants. For example, in classical Indian culture the brahmins and kshatriyas formed the leading social status groups, below them were the vaisyas who were principally peasants, and merchants and artisans held status positions even lower than these, though in terms of income and wealth some were substantially superior to almost all peasants and even many members of the two leading castes. The same social differentiation was observed in pre-republican China and even in Japan even under the Tokugawa rule.¹¹ The significance of this

11. On classical Indian society, see T.W. Rhys-Davids, Buddhist India, Calcutta,

stratification system was not that it prevented the accumulation of wealth on the part of some of the ablest merchants and industrialists, but rather that it led them into subservience to the political leaders, and often induced them to use large portions of their wealth to "appease" or attract the benevolence of the politically and socially dominant status groups.

The importance of a stratification system such as this is its resistance to changes in the economic objectives and political organization of a society. Though over time the low status of entrepreneurs in commerce, industry, and related activities tends to be modified and an advancement in a person's social position may become dependent upon successful economic performance, the traditional emphasis on the low status of persons acting as business entrepreneurs maintains itself for a long time and some of the potentially most talented persons will avoid a career in business if they can find suitable occupations elsewhere. In other words, the traditional low status of artisans, merchants, and even industrialists slows down the supply of some of the best educated and potentially best endowed persons, many of whom also have relatively easy access to saved up wealth and other assets, to enter into economic activity contributing to the economic growth process of their societies.

In Japan the close association between lower level samurai and wealthy merchants and farmers even under the Tokugawa rule tended to break down this resistance in part even before the Meiji restoration. In India, the first entrants into entrepreneurial positions and other leading business activities were members of those "communal" groups which were outside the caste system (e.g., the

11. (cont.) Susil Gupta, Ltd., 1957, pp. 27 ff. On Japan under the Tokugawa regime see Mitsui Takafusa, "Some Observations on Merchants," (translated and annotated by E.S. Crawcour), Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, 3rd Series, Vol. VIII (Tokyo, 1961), p. 31.

Parsees) or whose caste function was in the field of economic activity (e.g., the Marwaris). Only under the great pressures exercised in more recent years, when in certain areas of India the entrance of brahmins into positions of intellectual or administrative specialization became harder, and in some limiting cases almost impossible, did they turn to industrial entrepreneurship in order to preserve their wealth and income position in Indian society.¹²

Another excellent example of the change in the basis of stratification under the impact of new socio-political objectives by a geographically distant but administratively effective new government is provided by the example of the Balinese town of Tabanan, reported upon by Clifford Geertz.¹³ Tabanan, a town in Southern Bali, was for a long time under a ruling aristocracy which presented, in contrast to the peasant masses it dominated, one extreme of the bi-polar stratification model mentioned earlier. The Dutch officially changed the legal norms upon which this stratification rested, but by making the nobles into colonial civil servants secured their power position within the village context. But already in the new situation which came into force in 1906 the local aristocracy had to base its leadership position increasingly on its economic performance as landlords, rather than on its earlier quasi-absolutist political prerogatives. Geertz continues to describe more recent changes as follows:

"Since the revolution even this modified pattern of aristocratic preeminence has come under attack. Progressive land taxation, laws

12. On Brahmin participation in industry in Madras State see James Berna, "Patterns of Entrepreneurship in South India," Economic Development and Cultural Change, 7 (1959), 346-347.

13. See Clifford Geertz, "Social Change and Economic Modernization in Two Indonesian Towns: A Case in Point," in Everett E. Hagen, On the Theory of Social Change, Homewood, Ill., The Dorsey Press, 1952, pp. 385-407.

protecting tenants against displacement and high rents, and the general egalitarian sentiments engendered by nationalist ideology have made landlordism a much less attractive proposition than it was before the war. Further, the opening of administrative posts to talent and to political party patronage has tended to reduce the monopolistic hold of the aristocracy on the civil service. In such a situation trade and industry, insofar as they can be profitably pursued, become an attractive means to maintain one's threatened status, wealth, and power; so it is perhaps not entirely surprising that it is this group of obsolete princelings which is behind Tabanan's recent economic expansion.¹⁴

The nobles have taken to industrial and commercial entrepreneurship in the Balinese town described by Geertz, and they have been ready to do so, because for the last fifty years their earlier unquestioned caste-based status tended to become undermined as a stratification principle by itself and depended increasingly on their role as landowners and receivers of rent. In other words, their "conversion" to entrepreneurship was made easier by the fact that this transition could be made in a social environment in which the system of stratification created under Dutch administration had become increasingly dependent upon social action performed in the economic sector of the social system,

(3) The discussion of the case of Tabanan leads to further consideration of a stratification system which resembles that predominant in Bali before the direct imposition of Dutch rule. In this system the dominant social class bases its position on its socio-political preeminence and the wealth and economic returns to the members of the predominant class are not a factor causing their superior class position, but a result of their leading position in the political and social stratification system. In brief, these societies are concrete exemplifications of the stratification system mentioned earlier in this paper under Point II.1. As was pointed out there, the general class stratification is bimodal

14. Ibid., p. 389.

in that a small dominant class is confronted by a large politically powerless and socially inferior mass. It is the position of power and social status which attracts income and wealth to the upper class and normally deprives the lower class of a portion of the produce it turns out. Though there exists usually a small middle class in these societies, its size and influence is sharply limited and its social status position relatively undefined and hence fluctuating. Some of the societies of the Middle East and South Asia, described earlier presented systems of stratification not dissimilar to this, and may be considered special cases of the more general pattern of essentially bimodal stratification systems. Mobility in these social systems is low, membership in a given social stratum is almost always determined by ascription.

In some instances these societies are the result of foreign conquest, with the victorious conquerors forming the upper, and the mass of the indigenous population forming the lower class. For example, the societies of most Latin American countries under Spanish or Portuguese domination resembled this pattern of social stratification with European officials and other immigrants forming the small dominant class and the mass of indigenous Indians, later augmented by imported African slaves, the lower class. A similar bi-modal stratification system may be encountered in several societies in the Middle East, though the conquest period there lies much farther back in history. It has been pointed out that the economic development process in these societies requires a growth of the middle classes, and a gradual acquisition of power of these middle classes. In fact, it has been maintained, at least in one instance, that the growth of a "middle sector" was one of the responsible factors in the growing economic and political maturity of these societies.¹⁵ But at the same time, it is undeniable that the

dominant status group will attempt to prevent the development of a middle sector and will try to draw individuals in the emerging middle class under its influence. For an independent middle class, especially one with independent, self-determined economic sources of social strength, forms a danger to the leading political and status group and this group has every interest to prevent or counteract this development.

Hence we find in these societies that the middle class may be composed of several sectors. In part, middle class status is conferred upon the attainment of a certain educational level, the integration of these educated persons into administrative positions, and the rigorous subordination of political organizations under the over-all rule of the centrally organized and tightly knit political elite. In other instances, in which middle class status is attainable by economic performance, various traditions are upheld which make the participation in commercial and industrial activity undesirable for indigenous persons and which leave these areas entirely, or largely, to persons coming from outside the society. For although these outsiders may obtain positions in the middle rungs of the structure of income distribution, they cannot, in most of these societies, attain positions of political leadership or high social status. The Chinese in many Southeast Asian countries, the Lebanese and Syrians in various parts of the world, the Indians in East Africa and parts of South Asia, have occupied such positions in the structure of income distribution without acquiring significant status position in the political or social stratification systems in which they resided.

15. See John J. Johnson, Political Change in Latin America: The Emergence of the Middle Sectors, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1958.

But in extreme cases the dominant status group tries to prevent economic advancement and associated social change from taking place altogether, if there it can be expected that these developments will affect its relative position in the stratification system. This was apparently the objective of the nobility in many Balinese towns and villages before the Dutch administration took on greater government responsibilities in 1906; this was until recently and remains, under a cloak of more egalitarian propaganda statements, the policy in some Middle Eastern countries, e.g., Saudi Arabia. Tendencies to prevent the more rapid penetration of measures of economic advancement into various local areas by the dominant groups in the class structure there are also not uncommon. As the society of an area remains relatively undisturbed by the failure to introduce new techniques, new educational facilities, and new contacts to the outside, the dominant position of its ruling local elite is relatively least threatened.

IV

In short, one of the most characteristic aspects of a pre-industrial stratification system is one in which there exists a sharp polarity of social strata with an extremely steep pyramid of social ranking, a general gap between the elite and the large masses, and a general disregard of economic performance as an important status conferring variable. These features, to which must be added, the almost exclusive predominance of ascriptive norms in assigning social, economic, and political roles, a "natural" outflow of such a stratification system, puts the social structures of pre-industrial societies fully in contrast with the more advanced western countries. There the middle class has attained a most important, if not the decisive role; the social pyramid though still too steep for

some, is much more gently inclined than in pre-industrial societies; one of the major, if not the chief status-providing variable, is economic performance and the level of income earned; and economic, but also many social, and political roles are assigned on the basis of achievement.

In the face of this distinction one of the main questions that may be raised is one of ascertaining the sequence of change of these variables which will facilitate the transition from the pre-industrial to the industrial stratification system without requiring a complete disruption of the society undergoing this change. One way of coming closer to an answer of this question is to identify the one or two most strategic variables, the transformation of which would be principally responsible for a change in the stratification systems from a pre-industrial to a more highly industrialized, economically developed society. I believe that the two most important variables (or rather, contrasts between them) are those already mentioned earlier: the ascription-achievement dichotomy and the diffusion-specificity dichotomy.¹⁶ Sufficient evidence to confirm this belief is not yet available, but might be provided by further study. The only support for my belief in the strategic significance of these two dichotomies rests on general reasoning.

The transition from a diffuse to a specific description of economic and social roles is not difficult to see. As the economy develops, as productivity grows, specialization in economic roles becomes increasingly important and

16. I have discussed these two dichotomies on a more general, but less penetrating level in an essay written several years ago. See my paper "Social Structure and Economic Growth," which appeared first in 1953 in Vol. 6 of Economia Internazionale and is reprinted in my Sociological Aspects of Economic Growth, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1960, pp. 23-52, esp. pp. 30-35.

eventually imperative. But specialization in economic roles leads to greater complexity of social structures in the adaptive sector, and hence in the increasing isolation or full separation of economic behavior from that in other fields of social action. This separation, in turn, leads to greater specificity emerging gradually in all sectors of social action. This means, however, that the steepness between and the number of steps in a stratification system can be modified, since the number and variability of combinations of factors determining the layers or levels of stratification become very much greater in a social system in which roles in the various sectors of action are determined by specific rather than by diffuse norms. A concrete example may make this clearer. In a simple folk-like society, all or almost all behavior has meaning in all the sectors of social action, i.e., a person engaging, say in planting food, believes that he is not merely participating in productive activity, but also that he does something to maintain his role as a member of a kinship group, to obey the commands of a religious belief, to meet certain goals needful for the preservation of the society of which he feels himself to be a member. These actions are therefore highly diffuse, and the roles assigned to individuals, if consciously assigned at all, also tend to be highly diffuse. But such a social system, if there exists a principle of social stratification at all, has only a very limited number of degrees of freedoms, and hence only very few, generally highly stable patterns of stratification are possible. The society in which behavior in any action sector of the system is highly specific has many more forms of stratifications, and above all, many relatively rapid variations in a given stratification system become not only possible, but may often actually take place. Here the causal nexus between economic change and change in social stratification is one in which the former tends to influence the latter. Economic change

implies that productivity increases. Since this increase is normally contingent upon greater specialization of economic roles, a greater degree of specificity takes place first in the economy, which ultimately finds its reflection in other sectors of social action. Thus economic growth, the introduction of new forms of production, tend to affect the stratification system of a society.

The opposite causal nexus appears to hold in the case of the ascription-achievement dichotomy. For the most important impact of this difference upon stratification is that in the case of predominance of ascription social mobility is possible essentially not for individuals, but only for groups, whereas, in the case of achievement-orientation in the assignment of roles, the distinctions and differences that exist between groups may remain unchanged, even though individuals who start as members of one of these groups may move through portions of the stratification system and end up as members of other groups. In other words, social mobility is not possible except through movement of one of the groups constituting the pattern of stratification. Perhaps one of the most convincing examples is provided by the caste system of India and social mobility within this system. As Irawati Karve has maintained, a caste (i.e., a jati) is an endogamous social group, normally residing in a given region, and exercising a traditional behavior pattern, including usually some specialization in one or a limited number of related productive roles.¹⁷

17. Irawati Karve, "The Hindu Society: A New Interpretation." Part I (Mimeographed version of a paper presented in 1959 at the University of California at Berkeley). Mrs. Karve differs in her interpretation of the caste system from that customarily presented, e.g., by J.H. Hutton, Caste in India, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1946. Whereas Hutton and others argue that new jatis develop due to the "fissiparous tendencies in Indian castes", Mrs. Karve thinks that new castes develop through the "process of continuous accretion." I believe that for purposes of this essay this distinction in the interpretation of why and how new jatis arise is of secondary importance.

Membership in a caste is ascriptive, and since it determines much more than occupational specialization, any person who belongs to a given jati is usually readily recognizable in the village or other small community in which he lives. Hence social mobility by the individual is virtually impossible within the region in which his jati is resident, and often even in other parts of the country to which he may have to migrate over long distances. Yet as the economy changes, various of the externally determined functions of many jatis undergo change. Some occupations become more, and others less remunerative, and this causes members of different jatis to engage in different forms of behavior. Though behavior, as was pointed out earlier, is partially traditionally determined, in situations of sizeable, relatively rapid, change, behavior patterns may and do become altered. With these changes in income, types of consumption, religious attitudes, and other forms of socially relevant variables, mobility in the social stratification system becomes attractive for quite a few groups and to the extent to which it becomes possible, it affects the group as a whole, rather than any individual in it.

It is quite clear that in a case like that exemplified by the caste system or other social systems dependent on ascription as a factor determining social roles, mobility is more difficult than in a system in which mobility of an individual rather than of an ascriptively defined group is the rule. For in a social system in which rigid structures exist, group mobility is especially difficult, and as pointed out earlier each jati or similar group has ramifications in many sectors of social action. Hence changes in stratification in societies with a predominance of ascriptive norms of allocating social and economic roles are much slower and less widespread than in societies in which achievement-oriented norms prevail. But considering the functional requisites

of a society with expanding and growing economic activities, mobility in the social stratification system becomes an imperative. The new requisites of an expanding economic system make necessary the formation of new social structures, and their formation is delayed or made more difficult by the prevalence of ascription as a norm in assigning economic and other roles. Finally, ascription tends to rely on different sanctions than a system based on achievement, since the pattern of norms determining social and economic roles and the interrelations between members of a given structure vary greatly in social systems subject to one of the two allocation principles.

The consequence of this is that economic development demands the gradual replacement of the principle of ascription by the principle of achievement in the realm of role allocation. This does not mean that ascription must disappear entirely, or that achievement must be the sole principle of determining all roles at all stages of a person's career. In actual situations some mixture between ascriptive and achievement oriented principles of role assignment will be developed. For example, in Japan, ascriptive norms are still considerably more powerful than in most western European countries and they are stronger in western Europe than in the United States. Yet Japan, as, of course, also the countries of western Europe, have successfully mastered the transition to a rapidly growing economy.¹⁸ On the other hand, in most Asian and African societies ascription is still too strong to permit the loosening of stratification systems sufficiently to permit genuine rapid economic expansion, and here is a strategic area in the realm of social relations which requires relatively rapid

18. On Japan, see James G. Abegglen, The Japanese Factory: Aspects of Its Social Organization, Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1958, pp. 115 ff.

and deep-going modification.

It is not easy to indicate what factors in a social system are likely to bring about this change from ascription to achievement most rapidly and most smoothly. Such changes as secularization, the imposition of non-indigenous values especially in the productive sector, the development of new occupational roles, the migration of persons out of their highly culture-bound villages to the culturally more diversified cities, and other related changes, may be some of the developments which make possible the decline of ascription and its replacement by achievement principles in the realm of role assignment. But a generally valid solution of this problem is impossible to give, since it depends upon the great variations in underlying cultural norms and existing arrangements in different social systems. It may be sufficient, if those who have responsibility for social policies are aware of the significance of this variable and attempt to take account of it whenever possible.

In conclusion it may be useful to point out that the points raised in this paper have in many instances been presented in a sharper form than would have been necessary if the attempt had been made to present primarily descriptive, rather than analytical, matters on social stratification. This is also the reason why some differences, which by sheer observation may sometimes appear as relatively mild variations, have been presented as sharp contrasts often tied to underlying principles. The reason for this procedure is that my intention in presenting the points in this paper was to reduce the empirical material to as few underlying variables as possible, and to select, above all, those variables which have wider applicability than the analysis of stratification by itself. A great task which is scarcely attempted in this paper is still before us and that is to test the propositions presented here by reference to the manifold

and varied concrete situations, cultures and societies which modern scholars are studying so assiduously.