The Ranking of Brotherhodds: The Dialectics of Muslim Caste among Overseas Pakistanis

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Caste and Islam

It is widely regarded as self-evident that overseas South Asian communities cannot develop a caste 'system' (Pocock 1957). While continuing to uphold endogamous practices, such communities lack both hereditary specialisation and interdependence, and a hierarchical organisation based on a ritual model of perfection (ibid.: 290). It is also assumed, further, that although caste as ranked hierarchy may articulate or underpin urban as well as rural relationships, caste as system is restricted to pre-industrial cities. The present paper re-examines the validity of these hypotheses in the light of research among overseas Pakistanis in Britain. It asks in what senses can caste be said to persist as a 'system' among communities of overseas Pakistanis in British industrial cities. In order to answer this question the paper examines first the nature of Punjabi Muslim castes in general and the underlying dialectic informing Muslim caste as a conceptual system. What are the cultural and moral premises informing Muslim caste categories? The paper then goes on to examine how such premises explain patterns of mobility and shifts in dominance or hegemony within a particular local community of overseas migrants living in Manchester.

The ongoing debate on the nature of Islam in India is locked in controversies raised by two seminal essays by Barth (1959, 1960) and Dumont's response to them. In his essay Dumont (1972: 247–63) spells out the central dilemmas raised by the apparent persistence of caste among Muslims (and other minorities) in India. Despite the evident conflict between the egalitarian values of Islam and the fundamental inequalities between men implied by caste, Muslims in India continue to foster a caste-like system of ranked, named and endogamous social entities, a system which bears

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striking similarity to the Hindu caste system. This apparent persistence of caste among Muslims raises, he argues, problems both in relation to his definition of Hindu caste, and in the context of more general theoretical issues regarding modes of cultural-historical analysis. Islam in India, like Christianity, appears impotent in the face of the vitality of caste attitudes.

Dumont criticises Barth’s attempt to disassociate social organisation from its cultural-historical determination. Barth, it will be recalled, while recognising the Hindu origins of contemporary Swat social organisation, bases his analysis of caste on its social structural features as a ‘summation’, a congruent cluster of statuses (occupational, kinship, political, etc.). This tendency towards congruence makes caste systems different, he argues, from other class and ranking systems which ‘give simultaneous recognition to a multiplicity of conflicting hierarchical criteria’ (1960: 113). However, in order to explain the stress on purity and pollution at the extremes of the Swat caste system Barth resorts to secondary explanations. The purity and ascendency of the saintly Sayyids is determined by descent, whereas the lower castes’ status is determined by their polluting occupations (for a more forceful exposition of this viewpoint, see Srinivas 1984).

For Dumont the most distinctive feature of the Hindu caste system is the disjunction (rather than congruence) between status and power, expressed in the priority of the sacred and the opposition between the pure and the impure. This sanctioning of hierarchy by religious belief is, he argues, even in the face of Barth’s evidence, apparently absent among Muslims.1 Dumont’s conclusion implies a continuously unresolved dialectic between the opposed principles of hierarchy and inequality in the Muslim caste system. In Dumont’s view, the association of Muslims and Hindus has created ‘a Muslim society of a quite special type, a hybrid type which we are scarcely in a position to characterise, except by saying that, lying beneath the ultimate of Islamic values are other values presupposed by actual behaviour’ (1972: 258).

An important theoretical advance in our understanding of Muslim caste systems may be found in Dumont’s more recent work in which he revises his earlier assumption that universal religions cannot accommodate this disjunction between power and purity within a holistic order. In early Christianity, he argues, the disjunction between the sacred and secular orders persists as an expression of the tension between the inworldly social order with its inequalities of power and ranking and the outworldly relationship between man and God, based on a presumption of universal equality. Outworldly individualism encompasses inworldly inequalities of

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1 Dumont’s contention that there is no disjunction between power and purity among Swat stems from his confusion of the role of saints and Maulvis (1972: 374, ft. 104b). Saints who are powerfully pure descendents of the Prophet’s daughter can act as intercessors with God. They are placed above the dominant ruler Khans in the caste hierarchy. Maulvis who are mere lay religious officials with some Islamic learning are placed below them.
power (1983: 7). In such societies the ritually pure mediate between the inworldly and outworldly and are thus placed at the extreme top of the hierarchy. The outworldly Church encompasses the inworldly State within a holistic order. These moral philosophical premises informing early Christianity are applicable with few modifications to popular Islam in South Asia where pure descendents of the Prophet mediate between God and individuals otherwise locked into a holistic inworldly order.

The ensuing tension or dialectic between conflicting premises of equality and inequality must be recognised if we are to bring together the sociological and cultural-historical within a single theoretical framework. Such a dialectical approach can help explain the persistence of caste as a system among overseas labour migrants in Britain. More broadly, it explains why world-wide ongoing processes of Islamicisation (I. Ahmad 1976a; Robinson 1983) do not obviate Muslim caste systems but come to be constitutive of them. As part of this process of Islamicisation, competing Islamic movements associated with different interpretations of the ‘perfect’ Islamic order (Das 1984) may be incorporated into localised Muslim caste hierarchies (although they do sometimes cut across them). Hence, a contextual analysis is undoubtedly essential (I. Ahmad 1976a; 1978b, 1981; Minault 1984); cultural-historical processes necessarily unfold differentially within localised contexts.

A second limiting feature of Barth’s analysis is its restricted application to rural communities or pre-industrial cities. It is recognised that caste-like structures are consonant with a mercantile society, or societies based on hereditary trades requiring ‘a minimum of organisational complexity’ (Coon 1953: 153, 171, cited by Lindholm). In Barth’s view caste hierarchies are generated where ‘individuals have intimate face-to-face relations with each other in many different spheres of activity. Differentiation in such societies can only be maintained if individuals in their different capacities are ranked consistently’ (1960: 142).

In this sense caste as ranked hierarchy may articulate or underpin urban relationships only where these conditions hold. But what place can notions of caste possibly have in post-capitalist industrial cities? How is it that for Pakistanis in Manchester, caste, rather than disappearing permanently, has been resurrected and renegotiated as an ongoing system of categorical relations, validating status and defining marriage options?

Such a process is quite inexplicable without a cultural-historical perspective. It remains essential to recognise the power of culture, regarded as a coherent set of ideas, images and norms, to determine action and generate structure. Given such a perspective, Barth’s basic hypothesis

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2 Lindholm (1986) presents an illuminating cross-cultural comparison of caste-like structures in different Middle and Near Eastern societies. In accepting Dumont’s interpretation of Barth, however, I feel he does not do full justice to the brilliance of the latter’s highly integrated analysis.
remains brilliantly predictive: in communities of labour migrants status discrepancies are renegotiated in order to recreate the appearance of status congruence. The principle of congruence between ritual, kinship, economic and political domains, once re-established, is articulated in the idiom of caste.

The dialectic between the explicit egalitarian ethos of Islam and the unstated, implicit values of caste and hierarchy is arguably an inversion of a parallel dialectic within the Hindu caste system itself. Thus Parry (1979), in his study of Rajputs in north India's Kangra district, finds a 'structural contradiction' between values of hierarchy, on the one hand, and equality, on the other, revealed in periodic attempts to suppress hypergamous marriage in favour of marriage between equals. For Muslims the dialectic would seem to be given an alternative ideological expression, as the explicit ideology is continuously undermined by the implicit and yet quite pervasive counter-ideology of caste and inequality.

Caste for Pakistanis in Manchester is no longer underpinned by land-ownership or clear occupational specialisation. During the early phases of migration Nai, Musali and Rajput worked side by side in the same factories. Nevertheless, I shall argue, emergent relations of power and economic dominance are articulated in the idiom of caste and ratified through marriage alliances. As the migrant community sinks roots locally, and establishes a local politico-economic order, a localised caste ranking re-emerges as significant. Migrants may attempt to change their caste affiliation or disguise their origins, but caste as an overarching principle is re-established. Whether this will remain the case for future generations is not yet clear, and is beyond the scope of this paper. It is conceivable that for youngsters growing up in Britain the confrontation will not be between Hinduism and Islam, but between patrimonialism and individual choice.

Punjabi Muslim migrants in Manchester

Most Punjabi Muslims living in Manchester originate from small villages with one, or at most two, land-owning castes. Manchester, very much like South Asian cities (cf. Pocock 1960), encompasses a large range of castes, from Sayyids to Musalis. Rather than disappearing, caste divisions in Manchester are thus probably more elaborate than in most migrants' home villages (urban migrants, of course, are used to this complexity). And since migrants come from many different parts of the Punjab and beyond, the relative ranking of castes is ambiguous and subject to current negotiation.

Most Pakistanis in Manchester condemn the caste system while practising it, and assert the basic equality and brotherhood of all Muslims. This assertion is borne out by their behaviour in many different contexts, for no obvious distinctions are made between fellow Pakistanis in matters of hospitality, feasting and worship, as well as in matters of economic co-
operation. Indeed, the absence of food prohibitions and other transactional
diacritica between castes makes the continued value accorded to caste
membership by local migrants somewhat problematic. On the face of it
cannot be said, for example, that caste in Manchester constitutes the
'summation' or 'cluster' of statuses Barth suggests it does in rural Pakistan.
Caste membership would appear instead to be reduced to single, and
apparently irrelevant, status attribute amongst many others.

Since most Pakistanis in Manchester do not follow their traditional caste
occupations, why, and in what sense, does caste continue to constitute a
meaningful category of interaction for them? The history of migration to
the city gives clues to the re-emergence of caste. Before discussing this
history in detail, let me consider first some of the specific features of the
Punjabi Muslim caste hierarchy. My data accords closely with that of I.
Ahmad (1976b, 1978b) for Uttar Pradesh, but is perhaps worth reiterating,
given the misunderstandings which have arisen about the Punjabi Muslim
caste system.

At the heart of the uneasy compromise Punjabis 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 kinsmen and consanguines, and this is
coupled with a prescriptive preference for patrilateral parallel cousin
marriage. The familiar complexity of the Hindu marriage system with its
wide range of marriage prohibitions and elaborate rules of exogamy is
entirely absent among Muslims, possibly with some notable exceptions (cf.
Alavi 1972). As a result, the fiction of equality is sustained despite the very
high level of endogamy practiced by Punjabi Muslims; and, indeed, the
same fiction disguises the de facto legitimation of inequality within strati-
fied Muslim societies throughout the Middle East.

Punjabi Muslim castes have been studied from a Marxist perspective
(Alavi 1971, 1972; Saghir Ahmad 1971, 1977) according to which caste is a
mere epiphenomenon of relations of dependency or exploitation. Egler
(1960), although lacking any clear theoretical stance, also denies the signi-
ficance of elaborate caste categories for Punjabi Muslim villagers. This
consensus has, I would argue, stultified any meaningful discussion of
Punjabi Muslim caste. The hiatus is all the more remarkable in the light of
my own research which reveals the persistent significance of caste among
overseas Punjabi Muslims in Britain.

On the whole the Punjabi caste hierarchy fits well with the general
pattern reported elsewhere (Barth 1960; I. Ahmad 1976a: 319–33; 1978b:
1–18). Punjabi Muslim zats, or castes, are social categories which resemble
Hindu castes in being (i) hereditary; (ii) ideally endogamous; (iii) recruited
both from occupational categories and ethnic groups; (iv) comprehensive

\footnote{The exception are a few goldsmiths, barbers and artisans.}
and ranked hierarchically in a 'system', with persons of high ritual pedigree located at the top of the hierarchy (Sayyid), followed by 'conquerors' of Muslim and Hindu origin, followed by categories of agricultural cultivators and artisan castes, with service castes and those coming in contact with polluting substances located at the bottom of the scale (see Figure 1). Like Hindu castes, moreover, zat membership is based primarily, though not unambiguously, on patrilineal descent, so that endogamy, while preferred, is often breached, with children assuming the caste of their fathers (on similar notions among Hindus cf. Parry 1979). The caste status of the offspring of marriages between castes of radically different statuses is, however, highly ambiguous.

Figure 1: The Symbolic Structure of the Muslim Zat System

Punjabi Muslim castes differ from Hindu castes in that (1) the Muslim zat system is not based, except at its extremes, on notions of ritual purity and pollution. This implies, among other things, that commensality between members of all zats is permitted, if not always practised in domestic contexts. (2) Attendant to this, ritual services are not necessarily provided by the highest caste of descendants from the Prophet, the Sayyids, but by lay specialists. Persons occupying mediatory roles as 'saints' (pir) or holy men do, however, usually claim to be Sayyids, while members of the
Barber caste perform certain ritual services during rites of passage, much like their Hindu counterparts. (3) Islam denies the validity of caste-like distinctions and all Muslims are equals in matters of law, worship and religious conduct.

The absence of notions of contagious pollution or commensal barriers and food prohibitions makes marriage the most highly significant symbolic ranking mechanism for Muslims. In Manchester, as elsewhere (Parry 1979), inter-caste marriages are the most problematic for migrants, since these contain implications regarding the relative ranking of the marriage partners. Marriage is notionally hypergamous, although this feature is underplayed in marriages between parallel cousins or in exchange marriages. The preference for marrying first cousins persists in Manchester as a means of bringing over to Britain close relatives from Pakistan. This preference is not, however, a sufficient explanation for the continued local significance of caste. This significance is to be understood in terms of the types of social networks maintained by migrants, and changes in the occupational structure of the community in Manchester.

Friendship among Pakistanis cuts across both caste and kinship boundaries. The local tendency towards the formation of regionally based networks contributes to the persistent significance of caste in Manchester, for it facilitates the flow of information between Manchester and Pakistan. Inter-caste marriages are quickly known in Pakistan and the prestige of migrants affected by them. Caste, therefore, cannot be ignored as long as migrants remain ‘double rooted’. It is partly this embeddedness of migrants within networks spanning both Pakistan and Britain which makes caste a social category of continued significance. It is, moreover, within friendship circles that invidious comparisons regarding caste identity become important, in the context of local competition for status and prestige.

As children reach marriagable age, close friends may discover quite suddenly that a marriage bar divides them, and that upper-caste persons will not contemplate marriages between their children and those of the lower-caste friends. For, despite the preference for endogamous marriages, marriages between castes of more or less equal status do occur, and this is reported in Pakistan as well (cf. Saghir Ahmad 1977: 73–75; Eglar 1960: 28–29; Alavi 1972: 7).

*The caste hierarchy in Manchester*

At the top of the caste hierarchy of Punjabi Muslims, Sayyids tend to maintain strict endogamy while Pathans, Moghuls, Qureshi, Siddiqui, and other ‘ruler’ castes marry hypergamosly with castes of somewhat similar status such as Sheikh and Rajput. In general, however, the major marriage

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bar, outside the Sayyids, is between castes known collectively as 'land-
owners' (zymindar), and those known collectively as 'servants' (kammi). The landowners are those who, until the turn of the century, were the only castes entitled to own land, while the 'servants' include artisan and service castes (cf. Ullah 1958: 174). The distinction is somewhat similar to that between twice-born and Shudra classes among Hindus, although the zymindar appear to be a somewhat broader category. Intermarriage among land-owning castes is, as mentioned, reported to be relatively common in Pakistan, and the same phenomenon of what might be called 'super-casteism' is also found in Manchester.

The caste hierarchy in Manchester appears to approximate to the list in Table 1. It must be stressed, however, that there is no complete agreement regarding caste ranking (cf. Saghir Ahmad 1971, 1977: 79–83), and most caste members tend to place their own castes somewhat higher in the caste hierarchy than others place them. The notion of ranking is, however, inherent in the concept of zat, and it was assumed among all migrants that castes—even those within the zymindar class, were ranked, although there might not be complete agreement on exactly how they were ranked. This feature of caste is, of course, common among Hindus as well (for a comparative account cf. Parry 1979). Table 1 shows the caste hierarchy in Manchester, based on informants' evaluations. Within each major class there are sub-classes, each divided into zats and zat 'sections'. The lower the level of division, the greater the equality implied between its constituent sub-sections. The list by no means exhausts all the castes represented in Manchester, but it includes those whose members I encountered personally in the course of my research, and comprehends the more inclusive caste categories which are the significant units of endogamy. Of particular interest is the positioning of the Arain, Darzi and Rawal castes within the hierarchy, for it is these castes which have changed status in Manchester.

Among Pakistanis, as among Hindus, relations of inequality or hierarchy pervade the system at all levels, and shifts in status necessarily involve a transformation either in caste status or in caste identity. Generally speaking, there are two chief patterns of caste 'mobility': A local caste group may raise its status through economic success and religious purification. Alternatively, a group or section of a lower caste may break away from its caste of origin and change its caste affiliation. Caste categories are divided

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5 Alavi denies the internal ranking of zymindar castes (1972: 26). He argues that for Muslims 'below the level of ashraf, caste ranking is obscure in the literature as well as in fact. This obscularity should not be confused with the ambiguity of ranking in the middle range of Hindu castes. In the latter case the principle of ranking is not in question, and ambiguity in ranking is accompanied by the process of Sanskritisation, by which changes in caste are established and proclaimed. There is no analogous process among Muslims' (1971: 115). My view, as demonstrated below, is that the principle of caste ranking does always exist, as does the equivalent process of ritual intensification.
into smaller sections usually regarded as descended patrilineally from a single putative ancestor (e.g., Gujar Khatana, Gujar Phaswal). The sections of various castes bear similar names and make affiliation of sections to higher castes possible. The rise in status of segments of higher order segments can take place at different levels of the caste hierarchy, as Parry has shown is the case for north Indian Hindus.

To fully understand processes of caste mobility we need first to examine the Punjabi Muslim notion of biradari (henceforth biradari). Castes, it

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class and Sub-class</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Caste Sections Represented Locally</th>
<th>Typical Family Surname Used Locally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zymindar</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual pure</td>
<td>Sayyid</td>
<td>Various (?)</td>
<td>Shah, Alawi, Awan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Conquerors’ (‘Rulers’)</td>
<td>Pathan</td>
<td>Various sections with zai suffix</td>
<td>Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Learned scholars)</td>
<td>Moghul</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moghul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous rulers</td>
<td>Qureshi, Siddiqui</td>
<td>Chohan, Koker, Pangwari, Gaher, Bhatti</td>
<td>Qureshi, Siddiqui, Raja, Chohan, Koker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Traders’ ‘Cultivators;</td>
<td>Sheikh</td>
<td>Kalo, Gelna, Bajewa Ningrial, Kateck, Ningial, Waraich Khatana, Chohan, Chechi, Phaswal, Gorshi</td>
<td>Sheikh Choudhry (headman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(vegetable-growers)</td>
<td>Jat (cultivators)</td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Indeterminate)</td>
<td>Gujar (herders)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashmiri</td>
<td>Dar, Bhatti, Molek Bat</td>
<td>Dar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Kammi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skilled artisans</th>
<th>Caste of castes in the Kammi class with similar names to those of zymindar caste sections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darzi (tailor)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohar (blacksmith)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tarkhan (carpenter)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawal (itinerant peddlars)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service castes</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kisai (butcher)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaspi (weaver)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mochi (shoemaker)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobi (washer)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nai (barber)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirasi (bard)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musali (sweeper)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
must be remembered, are mere categories and do not form either corporate groups or actual units of endogamy. Members of castes bearing the same name are widely scattered and the effective unit of ‘recognition’ and ‘participation’ (cf. Mayer 1960) is the local group for marrying within the caste or, as it is known in Pakistan and north India, the biradari. The chief reason, in my view, why the significance of Punjabi Muslim caste has not been recognised stems from a misunderstanding of the cultural construction of biradari.

For Punjabi Muslims the biradari encapsulates the contradictory ideas of equality and inequality. It disguises the immanence of caste behind a facade of fraternal kinship. It is thus necessary to elucidate the complex relationship between Muslim caste, regarded as a ranked set of categories, and biradari, regarded as a localised marriage circle, as these are played out in the context of migration.

*The ranking of brotherhoods*

While Barth and Ahmad, as we saw, stress the continued relevance of caste for South Asian Muslims, others regard caste categories as vestiges of a prior order. Alavi (1972) and Eglar (1960), for example, both argue that all ‘land-owning’ castes among Pakistanis are equal within a single ‘caste’ or ‘class’ category. The elaborate distinctions between castes or caste sections are, in their view, of no significance in the villages they studied, either in relation to marriage prescriptions or for the ranking of status. The unit of ranking, Alavi argues, is the far smaller unit of the village patrilineage—the biradari—which is named after an apical ancestor five generations from the living (and not by a caste and caste section name). This, according to Alavi, is also the main unit of endogamy. Saghir Ahmad (1977), while arguing that an analysis in terms of caste distinctions would provide little insight into the social structure of the village he studied, accepts the existence of a cultural ‘system’ of ranked *zat* categories even within the land-owning class. His view is, however, that occupation and property ownership are more significant parameters for structural analysis.

I would argue, however, that the exclusive definition of the biradari as a lineage points to a fundamental analytic confusion: Biradaris for Punjabi Muslims, as for their Hindu counterparts, are units of endogamy within the caste, and they are also, as Parry shows, the primary vehicle of strategic marriage alliances and caste mobility. Alavi says of the notion of ‘biradari’ that it is a ‘term with a sliding semantic structure’ (1972: 2). In more common anthropological parlance, he is referring to the segmentary nature of the caste system. Thus Parry, following Beteille (1964, 1965) and Dumont (1972), argues:

... that Kangra people conceptualize their society in terms of a segmentary model and that neither in language nor in behaviour do they
signal any radical or absolute distinction between the nature of the groups of different orders of inclusiveness. The boundaries which mark divisions within the caste, divisions between castes, between 'clean' and 'untouchable' castes and even between men and gods are not of qualitatively different kinds, but are different only in the degree of emphasis and elaboration they receive (1979: 3).

The biradari, Alavi recognises, may include, depending on the context of action, a wider or more restricted group of people (cf. Eglar 1960: 76–77). Like Eglar and Saghir Ahmad, he emphasises that the biradari is a *patrilineage*, although an extremely shallow one (ibid.: 3), defined by patrilineal descent from a single apical ancestor. Neither he nor the other two scholars give an example of such a patrilineage except as it exists in a single village. From their own accounts, however (cf. in particular Eglar 1960: 77), my own research, and the accounts of others in north India (especially I. Ahmad 1976a and 1978a), it is clear that the principle of patrilineal descent operates in defining the biradari at the village level only. Here the biradari is the 'maximal lineage' in Parry's terms. At the wider, inter-village level, the biradari is a recognised marriage circle composed of members of a single caste and named section who live in a relatively large number of villages within a locality, and who traditionally intermarry with one another. Only one informant among the many with whom I discussed this issue claimed that the notion referred to the village kin group exclusively; all other informants stressed its wider application as a concept referring to all kinsmen, affines, and affines of affines. It would appear that only in the unlikely instance where the rate of marriage within the village is absolute can the village patrilineage and the biradari as a marriage circle be said to coincide. Thus, Alavi reports that in one village he studied 73 per cent of all marriages were contracted within the village and only 27 per cent were contracted within the caste section outside the village (1972: 6–7).6 None of the village genealogies I recorded showed this remarkable tendency towards village endogamy. In most of them under 40 per cent of the marriages were within the village, and there was a tendency to renew links between villages in consecutive generations through matrilateral marriages, a pattern commonly found among Hindus as well.7

The distinction between the biradari as a village kin group and as a marriage circle is important to bear in mind, for while at the village level the principle of patrilineal descent (*nasab* or *nasal*) may operate, at the inter-village level the principle of inclusion or exclusion in a biradari is based on affinity or prior affinity rather than descent. My informants in

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6 A possible explanation of this high rate of endogamy might be the fact that the village was composed of refugee families who were first establishing marriages with one another in the current generation before seeking them with other villages.

7 This goes against Alavi's view that small landholders marry mainly within the village (1972). The village did, however, have a high rate of labour migration.
Manchester were adamant that the biradari was a bilateral kindred and included, in addition to cognatic kinsmen, affines, the consanguineous relatives of affines and even the affines of affines. Indeed, in tracing links between people in Manchester, no attempt was usually made to trace connections through descent beyond the grandparental generation, particularly if a more recent affinal link existed. Members of a biradari are descended from a single apical ancestor only to the extent that the caste is regarded among Muslims as, ultimately, a descent group, even though its members cannot trace actual links with one another. Seen in terms of marriage alliances, descent, while possible, is irrelevant.

Hence, while putative patrilineal descent of biradari members may well be assumed in Pakistan, it cannot be expressed by migrants in detailed genealogical information. Genealogical information known as ‘shajra nasab’ (family tree) is often recorded in Pakistan by genealogists and is referred to by informants when information is sought. The main purpose of such ‘family trees’, however, is to prove a family’s pedigree for marriage purposes, since marriages are supposedly contracted only between ‘good’ families. Insofar as genealogical memory is concerned, beyond the village level social and group relations are not articulated in the idiom of unilineal descent, and there exists no explicit ramifying segmentary system expressing relations between village lineages in such an idiom of descent. A village lineage may be said to have been founded by an apical ancestor known to have come from a named village elsewhere in the Punjab, thus recognising an agnatic link between the two villages, but no further segmentary levels can be specified. This genealogical pattern appears to be common throughout north India. In Kangra, for example, Parry’s data indicates that while clans and sub-clans are putatively based on common descent, actual genealogical links are traced only at a localised level.

I obtained about 20 bilateral genealogies from migrants living in Manchester. The greatest genealogical depth appeared in the village genealogies I recorded, where there was a memory of an apical ancestor three generations from the living, and four generations from my informants. Most genealogies of migrants from urban backgrounds were much shallower and many did not even recall the name of their great-grandfather, although they did know some of the descendants of his siblings. An exceptional case was that of one informant who came from a landed family; he recalled the names of antecedents four generations from himself, but a closer inspection of the genealogy he gave (Figure 2), reveals that he could recall only the descendants of his grandfather in the present generation. The rest of those listed in prior generations were said to have died childless, or to have left Pakistan.

To understand fully the notion of biradari it must be related not to unilineal descent but to the wider category of the caste or zat, and its use resembles that among Hindus. It is, in Blunt’s words, ‘the zat in action’
Figure 2: Urban Genealogical Memory
(1969: 10). At the village level, the biradari is a corporate descent group which often acts as a faction in local-level politics (cf. Alavi 1971; Saghir Ahmad 1977). At the inter-village level it is a circle of intermarrying affines. As such it is non-corporate and its boundaries undefined except when it refers to a number of village lineages who are known traditionally to intermarry. Otherwise it is family-focused with each family and village lineage having a slightly different marriage 'circle' or chain of marriages; even this circle changes over time as new marriages are contracted and old affinal links left unrenewed. The circle might be quite large: I recorded one village genealogy of small landholders in the Jhelum district, in which the village lineage had ties of affinity with lineages in 22 other villages and towns in Pakistan within a radius of over 30 miles (cf. also Saghir Ahmad 1977: 47). On the other hand, the rate of inter-caste marriages in the genealogies I recorded was rather low—in most cases far less than 8 per cent (cf. Appendix I).

It must be stressed, therefore, that biradari does not simply imply a kin relationship. Consanguineous kinsmen are known as rishtedar and this term is extended to include their spouses as well. Rishtedar are either nazdik (close) or dur (far), and a distinction is also made between 'real' (sakke) and classificatory kin.

References to group categories vary contextually, as one notion is used in contrast to another. Hence, when biradari is used in contradistinction to rishtedar in Manchester, it is used to imply a more distant relationship than that of traceable kinship. When contrasted with zat, the latter term implies the absence of any relationship and is used about caste members with whom no links of consanguinity or affinity are thought to exist. At the widest and vaguest level biradari is interchangeable with zat and is applied to all caste members within a single locality, or even within a country. The reference of the term thus varies with the context of action or debate, and the significant unit often emerges in situational opposition to like units of a similar order. While the use of the notion of zat implies ranking as well as non-kinship, biradari, meaning 'brotherhood', implies equality as this is defined situationally. The very flexibility of the notion of 'biradari' makes its application in Manchester possible, and there too its significance is situational and contextual rather than constant.

As mentioned, there appear to be important differences in the genealogical memories of migrants originating from villages and towns, for the latter do not attempt to encompass all members of the biradari living in town within a single unilineal descent group as is the case in genealogies of village caste groups. Even in village genealogies, however, there is an area of ambiguity at the third ascending generation regarding the exact relations

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8 Cf. also Inayat Ullah who reports that castes are divided between factions (pati) (Ullah 1958). This usage of pati was one I also encountered in Manchester in relation to one intra-familial dispute.
between ancestors. This is shown in the genealogies in Figures 3 and 4. In Figure 3 the relationship between two branches of a village biradari was presented as that between a man and his brother's son. In Figure 4, the genealogy presented three years later by the wife of the initial presenter, the two men were given as brothers. On both occasions, a whole branch of the village biradari was initially left unmentioned, and was only revealed to me after a great deal of probing. The members of this branch were said to be 'poor and uneducated' and to have 'less land than we have'. Their omission was all the more remarkable because the wife's mother's mother came from this branch, there had been a number of other marriages between the two family branches and once their existence was revealed, she could provide information regarding all living members of the family branch, their marriages, current residence and children. The other family branch, which had been mentioned on both occasions, was said to be composed of members who were 'rich and educated'; it included in its numbers an advocate of the Punjab High Court and a college principal. However, I was told that this branch was now 'separating' from 'us', because no recent marriages had taken place between the two branches. The emphasis, even with regard to village genealogies appears thus to be on the closest relatives with whom marriages are still being contracted.

Although biradaris, if regarded as marriage circles, are not as explicitly ranked as are marriage circles in Gujarat Province in India (cf. Van der Veen 1972; Lambat 1976), the fact remains that caste members marry within their class with those of equal wealth, power or education. This in turn means that marriage circles 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, as in the case of the advocate's family mentioned above, they may cease to intermarry with their less successful kinsmen and over a generation or two the family will split into two separate biradaris.

The mutability of kin relations among Punjabi Muslims and their relativity to performance are mentioned both by Eglar (1960: 100) and by Alavi (1972: 9). In Manchester, too, migrants emphasise that kinship extends only where there are ceremonial exchange relations and mutual aid. Parallel and cross-cousin marriages can also be understood as arising out of this view regarding the ephemerality of kinship. A well-known Punjabi proverb quoted to me in Manchester cautions that 'When the fence gets old you must put new wood in it' (purani bar-nu nawan chapa lagana zaruree ay)—i.e., new marriages with relatives are necessary if the kinship relationship is not to crumble away and disappear. As families become scattered through labour migration, marriage between cousins, the children of widely dispersed siblings, become important for sustaining the kinship connection, and these continue alongside marriages outside the family altogether. Relations with more distant relatives of the old biradari, however, are often not considered worth renewing through new marriages.
Labour migration and the definition of biradari

The scattering of the family through labour migration was remarkable in all the genealogies I recorded. In some instances migrants came from refugee families and this may have precipitated their dispersal, but even in cases of non-refugees, dispersal was very marked. Families were scattered both in
different towns in Pakistan and in different countries throughout the world. Major countries of immigration, apart from the United Kingdom, appeared to be Canada and the United States, Denmark, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Libya and the Gulf States. In the case of one woman from Karachi, for example, her close relatives lived in India, Australia, Britain, the Sudan, Saudi Arabia and the United States, while her husband had relatives in Malaysia, Austria and Libya as well. Only in one case I recorded did an informant appear to have, outside Pakistan, relatives only in Britain.

Under these circumstances, the home villages and towns of migrants have been transformed in many cases into temporary bases and centres of communication for widely dispersed kinsmen. Indeed, in one case I know
of, a large patrilineal homestead is maintained by a matrilateral relative as all the male joint owners are absent from their home town. In a large number of cases migrants of village origin have actually changed residence in Pakistan, moving from their village to a nearby town, after they have immigrated to Britain. They are thus practising a form of double urbanisation. At times, this is linked to their attempts to raise their status simultaneously both in Manchester and in Pakistan. It also stems from other reasons: family quarrels and divorces precipitate a move from the village; so too the desire to invest in urban land or businesses may determine a move away from the village to the regional city or urban centre.

The geographical mobility of migrants has affected their marriage patterns. New marriages are contracted in Manchester in response to the new situation they find themselves in. Most of these marriages are contracted within the zat category. If this happens repeatedly, the caste category will be transformed over time into a recognised biradari. This is more likely to occur if the local caste membership is large, with some already linked by prior kinship or affinal ties forged in Pakistan, and if a large proportion of caste members are successful economically. Under these circumstances, local caste members begin to define themselves as a biradari.

The re-emergence of a locally negotiated caste hierarchy occurs once migrants begin to sink roots locally and enter the local competition for status. And, as in South Asia, caste ranking has economic, political and religious dimensions, and is ratified symbolically through hypergamous inter-caste marriages. To appreciate this process, a brief review of the history of migration to the city is needed.

**Caste and the history of migration to Manchester**

Pakistani migration to Manchester may be regarded as composed of three parallel yet distinct migratory movements or flows. For a time, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the three movements appeared as one. Yet in reality, the arriving migrants followed distinct migratory patterns.

1. *The 'trader' migrants*: A well-documented feature of Asian migration to Britain has been the early pre-War arrival of migrants from the Punjab who became door-to-door peddlars. It is noteworthy that these migrants settled in the larger cities: in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Glasgow or Newcastle. They worked in factories for brief periods only, and entered almost immediately after their arrival into different sectors of the clothing and garment trade. In Manchester today they occupy a distinct vertically integrated economic enclave (Werbner 1987).

Within this general category of 'trader' migrants there appeared to be three major sub-groups which settled in Manchester, each composed of a biradari. One group was that of East Punjabis, mainly from the Jullunder
area, and mainly of the Arain zat. After the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 this group moved as refugees into the Canal Colonies in the Punjab—to the Sahiwal, Multan and Bahavarpur areas, and to the large cities—Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad and Karachi. At the same time that they were moving as refugees into the newly formed state of Pakistan, they began arriving in Manchester in quite large numbers, following a pattern of chain migration. Most became market traders, and later wholesalers, in the garment and clothing trades. Some of the largest wholesalers and manufacturers in the city today come from this group. Seen in aggregate members of the group are extremely powerful economically, employing female machinists and young male workers from within the community, and providing custom and credit to a large number of manufacturers and retailers. Politically, the group has always been extremely influential, controlling the Central Mosque Management Committee (Werbner 1985) and other key voluntary associations. Members of the group meet regularly at large weddings and mortuary rituals (Werbner 1986, 1988). While split by factional in-fighting, they nevertheless tend to worship at Manchester’s Central Jamia Mosque and to follow Sunni ‘Barelv’ traditions. These traditions stress the intercessory role of saints or Sufi pirs in mediating between the individual and God.

A second biradari following a similar pattern was also originally from East Punjab. The family was already established in trading and the kin group extended into Singapore and Malaysia. After Partition members of the kindred, of the Rawal biradari, settled in Wazirabad, Gujranwala, while at the same time some began migrating to Manchester. They too entered successfully into market trading and shopkeeping. One prominent branch of the family owns a successful small hotel, another is a large wholesaler. The group, while small, has prospered economically. Some (though not all) of its members are extremely religious, but unlike the Arain they prefer a more puritanical form of Reform Islam centred around another local mosque. The Sunni Islam they advocate stresses the direct access of individuals to God through prayer and religious learning. They thus deny the disjunction between the inworldly and outworldly characteristics of Barelv traditions.

A third biradari, also with international trading links in the Far East, came somewhat later, in the 1950s. Many members of this kindred were tailors by occupation. They too originated from Gujranwala, but mainly from Gujranwala town itself and its surrounding villages. Several members of this family had served as tailors for the British army, or in other administrative capacities, and many were stationed in Cyprus. After the independence of Cyprus, they immigrated to Britain. Today many are successful manufacturers, a few are wholesalers as well. Key members of this group are known for their extreme piety, education and religious knowledge. They too advocate a stream of Reform Islam. One of their
members is a founder member and Maulvi of the Reform Islam Mosque and one-time President of UK Islamic Mission. He is very active in religious circles and has led many parties on Haj to Mecca. His wife and sister often lead communal Koran readings, and the family is dedicated to religious service.

Members of all three groups and especially the two Gujranwala biradaris are literate and relatively educated to high school or college level, while a few prominent members of the Gujranwala biradari have university degrees. This, despite the fact that most come of village or small town origin. They are all Punjabis, and they have incorporated newcomers from their groups into trading and manufacturing after very brief periods in factory wage-employment.

2. The students: The second major migrant flow to Manchester was that of students. Like other major British cities, post-war Manchester attracted a large number of students to its educational institutions. Many of these students remained in the city, either to practice (as accountants, doctors, etc.) or to go into business. They were in any case mostly born in India, and most were Punjabis, although there were some Urdu speakers from Delhi, Lucknow, and other parts of UP, and a few Gujarati speakers from Karachi. The families of most of these students had moved into the cities of Pakistan after Partition. Virtually all belonged to higher castes, including Sayyids, Qureshis, Pathans, Moghuls, Siddiquis or Sheikh, while others came from the main cultivating castes (Jat, Arain, Gujar). A few were Mhemanis from Karachi. While forming a sub-group, many had connections to the 'trader' East Punjabi migrants. In any case, the community in those days was very small, and concentrated residentially in certain areas of the city around the University (cf. Werbner 1979), all of which made for links between the two groups. Between them the students-turned-professionals and the large wholesalers in the garment trade controlled the Central Jamia Mosque, and most other communal institutions for many years. The ex-students, however, continued to marry within their respective biradaris, recruiting wives primarily from Pakistan.

3. The worker migrants: The third flow of migrants to the city occurred after the other two groups were well established. During the late 1950s and early 1960s the pattern of migration to the city changed. While the East Punjabis and students were bringing over wives and families, young bachelors from West Punjab—primarily from the Gujarat and Jhelum districts—began arriving in Manchester. These men did not come from refugee families but from smallholder families and biradaris with deep extensive roots in their village localities. Moreover, the traditional

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9 There are some migrants in Manchester from peripheral areas: Mirpur, the North-West Frontier, Baluchistan and Karachi, as well as those originating from various other regions of India (Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, etc.). These migrants either form small encapsulated groups or attach themselves to one of the other major categories of migrants.
supplementary occupations in these barani (rainfed) areas was of service in
the army and the police. Although most of the men were moderately
literate and educated, some to high school level, there was no tradition of
trading in their families. They came to Manchester to work in local fac-
tories or in public transport services (the buses and railways), and they
remained wage earners until the most recent economic recession and its
associated factory closures and cut backs of the mid or late 1970s. The
migrants were not connected to the trading families, and only a small
minority attempted to move into market trading, shopkeeping or manu-
facturing. Like the earlier pedlars, however, this enterprising minority was
to lay the foundation for this group's entry into business in the 1980s. As in
the other two migratory flows, caste membership was related to area of
origin. Although migrants came from a variety of castes, including some
service kamni castes, most notably from the Mirassi (Bard) and Nai
(Barber) zats, the vast majority appear to have originated from the Gujar
and Rajput land-owning castes. They were not, however, from a single
biradari, but from several discrete biradaris. It has thus taken them some
time to acknowledge links across the different kindreds, even within the
same zat.

Although the flow of migrant 'workers' has been the most recent, they
appear to be the largest group numerically (there are no statistics on this
matter, and I base this statement on mobilisation events). Initially marginal
to the community and its institutions, they have recently begun to reassert
their political status, basing their power on their numerical strength rather
than their economic superiority. In their political struggles, they stress
their proud land-owning origins and influence in Pakistani politics. As their
local commitment has grown they have also become more conscious of
other caste members, beyond their current biradari. This is true, for
example, of members of the Gujar caste who, though quite numerous in
Manchester, have only begun to develop a 'consciousness' of their unity in
the city. Although Rajputs claim to be placed above Arain in the caste
hierarchy, and Gujars claim to be their equals, they acknowledge the
Arain's superior local status and recognise the need to reassert their own
local standing.

As migrants have come to be more settled in Britain, they have begun to
use the notion of biradari not only in its most restricted sense (to refer to
the current localised marriage circle within the caste), but with reference to
a series of segmentary contexts—it is once again a term with a 'sliding
semantic structure'. This was made clear in an interview with a local
Pakistani community activist who had lived in the city with his wife since
1960, was a member of the Mosque Committee, had married children
living locally and had sons working as market traders. He began our
conversation by stressing the small number of kinsmen (risthedar) he had
living locally. Apart from a married sister and a brother, there were about
five or six other ‘houses’ (ghar—agnatically defined families) living in the
city who were related to him. During the course of the interview we
discussed another community leader and his stand on various political
matters in the mosque, and I commented, since I knew this leader and his
family very well, that he had a large biradari in Manchester. To this came
the quick reply from my informant that his own biradari was just as large.
Henceforth the discussion turned to the membership size of various castes
in the city. Thus, for example, my informant—himself a Rajput—thought
there were many people of the Gujar biradari living locally. He used the
notion of ‘family’ in English and biradari in Punjabi interchangeably, but
the discussion was about caste membership and the implication was that all
migrants with the same caste identity were somehow related to one another.
This, despite the clear distinction he had made earlier between caste
members and consanguineous kin. As a politician, my informant had an
interest in emphasising the unity of caste members, and in the context of
political confrontation biradari was defined by him as the local zat. My
informant also claimed to know all members of his zat living in Manchester,
although he knew some of my Rajput acquaintances by reputation only.

The political arena is not the only one in which the unity and kinship of
local zat members may be claimed. As I mentioned earlier, economically
well-established migrants of a single caste also regard themselves as be-
longing to one biradari. The most striking example of this in Manchester is
the case of the Arain caste. All the members of this caste I met in
Manchester claimed to belong to a single biradari: Arain was, they said, a
biradari. For them zat and biradari are locally synonymous. To explain this
they relate a saying among Arain: ‘If you lift up a brick, you will find a
relative’, and, indeed, many of the Arain in Manchester are able to trace
distant kinship and affinal links with one another.

The ranking of the Arain caste appears to have undergone a shift in
Manchester, and especially in the eyes of migrants from West Punjab, for
in the West the Arain caste was ranked below the land-owning class in the
caste hierarchy. Eglar reports that in Gujarat district Arain was not a land-
owning caste, although its members were entitled to own land (1960: 32).
Ullah (1958: 172) ranks it near the bottom of the caste scale, among the
kammi, in the village he studied. In Manchester, however, Arain are
clearly accepted by all Pakistanis, including those from West Punjab, to be
a land-owning caste and many rank Arain as high as the Rajput caste. Such
ranking has been validated by at least one inter-caste marriage. Members
of the cultivating castes like Gujar and Jat usually, as mentioned, rank the
caste in the same order as themselves, but one member of the Gujar caste
told me that ‘everyone in Manchester says they are Arain’ and recounted a
story about a low caste acquaintance whom she had heard claiming to be an
Arain. There is thus a recognition among other land-owning castes in
Manchester that to be an Arain is to have a slight edge in the local
competition for status and prestige.
Similar changes in status have occurred for the Rawal and Darzi castes. Rawal, said originally to be an itinerant pedlar kammi caste, are now said by its members to be of the original rulers of the Rawalpindi area. Members of the Darzi caste claim that they are ‘really’ of Rajput origin, while acknowledging that they had been tailors by occupation. Some claim they were ‘really’ Nai before they became Darzi. The claims of both Darzi and Arain have been validated by inter-caste marriages with members of the Rajput (and in the case of Darzi also Arain) groups. However, in the case of Darzi I know, the marriages have all been of daughters to male members of higher castes.

Migration and caste mobility

I have argued that as in rural Uttar Pradesh (I. Ahmad 1976b) so too in Manchester the achievement of caste mobility among Punjabi Muslims is clinched when marriages formerly not contemplated take place. Caste ranking is, in other words, tested and proved through inter-caste marriage. Here a further word of explanation may perhaps be necessary regarding the prevalent patterns of ‘caste mobility’ recognised in South Asia.

The literature records a number of forms of caste mobility. Perhaps most widespread is the process of ‘Sanskritisation’ commonly occurring when members of an intermediate caste achieve enhanced (secular) status through an accumulation of power or wealth. Their enhanced status is accompanied by a collective decision to adopt Brahminical practices, to ‘Sanskritise’ the caste. Such changes in ritual and dietary observances may or may not be accompanied also by a transformation of caste identity. A similar process has been called ‘Ashrafisation’ and ‘Islamisation’ among Muslims (cf. Vreede-De Stuers 1968; I. Ahmad 1978). This trend towards increased religiosity is evident in both the Darzi and Rawal groups, of kammi origin. They adhere to a puritanical form of Islamic worship associated with the Deoband or the Wahabi Islamic schools, and stress religious scholarship and the ability of each individual to worship God independently and directly through learning and personal devotion.

Caste mobility—especially of the more inferior castes—may also occur, as I argued above, when a small segment of a larger caste unit breaks off from the caste, calls itself by a separate name and marries endogamously. This type of caste mobility is facilitated among Muslims by their ability to marry close kinsmen, for even a relatively small kindred group can arrange


11 Jeffery (1976) also emphasises the assumption of class life styles and symbolic modes of behaviour, but this would seem to be only one aspect of a more general pattern of social mobility.
suitable marriages internally during the period of caste identity transformation, before they have established themselves as a caste section of a more elevated caste. There is no need for them to seek marriage partners far afield, as Hindus are compelled to do, and this means that the mobile section may be a far smaller kinship unit than it must necessarily be among Hindus. An instance of this form of mobility in Manchester was that of a group from the Bard (Mirassi) caste. This group claimed to be Shi’ite and, as such, Qureshi or Qazi by origin, even though their caste status was well known locally. They worshipped in the Shi’a mosque, thus setting themselves apart in matters of worship. Several of the younger members of the group were, or were studying to be, professionals, but they did not assert their claims to high caste status aggressively. Instead, members of this group preferred to marry internally, with very close relatives, primarily matrilateral first cousins, and not test their claims publically. It is quite possible, however, that future claims to high caste status could well be accepted a generation hence when the professional generation’s children reach marriagable age. Here an element of collusion enters: once a group has established itself economically and politically, it is not necessarily in anyone’s interest to invoke their caste origins.

Rather than intensified religiosity, mobile groups may of course choose to ‘Westernise’. On the whole, however, such a trend was evident in Manchester only among a small minority of elite caste members, mainly professionals and a few wealthy businessmen. Far more evident was the growing trend towards religiosity.

It is theoretically possible for a socially mobile individual to marry an impoverished woman of a higher caste and assume her caste name (Vreede-De Stuers 1968: 6). This type of individual mobility appears, however, to be rare in Manchester. Individuals usually achieve wealth only through cooperation with a wider group of kinsmen with whom they have continued relations of debt and trust, and whom they are unable to disown. It is the whole kindred group which attempts to transform its caste identity, rather than a single individual within it.

The various forms of social mobility may be summarised in a general hypothesis. The hypothesis posits a contrast between individual social mobility and caste mobility, each form varying also according to the group or individual’s prior caste status. Table 2 sums up this central hypothesis. Very generally, land-owning castes validate their enhanced dominance through hypergamous marriages, while continuing to follow a mild form of popular Islam. Mobile individuals from within the land-owning caste groups attempt to contract marriages with partners from an enhanced educational or wealthy background. Mobile kammi castes intensify their religiosity, choosing very often to stress religious learning and individual autonomy; they marry endogamously within a highly restricted kinship span and attempt to change this sub-group’s caste affiliation.
As the number of mosques in the city has grown, it almost seems that they parallel the different biradari and their particular strategies. There is a continuous drive towards status congruence: education, piety, wealth and political reputation are regarded together as people try to assess the local standing of different groups. But even more important I think is the fact that choices are determined by caste background and the values associated with the caste hierarchy: the move from employment (dependence) to self-employment (and control over others); the fierce battles for political office; the increasing religiosity, especially among those from lower castes; the renewed esteem and belief in saints and the local growth of Sufism. Purity, power, autonomy and control— the central ingredients of a caste hierarchy— determine choices and thus, ultimately, the collective history of the local community. Seen over time the dialectic is evident: the move has been away from a caste society to a suppression of distinctions and then to their renewal; from an intensification of religiosity with its egalitarian practices to its refraction in groups defined by differentials of status and wealth. Equality continues to be the highest value, epitomised in the notion of the biradari as a brotherhood, but it is constantly being undermined by ideas about ranking and relativities of honour and status. The biradari is, after all, a ranked group.

The marriages contracted by Pakistanis in Manchester all seem to illustrate that caste mobility is not simply a matter of the ‘manipulation of meaning’, or the use of symbols and emblems for personal advancement. Caste membership is an important aspect of a Punjabi’s identity, and it defines a field of relationships that can be appealed to in terms of values of equality and brotherhood. A change in caste identity is not, therefore, undertaken lightly, and it necessarily involves a period of relative social deprivation. It is unlikely to occur very often, and is a slow and painful process. So too the shift in caste ranking is gradual, and occurs only within the limits of the cultural logic of the caste ranking order. The types of legitimation used to explain this ranking order (descendants of the Prophet, rulers, etc.) change very slowly and set strict limits to the possible changes in the ranking order itself. It is only within these limits that change occurs.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Muslim zat system raises general theoretical questions about the relation between legitimate and ‘ unofficial’ ideologies. The contrast is not between ‘real’ and ‘ideal’, or ‘emic’ and ‘etic’. Both Islam and zat ideologies are explicit and systematic. To argue that the egalitarian ethos of Islam is dominant is, moreover, also misleading since this ideology is continuously undermined by the underlying stress on rank and hierarchy.

The persistence of caste categorisation and caste labelling among Pakistani migrants in Manchester stems, I have argued, from the semantic
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<th>Individual Social Mobility</th>
<th>‘Caste’ Mobility</th>
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<td><strong>High’ Castes</strong></td>
<td><strong>‘Land-owning’ Castes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Situation</td>
<td>Personal social mobility—increased wealth/education</td>
<td>Large proportion of caste members socially mobile—wealth/education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage strategy</td>
<td>(Divorce) Remarriage with wife of urban/educated background</td>
<td>Marriage with woman of higher caste and poor family</td>
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<td>Emphasis on biradari of caste members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>No change in caste—caste irrelevant</td>
<td>Take on in-laws’ caste identity</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
<td>Irrelevant</td>
<td>Public religiosity emphasis on western-type values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case cited</td>
<td>Marriages beyond the biradari or between members of different land-owning castes (several cases in Manchester)</td>
<td>(Reported by Vreede-De Stuers, I did not encounter a case of this type in Manchester)</td>
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elasticity of notions of ‘zat’ and ‘biradari’, as these are applied to critical levels of social action: familial, economic, political and religious. Caste is not simply a set of residual categories imported from Pakistan. Its viability and continuing relevance for migrants are attested to in their marriage strategies and religious behaviour. The concern of Pakistani migrants with hierarchy continues to be all-pervasive, and is underpinned by the rapid social mobility and wealth of the more fortunate members of the community. Like the vast majority of their British neighbours, they regard class, status and occupation as major concerns. But for British overseas Pakistanis the relation between these and the caste system has been crucially reinstated.

The notion of biradari, we saw, mediates between caste, kinship and locality. For more settled migrants in Manchester, its reference has expanded to include fellow caste members within the city. And because caste has remained a significant category of interaction, strategies of caste mobility have re-emerged locally. As in Pakistan; so too in Manchester; Pakistanis are caught in a dialectic of equality and inequality, of brotherhood and ranking. For a younger generation growing up in Britain, the contradiction between these ideologies or systems of belief is sharpened, highlighting the cultural and personal dilemmas implied by their uneasy coexistence.

Appendix 1: Marriage

The following figures are based on 14 genealogies collected from urban and rural migrants in Manchester. Although I have attempted to select the more reliable genealogies they are inevitably inaccurate. The difficulty of recording genealogies of absent persons is itself indicative of the selective memories of migrants. Although in all the cases migrants were extremely cooperative, the exercise appeared to most of them to be futile. It was also remarkable that they rarely remembered the names of children or spouses of relatives born or married while they were in Manchester. Marriages in collateral branches were often described as ‘biradari’ or not related, whereas the marriages of siblings and first cousins seen regularly highlighted the complexity of consanguineous and affinal relationships between marriage partners.
<table>
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<th>No. of marriages</th>
<th>1st pat. par.</th>
<th>1st mat. par.</th>
<th>Mo's/bro falsis cross c.</th>
<th>Exchange/multiple affinity</th>
<th>Classif. or 2nd caste</th>
<th>Intersection/caste</th>
<th>No. villages/towns</th>
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In order to attempt to compute rates of endogamy I have selected four genealogies and examined the relationship in marriages of ego's own generation only.

Two of the genealogies are of urban migrants (Arain and Pathan); two are of rural genealogies (both Gujar, one from the Jhelum district, one from Gujarat district).

Rates of Endogamy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of marriages (Rural/Urban)</th>
<th>1st cousis/ mo's bro.</th>
<th>(1st pat. par. c.)</th>
<th>Exchange/ multiple affinity</th>
<th>Within biradari/ cast</th>
<th>Inter-caste</th>
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<td>(R)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>(6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(U)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R)</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>5 (2nd pat.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>Perc.</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>(15%)</td>
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</table>

These figures are comparable with rates throughout the Middle East.

REFERENCES


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