

PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE ASSOCIATIONAL REDEFINITION  
OF CASTES IN HYDERABAD-SECUNDERABAD

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Introduction

Voluntary associations may be defined as social groups in which the bond that unites is a primary shared interest other than that of either kinship or territory. Voluntary associations attract attention in current studies of change because they tend to proliferate in societies experiencing urbanization and industrialization (cf. Anderson and Anderson 1959:272-273; 1962a:167-168). The search for regularities concerning these institutionalized common interest groups has, with notable exceptions, not been extensive (cf. Bohannan 1963:147), but has ranged widely. Some investigators have looked for the relationship of voluntary associations to political organization. Durkheim regarded them as essential intermediate groups in a modern nation where the gap between the individual and the state is great (Chapin 1957:260-261), while others have investigated their correlation with a democratic ethos (Rose 1954:50; Norbeck 1963) or with voting practices (Maccoby 1958). Perhaps the greatest interest has attached to their significance for the individual, as in efforts to see whether members' motivations are to achieve self expression or to exert social influence (Rose 1954:52), or to determine how associations meet personality needs for status definition (Gordon and Babchuk 1959). The greatest amount of writing has been devoted to establishing class, residence, sex, age, religious and other correlates of membership in voluntary associations (e.g. Scott 1957), but some notes the multitude of functions performed by associations and attempts to document their formation for a range of purposes from hobby activities to labor agitation (Warren 1955:287-288) or to demonstrate the comprehensive transfer to them of the functions of traditional institutions (Anderson and Anderson 1962b).

In the search for regularities, attention is drawn to a process by which, in various parts of the world, traditional social groups sometimes adapt to modernized circumstances by reconstituting themselves as a rational-legal type of voluntary association. The rational-legal association, familiar to the West, possesses written statutes which contractually (legally) define in pragmatic (rational) rather than traditional terms the membership, participant obligations, leadership roles and conditions of convocation of the group. It normally possesses a legally recognized corporate identity.

The process of redefining a traditional institution as a rational-legal type of association is seen, for example, among the Japanese (Norbeck 1953:376) and the West African Ibo and Udam (Bohannan 1963:158-159), where age sets have given way to modern forms of voluntary association, or among the Muslims of Pakistan, where the religious jurists, the 'ulama', recently superimposed a modern associational framework upon a disciple system of organization (Binder 1963:25, 28, 30).

The caste associations of India offer yet another example of associational redefinition. Traditional caste organizations, often with hereditary

headmen and panchayats, have in some cases been reformed as formally organized voluntary associations on a Western model. This process, in fact, is widespread. Yet, interest has been limited thus far to its political implications (cf. Harrison 1960:104-105; Rudolph and Rudolph 1960), to the complete neglect of local dimensions.

A first step towards an exploration of these local dimensions was carried out in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad in the form of an incomplete and limited series of interviews with members and leaders of several castes and caste associations.<sup>1</sup> The results of this exploratory investigation were sketchy, and inadequate for thorough systematic analysis. Yet the void of relevant publications gives them a timely interest, for which reason they are presented here as preliminary notes. Among the castes studied, interviews with Harijans and Brahmins elicited no evidence of local caste associations. The other castes investigated, the (I) Kayasth, (II) Marwari, (III) Komti, (IV) Reddi, (V) Mangala, and (VI) Mudiraj, all possess some form of caste or subcaste association of the rational-legal type.

### Caste Data

Note.--The following statements are based upon limited interrogation and have not yet been verified by further inquiry.

#### I. Kayasth Caste

The Kayasths, who held powerful and highly respected positions as Hindu officials and civil servants in the Nizam's government, comprise twelve sub-castes, of which three, Mathur, Saxena, and Asthana, were studied (Hassan 1920:322-323).

##### A. Mathur Subcaste

Sources.--Information comes from two major respondents, both of whom are men from the leading Mathur family in Hyderabad.

##### (1) Traditional subcaste structure

To this day, the Mathurs of Hyderabad consider themselves a brotherhood (biradiri) of related families owing loyalty to the senior family, the eighteenth century recipient of a large estate from the Nizam. The head of the senior family is automatically head of the brotherhood, a position inherited patrilineally, the present head having succeeded to the position of his elder brother in 1947. Normally the head of the biradiri held an important position in the Nizam's government, a custom which necessarily ended with the incorporation of Hyderabad into the Republic of India. Until 1948, the head of the brotherhood gave each Mathur family a regular income as well as special grants at the time of births and deaths. In return, he was honored at weddings and dassera by a meeting of representatives of the whole brotherhood at his home. His leadership, however, was exercised informally, and is most clearly seen in his function as adjudicator of intra-Mathur disputes, an activity which takes less time now than when he had more tangible control of Mathur finances. Only one or two cases a year currently come to his attention.

##### (2) Ithed-i-ul-Amal

Founded around 1925, "United Action" was defunct by 1935. The association was interested in social reform. Its members were mostly young men determined to cut down the opulent wedding celebrations

which so often decimated family resources, to shorten ceremonies generally, to limit dowries, to restrict the number of courses at formal dinners (and incidentally to enforce punctuality by beginning to eat at eight-thirty or nine o'clock whether dignitaries were present or not), and generally to do away with costly extravagances.

The leaders were young men from influential, well-to-do families who welcomed all interested Mathurs to join. Because the leaders themselves could not resist the temptation to break the rules, however, the movement collapsed, and many Mathurs feel to this day that the community suffers from ceremonial overindulgence.

No information is available on the formal structure of the association.

### (3) Mathur Cooperative Society

Around 1937 a cooperative society was established to make loans available at reasonable rates of interest for the expenses of the ceremonies, especially marriages, which constitute a major financial problem for the community. As one informant put it, the association was established "to keep Mathurs out of the clutches of the Marwaris." The membership, limited to Mathurs and requiring the purchase of at least one share in the society plus the payment of a rupee a month, numbered approximately twenty-five at the time of the founding of the association and is currently said to be between 125 and 150.

The cooperative has always had the complete support and approval of the traditional leader of the subcaste. He reputedly encouraged some members to join by threatening to terminate their monthly incomes if they refused, and his successor presently serves as president of the association, the latter's brother-in-law, as vice president. The business of the organization is performed by a paid secretary whose most basic job is to dun defaulters. The lesser communal solidarity of the Mathurs since the annexation of Hyderabad is perhaps to be seen in the extent to which it is now necessary to turn to the courts for sanctions against delinquents. In 1961 approximately fifteen cases were taken to court, all judged in favor of the cooperative. In the opinion of our respondents, the society has been very useful and very successful, although it functioned rather inadequately in the late 1950's when the secretary proved inept and insufficiently aggressive in his duties. In 1959 the society came under the leadership of a new managing committee and a new secretary.

## B. Saxena subcaste associations

Sources.--The primary informants are two gentlemen, each possessing advanced university degrees in academic subjects.

### (1) Traditional subcaste structure

The endogamous Saxena community of Hyderabad comprises a brotherhood much like that of the Mathurs. The last head of the biradiri, again the senior man of the senior family, was the former deputy director of the Nizam's postal department. He had succeeded his father to the headship, but on his death in 1957 the position did not go to

his son, who is said to be inappropriately young for the honor and remote as well, since, as an army officer, he is posted outside of the area. As among the Mathurs, the leader was honored at dassera and at the weddings by meetings at his home, and was the arbitrator of intra-subcaste disputes. Unlike the Mathurs, the Saxena head did not contribute regular salaries to other families of the community.

(2) Saxena Sabha

Sometime around the second decade of this century, the sabha was founded to be the vehicle for stimulating the community to certain cultural changes. In particular, the rules of the association prescribed expensive weddings and large dowries. It was also hoped that the circa 150 Saxena families of Hyderabad would be encouraged to establish closer relations with other Kayasth subcastes. Get-together parties were arranged. One respondent reports that as a result he did not demand a dowry contract when he married, although he did receive a dowry, and his brother accepted a dowry of only twenty-one rupees. In addition, marriages to Mathurs and Asthanas as well as a cross-caste marriage to a Katri are reported.

The association did not last. It has not met since 1940, at which time the problems considered included those of inter-subcaste marriage, the possibilities for providing education for the children of poor Saxena families, and the possibilities of ameliorating the lot of young subcaste widows by providing employment. (Widows are forbidden to remarry.) The community in general appears to have taken no interest in the association and the leadership appears to have been ineffective. This in spite of the support of the head of the biradiri, the ex officio president of the sabha. As one informant put it, "there were no elderly persons to influence the community and so the sabha fell apart." In fact, the active members were described as progressive young people who went against the wishes of the elders in their efforts towards social reform.

While it was not possible to examine the written statutes of the association, it was described as organized in a "modern," i.e., rational-legal way, with the inherent purpose, "to give democratic patterns" to subcaste organization.

C. Asthana subcaste

Sources.--The Asthanas who served as principle sources are professional people, a man and a woman.

(1) Traditional subcaste structure

Of the three Kayasth communities studied, the Asthanas are both the smallest and the most recent group, since they number only ten or fifteen families that came to Hyderabad "sixty or seventy years ago." Their biradiri organization essentially duplicates that of the Mathurs and Saxenas. The head has no official title and is addressed as baba ("grandfather") or chacha ("uncle"). He is the senior man of the senior family and inherits his position patrilineally. The present leader succeeded to his father, and it is anticipated that his son will in turn succeed. Each joint family has a recognized head, but the heads do not convene as a panchayat or council, although all members of the community go to the leader's house at festivals (Dassera, Divali and Holi, for example), subsequently to visit from house to house in the brotherhood.

Brotherhood integration is primarily carried out by the leader. The father of the present head firmly controlled the subcaste. As a minister in the Nizam's government he was a man of power and prestige in the state. A very rich man as well, he aided Asthana families financially when required and presented every family with wedding gifts, practices which ended with the termination of landlord rights. The head of the brotherhood adjudicated intra-subcaste disputes and in general looked out for the welfare of the group. In the 1930's he helped poorer members of the community educate their sons and requested, with apparent success, that Asthanas terminate the practice of large dowry payments. The present head, who assumed the position around 1935, apparently does not command the respect and obedience that went to his father. In part this is attributed by informants to personality considerations, in part to the break up of former communal harmony subsequent to the termination of jagardir and zamindar prerogatives.

(2) No other structuring of the Asthana community was reported.

#### D. Kayasth caste association

Sources.--All of the subcaste informants, but particularly those from the Mathur subcaste.

##### (1) Traditional caste structure

Intracaste activity in Hyderabad seems to have been on a purely social level. The four or five subcaste brotherhood-heads, all of whom were wealthy and important officials in the government, were in a position to collaborate informally as required, and this seems to have sufficed for caste needs.

##### (2) Kayasth Association

Founded sometime before or during the first World War and defunct around the time of the second World War, this association is described as "a sort of literary society," which had a library, some recreational facilities and scholarship funds for students. Meeting once or twice a year, when a lecture by some respected figure was featured, the association was notably not reform-minded. The annual lectures did not espouse cultural reform, although they might support caste unity to the extent that they sometimes dealt with Kayasth history and achievement. Organized in a rational-legal way, with a slate of officers and written rules and regulations, the society was dominated by the dominant subcaste, the Mathurs.

##### (3) Kayasth Cooperative Society

Established around 1928, before the founding of the Mathur Cooperative Society, the Kayasth cooperative has always functioned solely as a credit society. Very recently it applied to the government for aid in support of small-scale industry for the destitute women of the caste, but at the time of this study the request had not yet been acted upon. The association, as required by law, is set up as a rational-legal organization. Although the managing committee elects members from most of the subcastes, it is in fact predominantly composed of Mathurs with the brother-in-law of the head of the Mathur biradiri as its president. The approximately 250 members join by purchasing shares and benefit by the opportunity to obtain loans at reasonable rates of interest. No other activities are sponsored. Business meetings are rare and socially unimportant.

## II. Marwari Caste

Members of this community are typically in business and have their origins and loyalties in Marwar to the north. Some ambiguity attaches to the definition of the group. Usually Marwari is taken to refer to the various Vaisya subcastes, and not to Brahmins or others from Marwar. Some informants consider all Vaisyas to be Marwaris, while others would limit the term to those from Rajputana. Three subcastes were investigated, Agarwal, Khandelwal and Jayaswal (cf. Harrison 1960:115; Hassan 1920:492, 497).

### A. Agarwal subcaste

Sources.--The single informant from the subcaste is a well-to-do Hyderabad merchant.

#### (1) Traditional subcaste structure

Although their exact size was not determined, the Agarwals of Hyderabad are a small community. They reputedly have never had a local formal organization of either traditional or modern rational-legal type.

#### (2) All-India Agarwal Sabha (Headquarters, Delhi)

This subcaste association has no local branch. According to our informant, the association meets annually in Delhi, and its aims are to modernize subcaste practices, including an end to the seclusion of women, child marriage, and the consumption of the narcotic drink pang. On the whole, one gains the impression that this association is remote from the everyday life of Hyderabad Agarwals.

### B. Khandelwal subcaste

Sources.--One young, educated man from the subcaste.

#### (1) Traditional subcaste structure

The three joint families that constitute the Hyderabad colony of Khandelwals have no formal structure greater than the family.

#### (3) All-India Khandelwal Mahasabha

The subcaste does have an All-India association with headquarters in Jaipur and branches in Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Agra, Mathura and elsewhere, though not in Hyderabad. Three joint families are not considered sufficient cause for establishing such a branch. The three families do keep abreast of subcaste developments elsewhere through the three monthly subcaste magazines, one originating in Jaipur and two in Agra. According to our informant, the main goal of the mahasabha is to raise Khandelwal cultural standards. It has embarked upon a three-year "progress program" aimed at giving monetary relief to widows, to the poor to help them establish businesses, and to students as scholarships for study in India and abroad. The association supports a program of inexpensive wedding arrangements to help members avoid indebtedness. It also supports widow remarriage, marriage across subcaste barriers and an end to purdah. As with the All-India Agarwal Sabha, this association seems remote from the everyday life of the concerned except for an awareness of the activities of reform taking place elsewhere.

### C. Jayaswal Subcaste

Sources.--Two educated men from the subcaste, one of whom is an officer in the Hyderabad Jayaswal sabha. A published copy of the sabha constitution.

(1) Traditional subcaste structure

The Jayaswal community is considerably larger than that of either the Agarwals or the Khandelwals. They consider themselves locally to constitute a brotherhood (biradiri) of related families led by seven "elders" under the headship of J. L. Jayaswal, a wealthy and highly respected member of one of the senior families. Occasionally the biradiri meets in council. The last such meeting in 1959 assembled "father and elders" and other interested Jayaswals in the home of J. L. Jayaswal to deal with such group affairs as the selection of students for financial aid and the donation of help to the poor, utilizing funds held in trust by the elders.

(2) Hyderabad Hai Hai Kshatriya Jawayaswal Sabha

Around the second decade of the twentieth century the Hyderabad Jayaswals established this rational-legal association in an effort to advance the subcaste by encouraging students and by changing customs that degrade or are old-fashioned, including purdah, child marriage, large dowries, strictures on interdining and intermarriage and the adjustment of those Jayaswals who had lost their liquor concessions when the Nizam's government ended the subcaste monopoly on this industry.

In 1951 a new constitution was adopted which included among associational goals to give aid to needy Jayaswals, to admonish all to behave correctly, to teach correct behavior, by simplification when necessary, particularly as regards the cessation of out-of-date customs such as overly expensive ceremonies, to encourage the progress of the community by providing books and scholarships and ultimately to inspire members of the subcaste by noble works.

This association is simply a local chapter of the national association, and for the most part reflects the purposes of the national leadership. National influence is in part mediated by a monthly magazine distributed from the All-India headquarters. Locally, the association carries out its functions in a context which merges the association with the traditional brotherhood structure, regularizing the latter to some degree as a result. As part of this regularization, a working committee now meets every three months to deal primarily with the administration of scholarships and debating competitions. The biradiri, meeting as the association, holds two general meetings a year for the distribution of prizes in educational contests. (The national association holds a general meeting every three years, the last one in Calcutta.) For fifteen years the Hyderabad association has reflected the same man as president, and before him elected his father, both the patrilineally descended heads of the senior family of the biradiri.

A major local activity of importance for daily life is the maintenance of the Jayaswal Public Library, open to all Jayaswals for a small fee and operated both as a recreational facility and as part of the educational program of the subcaste. The library is the center for the debating competitions and for the administration of scholarship programs. It meets students' book needs by being open daily from five to seven P.M. under the direction of the library president who lives nearby. The library attracts many young men of the subcaste for purely social and recreational reasons.

#### D. Marwari [Marwadi] Caste

Sources.--Primarily the secretary of the sammelan, with a large amount of newspaper material.

(1) Traditional caste structure  
No information.

(2) Andhra Pradesh Marwadi Sammelan

This local chapter of the All-India Marwadi Federation was founded in 1959. During the period of field work the Second Marwadi Sammelan held its two-day meeting. The A.P.M.S. was preceded in Hyderabad by the Rajasthani Pragatti Samar (Rajasthani Progressive Society), founded around 1940 and now connected with the A.P.M.S. During the 1930's a small number of men organized a mandal to advocate cultural reforms such as an end to purdah and the dowry.

The Andhra Pradesh Marwadi Sammelan has but one activity in Hyderabad: an annual meeting, normally well-attended, featuring speeches by caste leaders and other dignitaries. It sponsors no library, recreational facilities nor other social activity. The association describes itself as non-political (cf. Harrison 1960:117). Its main object is to end "evil social customs," such as child marriage and purdah, to help students with stipends, scholarships and loans, to encourage cooperation, inter-subcaste marriage, widow remarriage and good relations among mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. One speaker at the associated meeting of the Rajasthani Women's Conference also urged family planning.

#### III. Komti Caste

Like the Marwari, a trading caste, the Komtis are indigenous, Telegu speakers divided into six subcastes (Hassan 1920:341-342).

Sources.--The principal caste respondents include three members of the Vysya Hostel staff, two prominent businessmen and two students. Copies of caste publications were also obtained.

##### A. Komti subcastes

Inquiry produced no evidence of subcaste voluntary associations. "Caste panchayats" reported for the countryside may be subcaste councils.

##### B. Komti caste

(1) Traditional caste structure

Inquiry produced no evidence of formal organization in the twin cities.

(2) Komti Mahasabha

At a conference held in Hyderabad in 1936 the Komti caste association was founded for the four purposes which to this day constitute association goals. First, the association hopes to promote caste unity by means of yearly conferences, through the personal contacts of officers traveling throughout the region, and through pamphlets including the publication of the monthly magazine, Gupta. Although the association has no village level chapters, it has carried out these functions among the more urbanized segments of the caste. Next, the association hopes to encourage cultural reform, particularly the termination of dowry payments and child marriage and the encouragement of widow remarriage. Although the association has persistently



propagandized for these changes, they do not claim great success as yet. Third, the association supports education. These goals are carried out through a subsidiary association, the Vysya Hostel. Finally, the association statutes mention unspecified political goals, and the association has functioned as a pressure group interested in legislation affecting the student hostel and business interests.

The Komti Mahasabha is a rational-legal association in which all Komtis are automatically members, but only those paying yearly dues of five rupees, and thus members of the Standing Committee, are eligible to vote for officers. The association holds an annual convention in the districts and is a notable presence in Hyderabad-Secunderabad only indirectly through the magazine and through the student hostel.

(3) Vysya Hostel

Established in 1939 when three students were given board and lodging, and moved in 1953 to a modern structure still under construction, the hostel currently provides room and board at reasonable prices to 200 students from all over Andhra Pradesh. Supported and encouraged by the Komti Mahasabha, the hostel is technically independent, operates under its own working committee of fourteen elected from a body of approximately two-hundred Komtis enfranchised by virtue of having contributed at least three-thousand rupees to the hostel. The elected president, a successful Hyderabad businessman, devotes a great deal of interest and effort to managing the hostel and its staff of twenty. Current financing derives primarily from student fees and rent for hostel buildings. The hostel undertakes no activities other than those affecting students.

(4) Vysya Hostel Student Association

A rational-legal organization of residents of the hostel, this association deals with student activities, manages contests, encourages studies and occasionally publishes a magazine.

IV. Reddi caste

This, the largest and most influential farmer-proprietor caste of western Andhra Pradesh, is subdivided into ten major subcastes (Harrison 1960:210; Hassan 1920:307).

Sources.--The principal informants consisted of two staff members and one student from the hostel and one officer of the Sangha. The statutes from the Kalyana Mantapan and various printed reports of the Sangha and the hostel were also obtained.

A. Reddi subcastes

No information.

B. Reddi caste

(1) Traditional caste structure

Appears to be purely informal.

(2) Reddy Jana Sangha

Organized on the provincial level during the British period, the first district conference of Reddis took place in 1913 and the first provincial conference, in 1917. During these years the idea of a

permanent organization for the social and educational uplift of the caste was proposed. The Reddy Jana Sangha was established as a rational-legal group at the second provincial conference in 1920 and since that time six All-Reddi conferences have been held, mostly to decry the breakdown of enthusiasm, participation and financial support between such meetings. Although the president of the association, Sri N. Venkataranga Rao Bahadur, who served for several decades, was very generous of money and interest, top leadership has not always been responsive, wealthier members of the caste have not always fulfilled their pledges of aid and the average Reddi peasant or worker has apparently looked upon the Sangha more as a source of help than as a cause to support. According to one report, 99 percent of the over four-hundred scholarship recipients have neither attempted to make any repayments to the Sangha nor shown any inclination to contribute to fund appeals.

The headquarters of the association was in Madras until 1958 when it was transferred to Hyderabad. The association is officially non-political and espouses two goals, (1) educational progress, and (2) the promotion of communal solidarity by marriage across subcaste lines. Its local importance appears to be almost solely within the realm of education; this, primarily through scholarships made available to Reddi students. The history of the Sangha is one of only partially successful pleas for funds for this purpose. The association also supports the formerly semi-autonomous and now entirely independent Reddy Student Hostel in Hyderabad.

### (3) Reddy Hostel

The Hyderabad Reddi hostel was founded in 1918. Officially supported by the Reddy Jana Sangha, it has been independent since 1948 and has its own body of subscribing members, its own elected officers and its own budget. Its present success is attributed to the president of the hostel, a successful business man who contributes heavily in time and money. The hostel occupies a large, well-kept estate and presently houses, at moderate rates, 350 Reddi students from all over Telangana.

### (4) Young Men's Reddy Association

Although the name might suggest an all-caste youth association, this is actually a rational-legal association of the residents of the Reddy Hostel with the sole purpose of administering student affairs in the hostel. Its potential importance as a training ground for future caste leaders, of course, is great. Most of the present Reddi leaders on the state level were fellow students in the oldest Reddi hostel, an organization which operated in Madras between 1907 and 1917.

### (5) Sri Pingle Venkatarama Reddy Kalyana Mantapan

This "marriage hall" society is notably local in potential significance and was in the process of establishment during the period of field work. It has the statutes of a rational-legal association. Its object is to purchase and build a building which will offer facilities for weddings and other ceremonies and will be available for rental for educational, social and cultural activities by all castes and communities. It hopes to possess a library, lecture hall, reading room, hospital and dispensary. It plans to run a lecture

program, to give scholarships to poor students, to encourage and promote cultural activities and "to use funds for charitable, educational or humanitarian purposes." Funds will be obtained by public appeal, with ordinary membership obtainable upon payment of 25 rupees a year.

At the time of study, this organization was under promotion by several young educated Reddis of Hyderabad, including a university lecturer who also works as secretary of the Reddy Jana Sangha. Its success cannot be prognosed. At the time it had no members, but forty individuals had promised to join.

(6) Raja Bahadur Venkataramareddy College

Founded in 1954 when the founder of the youth hostel donated the necessary buildings and land and set up a trust, this college for women is partially supported by donations administered by a governing council. Much of its present success is attributed to the vice president of the governing council, an influential member of the caste who also holds the position of chairman of the upper house of the Andhra Pradesh legislature.

V. Mangala Caste

This, the Telegu barber caste, is officially classified as backward. It consists of five subcastes (Hassan 1920:463).

Sources.--The heads of the two barber associations were the primary respondents. The archives of both associations were made available, but these archives were not complete. The barbers of six barbershops in Secunderabad were interrogated concerning the barber associations.

A. Mangala subcastes

No information.

B. Mangala caste

(1) Traditional caste structure

On the local level, the caste (subcaste?) was led by hereditary headmen (chowdries) whose main function appears to have been to adjudicate disputes in panchayat sessions. Such panchayats are not reported for the twin cities for recent years and reports conflicted regarding earlier years.

(2) Andhra Pradesh Nayee Brahmin Sangh

Around the year 1928 the barber attached to the palace of the Nizam established a barbers' association. This group reformed in 1956. Its earlier structure is unknown, but at least since its reformation it has possessed written statutes which organize the group as a rational-legal association. In spite of a statewide organization, however, the association is essentially moribund and seems to be the private possession of its president, the owner of one of the finest barber shops in Hyderabad, and his friends.

Association goals, as stated in the constitution, are to unify the subcastes for social, economic and educational progress. More specifically, the association would like to help impoverished families and encourage students. Explicitly non-political, the association encourages the following changes: to end liquor parties at weddings and funerals, to end excessive wedding expenditures, to

increase the age of brides, to work for the abolishment of barber taxes and license fees and to arrange for the better location of barber shops. In 1950 the association worked successfully for inclusion of the Mangalas on the list of backward castes, with resultant governmental preferences for the community.

The association apparently had some success during the 1950's. A violent disagreement between the president of the association and a dissident member, the owner of another modern shop, led to the establishment in 1959 of a rival association, and at least since that date, neither association has had demonstrable support from the caste at large. Inquiries in six barbershops in Secunderabad indicated that city barbers either did not know of the associations or considered them defunct, although the A.P.N.B.S. leadership reports that it functioned as a panchayat "four or five times last year" to settle disputes between caste members. (The present leadership is in no way related to the traditional chowdries.)

(3) Nawayuvak Nayee Sabha

The aims of the dissident association do not differ markedly from those of the older group except for a more explicit dedication to work for governmental aid. Both associations are eager to find workable projects to attract support from the potential membership, but neither so far has been successful. (Active voting members pay a very small monthly dues.) The Nawayuvak Nayee Sabha has specifically attempted to get a gift of land for the construction of modern residences, to get educational aid for children, to get governmental support for a children's hostel, to get impoverished members placed on the social welfare relief rolls, to use membership dues for the purchase of clothing and books to permit children to attend school, to get government money for a women's welfare society, to build a cooperative store for the sale of hair-cutting materials, and, from the ethnographer, to arrange for the free distribution of milk. In all of this, the association has failed. More specifically, the president has failed, for this seems to be almost solely a paper association with only a small clique participating.

VI. Mudiraj Caste

A backward Telegu-speaking caste estimated to number 250,000 in Andhra Pradesh.

Source.--Our single informant was a highly educated professional man from the caste.

A. Mudiraj subcaste

No information.

B. Mudiraj caste

(1) Traditional caste structure

Caste (subcaste?) panchayats exist in the countryside, but are unreported for the city.

(2) All-India Mudiraj Conference

Around 1932 this association was founded by a meeting of delegates from all over Hyderabad State under the leadership of the first Mudiraj to achieve wealth and power, a former mayor of Hyderabad.

The objectives of the association, which apparently was organized as a rational-legal association, were to upgrade the community by providing financial and other assistance to Mudiraj students, to work for inclusion of the Mudiraj on the list of backward castes, to work for cultural reforms such as prohibition and the education of girls. The association also sponsored a student hostel until a few years ago. The effectiveness of this association appears to have been directly due to the success of its principal founder and supporter. When the latter lost his wealth a few years ago, he also lost his ability to maintain the association. The association and the related hostel are now non-existent or moribund. Significance for the Mudiraj community was apparently primarily in the assistance and facilities for students and in the visits of association leaders to Mudiraj communities and local leaders.

(3) Mudiraj Student Hostel

Founded by the All-India Mudiraj Conference in Hyderabad, the hostel was closed around the year 1957.

(4) Mudiraj Mahasabha

Founded around 1950 by dissident members of the All-India Mudiraj Conference, this rival association seems primarily the product of leadership jealousies. The association shares the objectives of the older association, and joined the older association in support of the student hostel. Both associations are active politically, working to get representatives in the state legislature. One Mudiraj has succeeded in becoming state minister. The membership of the two associations dichotomizes the caste, since rivalry interferes with dual participation, but the division is reputedly not along subcaste lines. Since no formal action is necessary to claim membership, one cannot easily determine the extent to which either association is presently more than a paper organization. The major local activity consists of campaigning at election time and the public celebration of Dassera, Republic Day, and other holidays.

### Conclusion

(1) One of the questions directed to the above data asks what the primary aims and achievements are of caste associations as local institutions. The following were discovered:

Cultural reform.--The majority explicitly encourage reforms in practices considered degrading, such as child marriage and purdah, or in cultural habits which otherwise undermine the well-being of the community, such as excessive dowry exchanges and expensive wedding celebrations. Success in these programs of reform can be documented, but for the most part are undramatic: voluntary associations have no sanctions to enforce compliance, and sole reliance upon persuasion is not strikingly effective. The traditional head of the Asthana subcaste brotherhood, by contrast, apparently had immediate success in terminating the practice of large dowry payments among the members of his group. His "requests" are backed by the power to invoke meaningful sanctions.

Unification of castes.--In order to make caste a force in modern society and politics, it is essential that castes develop a capacity for united action that far exceeds traditional solidarity. Caste associations provide a formal structure useful for this purpose, but a sense of caste unity needs

encouragement in every way, and particularly by breaking down barriers among subcastes. On the local level this takes the form in several cases of efforts to encourage subcaste socializing and intermarriage. As with other cultural reforms, however, the association can only persuade, it cannot force. Nevertheless, informants give the impression that attitudes towards such formerly forbidden interaction have changed markedly, and examples of inter-subcaste marriage can often be cited. Such achievements, of course, cannot be attributed solely to associational activity.

Cooperative society advantages.--The two Kayasth cooperatives appeal to potential members, as do cooperatives generally, because of the practical advantages they offer. (The barber caste cooperative, having failed because of poor leadership and lack of governmental support, never developed sufficiently to seek members.) The two successful cooperatives, however, seem to incur problems common to credit cooperatives generally in India: the necessity to persuade potential members to join beyond simply explaining obvious advantages and repayment defaults.

Poor relief.--Several caste associations attempt to aid the poor of their community and some have schemes for providing training and employment for the unemployed. One has the impression, however, that such help is much less than might have been anticipated. Perhaps this reflects in part the excessively large dimensions of the problem in India. For most communities, poverty is so widespread and serious that only outside help can effectively ameliorate it. As a result, such caste association programs flounder for lack of funds and in unsuccessful quests for governmental aid. Perhaps when the problem reduces to more manageable proportions caste associations may intervene more consistently and with greater success.

Educational support.--Caste associations frequently hope to raise the general social and economic level of their people by increasing the number of trained and successful members through education. Commonly, the most consistent association achievements have been in the management of scholarship programs, libraries, student hostels and other activities for students. Even though requests far exceed resources for even the wealthiest castes, this appears to be the area in which voluntary associations can and have operated most effectively. It is interesting to note that unlike ethnic groups such as the Muslim, Parsi, and Maharashtrian caste associations do not typically found schools.

Political activity.--Associations vary as to whether they are admittedly "political" or not, but almost without exception they appear responsible to legislative and administrative activities relevant to their members. Some associations function primarily as pressure groups. They often encourage legislation and governmental intervention useful to dominant caste interests in business, farming or trade. More broadly, they may seek political objectives with wider implications for caste standing (cf. Harrison 1960:96-136). On the local level, this may mean campaign activities for candidates and issues from time to time. No doubt associations are not otherwise important for many caste members and impinge for these people very modestly upon the life routine.

(2) A second question inquires into the nature of leadership. In some cases we found that the traditional leaders of the caste or subcaste support the new association, though not always for identical reasons. The

inherited leaders supported the establishment of the Kayasth cooperative as a purely practical expedient. In order to function, a cooperative society must establish itself as a legal body. One might anticipate that old organizations will readily redefine themselves when obvious advantages follow upon formal establishment as a legally defined voluntary association. Many of the other associations in our sample are no doubt equally cases in point. The Jayaswal Sabha, as a local branch of a national association, assimilated with the local brotherhood. The extension of a large-scale organization into the local community is apparently facilitated by amalgamation of the affiliate of the large national-legal association with older leadership structure on the local level. This becomes, then, a special case of redefinition for obvious advantage, the advantage in this case deriving from participation in the national association.

One cannot readily speak of traditional leaders on the regional or state level, since individuals seem to lead by virtue of wealth and power as much as by succession. Involvement in caste associations on this level offers an important organizational advantage to the established leadership since it provides a structure, a regularization, of their leadership. The Reddis illustrate the phenomenon. When the Reddy Jana Sangha was established, the traditional head of the caste, its most wealthy and illustrious member, the Maharajah of Munagala, supported the new organization and was in turn its elected president for several decades. Similarly, the president of the Komti Mahasabha is an influential person in Hyderabad society and politics and the president of the All-India Mudiraj Conference was the first Mudiraj to attain provincial importance financially and politically. In the absence of other caste machinery at this level, a caste association can be used to reinforce established semiformal or informal leadership.

Some caste and subcaste associations had a contrasting relationship to established leadership: the association can be a primary mechanism for the definition of new leaders. The president of the Andhra Pradesh Nayee Brahmin Sangh reportedly organized in defiance of established caste authorities, and the newer Nawayuvak Nayee Sabha was founded to establish a leadership antagonistic to existent association leaders. Similarly, the Mudiraj Mahasabha promoted a caste leadership opposed to the established leadership of the older Mudiraj association. The youthful leaders of the Kayasth Ithed-i-ul-Amal had acquiescence of the established community heads, but all the same seem to have attempted to assert their leadership in opposition to traditional customs by forming this association. The same may be said of the Saxena Sabha. An association may be a vehicle for establishing a body of new leaders without treading upon the domain of the established leadership.

(3) An important measure of associational success is the amount and quality of member participation. Our data permit only superficial observations. Many who take part in caste or subcaste association activities are individuals seeking aid, whether students, the needy, or individuals wanting the advantages of cooperative credit. Only a couple of associations cater to those seeking entertainment and socialization beyond annual celebrations of one kind or another. Very few individuals participate beyond attendance at the annual meeting, subscription to the association publication and perhaps an occasional contribution. Only a few, in short, participate actively and regularly primarily to support a cause they believe in. All of the associations studied appear to suffer from inadequate member participation. (Note the contrast, however, to the Saraswat Brahmins of the Bombay area who

appear to have very active member participation. Unlike any caste in our sample, this association is reinforced by a caste-delimited religious sect organization and has the additional advantages of constituting a wealthy, well-educated group (Harrison 1960:104-105; interviews with a member of the caste at Mills College).

(4) In planning this investigation we anticipated differences in organizational ability between the higher and the lower castes. Our findings indicate to the contrary that associational redefinition is not simply a matter of position in the caste hierarchy. Although Brahmin associations do not exist in Hyderabad, they occur elsewhere. Untouchable associations are equally absent, and it has been suggested that they are less inclined to form associations since special legislation does much for them that others accomplish through voluntary associations. Our information on harijans is inadequate for further comment. On the whole, however, our sample is notable for demonstrating the existence of caste associations on all levels, from the very highly placed Kayasths, through the Reddis, Komtis and Marwaris, to the backward Mangalas and Mudirajes. Some factors related to position in the hierarchy no doubt affect capacity to organize. The level of sophistication and education will surely relate to the kind of leaders and participants available for associational activity. But just as important and not necessarily related to position in the hierarchy will be factors of unity and disunity, homogeneity and heterogeneity, size, location and others relevant to organizational capacity.

(5) Finally, is associational redefinition a distinctive process in terms of the assembled data? The answer, we think, is yes. The process involves both the creation of a formal structure and the delineation of group objectives. As concerns structure, it seems meaningfully distinguished from the formation otherwise of rational-legal common interest groups since the redefining association adapts or opposes its leadership to that of the traditional group and incorporates or courts a membership with customary habits of social interaction. Not all traditional groups, however, have established leaders and habitual socialization and cooperation. On the regional and state level, for example, we found that directed caste-wide action first really developed with the formation of an association.

In the delineation of group objectives, the association that is redefining inherits a developed sense of group purpose which it must adopt, adapt, or oppose. This adds a dimension to the determination of the association's shared interest which would distinguish it from other shared interest groups. But established groups vary in the extent to which they have crystallized such group objectives. The present study offers, unfortunately, no direct evidence on traditional caste goal-awareness. Caste traditions, however, are surely strong and distinctly normative. The present study provides numerous examples of associations that formed at least in part as a technique for explicitly introducing new or modified norms of behavior. This suggests a potential manipulative utility in the formal delineation of goals different from those traditional for the group by the formation of a rational-legal association.

One concludes tentatively from these observations that the process of associational redefinition is a recurrent process that ranges in its distinctiveness. While in many cases it clearly involves added dimensions in the form of adaptation to a well-developed older group structure and a system



of felt-needs, it shades in other cases into situations of undeveloped preëxistent structure and felt-need which leave the process essentially undifferentiated from that of the formation and maintenance of any formally organized common interest group. To the extent that the process is unique and recurrent, it would seem to warrant further cross-cultural search for regularities.

#### ENDNOTE

- (1) Field work was carried out during two months in India, of which five weeks were in Hyderabad-Secunderabad, as a participant in the 1962 Summer Institute in Indian Civilization. Support came equally from Fulbright funds and from the Mills College research budget, for which I am deeply grateful. I owe a special debt of gratitude to colleagues in India, particularly to Miss A. Kanga and Mr. R. Mudiraj of Osmania University and Mr. Bashiruddin Ahmed of the Nizam's College. The author alone is responsible for the contents of this paper.

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