

Transients and Permanents at Camas

A STUDY IN SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

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RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie la stratification sociale de Camas, un village de quelque 1,200 habitants, situé à l'intérieur de la Colombie Britannique. L'Auteur pense qu'en raison de facteurs économique-sociales, la stratification sociale à Camas présente deux différents systèmes, selon précisément que les habitants sont des résidents permanents ou non.

The following is a discussion of a social stratification at Camas, a village of some 1,200 people, situated in the interior of British Columbia.

It is suggested here that because of some socio-economic factors stratification at Camas shows a configuration which is different in some respects from the ones discussed by such authors as Warner (1960), Hollingshead (1961), and Vidich and Bensman (1960). Two systems of stratification are detected at Camas, and it is believed that length of residence and the ownership of real estate are important criteria in allocating personnel to one or the other system.

Since there is some reason to believe that certain kinds of Canadian villages show characteristics similar to those of Camas, the following study might be of some interest to students of Canadian society.

* This work is the result of two years residence at "Camas" where I worked as a minister of the United Church of Canada from August 1960 to June 1962. Because of this peculiarity of the research situation I have decided to use a pseudonym for the settlement. I wish to express my thanks to the following individuals for their help in research and in developing the argument of the paper: Professors H.B. Hawthorn and K.G. Neagele of University of British Columbia, and Professors J. Burnet, J.W. VanStone, and F.W. Voget of the University of Toronto. The responsibility for the interpretation of the data, needless to say, is mine.

The Economic History of Camas

Camas came into being in the 1850s after gold had been discovered in the Cariboo Country. In the initial stages of the resulting gold-rush a combination of land and water transport was used to carry freight and personnel through a series of lakes and portages to the edge of the Cariboo where goods were transferred to mule trains and other forms of land transport. Camas, being situated on the west bank of the Fraser River and being the gateway to the geographical region of the Cariboo, served as the half-way point in this transportation chain. It was there that goods were taken off the barges and transferred to mule trains. A village sprang up with stores, offices, churches and gambling halls. Gold miners with their satellites moved in by the hundreds.

Somewhat later in the same century the Cariboo Road was completed. This road provided a direct line of communication between the Fraser Valley and the Cariboo gold fields so that it was no longer necessary to use the Camas route with its lakes and lengthy portages. As a result of this development Camas lost much of its importance and most of its population. A small group of people, however, remained mainly to trade with the Indians and to take up subsistence farming. The building of a railroad early in the 20th Century gave a modest boost to the development of Camas, which, for the second time in its history, became a communications center. Although the volume of traffic along this railroad never approached that of the nationally-owned railway systems, still it gave employment to a number of people, some of whom settled at Camas to work for the railroad.

Another significant population increase occurred as a result of the re-settling of Japanese-Canadians during World War II. In this period camps were established for the Japanese-Canadians in and around Camas which became the headquarters of the administrative and supervisory staff. Some Japanese-Canadians engaged in horticulture, so a cannery was built at Camas to handle their product. At the end of the war most of the Japanese-Canadians left the Camas detention area, horticulture came to an end, the cannery closed down.

In the 1950s a series of hydro-electric installations were constructed in the Camas region. The availability of employment, the influx of workers (many with their families), the establishing of retail and recreational outlets led to an economic boom and population increase. Once the construction of hydro-electric complexes was completed the workers and their families left Camas so that by the fall of 1960 the village faced a local economic recession and population decline.

Thus, in a period of some 100 years the demographic and economic history of the village shows a series of boom periods associated with rapid population growth, followed by relative economic recession and population decrease.

Population and Economy from August 1960 to June 1962

At the time of the study (August 1960 - June 1962) the population of Camas was a little in excess of 1,200. Of these some 100 - 150 were of Japanese, Chinese, East Indian and Canadian Indian ancestry. The rest were Anglo-Canadians and a very few were European immigrants. In addition to the number of people residing within the village limits there were some 1,200 Indians of the Thompson, Lillooet, and Shuswap linguistic divisions making use of the facilities at Camas. (Teit 1900:166). These Indians lived on small reserves scattered along the Fraser and its tributaries. Some of the reserves are adjacent to Camas, others are situated thirty miles away.

In the period under discussion agriculture was minimal in and around Camas. While there were some ranches within a thirty-mile radius of Camas, the marketing and shipping of cattle normally took place at Kamloops which is some hundred miles east of Camas. There were a few part-time farmers growing vegetables and fruit for their own use and for marketing at Camas, but the income derived from this kind of horticulture was very small. The presence in Camas of Provincial Government Offices, an eighteen-bed hospital, a high school, as well as the road and railway stations provide employment for two-thirds of all gainfully employed. The following list gives an outline of the main sources of employment with approximate numbers of employees. It has to be stressed, however, that there

was considerable seasonal fluctuation in the level of employment. This fluctuation was due to such factors as the changing demands of the economy of the province, the government-sponsored winter works programs, and even the weather. The latter was particularly important in the case of the Public Works Department and of the Railway, since mud and rock slides caused by heavy rains occasionally necessitated the hiring of large numbers of temporary labour.

<i>Main Sources of Employment in 1960-62.</i>	<i>Approx. Number of Employees.</i>
The Provincial Railway	50
Public Works Department	50
The Forest Service	50
Government Offices	25
The Hospital	22
The School	21
2 Grocery and Clothing Stores	8-10 in each
2 Hardware Stores	3 in each
4 Service Stations	3-4 in each
4 Hotels and Motels	3-12 in each
2 Coffee Shops	3 in each
1 General Contractor	6-12, variable
3 Logging and Saw-Mill Contractors	5-12 in each, variable.

This short survey of the sources of employment indicates that Camas is basically a "service" town. I use this phrase to emphasize that Camas serves as an administrative and communications center. In addition to this, it provides hospital care and education, as well as shopping and recreational outlets to the population of Camas and to others living in the area.

Ethnic Groupings

As mentioned above, the number of Indians making use of Camas facilities equals the number of village residents. Especially on Fridays and Saturdays the Indians appear in large numbers in Camas where they shop, visit, and drink.

The population of Camas, then, may be divided into two groupings: Indians and non-Indians. "Indians" are those whose physical characteristics indicate Indian ancestry to Camas residents. Whether they have been enfranchised or not does not

matter, if they look like Indians, they are treated as such. In other words, categorization along visible physical characteristics is accompanied by standardized patterns of behaviour within each grouping. While there is no colour bar or overt hostility, there is little intimate social access between Indians and non-Indians. The list of associations, for example, showed no persons of recognizable Indian "blood" in the years 1960-1962. "They stick together. We don't bother them, and they don't bother us," summed up a non-Indian resident. In many respects the Camas situation parallels that of Fort St. James as reported by Hawthorn (1960:63-67) except for the ratio of Indians to non-Indians in the two settlements. In the case of Camas only about 300 Indians live in the village itself or on reserves adjacent to it, while many others pay periodic visits only. In Fort St. James, on the other hand, the two ethnic groupings are of equal size and are settled side by side. Whether an Indian is a resident of Camas, or whether he is a visitor, his relations with non-Indians can be summed up in the phrase "social distance."

I have used the word "non-Indian" rather than "White" because families of Japanese, Chinese, and East-Indian ancestry were grouped with the Euro-Canadians. These families were almost fully integrated into the social life of the village. Formal and informal visiting, participation in the activities of the associations, and mutual acceptance characterized their involvement into the socio-cultural complex of the Village. Generally, however, the Japanese and Chinese are lumped with the Whites into one category and are contrasted to that of the Indians. Thus, ethnically the village is subdivided into two main groups only; Indian and non-Indian.

Residential Categories

Many Camas residents work and live in the village temporarily only. Employees of the Forest Service, for example, moved into Camas in 1961 with the expectation that they would live and work there for the next two years. It was estimated that the building of forest access roads would be completed in that time. Thus, Forest Service employees and their families had no plans of settling in Camas permanently. Along with the

Forest Service, the school and the hospital also might serve as examples of short-term residence. The principal of the school, for example, reported that, apart from himself and another teacher, the entire staff was replaced in every three years. The hospital also reported a high turnover both among the professional and the non-professional staff.

Other examples from other sources strengthened the impression that there was a high turnover of employees at Camas at the time of the study. Many people would work there for a year or two, then move on. One of the government officials and one of the local businessmen suggested that in the years under consideration about half of the village's population was made up of people who would stay in Camas for no longer than three years.

Interviews with village residents showed that there was an awareness of a division amongst them. For example, newcomers tended to complain about the unfriendliness of other Camas residents. A school-teacher's comments sum up the general trend of comments of this kind:

This is not a friendly town. In the first two years of our work here people would hardly talk to us outside of school. We received no invitations and we issued none. Although we go to church, even there we feel we are outsiders. Now this is our third year here and just a few days ago we got invited to two places.

On the other hand, residents who had lived in Camas for many years also complained. They felt that most newcomers, especially the teachers, simply regarded Camas as a place where they could make some money. The old-timers resented this and pointed out that they were the ones who had kept the village alive during periods of economic recession and that they were the ones who had "a stake in the community". As far as making friends with newcomers was concerned, one prominent old-time resident made the following observation:

There is not much sense in making friends with a woman who is here today and gone tomorrow. By the time you get to know her, she is gone... One year we made a real effort to encourage new comers to join the Ladies' Guild. We invited them to our meetings and we even elected our executive from amongst them. Well, you know what

happened; the construction came to an end by Christmas, these ladies left with their families, and the Guild was left without an executive. We had to start all over again and since then we make sure we elect people whom we can count on.

There is, then, an awareness in Camas of a division of the resident population. Some people talk of "old-timers" and "new-comers", some use other labels. A number of newcomers felt that they had to spend a number of years in Camas before they were accepted by the older residents. Some of the old-timers stated explicitly that they avoided intimate social relations with newcomers.

This awareness of division along residential lines suggested to me that it might be analytically useful to divide the resident population into "permanent" and "transient" categories. I have defined "permanent" to refer to such persons who, at the time of the study, had resided in Camas for more than three years and who had acquired real estate there. Conversely, "transient" refers to such persons who, at the time of the study, had not yet spent three years in the village and who had not acquired real estate there.

Admittedly, the above definitions are somewhat arbitrary and rigid. It could be argued that both the permanent and the transient residential categories should be subdivided according to a number of other criteria. For example, one would expect that some Camas people were "permanent" by choice, others were "permanent" by necessity. Very likely some transients would wish to become permanent, while others would wish to leave Camas as soon as possible. Also the question of real estate could be raised. If a person owns land in Camas but has not lived there for three years, is he permanent or transient? While further elaboration of criteria of permanence and of transience will no doubt increase the applicability and usefulness of this sort of study, in this paper I shall be satisfied with pointing out certain relationships that existed between length of residence and real estate on the one hand, and associational activity and class affiliation on the other.

On the basis of the above definition of permanence and transience an estimate was made as to the ratio of permanent and

transient residents in the village. It was estimated that in the years 1960-1962 up to about 50% of the village's population was transient. Again, it has to be stressed that even within one calendar year there were many fluctuations as regards the number of transients.

The list of associations provided below indicates that the majority of the associations have their members from the permanent residential category. There are, of course, border-line cases. Some individuals join the associations sooner than do others, but, again, a tendency seems clear; the longer a person has been a resident of Camas the greater the chances of his participation in associational life. The list shown below will indicate only the parent associations; satellite or auxiliary associations will be mentioned only if their residential composition differs from that of the parent association.

<i>Religious Associations</i>	<i>Permanent Families</i>	<i>Transient Families</i>
Anglican Church	40	10
Jehovah's Witnesses	4	3
Pentecostal Church	9	1
Roman Catholic Church	22	8
United Church	45	5
	Total	Total
	120	27

(Two qualifications to the above list should be noted. First, according to information received from the clergy, transient residents tended to participate marginally in church activities. Second, the Sunday Church Schools included a higher proportion of children of transients than the membership lists.)

Masons	20	5
Elks	13	2
Lions	23	2
	Total	Total
	56	9

There were also three small groups with a predominantly *transient* membership. These were short-lived attempts by transient residents to provide means for intellectual and aesthetic expression. These groups lasted for only one or two years since

most of the founding members left Camas after that period of residence. One was a church discussion group, meetings of which were attended by clergy, nurses and some teachers. The ratio of transient to permanent residents in it was 14-1. A political discussion group met in private homes with attendance by invitation only. Transient-permanent ratio was 8-2. The Drama Club was organized by high school teachers; its activities came to an end when the teachers left Camas after two years of residence.

There were also three associations with a membership composed of both transient and permanent members. The Women's Auxiliary to the Hospital included women of both residential categories, the Parent-Teacher Association and the Canadian Legion also had both permanent and transient members. In these three associations no clearcut dominance of permanents or of transients could be seen.

Of these associations those with most prestige were the church groups, the service clubs, and the Hospital Auxiliary. The discussion groups and the Drama Club were short-lived so that their relative prestige compared to that of the other associations was neither understood nor measured by residents.

At the same time, residents of both categories were aware of the fact that the associations of greatest durability and prestige were staffed by permanent residents. Transients tended to complain that the "old guard" ran the town and the associations, while the permanents claimed that the admission of numbers of transients to these associations would be disruptive. It was also evident that informal and voluntary interaction tended to occur mainly within residential categories. Local businessmen associated mainly with other local businessmen and with other permanent residents. Teachers, nurses, as well as other transients, on the other hand, tended to associate mainly within their own professional groups and with other transient professional groups of roughly equal prestige.

Social Classes in Camas

Within each residential grouping a ranking of individuals and of families took place. This ranking was more clear-cut

within the permanent category than within the transient one. Among the permanents social classes were distinguished and ranked. I use the term "social class" to refer to

...a more or less endogamous stratum consisting of families of about equal prestige who are or would be acceptable to one another for "social" interaction that is culturally regarded as more or less symbolic of equality; as the term "stratum" suggests, a social class is one of two or more such groupings, all of which can be ranked relative to one another in a more or less integrated system of prestige stratification. (Johnson 1960:470).

Within the permanent category residents correlated civic-political power and high prestige so that the most often mentioned index of upper-class status was the exercise of power in local politics and associations. Residents readily identified some fifteen individuals as the ones who "run the town". They regarded these individuals and their families as the leading citizens of the village. The individuals thus identified thought of themselves also as leaders of the village. They, too, thought in terms of social strata, they, too, ranked other residents into social classes.

In addition to those who "run the town" two more classes were identified by village residents: the "decent", "reliable" people and the "low class" people.

The Permanent Upper Class, then, was composed of those families whose adult members were identified as the leaders of the village. Members of this class accepted each other as being of roughly equal prestige and manifested this mutual acceptance through such activities as mutual visiting and joint participation in forms of recreation.

As mentioned above, the most important index of identification with this class was the exercise of civic power realized through village politics and participation in, and leadership of, the permanent village associations. In the fifteen families of this class there was at least one adult member who occupied multiple leadership positions in a number of associations. An example of such multiple leadership status was that of the Chairman of the Village Council. Owner of one of the largest stores in the village, this man, in addition to being the Chairman of the Council, was in the year 1961 the leading layman of one of the Protestant

denominations, an executive member of the Lions, and one of the local officials of the Masons. His wife occupied, at the same time, two positions of high prestige; that of the Vice-Chairman of the Women's Auxiliary, and that of Chairman of the Ladies' Guild. This couple associated in an informal way mainly with the families of other merchants who also occupied positions of leadership in the associations.

Businessmen and the magistrates belonged to this class. They identified two more classes of residents within the permanent residential category: the "respectable citizens" and the "low class people".

From the point of view of Upper Class people those individuals and families were respectable who owned real estate in the village, who were permanently employed, and who were not publicly known to be involved in such activities as heavy public drinking and marital scandals. Permanent Upper Class people regarded as "low class" all those who owned, or lived in, poorly kept houses, were chronically unemployed, who associated with Indians, and whose heavy drinking and sexual promiscuity was common knowledge.

Upper Class people were also aware of prestige differences among the transients. Among the latter they identified three broad prestige groupings: "the doctor's friends", the "newcomers" or "transients", and "bums" or "drifters". It must be stressed that permanent residents in general, and permanent Upper Class residents in particular, were much less concerned with placing transients into prestige strata than they were ranking permanent residents. With the exception of some of the transient professionals they did not know many other transients by name and showed little interest in them unless some of the latter showed signs of settling in Camas permanently.

I shall use the term Permanent Middle Class to designate those who were locally identified as "respectable citizens". People belonging to this class were permanently employed. They participated in the life of the associations. Most of them were employees of the Railway and the Public Works Department, or were small businessmen. Their houses were well-kept, their children were well-dressed, their reputation was considered good by

other permanent residents. The main difference between them and the Upper Class was not so much one of income, but rather one of civic power. Middle Class individuals seemed less interested in local politics, and in general they did not challenge the Upper Class's leadership. Yet Middle Class people participated in associational life and some of them occupied leadership positions. Informal social interaction tended to occur within class boundaries, yet there was some crossing of residential boundaries. Among them occupational ties were, at times, stronger than residential ones. On the whole, however, informal and voluntary interaction occurred within the residential category as well as within class.

Thus, while in education and income there was little difference between the Permanent Upper and Permanent Middle classes, the exercise of civic power by the former and the recognition of this leadership by the latter constituted a line of division between the two groups.

The Permanent Low Class was characterized by chronic unemployment, dependence upon some form of social assistance, poor housing and, in some cases, conspicuous deviation from the sexual and drinking mores of the Upper and Middle classes. Members of the Low Class were aware of the existence of the other two strata above them, but this admission of superior prestige was grudgingly given. Their self-evaluation, while admitting relative inferiority *vis-à-vis* some other residents, was attenuated, at least in their own eyes, by their constant reference to bad luck and the alleged corruption of people of superior prestige.

Low Class people lived in dilapidated shacks on the outskirts of the village. They did not participate in associational activities (with the exception of the Canadian Legion which was an important liquor outlet), nor were they involved in village politics. Socially as well as geographically they lived on the outskirts of the village.

To sum up discussion of class among the permanents, let us turn to numbers. Of some 140 families categorized as permanent 15-20 should be placed with the Permanent Upper Class, some 60-70 into the Permanent Middle, and the remainder into the Permanent Low Class. While these rough estimates seem to

make the Low Class rather large, they are in accord with the opinion of the merchants one of whom stated: "It is a shame that I have to report that at this time social assistance seems to be the greatest single source of income in the village." While this was somewhat of an overstatement, the Government Agent and social workers also claimed that in their opinion Camas had a larger percentage of unemployed in the winters of 1961-1962 than some neighbouring villages of similar size.

The Transient Residential Category, probably because of the frequent change in its personnel, did not show quite as visible evidences of the existence of social classes as did the permanent. Yet there appeared one group among the transients showing all the criteria of social class. I shall call this group the Transient Upper Class noting that in Camas they were known as "the doctors' crowd". The core members of this class were some eight professional men who settled in Camas around 1960. Although at the time of the conclusion of the field-work some of them had spent three years in the village, they still retained a separate identity as a group. They regarded themselves as different from the Permanent Upper Class and they were regarded as different by members of the same. Doctors, clergymen, a lawyer, government officials constituted this class. The possession of university degrees, more than any other single feature might be regarded as an important index of their separateness. With the exception of the clergymen Transient Upper Class people did not join the associations, they did not involve themselves in village politics. Their own attempts to form and to maintain special interest groups were frustrated by the moving away, year after year, of some of their members. They rationalized their rejection of the associations by referring to the lack of intellectual and aesthetic activities in those groups. As a result of their attitudes, and as a result of the perception of their attitudes by permanent residents, there developed a degree of covert antagonism. While once or twice a year permanent and transient Upper Class people appeared together at some celebrations, they did not interact freely with each other. Transient Upper Class people preferred the company of their own kind even when engaging in recreation. They cited the lack of education of the permanent residents as the main reason for their lack of interaction with them.

The attitude of the permanent residents, and especially that of the Permanent Upper Class, was a mixture of criticism and of appreciation of superior education. According to the permanents, the transients took no interest in village affairs; according to the transients, they were being kept away from village affairs by the jealousy of the permanents. Permanents accepted the superior education of the transients somewhat grudgingly and claimed that the latter would "desert" Camas just as soon as economically convenient.

It would be difficult to decide which of the two upper classes had the greater prestige in the village. It seems that civic-political power in the case of the permanents, educational achievement and economic contributions in the case of the transients, placed the two classes into positions of equal, but different prestige.

It may be stretching the concept of social class to speak of the existence in Camas of a Transient Middle Class. Perhaps, it would be more accurate to suggest that teachers, nurses, government employees and some other occupational groups whose members resided in Camas for relatively short periods, formed a broad and vaguely defined prestige category. Individuals within this category interacted within their own groupings, but, because of their short-term residence in Camas, did not categorize clearly and consistently in terms of social classes. When identifying themselves, they did so by reference to their occupation and they interacted mainly within their own occupational group. A teacher's statement may be cited here:

My wife and I came here a year ago. We intend to stay for another year, because the pay is good and we like the country. We want to save some money then move to a place with more life in it. We don't want to mix with the old-timers, and they don't want to mix with us. We visit back and forth with our colleagues.

Many transient professionals, however, were aware of social classes among the permanent residents and could identify the leading, as well as the low class, citizens of Camas.

To sum up discussion of social stratification in Camas, the periodic arrival of transient unemployed should be noted. Since these stopped only for a few hours, or for a few days at the most, their presence was not a significant factor in the stratification

scene although village councillors made unflattering remarks about "drifters" and "bums" who occasionally appeared in the village.

Conclusion

In the preceding discussion it was suggested that stratification at Camas occurs in both of the residential categories into which Camas residents sort themselves. Since Fried's (1963) preliminary survey of northern settlements shows residential configurations which seem to resemble that of Camas, it is entirely possible that length of residence and the ownership of real estate would turn out to be significant indices of stratification in certain kinds of Canadian communities.

I would offer the following suggestion for further study and testing: in settlements where a relatively stable and relatively well-entrenched permanent population experiences the influx of transients equal, or nearly equal, to their own numbers, a dual system of stratification might, at least temporarily, develop.

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