Potters, Plotters, Prodders
in a Bombay Slum

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Anthropological literature on squatters and shantytown dwellers is by now ample though by no means copious (cf. bibliographies of Nelson, 1969; Mangin, 1970; United Nations, 1976; Cornelius, 1975). But imbalances exist in this literature that give it a particular slant and make it less useful than it might be. In the first place, much of the ethnographic coverage is from Latin America and Africa-Middle East; Asia and Southeast Asia are poorly represented. Yet major population movements and mushrooming shantytowns of great size and density are crowding into the available urban space in these parts of the world.[1]

A second imbalance, if not bias, in this literature is that it is by and large within a structural form and uses various types of structural explanation. This imbalance appears in three, not necessarily mutually exclusive, types of study.

Aggregate Data Studies

Such studies are generally based upon surveys or questionnaire type of data (e.g., Perlman, 1976; Cornelius, 1975). Definitions of concepts and variables are most often etic. Squatters and shantytown dwellers, then, are a culturally homogeneous category varying along predetermined or factor-analytic dimensions. When such studies are not based upon questionnaires or survey data, they are often on a macro level. The Leeds and Leeds (1976) study of political responses of squatters in Brazil, Peru, and Chile argues that the political behaviour of squatters is predictable because it is an adaptive

response determined by a wide range of variables of the inclusive polity (1976, p. 194, 236). Thus immanent characteristics — cultural, moral, personal, psychological, or racial — are not needed to explain political behaviour. This is a positivistic approach par excellence.

Marxian or Dependency Studies

In such studies (Perlman, 1976; Epstein, 1975; Safa, 1974; Desai and Savur, 1974) squatters are a homogeneous category in some way linked into or related to a nationally or internationally capitalistic mode of production. Portes and Browning (1976) have summarized this theoretical position and noted its shift away from the study of culture and consciousness. 'The general trend detected is thus from respect for geographical limits and concern with culture to a dynamic focus on processes and concern with structural issues of interests and power' (Portes and Browning, 1976, p. 14). Whatever consciousness squatters have, then, is false and hardly worth analysis. They are the exploited poor, the 'industrial reserve army', supporting an elite upper class in control of the forces of production and of access to strategic resources and the good things of life.

In her otherwise excellent study of marginality theories Perlman (1976) takes the framework of her argument from those whom she is trying to refute. The result is that we learn much about the functions of marginality myths for the elite, but little about the cultural meaning that the squatters use to constitute their lives or even about the functions of these meanings for them.

Studies of Mediators and Voluntary Associations

Much of the literature on mediators among shantytown dwellers has a distinctly Latin American tone. The literature, at times, appears a hopeless confusion of types, subtypes, and distinctions (Kaufman, 1974; Demegret, 1976). The common theme, however, is the structural articulation of the poor with the larger system and system allocations. Voluntary associations, the institutional equivalent of the individual mediators, are also seen in a structural-functional framework in which the emphasis is on functional integration and adaptation. The argument between Jongkind (1974) and Skeldon (1976, 1977) summarizes this literature and need not be repeated here.

This paper considers the cultural rather than the structural side of the social coin. It asks, 'Does culture have anything new to tell us or can it suggest new questions about squatters'? The paper, then, disaggregates the category of squatters and looks at three ethnic groups in a Bombay, India, slum. In conclusion, I speculate on what these three ethnic groups in Bombay and the South Asian continent may have to say and add to our understanding of shantytown dwellers in general.

The Setting

Bombay was originally a fishing village acquired by the British East India Company in 1667 as a factory or warehouse. The area had one of the few excellent harbours in India, so that it rapidly grew into a colonial administrative and commercial entrepôt. Today Bombay is India's financial and industrial capital. It shelters a cosmopolitan population of well over 5 million people speaking many tongues, belonging to many castes, and living in anything from palatial high-rises to gunnysack shacks.

Bombay is the centre of capitalistic enterprise in India and is intimately linked to the world capitalistic system (see Desai and Savur, 1974). Three legacies of colonial rule have structured Bombay's social organization. First is a large industrial army of labourers in both the formal and informal sectors along with a huge administrative bureaucracy both public and private. British policy avoided interference with the traditional caste and authority structure. Thus position in the new occupational hierarchy has tended to replicate position in the old caste hierarchy. Second, though migrants from all over India have steadily streamed into Bombay, they have remained segmented along caste, linguistic, regional, and religious lines. Third, rapid growth of the city created many shortages for housing, employment, education, and other amenities; all of these remain today. These three legacies have provided a social milieu in which mediators grow to fill and bridge the gaps between segments and hierarchical ranks (Michaelson, 1976). They also structure conditions for the growth of squatter settlements themselves.

Estimates of the number of squatter and slum dwellers in Bombay vary. Singh (1978, p. 168)[2] in a recent survey of the available literature for all India suggests that more than a third of the urban population of India's four major cities (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and Delhi) live in slums. For Bombay, estimates of the number

of people who live in shantytowns range from 500,000 (Desai and Pillai, 1972, p. 49) to 1 million (Economic and Political Weekly, Aug. 3, 1974, p. 1219). The latter figure would mean that one-fifth of a population of more than 5 million in Bombay lives in shantytowns.

Shantinagar, a pseudonym, has a reputation for being one of the worst, if not the worst, slums in Bombay. It is seen as 'a hell hole for so long that the general public has begun to take it for granted' (Free Press Journal, Oct. 13, 1960); as a place where upright citizens are 'shocked at poverty, filth, wretchedness of people and conditions' (Free Press Journal, Oct. 17, 1960); as 'a stinking slum-town ... bursting at the seams' (Economic and Political Weekly, Aug. 3, 1974); and as a place where 'there is nothing like a social life for ... [its] residents' (Free Press Journal, Oct. 3, 1960). Some of this reputation is due to illegal activities, such as the brewing of bootleg liquor in dry Bombay, the numbers racket, and the like, that take place there. But it is also due to Shantinagar's leather tanning and other small industries and to the translation of the physical conditions in which its inhabitants live into an evaluation of their social life and worth. These views of Shantinagar's inhabitants, in addition to the three colonial structural legacies, condition the ideological environment of 'depersonalization' (Lynch, 1974, p. 1667-8) in which they live, as well as policies for dealing with them. They also condition responses of the shantytown dwellers themselves.[3]

One estimate, perhaps more in the nature of a guess, of Shantinagar's population is 300,000 individuals who live in 70,000 to 80,000 hutments (Economic and Political Weekly, Aug. 3, 1974, p. 1219), while a 1944 survey indicates a population of 16,414 (Tata Institute n.d.: 3). This is an explosive growth over the last 30 years. Much of Shantinagar is swamp land that the squatters are slowly filling in as they creep across remaining empty space. Drainage is poor and during the monsoon many homes and paths are inundated with water, mud, and waste material. One section of Shantinagar has been a garbage dump for the city of Bombay. Despite these conditions it is centrally located in a suburb close to the city; all major railroads and major bus routes are within easy access. Shantinagar is also cosmopolitan; its alleyways and streets echo with a polyphony of languages and dazzle with a potpourri of people, custom, and costume.

Shantinagar itself has a segmentary structure and is broken up into five sections, again broken into subsections, and these again

an assessment tax. The original settlement was of three *vaadis*, or alleys, 80 feet wide, with houses lining each side of a *vaadi*. The Municipal Corporation later installed six water taps, two per *vaadi*. Since the original settlement, the colony has expanded with the addition of two more *vaadis* and a great number of housing extensions that now crowd into the originally wide alleys.

The potters of Shantinagar are a tightly knit, involuted community. After coming to Bombay they reconstructed and reinforced their traditional way of life because of their isolation from Bombay and their large population in one place. Much also is due to the constraints put upon them by the nature of their occupation as a 'total social institution' (Mauss, 1967) and its interweaving with other aspects of their life.

TABLE 1

Occupational Differences for Potters, Adi-Dravidas and Muslims

Occupation	Potters		Adi-Dravidas		Muslims		Total	
	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
Dock worker	—	—	18.3	(11)	35.5	(21)	16.4	(32)
Factory worker	2.6	(2)	58.3	(35)	8.4	(5)	21.5	(42)
Distillery worker	—	—	—	—	13.5	(8)	4.1	(8)
Construction, labourer	1.3	(1)	6.6	(4)	18.5	(11)	8.2	(16)
Potter	75.0	(57)	—	—	—	—	29.2	(57)
Truck driver	1.3	(1)[a]	5.0	(3)	3.3	(2)	3.0	(6)
Clerical worker	2.6	(2)[a]	1.6	(1)	—	—	1.5	(3)
Carpenter	5.2	(4)	—	—	—	—	2.0	(4)
Tailor	2.6	(2)	3.3	(2)	1.6	(1)	2.5	(5)
Vendor, Shopkeeper	2.6	(2)	5.0	(3)	16.9	(10)	7.6	(15)
Other	1.3	(1)	1.6	(1)	1.6	(1)	1.5	(3)
Unemployment	5.2	(4)	—	—	—	—	2.0	(4)
Total	100.0[b]	(76)	100.0[b]	(60)	100.0[b]	(59)	100.0[b]	(195)

[a] These individuals work in the Potters' Cooperative. In the text they were included with the potters as related occupations.
[b] Figure rounded to nearest tenth.

Pottery making is a family occupation for the Prajapati Kumbhars. All processes of work take place at or in the home, and much space inside the home is given over to work and storage for complete ware. Space outside the house is also needed to dry the pots, to knead and purify the clay, to set up firing ovens,

and to soak and strain raw clay in soak pits. From an early age children learn to be careful of knocking over pots. Boys begin helping out in simple tasks around the age of 10 and during their teens begin learning the craft. Wives help to knead the raw clay and to transport the ware to market or peddle it in various neighbourhoods of Bombay. As a family enterprise, then, the potters are in control of the means of production, most important of which is their own skill. A skilled man with the assistance of his wife could in 1970 net about Rs. 200 a month in the non-monsoon season. Potters are, moreover, their own bosses. As one man put it, 'One thing is better about potters' work, no one gives orders. One is his own boss and all work is at home'.

Just as space and time in the home are organized around the tasks of pottery making, so too seasons of work are constrained by the requirements of the wheel or the Hindu festival calendar. The period of the monsoons is especially difficult since the pots won't dry or the ovens fire. The days before festivals such as Nag Panchmi and Diwali are ones of feverish activity to fashion the traditional items required on these days.

The potters' craft is embedded in the caste system and Hindu religious belief. The Kumbhars have a myth about the potters' wheel.

In ancient days the potters' wheel used to turn by itself. It was given by God. One day a man kicked it with his foot and it stopped turning. The potters then went to Shankar Bhagvan and told him what had happened. He gave them a stick and said the wheel would have to be turned by using the stick. He also took off the waist string from the potters and said the pot would have to be cut from the wheel by that string.

The wheel itself is worshipped daily and is associated with Shankar Bhagvan (Lord Vishnu), who carries a wheel in one of his hands. The wheel is also worshipped because, as one informant put it, 'From the wheel we get our daily work, and from our daily work we get the food which fills our bellies'. All holidays from work are Hindu holidays or festivals and most of the potters' recreation is in the form of religious songs, stories, and rituals. In their oral tradition, a trickster figure, Gora Kumbhar, is often rescued from his escapades by God, just as in their belief they and their work are in the hands of God, who protects and rescues them. *Mukaddar*, fate, is a term frequently heard among them. The craft and the caste are also part of the traditional caste system, and pottery is an essential item in

TABLE 2
*Literacy Rates for Potters, Adi-Dravidas, and Muslims**

	Potters		Adi-Dravidas		Muslims		Total	
	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
Illiterate	47.0	(36)	30.0	(18)	68.0	(40)	48.0	(94)
Literate	53.0	(40)	70.0	(42)	32.0)	(19)	52.0	(101)
Total	100.0	(76)	100.0	(60)	100.0	(59)	100.0	(195)

* 'Literacy' means a fourth standard education or better.

In the potters' respondent group those with a fourth standard education or better were considered literate. By this criterion 53.0% (N=40) were literate and 47.0% (N=36) were illiterate (see Tables 2 and 3). Respondents were also asked if they read the newspapers, regardless of formal education, and 71.0% (N=54) said that they read the newspapers, while 29.0% (N=22) said that they did not (see Table 4). More revealing, however, are figures for frequency of reading. Of those who said that they read the newspapers, only 37.0% (N=20) said that they read the newspapers daily, 53.7% (N=29) read a few times a week, and 9.2% (N=5) said that they read occasionally (see Table 5). My own observations lead me to believe that the criterion of fourth standard education is the more accurate figure. There is little doubt, however, that literacy is increasing, especially among the young. A very few young people have obtained college degrees but they tend to move out of the colony. Maltiben has also been able to arrange for scholarships in private schools for some of the children and her contacts range as far away as the United States and Canada. Because of these projects Maltiben has gained respect from the potters, and her voice is influential with the leading men of the cooperative. She has been a leading mediator, and through her efforts resources have been allocated to the community and improvements made. The pattern is paternalistic, and this has led to some dissatisfaction. Not all potters are satisfied with Maltiben and the Improvement Association, nor are all satisfied with the cooperative and its leaders. Some basis for dissatisfaction exists but not all is due to the exploitation of the poorer potters (Desai and Savur, 1974). Some complain because of personality

and family quarrels, and others because they envy their neighbours' success (cf. Portes, 1972).[7]

TABLE 3

Educational Levels and Differences for Potters, Adi-Dravidas, and Muslims

Standard	Potters		Adi-Dravidas		Muslims		Total	
	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
No education	23.6	(18)	16.6	(10)	59.3	(35)	32.3	(63)
1-3	23.6	(18)	13.3	(8)	8.4	(5)	15.8	(31)
4-5	32.8	(25)	51.6	(31)	25.4	(15)	36.4	(71)
6-7	11.8	(9)	8.3	(5)	5.0	(3)	8.7	(17)
8	—	—	1.6	(1)	1.6	(1)	1.0	(2)
SSLC	6.5	(5)	8.3	(5)	—	—	5.1	(10)
Technical	1.3	(1)	—	—	—	—	.5	(1)
Total	100.0[a]	(76)	100.0[a]	(60)	100.0[a]	(59)	100.0[a]	(195)

[a] Figure rounded to nearest tenth.

TABLE 4

Difference in Newspaper Readership for Potters, Adi-Dravidas and Muslims

Group	Don't read		Read		Total	
	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
Potters	29.0	(22)	71.0	(54)	100.0[a]	(76)
Adi-Dravidas	21.6	(13)	78.3	(47)	100.0[a]	(60)
Muslims	66.1	(39)	33.9	(20)	100.0[a]	(59)
Total	38.0	(74)	62.0	(121)	100.0[a]	(195)

[a] Figure rounded to nearest tenth.

The potters are, then, like other dwellers in Shantinagar. They are poor, in need of better houses, sanitation, health care, food, education, and especially better living conditions. But they are also unlike other dwellers in Shantinagar. They identify themselves as Gujaratis and as a Hindu potter caste; this is important to them for it defines who they are. They are in cultural opposition to the nearby South Indians and Muslims, with whom they share little cultural heritage. Their sense of self-worth derives from their occupation and from its meaning within their cosmology. They

distrust godless politicians and outsiders meddling in their community life. Objectively, too, they differ because, as potters, they face problems peculiar to them and them alone. For these reasons, in part, they have accepted and worked with mediators of their own caste or of their own Gujarati subculture. The definition of their situation is predicated on these circumstances and is constituted through these caste and religiously embedded ethnic symbols. To paraphrase Clifford Geertz (1968, p. 29), to be a shantytowner here is thus not to be a Shanty-Towner; it is to be a particular kind of shantytowner, and of course, shantytowners differ.

TABLE 5

Differences in Frequency of Newspaper Readership for Potters, Adi-Dravidas and Muslims

	Daily		Few times/ week		Occasionally		No reply		Total	
	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.
Potters	37.0	(20)	53.7	(29)	9.2	(5)	—	—	100.0[a]	(54)
Adi-Dravidas	63.8	(30)	23.4	(11)	12.7	(6)	—	—	100.0[a]	(47)
Muslims	50.0	(10)	35.0	(7)	10.0	(2)	5.0	(1)	100.0[a]	(20)
Total	49.5	(60)	38.8	(47)	9.9	(12)	.8	(1)	100.0[a]	(121)

[a] Figures rounded to nearest tenth.

Plotters

One of the groups living across the road from the potters in the Gandhi Bridge section of Shantinagar is that of the Adi-Dravidas. The Adi-Dravidas are a Tamil-speaking, untouchable caste from the state of Tamilnadu in South India. By and large, those in Gandhi Bridge come from the Tinnevelly district of that state.[8]

Adi-Dravidas began migrating to Bombay about 100 years ago when they came to work in the leather tanneries of the city, some of which exist in Shantinagar today. Today's migrants are much more sophisticated and diversified than their forebears. While the potters live by their craft, the Adi-Dravidas live by their craftiness. Having no special skill, they use wit and ingenuity to get a job in a very competitive Bombay. In a respondent group of 60 Adi-Dravidas from Anna Chawl or *vaadi* in Gandhi Bridge, the

of mediation for their people. The association represented 'the grievances of its members before various authorities, and is semi-political in outlook' (Tata Institute n.d.: 35).

The DMK party has largely replaced the association in Shantinagar today. It has 14 branch offices throughout Bombay city and a head office at Dravidian House in Shantinagar. There are ten units in the Shantinagar branch of the party and one of these is located in Anna Chawl. Dravidian House is a major communications center for the caste and is open most evenings when the party leaders and other followers congregate there.

The DMK is a regional party of Tamilnadu state. For some time the party espoused an anti-Brahman ideology along with the propagation of Tamil language and culture. After a long struggle with the Congress Party of India, it came to power in Tamilnadu state and in so doing muted much of its original anti-Brahman stand. Adi-Dravidas respond to the party's promises to help the poor, its anti-orthodox Brahmanical orientation, and its glorification of Tamil language and culture. In Shantinagar the party has taken on many other important functions.

Adi-Dravidas in Shantinagar are of different religions, come from different parts of Tamilnadu, have different migrational histories, live dispersed through the area, have different occupations in the city, and are literate as well as politically sophisticated. Because of this heterogeneity there are few traditional caste principles and values that all adhere to and that can unite them. The DMK provides an organizational framework and a generalized ideology that on the whole can and does unite them in Bombay. Within the party, individuals jockey for positions of influence in the community and become mediators for it. Party leaders are called into chawls to arbitrate and settle serious conflicts.

Four men who hold respectable white-collar jobs in the city control the party in Shantinagar today. These leaders have proven their organizational skills a number of times. In 1968 a Maharashtrian irredentist party known as the Shiv Sena was active in Bombay (cf. Katzenstein, 1973; Gupta, 1977). One of its targets was the South Indians, who, it claimed, were taking jobs away from native Maharashtrians. An incident flared up between police and South Indians in Shantinagar; as a result about 30 South Indians were jailed. The DMK party leaders as members of an all-South Indian association worked to raise money for the defence of the jailed Adi-Dravidas. A lawyer was hired and eventually all South Indians were

However, in Bombay they need not and do not reveal their identity. In Bombay they say, 'We are free to go where we will and eat what we want. Nobody here pays any attention to our caste'. The party provides an ideology of Tamil identity and Tamil culture that they may identify with and be proud of. The DMK claims to reject caste differences and even advocates intercaste marriages, in word if not in deed. As one informant put it, 'We don't think of caste; we want to abolish caste. We don't add caste names to our names as do some other castes. In the DMK there are all castes and communities especially from the younger generation. In the party we acknowledge all as the same'. If the party does not live up to this in practice, the party leaders, not the party and its ideology, are at fault.

Moreover, the DMK promises to work for the poorer classes and its now-hallowed founder, C.M. Annadurai, is believed to have come from humble origins. Annadurai's teachings in his death have become more powerful than they were in his life. In identifying with him and his party, the Adi-Dravidas symbolically put themselves on the side of the right and the good in the struggle against poverty and discrimination.

More important than these factors, however, is the fact that Adi-Dravidas are immigrants to Bombay. They speak a language and have customs foreign to that city. The DMK gives a clear ideological definition to this situation and DMK organization provides a means to cope with it. Natives of Bombay and Maharashtra much resent South Indians because, it is felt, they take jobs away from the sons of the soil. Just as the Shiv Sena organizes and defines this situation for Maharashtrians, so too the DMK defines and organizes it for the Adi-Dravidas. In its glorification of Tamil language and Tamil culture, the DMK provides a unifying ideology and set of symbols to counteract those made against South Indians, particularly lower class South Indians, in Bombay. The DMK provides an ethnic identity in political form. In this Adi-Dravidas are unlike South Indian Muslims, who are identified as members of an all India religious minority.

Prodders

Adi-Dravidas are but one small group that lives in the nonpotter half of Gandhi Bridge, where there are chawls or *vaadis* with people

its upkeep. A record book of all contributions is kept. One hundred and seventy-five rupees per month is paid to the resident *peshmaam* (teacher) and another 25 per month is given to the *mauzaan* who calls to prayer. The rest is used for electricity and upkeep of the mosque itself.

Payment of the monthly contribution to the mosque defines one as a member of the Anna Chawl Muslim community. In one case a young child had died but the funeral and burial services were held up. The Muslim men were stalling and arguing because the family of the young child had not paid its contributions for 2 years. Eventually, the men carried the body to the old Muslim cemetery in Shantinagar. The event was a symbolic assertion of Muslim belief, community, and identification both in the threatened sanction and in the final resolution.

A small building in the chawl was once used as a school to teach Koran to the chawl's children. Muslims are more concerned with education in the Koran than with secular education. They are the least educated of the three groups mentioned in this paper. Of the respondent group of 59 Muslim males 68.0% (*N*=40) were illiterate and 32.0% (*N*=19) were literate defined by a fourth standard education or better (see Tables 2 and 3). Muslims also showed least interest in reading newspapers. Only 33.9% (*N*=20), regardless of education, said that they read the newspapers, while 66.1% (*N*=39) reported that they did not read newspapers (see Table 4). Of those few who did read 50.0% (*N*=10) said that they read daily, 35.5% (*N*=7) read a few times a week, 10.0% (*N*=2) read occasionally, and 5.0% (*N*=1) did not respond (see Table 5). While not apolitical, Muslims are most alienated from the larger social system.

While Islam unites the Muslims within Anna Chawl with Muslims in other parts of Shantinagar, it also divides, but in so doing it reinforces Islamic identity.[11]. The small religious school building in the chawl was closed a few months before my arrival early in 1970 because of a religious dispute among the Muslims. Before that time a *peshmaam*, other than the present one, taught the children. He was paid only 60 rupees a month, was of the Hanafi sect of Islam, and, it is claimed by some, was not really well educated in Islam. One faction in the chawl was able to dismiss him and bring in the present *peshmaam*, who is of the orthodox Wahabi sect and is from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. He, unlike the earlier *peshmaam*, refuses to recognize some of the customs of the Tamil Muslims, such as presiding at funerals. Feelings about

his role run high; these are indicative of a deeper change slowly affecting the community. The present *peshmaam* was brought in from outside as a member of the larger Islamic community in Bombay and not as a Tamilian. Some Muslims in Anna Chawl and in other parts of Shantinagar are responding to residence in Bombay with a call toward greater orthodoxy and stronger identification with Islam through the Wahabi sect. Although the Muslim residents of Anna Chawl see themselves as poor, in need of good jobs, and in need of better facilities for everyday living, they also see themselves as a Muslim minority in a largely Hindu society. News of Hindu-Muslim riots in other cities of Maharashtra State reinforces their Muslim identity and their politically defensive definition of the situation.

Anna Chawl Muslims have a *jamaat* for dealing with conflicts and problems among themselves as well as for witnessing life-crisis ceremonies. In more important cases men from other *jamaats*, but of the Muslim brotherhood, are called in to witness and ensure a fair decision. In one case a Muslim man had been living with a Hindu girl. The community discovered this and forced the man to send the girl away. He subsequently married another woman, this time a Muslim. Thereafter, the first girl returned and said that she had been previously converted to Islam and had really been married to the man. The case was too legalistic for the Anna Chawl *jamaat* to decide and was referred to an important religious leader in Greater Bombay. These cases illustrate not only a religiously defined network of ties but also the activation of these ties in linking Anna Chawl's Muslims with others in Shantinagar and Greater Bombay.

This network has other than religious functions. During 1971 the Anna Chawl *jamaat* met to try and get itself legally registered as a mosque in Bombay and to get a separate electrical connection. A sympathetic Muslim official of the Bombay Electric Company was brought in to advise on the arrangements. Registration of a mosque is not an innocent tactic. A Muslim leader from another chawl asserted:

> My plan is to get the mosque registered. Then when it is registered it cannot be moved out of this place. It will have a standing. Then when they want to move us from this area, we can say that it would mean leaving the mosque without any people to go to it. It is necessary to let the people stay with their mosque.

The plan is to do this so that the hutment dwellers will have a case for not being removed.

Anna Chawl's attempts at registration are the same. Unlike the Adi-Dravidas, who work through their parties, however, the Muslims work through their religiously defined *jamaats*, and their less organized religiously defined networks.

The most important Muslim men in the Gandhi Bridge section of Shantinagar are the local *seths* or businessmen, some of whom are involved in the moonshine business. Because of their businesses they have contacts outside of Gandhi Bridge and the distillers have regularized relations with the police. One *seth*, Jahangir *seth*, is politically active and has actively campaigned among the Muslims for local candidates. As he said, 'I make friends easily. My friends include Mr. Alvarez [a former municipal councillor], the local police inspector, and Mr. Pandyan [the present municipal councillor]'. The returns were not insignificant; one candidate gave Rs. 1,300 towards the construction of the permanent mosque in Shantinagar and also helped with cement and a contractor. The *seths* are well known in the area; people come to them for help and they often act as mediators with the police. Through them a working compromise was worked out with the cooperative leaders of the potters, whose people were being harassed by distillery workers commandeering water taps.

During the 1971 election in which Mrs. Gandhi won a stunning victory, Jahangir *seth* and others actively campaigned for her. They were against the old Congress because they felt it had an alliance with the Jan Sangh, a party with orthodox Hindu and anti-Muslim leanings. Anna Chawl's Muslims felt likewise; political issues for them always have a Muslim-defined component.

The Muslims of Gandhinagar, then, are poor, perhaps the poorest of the three groups mentioned in this essay. They need jobs, health care, and better sanitary conditions, and they are consciously aware of these needs. But they also see themselves as Muslims and that is important to them. Islam defines who they are vis-a-vis other communities and castes in Shantinagar. Mediators are sought first among those who are likely to carry a measure of trust, those also in the brotherhood of Islam. Muslim definition of the situation is anchored not only in their poverty but also in their Islamic identity, and this means an all-India religious minority that sees itself on the defensive against a Hindu majority. In their defensive posture,

Muslim tactics prod, not provoke, the system.

Discussion and Conclusions

The introduction of this paper mentioned a number of imbalances, if not biases, in the literature on shantytown dwellers. What speculations do the sketches presented in this paper lead to when reflecting on these imbalances?

First is the problem of consciousness and culture. Marxian or dependency-type studies are important and have told us much. But have they told us all we need to know? The consciousness of these three ethnic groups in Shantinagar may be false, but its content is not unimportant. Each of them has a separate cultural identity that provides a definition of the situation vis-a-vis others. No less so, it provides meaning to live by. What they are may be exploited squatters, but just as important in understanding them is who they are. A simple Marxian or dependency point of view too often reduces needs to material needs alone in a very un-Marxian way. Paradoxically, explanation by reduction to material and economic causes or to external political determinants (Leeds and Leeds, 1976) deprives shantytowners of the very humanity that it seeks to restore to them. Such explanation makes shantytowners into bellies needing bread, not also minds constituting meaning; it makes them objects, not subjects.

When squatter consciousness becomes merely a block to class consciousness (Safa, 1974), objectification (culture, to be a culture, must symbolically represent and explain the world) is confused with reification. Such a confusion also conceals the teleological assumption that anthropological researchers can and do know what perfect class consciousness is and will be. This is the error of methodological dualism, in which the researcher assumes that squatters are subject to structural and cultural constraints on knowledge in their everyday life, but feels absolved from those same constraints in his ethnographic practice.

Consciousness is a social process in time and in human actualization; it does not become class consciousness in a single flash of insight. For this reason shantytown dwellers will never be understood until we begin with where they are at and how they see themselves. These three ethnic groups value not only bread but also belief. While the belief may be an opium, the addiction will

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power. Lomnitz (1976, pp. 146-7) reports that *confianza* is extremely important among Mexican squatters and that the study of it offers an entirely new and productive viewpoint for the analysis of urban problems in Latin America. Metaphors of bridges, linkages, gatekeepers, and brokers conceal subjectively defined morals and models through which mediators are constituted and evaluated. These morals and models are part of the symbolic materials out of which shantytown dwellers variously construct maps of social space. Mediators, in India at least, are not a category of people equally approachable by all; their role in part is ethnically ascribed by caste, religion, or regional origin (cf. Bellwinkel, 1973).

The DMK offices of the Adi-Dravidas, the Cooperative Society of the potters, and the mosques of the Muslims are not only voluntary associations with various functions. They also are concrete symbols of the meaningful interpretations and identities that these people use to add significance to their lives. Because they are significant, the social realities that they symbolize will not be easily shaken by an analysis neglecting to take them into account (Lynch, 1972, pp. 99-106).

Fourth is a need to get beyond the cowboys-and-Indians type of Marxism that pervades much of this field, in which there are always the good guys, along with their anthropological spokesmen, and the bad guys. Smart (1976) has provided an interesting critique of simple and reductionistic interpretations of Marxism and asked us to reconsider Marx's method and his critique. One effect of simple Marxism has been to push the study of culture and subjectivity where it does not belong, that is, into the camp of the reactionary bad guys who are unsympathetic to the concrete material needs of the poor. But this type of Marxism has also divorced men from their own conscious thinking, from their praxis. 'It is not so much the case that men take on only those problems that they can resolve as that they can only take on those problems which they can identify' (Smart, 1976, p. 61).

Perlman (1976, p. 247) notes that 'myths of marginality are in part an ideological expression of the sociologists' concern with the integration of the masses of the people'. Much ink has been spilled in both the creation and the destruction of the marginality concept, because we have failed to look at the culture of the poor itself. Because the culture of poverty was poorly conceived as a theory, the study of culture has mistakenly become an unworthy subject for research. Marx brilliantly exposed for us the fetishism of

commodities; in our studies of shantytown dwellers and the poor we might examine the fetishism of academic categories. What concrete social interests lie behind our use of these categories in our analyses? They have framed the questions for 'What do we want to know'? but not 'Why do we want to know it'? Marx himself gave us the lead when he said, 'The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself' (Marx and Engels, 1970, p. 121).[16]

Notes

1. This paper was originally presented at the Burg-Wartenstein Symposium No. 73 on 'Shanty Towns in Developing Nations' sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation. The research upon which the paper is based was funded by a grant from the American Council of Learned Societies and was supplemented by a Faculty Fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies. The paper is written in the ethnographic present, June 1970 to June 1971. The data were collected by three methods; first, participant observation of all three ethnic groups; second, interviews with leaders of the different groups; finally, an extensive questionnaire administered to 200 squatters. Of the 200, 5 were rejected, so that there were 76 potters, 60 Adi-Dravidas, and 59 Muslims for a total of 195. The sample was a respondent group in that it proved impossible to adequately randomize the sample in a statistically meaningful sense.

2. Singh (1978) is a condensed version of Singh (1977). The latter contains an extensive bibliography on slums and shantytowns in India. Bulsara (1970) contains interesting survey data on five squatter settlements in Bombay. Desai and Pillai (1972) is an excellent study of one settlement in Bombay that used some interesting techniques for gathering data.

3. For an attempt to refute these interpretations in India see Lynch (1974) and Siddiqui (1969). Perlman (1976) provides an excellent analysis of the forms, sources, and maintaining processes of such interpretations. A survey of conditions in Shantinagar in 1944-1945, as well as some historical information, is given in Tata Institute (n.d.).

4. Desai and Savur's students conducted another study of the potters in 1971 toward the time when this study was ending. Their study, like this one, concentrated on the potters, although there are other communities now living in Potters' Colony that create a whole set of other problems. The Desai and Savur (1974) study argues that the potters' poverty and living conditions are due to a capitalistic path of development in the context of Third World urbanization. It also accuses with an acid and sometimes self-righteous rhetoric those whom I called mediators of exploiting the poorer potters, once again because of capitalistic development. While there may be some truth to their (unsupported) accusations, they neglect a whole other side of the picture to which this paper attempts to add some

perspective, in terms of both data and theoretical perspective. Desai and Savur's students looked for the worst and found it; in so doing, they failed to see the many positive accomplishments and intentions of the mediators that counterbalance their interpretation.

5. A short one-day visit to the colony in the summer of 1978 revealed that the plan for relocation has been abandoned. Instead, the mediators of the potters have negotiated with the municipality and private sources for a complete rehabilitation of the colony in situ. Since part of the money for the rehabilitation must come from the potters themselves, the project is in some doubt.

6. This directly contradicts Desai and Savur (1974, p. vi).

7. Desai and Savur accuse the mediators of exploiting their fellow potters and the social worker of an individualistic rather than a group orientation to improvement. Bellwinkel (1973) in an interesting study of Rajasthani contract labourers in Delhi points out that mediators may be exploiters, but they do not take undue advantage of the workers because their relationship to workers is tempered by kinship and intracaste norms. Although such mediators now straddle both intracaste and urban capitalistic contexts, intracaste and kinship norms do not entirely change their meaning and cease to exert their effect upon the mediators even in the urban industrial context. Desai and Savur also fail to note that the potters themselves prefer to be their own bosses and have a petty bourgeois mentality about business. Group-oriented projects run into great trouble in India, where envy of the success of others is great and cooperation is too often seen as subservient 'work' for others. The causes once again are not only structural but also cultural.

8. A more extensive interpretation of this community is given in Lynch (1974). See also Mencher (1972, 1974).

9. These figures are slightly different from Lynch (1974), because in that article figures for frequency of readership were computed only for those who had a fourth standard education or better and who also said they read the newspapers.

10. An account of Dr. Ambedkar and his influence upon another untouchable community in India is given in Lynch (1969).

11. An interesting account of urban ethnicity among Muslim Tamilians in the state of Tamilnadu itself is given in Mines (1975).

12. The shift in theoretical perspective on caste in urban India has been variously conceptualized in processual terminology as ethnic polarization (Lynch, 1974), congeneric ethnicity (Mines, 1975), and substantialization (Barnett, 1975). All seem to agree on the importance of symbolic and ideological elements in self-identity but disagree on the weighting of factors that explain the shift and the symbolic elements emphasized.

13. A penetrating, if not devastating, critique of this dichotomy as well as of the Marxian theory of ideology is given in Seliger (1977).

14. David (1977) is a critical effort to bring the neo-Marxist literature together with symbolic and cultural-ideological literature on the question of identity. It is essential reading.

15. I am indebted to the important work of my student, John Page, for this idea. Peace (1977) provides an excellent example of what can be done.

16. Mamdani's (1972) re-examination of village belief and practice in the context of the failure of the Khanna study is an instructive example of what I have in mind.