

Global pathways. Working class cosmopolitans and the creation of transnational ethnic worlds*

The present interest in new diasporas and globalisation processes raises the question of what might a transnational subjectivity be like? What does it mean to be, in some sense or other, at home in the world? Ulf Hannerz proposes a set of useful distinctions between cosmopolitans 'willing to engage with the Other', locals, 'representatives of more circumscribed territorial cultures', and transnationals (Hannerz 1992: 252), frequent travellers (usually occupational) who share 'structures of meaning carried by social networks' (*ibid.*: 248–9). Oddly, though, Hannerz lumps together migrant-settlers, exiles or refugees, the formative makers of diasporas, with *tourists*:

Surrounded by a foreign culture, he [sic] perhaps tries to keep it at arm's length, and guards what is his own. For most ordinary labour migrants, ideally, going away may be home plus higher income; often the involvement with another culture is not a fringe benefit but a necessary cost. A surrogate home is created with the help of compatriots, in whose circle one feels most comfortable (*ibid.*: 248).

Transnational subjectivities

Implicit in this separation of professional-occupational transnational cultures from migrant or refugee transnational cultures is, I propose, a hidden Eurocentric and class bias: transnational cultures are most often centred on the North and manned by high status professionals. The transnational cultures of migrants and refugees, by contrast, are centred beyond the North and their occupational profile is (primarily) menial and low-income. This implicitly explains why, for Hannerz, instead of a willingness to 'engage with the Other', diasporics are reluctant to step outside a 'surrogate home'. It remains unclear, however, why migrants and diasporics should be distinguished *analytically* from occupational transnationals, the oil engineers or foreign journalists who live in special compounds, or the Hilton, wherever they go.

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The confusion points to the fact that the class dimensions of a theory of global subjectivity have remained mostly unexamined. Exceptionally, Jonathan Friedman addresses issues of transnational subjectivity as manifestations of new class formations:

one might also suggest that there has emerged a global class structure, an international elite made up of top diplomats, government ministers, aid officials and representatives of international organisations such as the United Nations, who play golf, dine, take cocktails with one another, forming a kind of cultural cohort. The grouping overlaps with an international cultural elite of art dealers, publishing and media representatives, the culture industries, VIPs ... producing images of the world and images for the world ... a proliferation of interpretations of the world (Friedman 1995: 79–80).

The description highlights the ambiguity of Hannerz's cosmopolitan–transnational distinction. In order to function, in order to market their goods globally, global elites must understand local cultures, must 'engage with the Other' even while they sustain their exclusive transnational networks. In this respect local 'cultures' are at least in part the product of extra-local constructions. Globalisation is, at least in part, a business strategy for adapting one's goods to local conditions (Robertson 1995: 28).

Unlike Hannerz, Friedman proposes that we can now speak of a diasporic global structure as marking a radical break from past historical precedents because of the evident power and influence contemporary diasporas wield (Friedman 1997: 84–5). Yet diasporas too are differentiated by class. Hence he launches a trenchant critique against diasporic intellectuals who speak 'in the name of mixture and hybridity, a claim to a humanity so fused in its cultural characteristics that no "ethnic absolutism" is possible' (Friedman 1997: 75–6).

The problem with this posture is, he claims, that 'identity is entirely abstracted from the subject, and reduced to a mere mask or role, to be taken on at will' (*ibid.*: 76). On closer inspection, the celebration of hybridity, in-betweenness or double consciousness by diasporic poets, artists and intellectuals proves to be a self-interested strategy, divorced from working class migrants' (or indigenous people's) predicaments and concerns. For the urban poor 'class identity, local ghetto identity, tend to prevail' leaving 'little room for the hybrid identifications discussed and pleaded for by cultural elites' (*ibid.*: 84). Cultural self-identifications are, ultimately, Friedman argues, like those of class or gender, a matter of social position (*ibid.*: 88). Diasporic elites are in reality as socially and culturally encapsulated in their cocktail-sipping worlds as are ghetto dwellers in theirs.

Moreover, as the Rushdie affair tragically demonstrated, diasporic intellectuals are often alienated from the transnational cultures evolved by compatriot migrant-settlers; their artistic works are directed towards an English-reading international intelligentsia rather than fellow diasporics (van der Veer 1997).

Yet, all this would still seem to point to a homology between class position and transnational subjectivity: cosmopolitanism is the claimed prerogative of elites within the newly evolving global ecumene. The present article disputes this commonsense connection. It argues that even working class labour migrants may become cosmopolitans, willing to 'engage with the Other'; and that transnationals – Hannerz's term redefined to encompass migrants, settlers and refugees as well as occupational travellers – inevitably must engage in *social* processes of 'opening up to the world', even if that world is still relatively circumscribed culturally.

A recent collection, *Underground empires. The cultural politics of modern Chinese transnationalism* (Ong and Nonini 1997), begins to unpack the complex relation between class and transnational subjectivity from a non-Eurocentric perspective. According to Donald Nonini, for example, diasporic Chinese middle-class petty capitalists differ from elite transnationals in their marriage strategising, through which they expand their universe of potential relations.

Nonini discloses the possibility of working-class Malaysian Chinese labour migrants developing 'new cosmopolitan subjectivities and identities, many of which at present can only be imagined'. In their migratory experiences, he argues:

these men acquire new patterns of commodity consumption and desire. They display new forms of habitus for coping with cultural and national differences encountered in their transnational travels. They have new perceptions of business opportunities (for example, smuggling, labour contracting, and petty trading). They form new self-definitions arising from exposure to the mediatized representations of Chinese in, for example, the kung fu films shown throughout the Asia Pacific. These and other aspects of transnational reversals represent forms of cultural production leading to new subjectivities and identities among working-class migrants. (Nonini 1997: 221)

It is these transnational reversals that are the subject of the present article. Against the globalising Northern (or Western) thrust of economic goods, technological experts and mediatized images it considers a counter-trend: the emergence of complex transnational ethnic or religious cultural worlds, created by vast flows of labour migrants.

Global pathways

Labour migration forges global pathways, routes along which people, goods, places and ideas travel. In considering South Asian global pathways, I argue for the need to recognise the class dimensions of this movement, and the significance of both strong and weak ties in determining emergent forms of cultural transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. The ethnic and religious worlds discussed in the paper – of Pakistani Muslim religious sufis and working-class Pakistani 'cosmopolitans' – cut across national boundaries and are centred beyond Europe. The global highways along which Pakistani labour migrants travel also carry goods, brides and tourists. Like the Melanesians, of whom Strathern writes that they make places – and sentiments – 'travel', Pakistani migration involves the metonymic movement of ceremonial objects such as food, clothing, cosmetics and jewellery, which personify moral 'places', and it is through these that new global ethnic social worlds are constituted (Werbner 1990a). Global families and transnational marriages reconfigure the local through global connections, while still being marked by economic class and status.

A key point made by Appadurai in his discussion of globalisation is the absence of any singular or permanently fixed centre and peripheries in the new global order (Appadurai 1990). Global landscapes criss-cross each other, centred in quite different parts of the world. This is true of *both* transnational 'ethnoscapes' discussed in this paper: an Islamic religious one and a familial one. Both ethnoscapes were generated by labour migration and both are composed of transnationals who are, in some sense, also cosmopolitans in an extension of the terms as defined by Hannerz. Transnationals are people who move and build encapsulated cultural worlds around them. Cosmopol-

itans, by contrast, familiarise themselves with other cultures and know how to move easily between cultures. The working-class labour migrants discussed here are primarily transnationals, living in their enclosed cultural worlds wherever they travel, but the paper also shows how it is possible to be a working-class cosmopolitan, a person who gains knowledge and familiarity with other cultures.

Let me stress that I am not simply talking of 'diasporas' but of specific kinds of focused networks that ultimately create diasporas as focused spatial extensions marked by flows of goods and patterns of gifting and consumption. This is a modern phenomenon which the literature on tourism and travel more generally has failed, so far, to comprehend. In particular, Clifford's clarion call to think about an anthropology of travel rather than of fixed and bounded communities (Clifford 1992) ignores anthropology's salient contribution to the study of labour migration and religious pilgrimage, on the one hand, and the movement of women as wives, on the other, as tropes which have been central to the subject.¹ Here these movements are traced in their global dimensions, but the claim I am making is that local cultural assumptions about the personified nature of economic goods, about religious power or about marriage are sustained despite the change in the scale of movement.

Religious transnationalism: Sufi cults

My first case study relates to the global spread of transnational Sufi cults and the impact this has on the careers of individual devotee labour migrants. I begin with an anecdote. On my recent visit to a saint's lodge in Pakistan in 1991, my local guide and guardian angel, Hajji Suleiman, a villager with relatively little education, explained to me where he had learned his English. 'I learnt it,' he explained, 'while I was working in the Gulf.' 'In the Gulf?' I wondered. 'But didn't you tell me that you were working for a Japanese firm there?' 'Yes', he answered, 'of course.' 'Well, how did you learn it then?' 'I learnt it from the Japanese', he replied. 'The Japanese? But they also don't speak English. How did you manage?' 'We used dictionaries,' he explained, as though this should have been quite obvious.

On another occasion we were chatting about the saint and the large number of foreign visitors he hosted at the *darbar*. 'The saint', he explained, 'likes to entertain each person according to what he is accustomed to. In your case, for example, he has given you a comfortable bed to sleep in. The Japanese are very interested in Sufism. Once there was a Japanese delegation that came here to talk about Sufism. At that time I was the Shaikh's *darban*, his gatekeeper. I served the visitors green tea without sugar, exactly as I knew they liked it. They were delighted and amazed. Once in the Gulf', he added, 'I cured a Japanese of a very bad headache by blowing *dam* on him' (he is referring here to the custom of 'blowing' Koranic verses as a healing device).

Hajji Suleiman is a cosmopolitan traveller with a good deal of international experience. His first labour migration trip followed an instruction by the Shaikh to go to Dubai to earn money for his family. This instruction was issued, it seems, after Hajji Suleiman's wife had been to see the Shaikh to ask advice about her financial difficulties,

1 Indeed, he fails to note that the two founding books of modern British anthropology, *Argonauts of the western Pacific*, by Bronislaw Malinowski, and *The Nuer*, by E. E. Evans-Pritchard were, respectively, on transcommunal, 'international' travel and trade, and transhumant pastoralism. A key question in both books was the problem of strangerhood and how strangers are culturally categorised, negotiated with, and made partners in trade or war.

since her husband was working at the lodge in a voluntary capacity, without earning any wages.

While in the Gulf, Hajji Suleiman not only learnt to speak English. He also learnt to speak Arabic and even a little Japanese. His encounters with the Japanese were complex. At one point he left the firm he was working for in Dubai at short notice after he had obtained a valuable visa permitting him to go on *hajj*. His application to the firm for leave was refused. At the time, he was a supervisor, and both site engineers were away in Japan on leave so he was responsible for 250 men. The manager told him: 'If I let you go, all the Muslims working here will want to go too'. Hajji Suleiman consulted a Pakistani friend who was working for another company. The friend advised him to forget the money and go on the pilgrimage anyway. 'This is a great opportunity for you to go on *hajj*', he said. 'You may never get another one!' So Hajji Suleiman went off on *hajj* without handing in his notice, for fear that the company might take away his passport. He just left, 20 days before the *hajj*. In Mecca he stayed with the Pakistani *khalifa*, deputy of the Shaikh, who is based permanently in the holy city.

When the Shaikh arrived in Mecca for the annual pilgrimage, Hajji Suleiman was terrified he would be angry with him for deserting his job. He did not come forward to greet the Shaikh but the latter noticed him hiding behind the door and called him in. Even though the saint knew nothing of his desertion he said to him: 'Suleiman, you have done the right thing. You preferred God to money. Do not worry. God will look after you'.

Hajji Suleiman was afraid to go back to his company. He spent a whole month searching for another job in Dubai, staying with a fellow cult member, but to no avail. Then, one night, at the end of the month, the saint appeared to him in a dream. He told him to go back to his old company, to go there at 2.30 p.m. sharp, just after lunch. He found out later, he told me, that the company was about to strike him off the books the following day, and to have him deported. He arrived at 2.30 and all the workers – Hindus, Bangladeshis, Japanese, etc. – greeted him: 'Hello, Hajji Suleiman' (stressing the 'Hajji' bit). At the office all the Japanese were there except the manager, who was late. They were pleased to see him but they advised him to wait in the meeting room so that the manager wouldn't encounter him straight away when he returned, since the manager was, they said, very angry with him. They promised to warn the manager that he was waiting for him in the meeting room.

Finally the manager arrived. He told Suleiman: 'I cannot employ you any longer. You were solely responsible for 250 men, and you abandoned them.' 'But,' Hajji Suleiman explained to me, 'I had the *tasawwar*, the picture, image, of the Shaikh in front of me (in my inner vision) and this gave me courage so I answered: "You refused me permission to go on *hajj* when I already had a visa, and all the Muslim workers were laughing at me". The manager thought for a while, and told me to wait. Eventually he called me to him and told me his company had just started a new project in Baghdad. He promised to send me there. I knew the Japanese manager of the new site, Mr Cato, who was away for a few days in Japan. When he came back I met him to discuss the move to Iraq. He wanted to put me in a lower position than I had before, under an ex-gang leader of mine who had in the meanwhile been promoted. But I still had the *tasawwar* of the Shaikh before my eyes, so I refused. In the end, they gave in. They promoted someone else to assistant engineer and made me a supervisor instead of that man. Then the company paid my wages and sent me back to Pakistan for a month. I

came straight here, to the *darbar* (the saint's lodge), to see the Shaikh, even before going home.

'When I first came in to see him, the Shaikh said to me: "Now you are going to Baghdad – first Mecca, now Baghdad. You are a very lucky man. Your company is located close to Abdul Qadr Gilani's tomb, just one stop by minibus. You will work in the company in the daytime and clean the tomb at night." You see, the Shaikh knew everything, even though he has never been to Iraq. As Iqbal [the great nationalist Punjabi poet] says, "God's Wali can take two and a half steps and see the whole world".'

While he was in Baghdad, Hajji Suleiman's wife joined him there for a while, and the two of them both worked as volunteers cleaning the shrine of Abdul Qadr Gilani, the revered founder of South Asian Sufism.

Hajji Suleiman does not belong to a landowning caste. One of his sons is a watchmaker in a small Punjabi town. But two of his sons have recently married cousins (wife's sister's daughters) in Amsterdam and have moved to the Netherlands. In 1991, when these conversations took place, they were waiting for their passports to be released, and then they would be allowed to bring their parents over to Holland. Hajji Suleiman regarded these marriages as a blessing granted him by the saint as reward for his labours. One day, discussing the issue of 'promotions' on the Sufi path, I asked Hajji Suleiman whether he did not resent his position as a mere *murid*, disciple, despite the long years of unpaid service he had put in at the lodge. 'No', he said, 'I *have* been promoted', and he explained that the saint had given him permission to blow *dam*, the healing breath of Qur'anic verses, for all illnesses, including snake bites.

'But could you not become a *khalifa*, a vicegerent or deputy of the saint?' I persisted. 'After all, you know Arabic and can even lead the prayers.' Hajji Suleiman then revealed to me a secret dream. 'Perhaps the Shaikh will send me to Holland', he said, 'to found a branch of his order there. He did have a *khalifa* there before who was sent over from England, I think, but the man proved to be a failure, and has now left. So Amsterdam is the only place which is now "empty", he said (that is, has no branch of the order, despite the large number of Pakistanis living there). In addition to Pakistanis, you know, there were lots of Turks and Arabs in Amsterdam. 'The other *khalifa* did not speak Dutch or Arabic', he told me. 'But what about you? You don't speak Dutch either,' I said. 'Dutch is very easy', Hajji Suleiman replied, 'it's just like Punjabi'. At this unexpected reply, I burst out laughing, but I had to admit to myself that for a man who had learnt English from the Japanese, as well as fluent Arabic, while working on a building site, learning to speak Dutch was likely to be a relatively small challenge.

According to Omar Noman (1991), by 1984, official migrant overseas remittances to Pakistan amounted to 3.2 billion dollars annually, and constituted the country's largest single source of foreign exchange earnings, also financing 86 per cent of the country's trade deficit. This was mainly due to the escalation of migration from Pakistan to the Middle East. What is remarkable, he tells us, about this migration is the class background of migrants, the majority being unskilled and semi-skilled workers, many of urban poor background. A total of 9.3 per cent of rural households and 16 per cent of urban households have, he reports, at least one migrant member working in the Middle East (*ibid.*: 88). By contrast, migration to the USA and Canada has mainly been of skilled groups such as doctors, and in most cases, whole families have moved. 'This form of migration,' he argues, 'and the physical distance, imply a very different

relationship with Pakistan when compared with the [all-male] migration to the Gulf.' The latter has had 'a pronounced egalitarian impact in both urban and rural areas' (*ibid.*: 83). Moreover, many returning migrants invested in small businesses with a major effect on the processes of class formation in Pakistan.

Migration is a class-related phenomenon and notions of transnationalism or cosmopolitanism as cultural phenomena are of necessity class related (see Novikowski 1984; Werbner 1990b). Working-class cosmopolitanism – a knowledge of and openness to other cultures – while implying the same processual *forms* of hybridisation and creolisation, do not generate the same cultural hybrids as those evolved by elite cosmopolitans. We need always, as Jan Pieterze warns us, to 'investigate the *terms* of mixture, the conditions of mixing and *melange*' (Pieterze 1995: 57). There are multiple modalities of cosmopolitanism.

The specificity of transnational routes

International labour migration from any particular society thus follows, I propose, a series of hierarchically ordered global pathways. The term pathway as used here is borrowed from the literature on popular culture, and follows Becker's analysis of 'art worlds' (Becker 1982). Drawing on Becker in her study of musical groups and musicians in Milton Keynes, Ruth Finnigan shows how performers follow different pathways throughout Britain, depending on the musical audiences and players who constitute their art world (Finnigan 1989).

A pathway might be a highway, as it has been in the case of migration to the Gulf. The Gulf highway is one along which many different nations travel, meet and interact, getting to know one another in the intimate context of work side-by-side. Such work, often dangerous or demanding physical labour, creates close encounters between people from different nationalities, and results in an *esprit de corps*, a collective sentiment of interdependency. In my view, what evolves is not simply another transnational culture, such as that created by meetings of diplomats or professional elites. While the latter come equipped with prior professional knowledge, in the Gulf, it seems, technical know-how, cultural knowledge and the forging of cross-national social relationships are acquired on site, in the relatively neutral context in which almost everyone is a foreigner.

But if we consider the specific case of Hajji Suleiman, we can also see that within this major highway there are different lanes. Hajji Suleiman is a devoted Sufi and an evidently pious Muslim. He would not have been given his job back had his piety and sincerity not been recognised by his Japanese employers. But his story is also a tale of the transnational dimensions of religious orders in the modern world. He is locked into a transnational network, not of relatives and family but of *pir-bhai*, Sufi brothers. A Sufi-brother advises him to seize the opportunity and go on *hajj*. He stays in Mecca with the *khalifa* of the order. He meets the saint he left behind in Pakistan at a recognised meeting point of the cult in Mecca, when the saint comes for the annual pilgrimage. He then lives with another saint-brother while seeking alternative employment. Finally, in Baghdad, along with his wife, he spends the days working for wages and the nights working for the love of God at a saint's shrine.

There is a further dimension to this type of transnationalism: for Hajji Suleiman, 'home' is condensed in the image of the saint whom he musters before his inner eye whenever he needs courage to confront superiors and foreigners. That image is always

with him, wherever he is. His experience of overseas travel is thus not one of alienation but of triumphant mastery, rooted in his localised faith in his saint – which is, simultaneously, very much also a faith in Islam as a world religion. Hence, one of the most exhilarating aspects of his migration experience for him is the sense of Islam as a boundary-crossing global faith. His work at the tomb of Abdul Qadr Gilani in pious service to God confirms his identity in his own eyes as a cosmopolitan who is at home everywhere, just as God is everywhere. So too, the pilgrimage to Mecca, which he performed subsequently several more times during his stay in the Middle East, provides him with an experience of membership in a global community. He is determined to share in that experience, even at the risk of losing a valuable job.

Although he is a simple man from a poor background and with little formal education, Hajji Suleiman clearly feels that the experience of labour migration has transformed him. He is competent now in the traditions of others. He knows the Japanese intimately, has observed their minutest customs. By the same token, he has also observed the customs, habits and idiosyncrasies of Hindus, Bangladeshis, Arabs and Iraqis. He appears to have had close cross-cultural friendships. His confidence is such that learning Dutch is regarded by him as a small matter, almost like knowing Punjabi – which is his mother tongue. But when he considers moving to Holland, it is nevertheless from the vantage point of his most valued identity as a Sufi. If he moves to Holland, it will be with the mission to found a branch of his order there. He will utilise the Arabic picked up in the Gulf to create a cross-national Sufi community of Pakistanis, Turks and Arabs. He knows he can do that, since he has lived with Muslims from other countries already. The world is mapped by him in terms of his Sufi order. Holland is an empty place, a void, since there is no branch there. His perspective as a Sufi member of Zindapir's transnational regional cult shapes his cosmopolitanism and provides it with a sense of order.

Migration to Britain

Pakistanis follow other pathways of migration. Migration to Britain has been particularly complex, and has included Pakistanis originating from a wide range of Muslim *zats*, or castes, and a wide spectrum of class backgrounds, from professionals and an urban bourgeoisie, to villagers from the least developed areas of the Punjab (see Werbner 1990a). Some of the migrants have been members of Zindapir's regional cult and, as in the case of Hajji Suleiman, the cult and its activities shape their interaction with the people around them. But in England the cult is part of a complex range of Sufi cults and other Islamic streams, movements and organisations based in Britain and centred on Pakistan, or even more globally.

The British Pakistani community is an established transnational community, stratified by class, caste, education, occupation, religious affiliation, cultural interests, urban or rural background, and so forth. Superficially, it might seem that it is possible in Britain to be a transnational without being a bit cosmopolitan. This is particularly true for women and *ulama* who often live in the country for many years without learning to speak any English. Many women live surrounded by large families, embedded within networks of affines in the context of localised *biradaris*. I shall return to the concept of *biradari* below. If they live in inner city neighbourhoods, they have Pakistani neighbours and friends. They shop in Pakistani shops, work for Pakistani clothing manufacturers, and spend their days in an exciting round of ritual

celebrations: communal Koran readings, weddings, birth rituals, funerals, *Eid*, and so forth. They run up exorbitant phone bills talking to family in Pakistan on an almost weekly basis, and go on visits back home for weddings, funerals or *Eid*, laden with gifts for relatives. A stream of gifts from home also arrives constantly in Britain from loving sisters, brothers, mothers, aunts and grandmothers.

Moving places, fixed identities

In *Partial connections*, Marilyn Strathern argues that in the

‘English view, persons acquire identity from the places they are at. ... Places stay, persons move ... Classes are fixed, individuals mobile. ... [Feminists who change] ... theoretical positions [also] change political or academic character. Moving between locations can thus seem like an act of disorientation. ... The result is felt to be fragmented persons and cultures.’ (Strathern 1991: 117)

By contrast to Westerners, Melanesians, she argues, ‘*make the places travel*’: masks, valuables, shells, trees ‘travel out of sight, are put and taken off or turned upside down’ (*ibid.*, emphasis added). If in the West places are sources of identity for mobile people, in Melanesia people move through the places (i.e. things) that they cause to travel.

But not only in Melanesia do places travel. Migration and imperialism both set in motion a series of different forms of ‘place travel’. First and most obviously, when the global pathway is broad enough, the flow of commerce and goods along the highway results in the creation of ethnic worlds. Within these ethnic worlds public aesthetics and values are geographically transposed. A young Pakistani woman walking along the street of a British city, dressed in traditional *shalwar kamiz*, may seem to an outside English observer to be flaunting her ethnic identity, asserting her difference and otherness. In England, the declaration of cultural and religious difference in the public domain is regarded as an unseemly exposure of privacy.

Hence exotic dress may seem deliberately aggressive: a visual barb. This is, however, to misread the intentionality of our casual Pakistani female stroller. Pakistani women wearing traditional clothes in public are hardly conscious of their dress as an act of identity display. They dress as they do because they regard their outfits as aesthetically beautiful. That such an outfit will enhance their appearance is part of a taken-for-granted world of taste and value which has come to be transposed over the years wholesale from South Asia.

Along with its purely aesthetic perception is a further social value attached to the stroller’s outfit which remains invisible to the English gaze. Many such outfits are gifts which embody other places and faraway, loved people – parents, sisters, mother’s brothers, living elsewhere. More profoundly even than the significance of the aesthetic home environment created by commercial imports is the traffic in sentimentally loaded, ceremonial exchange objects. This is one important way of making places travel, of making contiguity out of distant locations. The metonymic transfer of ceremonial objects such as food, clothing or cosmetics and jewellery, is just as important as the metaphoric meanings such objects have within culturally determined semantic grids (see Werbner 1990a: 332–3).

When Pakistanis visit relatives living abroad, in the West, they invariably take back home with them to Pakistan a particle of the country they have visited, as a pilgrim might take home a handful of soil or a flask of water from a sacred shrine (on such sacred exchange, see R. Werbner 1989). The department stores of the West are its

museums of contemporary culture. Unlike museums, however, the goods they contain can be appropriated and taken home, a bit of place that travels. Cosmopolitanism is thus very often, in my observation, a matter of expertise in material culture, acquired by visitors in the many long hours they spend browsing through Marks and Spencer or John Lewis, big British department stores.

I have often wondered why such visitors from Pakistan, many of them urbane, sophisticated, middle class individuals, spend so many hours shopping and almost no time at all going to the theatre, to concerts or to museums and art galleries. Western high culture is ignored and it is evident that what they find most intriguing and important is the material culture of the West. To explain this almost obsessive exploration of the high-street jungle, we need to recognise that it is also, however, grounded in the anticipation of return: visitors know they must go home to friends and relatives in Pakistan, bearing with them new and exciting bits of the country they have just visited. Moreover, they must bring home a gift for each of those relatives and friends. Given budget limitations, shopping becomes both a pleasure and a nightmare.

The same is true, of course, in the reverse direction. British Pakistanis going home on family visits also spend a good deal of time shopping in the bazaars of Lahore or Rawalpindi. They go home laden with gifts – personified objects, objectified places, and return with gifts, including the latest South Asian crazes and fashions. It is this traffic in objects–persons–places–sentiments which is one of the most significant bridges of distance spanning global diasporic communities and transnational families. This, along with the easy accessibility of long-distance telephones calls and cheap air flights, creates an illusion of spatial contiguity, a lack of spatial separation.

Seen in general terms, the traffic in objects is a great leveller. Everyone seems to go to the same department stores or bazaars and to buy rather similar kinds of objects, even if some of these objects are more costly than others. Mass popular culture – from clothing and cosmetics to videos and compact discs – is not perceived, from the point of view of visitors, in terms of its finer discriminations. The separate class-based pathways of migration and international travel converge on the high streets of Britain's big cities, just as they do in the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

But there is one kind of traffic which is critical both to the reproduction and the recategorising of hierarchy in transnational families: I refer here to the movement of people in marriage. Even the most encapsulated migrants, who have apparently made no effort to expand their cultural universe, need to negotiate critical decisions about marriage which reflect the current limits of their experienced social universe. When it comes to marriage, migration as a process necessarily involves a re-evaluation of familial categories of identification and otherness. The final part of my article is thus concerned with the issue of family, class and marriage strategies.

Strong and weak ties

In its most fundamental sense, cosmopolitanism implies an openness to strangers and strangerhood or difference. If the immediate nuclear family is the most intimate unit of non-strangerhood – of shared values, customs and understandings of the world, then the incorporation of friends and marriage partners into this primary group constitutes a willingness to recognise the value of difference and strangerhood. It is in this respect that the migration process involves a major reorientation of familial perspectives and

categories over time, even for those who remain highly encapsulated within the diasporic community and its extension to Pakistan. Like the migration flows themselves, however, this reorientation has a class dimension and is, indeed, class related.

At the heart of the uneasy compromise Pakistanis make between the Islamic ethos of equality and the inequality implied by caste is a cultural serendipity: Islamic rules of exogamy are notoriously lax, permitting marriage with a wide range of close kin and affines, and this is coupled with a prescriptive recommendation to marry patrilineal parallel cousins and a further preference, in practice, for cross cousin, exchange and other affinal marriages. The wide range of marriage prohibitions and elaborate rules of exogamy associated with Hindu intra-caste marriage is entirely absent among Muslims.² As a result, the fiction of equality is sustained despite the very high level of endogamy practised *de facto*.

The majority of Pakistani marriages take place within the *biradari*, at village level an agnatic lineage, but more widely an ego-focused kindred of traceable affines and their consanguinous kin. The notion of *biradari* mediates between kinship, locality and *zat* (caste), regarded as a ranked category, and is thus a localised kindred group. *Biradaris* for Pakistanis, as for their Hindu counterparts, are units of endogamy *within* the caste, and they are also the primary vehicle of strategic marriage alliances and caste mobility.³ Although *biradaris*, regarded as marriage circles, are not as explicitly ranked as they are in parts of India, nevertheless *zat* members marry within their class with those of equal wealth, power or education. Hence *biradaris* are usually homogeneous with regard to their class composition and social standing and can, in this sense, be ranked. When some members of a single extended family rise on the social scale, they often cease to intermarry with their less successful kinsmen, and over a generation or two the family will split into two separate *biradaris*.

To appreciate the sociological significance of the reorientation of kinship categories during migration, we need first to consider the contrastive social consequences of what Granovetter has called 'strong' and 'weak' ties. According to Granovetter (1973), strong ties are those embedded in dense social networks while weak ties are those bridging different social networks. Strong ties are powerful in the dual sense that they are both multiplex and interconnected through a multiplicity of pathways. Their weakness is in their restricted 'reach.' The strength of weak ties lies, by contrast, in their power to span different groups, settings, and classes. Such are the ties of friendship which the migration process produces: new friendships based on work or neighbourly relationships, as well as on political alliances and religious affiliation among Pakistanis.

2 See Alavi (1992) for an exception, in the case of one village he studied, which would seem unusual since I did not encounter cases of this type in my own research.

3 See Werbner (1990a); and for a discussion of Hindu *biradaris* in North India, Parry (1979). Ballard (1990) outlines some of the implications of the contrast in marriage rules for Muslim as against Sikh and Hindu Punjabi immigrant settler marriage strategies in Britain. His account does not consider the growing tendency, among Muslim settlers, to forge the new, weak ties discussed here, or the statistical fact that with each successive generation, the number of local first cousins increases exponentially. There is also a conscious, growing tendency to avoid intercontinental marriages which are perceived to create unnecessary problems for the incoming partner, male or female. I attended a meeting in Manchester among middle class Pakistanis on this theme in which participants discussed, for example, the joys of grandparenthood which their own children had been deprived of because of migration. Ballard does, nevertheless, usefully point to the different ethos and range of marriage strategies available to different South Asian groups in Britain.

Given the very high rates of first cousin and intra-caste endogamy, most kin relationships are necessarily 'strong'. Marriage beyond the family – the establishment of a 'weak' but bridging first link, holds out both promise and risk. In particular, inter-continental marriages between Britain and Pakistan can go seriously wrong. This is often more so, I shall argue here, for villagers settled in Britain than it is for the middle classes.

In Britain, close friends are often idiomatically recategorised as kin and expectations from them are informed by customary ideas about exchange, mutual aid and ritual services associated with kinship (see Werbner 1990a). Yet friendship ties differ critically from kin ties since they constitute crucial 'bridging' ties. As such, they facilitate communication between different kin groups and across different social strata. Kinship ties, being by their very nature 'strong', doom migrants, if sustained in isolation, to remain fixed within the social limits set by their origins and circumstances in Pakistan, prior to their migration to Britain. By contrast, new friendships and acquaintances forged by migrants locally extend their horizons and mediate processes of mobility and social transformation. They facilitate not only job searches and entrepreneurial ventures, but also the expansion of the family and the setting of novel lifestyles.

Friendship rather than kinship is the basis for the formation of incipient class divisions associated with distinctive life styles (see Werbner 1981). In particular, processes of exclusion and inclusion set a locally emergent elite apart. This elite is distinguished by its income and associational patterns rather than its kinship and unique caste origins. During the initial phases of migration, young professional Pakistanis, mostly originating from higher landowning Muslim castes, created and sustained close-knit, exclusive social networks, despite a relatively high rate of turnover in these social networks due to geographical mobility. They did so through established modes of incorporating incoming elite Pakistani newcomers into the networks. Once incorporated, relations of friendship between members of this diasporic middle class are very intense and depend upon continuous shows of generosity, mutual hospitality and the extension of assistance on ceremonial or ritual occasions.

Yet despite their urbanism and sophistication, elite Pakistanis remain a transnational rather than a truly cosmopolitan diaspora. In Britain, this stems from the fact that like all Asian immigrants, they live in the knowledge that their group is scorned and stigmatised by the wider society. They are subject to abuse and name-calling, to the indignities inflicted by immigration officers, or to racial prejudice and discrimination. They are, moreover, highly conscious of the views and attitudes of the wider society, reflected in the increasing number of incidents of racial violence or police brutality, and clearly articulated in the speeches of politicians.

Perhaps more fundamentally even, elite Pakistanis share a specifically Pakistani, elitist cultural tradition which sets them apart from their English professional and business counterparts. It expresses itself in language fluency, aesthetic tastes, cultural and political interests, religious beliefs and practices, even in the humour and gossip style preferred. These draw them together, while their potential itinerancy draws them further apart from the society around them. As the families of such young British Pakistani professionals have matured, however, many have partly refocused their sociality around familial concerns. Family looms larger for all migrants, irrespective of class, as the extended family expands locally.

By contrast to the urban middle classes, villagers tended during the initial phases

of migration to form multi-caste diasporic friendship networks based on regional origin. Yet for both groups a global network of links stretching to Pakistan has ensured that inter-caste marriages are rapidly known in Pakistan and the prestige of the families concerned affected. Caste cannot therefore be ignored as long as migrants remain double rooted.

Nevertheless, different considerations determine the flow of marriage partners along the stratified global pathways which migrants have established. Middle class and elite Pakistanis form a small but exclusive diaspora which extends throughout the large cities of the world – from North America, Britain and northern Europe to the Middle East, Africa, the Far East, Australia and Pakistan itself. The circulation of members of this diaspora and their kin folk or friends throughout these cities is associated with the constant forging or renewal of ties. The anticipated patterns of elite or middle class movements – whether as diplomats, employees of government or large international firms, private businessmen, or students, while not necessarily involving a return to Pakistan, is oriented towards the elite Pakistani diaspora and its centre in Pakistan.

Elite openness to friends of similar status, who, we saw, are easily transformed into local surrogate kin, fails, however, at least in the short run, to be transmuted into actual affinity and kinship. Instead, such surrogate kinship is fostered at the same time that arranged marriages continue to be restricted to exclusive, though sometimes global, *biradaris*, and particularly to the children of very close family, nephews and nieces, or, less frequently, their family friends.

In an obvious way, all arranged marriages reflect the interests of the ascending generation. The wider the generation gap or the global cultural gap, however, the more problematic arranged marriages become. It is in this sense that the contrast between the urban middle classes and rural villages is most pronounced. The urban middle classes in Pakistan usually provide their children with an English-medium education. At the same time, we saw, the life styles of diasporic Pakistani elites retain their South Asian Islamic cultural emphasis. Hence children growing up on different continents have surprisingly similar backgrounds. Since middle class Pakistani parents and children, wherever they happen to live, share broadly the same transnational culture, inter-continental marriages may be less risky. Cosmopolitanism, rather than being a mode of individual exploration and experience, as Hannerz describes it (1992), is for this class a collective and highly selective perspective; a hybridised set of moral and cultural assumptions and sensibilities that transcends particular national boundaries.

In Pakistan, I was told when I was there in 1991, the whole caste system is 'breaking down' in town as people increasingly choose spouses for their children on the basis of wealth, education and social status. The reason for the continued elite diasporic exclusiveness in the choice of spouses for their children stems, I think, from the fact that status discriminations within the middle classes are very finely drawn. In Pakistan, where there is a broader pool of marriage candidates perceived to share identical status, inter-caste marriage between landowning castes may be risked. In Britain elite friendship circles serve well as local substitutes for family, yet fine status discriminations between friends are seldom put to the test. Marriages continue to be arranged with the children of kin or family friends at home in Pakistan or elsewhere in the familial diaspora. Perhaps this reflects also the elite's sense of impermanence, its members' anticipation of future mobility. Their itineracy makes 'home' – Pakistan and the immediate diasporic family the two pivotal sources of status and identity for them.

Even in the case of the middle classes, however, migration has affected marriage

choices. Increasingly, new marriages are contracted locally, in Britain, in response to the new relationships and commitments they make locally. Among villagers, most of these local marriages are normally contracted within the *zat* category, although often with prior strangers who hitherto were regarded as *non-biradari* members. If this happens repeatedly, the *zat* category comes to be transformed over time into a localised *biradari*. This is most likely to occur if the local *zat* is quite numerous, with some of its members already linked by prior kinship or affinal ties, and if a large proportion of *zat* members have been mobile economically in Britain. Under these circumstances, local *zat* members redefine themselves as a single *biradari*.

As long as migrants are still not entirely established locally, however, but place priority on their relations in Pakistan, they tend to define the *biradari* in a much narrower way, to refer exclusively to persons who were members of the *biradari* in Pakistan as well, and this is the only sense in which they use the term. Members of the same caste living in Britain are perceived, if they are strangers without prior kinship links, as belonging to distinct *biradaris*.

If the middle classes are able to reduce the risks of global marital breakdown by fostering a transnational, relatively open, hybridised culture, the cultural chasm between young British Pakistanis, their villager parents and their Pakistani-based relatives appears to be widening. To marry a young person from a Pakistani village is to marry not only a stranger (even if the person is a relative) but a person alien to local British culture. As the number of failed, broken and unhappy inter-continental marriages multiply, the arrangement of such marriages with young Pakistani villagers, whether strangers or nieces and nephews, is increasingly perceived to be highly risky. The sense of immanent danger is intensified by a fear that if marriages break down amidst acrimony, the Punjabi code of honour could provoke a violent response. This kind of response is particularly feared in the case of strangers. Yet strangers wishing to send a son or daughter to Britain also represent for local immigrant settlers the possibility of enhancing their status, especially if they still hope to return to Pakistan one day. The kinds of dilemmas and risks such marriages, both with close relatives and with strangers, pose are illustrated by the following case study.

The case concerns Mustafa, a young son of a villager landlord migrant of the Jat caste with ambitions to raise his family status.⁴ Mustafa (C2, see Figure 1) left school at 17 to become a successful market trader. In doing so, he laid the basis for the family's fortune, drawing his father, who had been made redundant when the factory which employed him had closed down, then his younger brother, and finally his two newly-wed brothers-in-law (C4 and C5) into market trading. After several years as market traders, the family also opened a small clothing factory, managed initially by Mustafa's father. The factory was never much of a success but later, one of the brother-in-laws (C7) opened his own knitwear factory, and became quite a successful manufacturer.

While still at school Mustafa fell in love with a beautiful Pakistan girl of a *kammi*, low caste origin. Under heavy pressure from his family he agreed, though very reluctantly, to marry a mother's brother's daughter (C1) from his natal village in Pakistan. The cousin arrived in Manchester and the wedding was duly held, with traditional celebrations culminating in a large hotel reception. Once married, however, Mustafa found himself unable to forget his girlfriend and refused to live with the new wife, or even consummate the marriage. After two years in Manchester, she eventually

4 The following case is adapted from Werbner 1990a, chapter 3.

returned to Pakistan, much beloved by Mustafa's family, but rejected by Mustafa himself. He insisted on divorcing her formally and his parents finally agreed to allow him to marry his girlfriend (C3), although not without serious family conflict. The second marriage took place without any public ceremonies, and the new wife's parents are totally avoided by Mustafa and his family. Mustafa's rejected bride eventually married another cousin.

The divorce had serious repercussions throughout the kin network scattered over three continents. The village *biradari* was enraged by the return of the rejected bride. In the United States, another mother's brother (B6), who was also the father's brother of the bride, responded by divorcing his second wife, a sister of Mustafa's sister's husband (B16). His marriage to this wife had followed Mustafa's sister's marriage to a

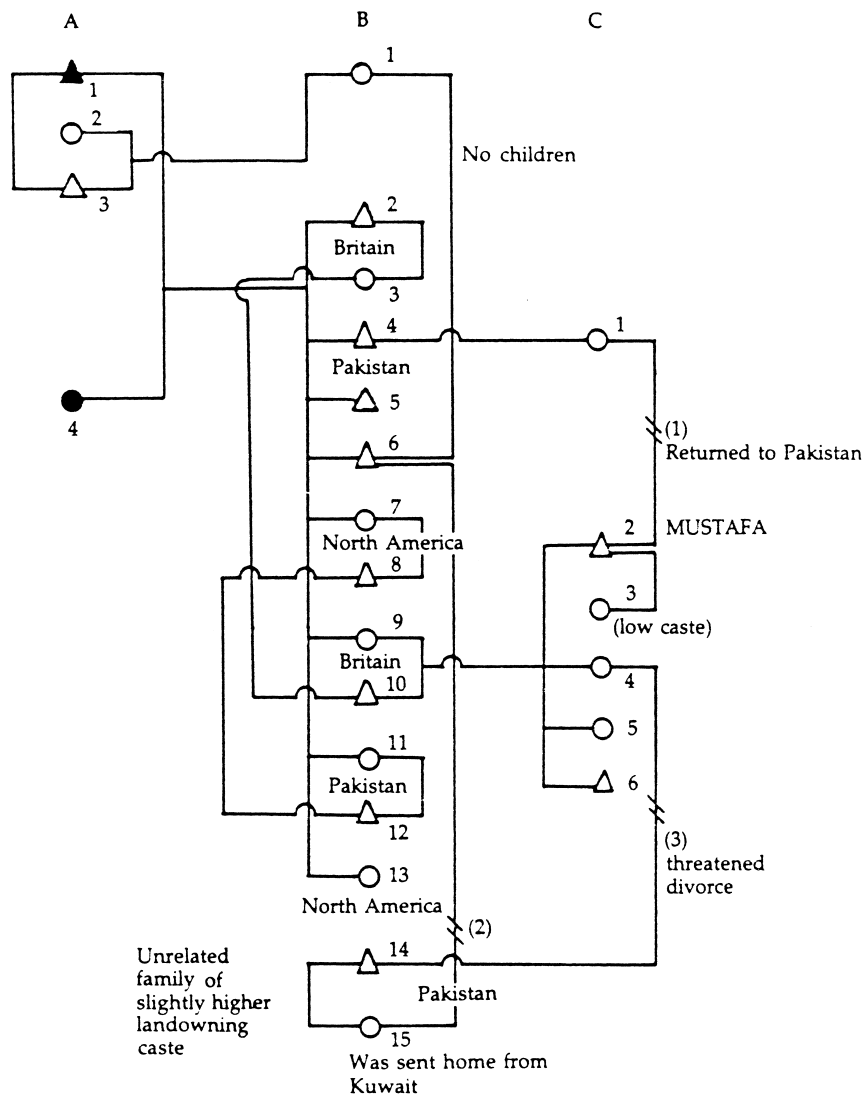


FIGURE 1. Chain marriage and divorce.

boy from Pakistan introduced through friends made in Manchester. The boy was from an unrelated family, from a slightly higher Jat subcaste. Once that marriage was established, the second marriage, by Mustafa's mother's brother (B6) followed. This mother's brother had been married for many years to a father's brother's daughter (B1) but she had borne him no children. It was his wife who had encouraged him to marry again. But in the upshot, his second marriage was also barren. It is possible that Mustafa's divorce gave him an excuse to send his second wife home.

Mustafa's sister's (C4) marriage to the stranger boy had been relatively successful. The boy had only distant relatives in Manchester and was basically incorporated, as was the other sister's husband, into his wife's family – a loving, cheerful and relatively open minded group. Once the boy's sister (B15) was divorced, however, by his wife's uncle, he himself came under increasing pressure from his own family to divorce too in retaliation. By this time the couple had a little girl whom he loved very dearly. He was a struggling market trader, trying to make a living, and dependent on his wife's family for emotional and financial support. He and his wife lived in a house that she had purchased as part of her dowry, with money earned as a machinist. Yet the pressure on him from home was intense. His spurned sister (B15), in particular, but also his mother (his father was dead) continuously sent him messages and letters which were sometimes uncovered by his wife. The result of this pressure was that he broke down psychologically and was diagnosed as schizophrenic. His wife told me his sister had sent a *jinn* in a bottle from Pakistan which had afflicted him. Such accusations of intercontinental sorcery are increasingly common in Britain as family disputes take on global dimensions.

The lad was sent to hospital for a period. His wife tried to sustain the marriage for a while but found that his relatives in Manchester had begun to interfere. In the divorce property settlement her main concern was to protect the house which she had paid for from her own earnings.

During the period leading to her husband's psychological breakdown, she had also come under pressure to go to Pakistan, to visit her in-laws there. But she was afraid to go, even on a short visit, for fear that her daughter would be kidnapped or that she herself might be trapped there. She clearly regarded the family of her husband as both potentially, and – through their sorcery – actually, violent. She was also reluctant to remarry for fear that a new husband might mistreat her daughter. She was thus left alone, the victim of a series of chain marriages and divorces which had nothing to do with her directly. I heard several years later that she had remarried happily and was living in the north-west of England.

Not surprisingly, Mustafa's younger brother's (C6) marriage was arranged with a close relative. But at the same time, the family also arranged a 'stranger' marriage for a niece with the son of Mustafa's father's closest political ally in Manchester. This marriage too crossed caste boundaries and might be regarded as hypergamous – the boy was of the Rajput caste.

The case points to the danger inherent in any transcontinental marriages. Mustafa's experience was not unique. Pakistani boys in Britain are given great freedom to roam without supervision and many establish liaisons either with English or Asian girls. In several cases I know of, they have nevertheless agreed to go through with arranged marriages with their first cousins, only to abandon their new brides almost immediately after the marriage. Family disputes arising out of such a rejection can have ramifying effects on intra-*biradari* relationships. This encourages settled British Pakistanis to seek marriages with prior strangers. But if these go wrong, there are few cross-cutting ties

enabling parents to control the behaviour of their son- or daughter-in-law, or of affines. This pushes them back into seeking marriages with close relatives.

Hence, centrifugal and centripetal forces create a dialectic of openness and closure in Pakistani kinship and marriage strategies. Openness to the world, the desire to forge new bridging, 'weak' ties, to enhance class, as well as caste, status, is periodically undermined when strangers are revealed as uncontrollable and unfeeling enemies. Yet marriages within the family not only limit the chances of mobility but result in an intricate chain of linked marriages. These carry with them the danger that conflict in one relationship can ripple through all the others, leading in extreme cases to chain divorces, with pernicious consequences for potentially large numbers of family members.

Global marriages often make the lot of victims of failed unions much harder: young women rejected by husbands find themselves living with strange in-laws far from their families; young men dependent on affines come under pressure from family back home who fail to understand their present predicaments. The success of arranged marriages depends on a balance of modesty – both girl and boy need to be protected before marriage, as they are in Pakistan. It also depends on strong parental control and upon ongoing viable relationships between affines. These are attenuated by the global separation between kin and even more so, between prior strangers. Hence the pressures increase on migrants to build up local relationships and forgo inter-continental marriages. The pressure is, in other words, to cease being too global, but to open up locally. Yet here we need to recognise that cosmopolitanism is as much an openness to prior strangers next door, a willingness to forge new weak but significant ties, as it is a commitment to sustain prior strong global links.

Conclusion

Labour migration forges global pathways, routes along which people, goods, and ideas travel. In considering South Asian global pathways, I have argued for the need to recognise the class dimensions of this movement, and the significance of strong and weak ties in determining emergent forms of cultural transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Global South Asian families belong to globally stratified South Asian communities. This is to be expected in the case of a society divided by caste, lifestyle and wealth. Global families' marriage strategies and sentimental links, as expressed through gifting and visiting, reflect these divisions, and precipitate processes of localisation as migrants are increasingly compelled to confront local strangers next door and open up to new cultural influences. The result is a continual dialectic between processes of localisation and continued transnationalism and globalisation.

Similarly, the Muslim religious diaspora is itself stratified and divided according to religious tendency. Sufism, one such tendency, creates its own global landscapes peopled by saints and *pir-bhai*, 'saint-brothers'; like global families the Sufi transnational regional cults have been created by international labour migration in which working-class cosmopolitans move along prescribed pathways. Rather than a one-way westernised flow of goods and images, the 'McDonaldisation' of the world, we see that processes of globalisation, transnationalisation and localisation are historically and culturally specific and that the economic pathways carrying goods and people criss-cross each other to create complex transnational topographies. Within any single national, regional or territorial community, however, these global networks disrupt, as Homi K. Bhabha (1994) has argued, any neat notions of boundedness, without

denying the validity of such local patriotisms. There are Scottish Pakistanis and Welsh Pakistanis. Pakistani membership in Britain or in Europe is thus mediated by several different dimensions of 'belonging'. Cosmopolitanism, in other words, does not necessarily imply an absence of belonging but the possibility of belonging to more than one ethnic and cultural localism simultaneously. This is as true of working class cosmopolitans as it is of third-world intellectual elites who produce the kind of hybrid artistic products – books, films, art – which have so far been the main focus of scholarly attention.

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