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Steven Vertovec

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Religion in Migration, Diasporas and Transnationalism

Steven Vertovec

Director, ESRC Programme on Transnational Communities
Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology
University of Oxford
51 Banbury Road
GB-Oxford OX2 6PE
Steven_Vertovec@anthro.ox.ac.uk

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Abstract: In a burgeoning literature from the early 1990s, we see a conflation of the related concepts of diaspora, migration, minority status and transnationalism. In the context of the study of religion – another field of rapid growth – these four concepts can be described as involving distinct, albeit related, dynamics of social transformation. From an extensive review of recent literature, with particular reference to Hinduism and Islam, this paper identifies specific patterns of religious change associated with each of these four concepts.

Keywords: religion, migration, diaspora, minority status, transnationalism, Hinduism, Islam

Over the last ten years there has been a proliferation of literature and a mushrooming of interest, among members of ethnic minority groups as well as among academics, surrounding the notion of “diaspora”. Historians and social scientists describe myriad facets of diaspora, while an ever increasing number of self-conscious communities call themselves diasporas. “Where once were dispersions,” Kachig Tölölyan (1996: 3) observes, “there now is diaspora.” Indeed, as James Clifford (1994: 306) writes, “For better or worse, diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated. It is loose in the world, for reasons having to do with decolonisation, increased immigration, global communication and transport – a whole range of phenomena that encourage multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations.” Or, in other words, “diaspora” has become “one of the buzzwords of the postmodern age” (Cohen 1999: 3).

Surprisingly, religion has been the focus of relatively little attention within this growing field. This paper surveys a range of recent literature in order: (a) to outline some of the understandings of “diaspora” that have developed over the past ten years or so, (b) to argue that current “diaspora” concepts often suffer from conflation with “migration”, “minority” and “transnationalism”, and that each of these of these areas of study involve distinct – albeit related – dynamics of religious transformation, and (c) to indicate some patterns of religious change in connection with each of these concepts.

Emergent Meanings of Diaspora

Most recent works on the concept diaspora naturally commence with a few statements on etymology (for example, Tölölyan 1996, Cohen 1997, Baumann 2000). The word “diaspora” derives from the Greek *diaspeirō* “to distribute”; it is a compound of *speirō*, “to sow to scatter” like seed, and *dia-* “from one end to the other”. The term of course became associated with the Jewish historical experience, and hence was associated with being a dispersed people sharing a common religious and cultural heritage.

However, the Hebrew verb *galah* and noun *galut* – each expressing deportation and exile – perhaps convey the experience more accurately from the Jewish perspective. “[I]t is this close relationship between exile and consciousness of exile that is the singular feature of Jewish history; it is that which, over the centuries of migrations and vicissitudes, kept Jewish national consciousness alive” (Marienstras 1989: 120). *Galut* broadly designates the period from the destruction of the second Temple in 70 AD until the creation of the state of Israel. Hence a distinction is made by a number of scholars between *diaspora* -- implying free movement, and especially pertaining to ancient

Jews living among Greeks (Modrzejewski 1993) – and *galut* implying involuntary movement due to a conquest of the territory that was/is considered home (Marienstras 1989).

Nevertheless, the overall Jewish history of displacement has embodied the longstanding, conventional meaning of diaspora. Martin Baumann (1995) indicates that there have been at least three inherent, and rather different referential points with respect to what we refer to as the Jewish (or any other group's) historical experience “in the diaspora.” That is, when we say something has taken place “in the diaspora” we must clarify whether we refer to (a) the *process* of becoming scattered, (b) the *community* living in foreign parts, or (c) the *place* or geographic *space* in which the dispersed groups live. The kind of conceptual muddle that may arise from the failure to distinguish these dimensions with regard to historical Jewish phenomena continues to plague the many emergent meanings of the notion of diaspora.

Academics have, in the term diaspora, found a useful concept through which to reorganize their research interests. This cuts across disciplines. The term has proliferated in conferences and publications within Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural Studies and Political Science. In 1999, by way of further example, the American Historical Association (AHA) held its annual conference on the theme “Diasporas and Migrations in History”. The Chairman of the organizing committee, John O. Voll, said he received literally hundreds of session proposals and was surprised by their diversity: “Everywhere we looked, in almost every subfield, people wanted to talk about diasporas,” he said (in Winkler 1999). However, not all of his colleagues welcomed the trendy topic: at the opening plenary of the 1999 AHA meeting, Colin A. Palmer opined that “Diaspora is a problem that invites a great deal of methodological fuzziness, ahistorical claims, and even romantic condescension” (in Winkler 1999).

Another account of the growing popularity of the term comes from Kachig Tölölyan, the editor of the academic journal entitled *Diaspora*. Tölölyan (1996: 3) has witnessed the fact that “The rapidity of material and discursive change in the past three decades has increased both the number of global diasporas and the range and diversity of the new semantic domain that the term ‘diaspora’ inhabits.” Once, as it were, there were three “classic diasporas” studied by social scientists – the Jewish, Greek and Armenian. By 1998 (only seven years after its launch), Tölölyan’s journal had covered no less than thirty-six communities who had been identified by academics as, or who have called themselves, “diasporas” (Kachig Tölölyan, personal communication). These numbers pale in comparison to other examples of the discursive expansion of “diaspora” in the public sphere. At the time of writing this paper, a simple AltaVista search of the Internet turns up no less than 102,435 web pages concerned with the term “diaspora”. Irish, “African”, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Arab, Tamil,

Ukrainian, Iranian, Slovak – even Baganda, Anasazi, and Tongan -- diasporas appear prominently with their own web pages along with numerous ones devoted to the “classic” Jewish, Greek and Armenian diasporas. Erica McClure (2000) found 650 websites for the Assyrian diaspora alone.

Why has there been such a shift of discursive category, particularly as a self-definition among dispersed groups? After all, drawing on the Jewish model, diaspora has arguably been a notion associated with suffering, loss, and victimization. Do contemporary, globally scattered communities opt to characterize themselves in this way?

One reason for the term’s appeal to a range of groups lies in its relevance to addressing, in a summary fashion, a core dilemma faced by any dispersed or transplanted people: how to survive as a group. Here, J.D. Cohen Shaye and Ernst S. Frerichs (1993: i) underscore the nature of diaspora in the ancient world and signal its continued pertinence to the present:

The contemporary common usage of the word “diaspora” which links the word to the experience of the Jewish people in their exile to Babylon and their dispersion throughout the Mediterranean world, is too exclusive an application. Viewed as a mass migration or movement or flight from one location or locations, diaspora could be viewed as an event in the history of several peoples of antiquity. Clearly the fact of dispersion and its many consequences have been an experience of many people, ancient and modern. Major issues for investigation include the question of whether, and how, those “dispersed” peoples maintain a sense of self-identity and a measure of communal cohesion. The central question for diaspora peoples is adaptation: how to adapt to the environment without surrendering group identity. These questions faced by the diaspora communities of antiquity are still apparent in modern times.

Further, the groups who now describe themselves as diasporas have wholly reappropriated and redefined the term as a new tool in cultural politics (Cohen 1999). Diaspora discourse has been adopted to move collective identity claims and community self-ascriptions beyond multiculturalism and beyond its related “impasse that the notions of ‘racial and ethnic minorities’ created with their emphasis on inter-group processes and their static notions of culture and difference” (Anthias 1998: 576). Diaspora has arisen as part of the postmodern project of resisting the nation-state, which is perceived as hegemonic, discriminatory and culturally homogenizing. The alternative agenda – now often associated with the notion of diaspora – advocates the recognition of hybridity, multiple identities and affiliations with people, causes and traditions outside the nation-state of residence. “Diasporic identity has become an occasion for the celebration of multiplicity and mobility – and a

figure of our discontent with our being in a world apparently still dominated by nation-states” (Tölölyan 1996: 28).

While not necessarily embracing the nation-state, some scholars are taking a more critical view of this ground for a discursive shift. Katharyne Mitchell (1997), for one, is sceptical of the assumptions of many postmodernist theorists (especially Homi Bhabha 1994) who contend that hybrid, diasporic “third space” standpoints are inherently anti-essentialist and subversive of dominant hegemonies of race and nation. Indeed, Mary Kaldor (1996) points to the presence not only of cosmopolitans and anti-nationalists, but also hard-core, reactionary ethno-nationalists within numerous diasporas (also see Ignatieff 1993, Anderson 1995, Rajagopal 1997).

Overall, during the past few years the term diaspora has become a loose reference confusing categories such as immigrants, guest-workers, ethnic and “racial” minorities, refugees, expatriates and travellers. In fact, “the word diaspora is used today to describe any community that has emigrated whose numbers make it visible in the host community” (Marienstras 1989: 125). Among academics and “community leaders” alike, the over-use and under-theorisation of the notion of diaspora threatens the term’s descriptive usefulness (Safran 1991, Cohen 1995, Vertovec 1999).

In his seminal volume *Global Diasporas*, Robin Cohen (1997) seeks to clarify and typologize the relationship between the, as it were, original conceptualizations of the term as it applied to Jews and the contemporary extensions of the term often made to and by other groups who are dispersed worldwide. Cohen (1997: 21) undertakes his project with the view that “All scholars of diaspora recognize that the Jewish tradition is at the heart of any definition of the concept. Yet if it is necessary to take full account of this tradition, it is also necessary to transcend it.” He accepts that there will be “inevitable dilutions, changes and expansions of the meaning of the term diaspora as it come to be more widely applied” (1997: 22). To be sure, Jewish scholars themselves have intensively begun to re-think the category of diaspora with reference to the historical and modern development of Judaism (see, for instance, Boyarin and Boyarin 1993, Webber 1997, Tromp 1998). But drawing on a number of other key writers on the topic such as Kachig Tölölyan, Gabriel Sheffer and William Safran, Cohen suggests a set of features considered to be common among groups we might categorize together as sharing a diasporic existence. These are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Common Features of a Diaspora (Cohen 1997: 26, after Safran 1991)

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions; 2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions; 3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements; 4. an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation; 5. the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation; 6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate; 7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group; 8. a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and 9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. |
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In addition to these core traits outlined by Robin Cohen, it has been said that diasporic groups are characterised by a “triadic relationship” (Sheffer 1986, Safran 1991) between (1) a collectively self-identified ethnic group in one particular setting, (2) the group’s co-ethnics in other parts of the world, and (3) the homeland states or local contexts whence they or their forebears came.

By way of an earlier review of this emerging field (Vertovec 1999a), I have proposed that current approaches to the topic can be distinguished in terms of underlying depictions of “diaspora” as a social form (concerned with the extent and nature of social, political and economic relationships, and marked by the kind of characteristics set out in Table 1), as a type of consciousness (involving aspects of collective memory, desire and an awareness of identities spanning “here-and-there”), or as a mode of cultural reproduction (relating to the global flow of cultural objects, images and meanings).

While attempts to theorize and typologize diaspora are certainly beginning to clarify a number of significant dimensions and developments surrounding today’s globally dispersed populations, it is clear that their religious elements (or sometimes, cores) have received relatively far less attention. Most writings on diaspora today have, in fact, “marginalized the factor of religion and relegated it to second place in favour of ethnicity and nationality” (Baumann 1998: 95).

Why study religion and diaspora?

As a response to the above question, Ninian Smart (1999) offers three basic reasons why it is important to study the connection between religion and diaspora (or, we might further suggest, why it is important to study the religious aspects of diasporic experience). Firstly, the study of diasporas and their modes of adaptation can give us insights into general patterns of religious transformation. Secondly, diasporas may themselves affect the development of religion in the homeland: the wealth, education and exposure to foreign influences transferred from diaspora may have significant effects on organization, practice and even belief. Finally, because of the great incidence of diasporas in the modern world, “multiethnicity is now commonplace” (Smart 1999: 421). These three facets are addressed in more detail under various headings below.

In appreciating the transformative potentials of religion in diaspora, we must first recognize that this is nothing new. Jonathan Z. Smith (1978) notes that almost every religion in Late Antiquity occurred in both a homeland and in diasporic centres (see, for instance, van der Toorn 1998, Dirven 1998). In homelands during this period, religions developed inextricably with local loyalties and ambitions, including as part of resistance to foreign domination.

Each native tradition also had diasporic centers which exhibited marked change during the Late Antique period. There was a noticeable lessening of concern on the part of those in the diaspora from the destiny and fortunes of the native land and a relative severing of the archaic ties between religion and the land. Certain cult centers remained sites of pilgrimage or sentimental attachment, but the old beliefs in national deities and the inextricable relationship of the deity to particular places was weakened. (Smith 1978: xii)

In probing the meanings of religion, diaspora and change, we must also consider the implications of what we might call religious travel. James Clifford (1992) has written of “traveling cultures”, suggesting how the meanings and relationships of dwelling-and-travelling displace conventional notions of culture and place (as well as challenge the ability of conventional methods of ethnography for representing cultures on the move). Since ancient times, religious travel has included pilgrimage, proselytising and the movement of students and scholars as well as exiles and migrants. Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (1990a, b) have underlined the importance of such travel on the development of Islam. They consider travel foremost as a journey of the mind, including an imaginary connection with many sacred centres that has a significant impact on notions of religious belonging over distance, collective identity with those elsewhere, and ritual practice that is both

universal and localized. Obviously these ideas have relevance for the understanding of diasporic dynamics. In thinking about travelling religion, however, Ninian Smart (1999) raises a caveat through the example of Hinduism. He asks us to consider:

themes such as caste, yoga, *bhakti* [devotion], pilgrimage, temple rituals, austerity (*tapasya*), wandering holy men, instruction in the scriptural traditions, regional variation, pundits, a strong sense of purity and impurity, household rituals, veneration of the cow, the practice of astrology, belief in reincarnation, the importance of acquiring merit, etc. These themes, which are woven together into the complicated fabric of Hinduism in India, do not all travel equally easily to new environments. (Smart 1999: 424)

Regarding categories and definitions, Robin Cohen (1997) questions whether religions can or should be described as “diasporas” alongside the dispersed ethnic groups which conventionally comprise the term. For Cohen, religions generally do not constitute diasporas in and of themselves. He describes religions at best as posing phenomena “cognate” to diasporas. This is largely because religions often span more than one ethnic group and, in the case of faiths that have come to be widely spread around the globe, religions normally do not seek to return to, or to recreate, a homeland. From Cohen’s (1997: 189) perspective, while religions do not constitute diasporas themselves, they “can provide additional cement to bind a diasporic consciousness.”

Judaism and Sikhism are the obvious exceptions, as Cohen recognizes. Dispersed members of these two traditions do represent diasporas since they are considered to comprise discrete ethnic groups, albeit especially marked by their religion, among whom many do indeed hold strong views about their conceived homelands. To these two, we should add groups like Ismailis, Alevis, Bahais, and Rastafarians whose respective religious distinctiveness usually tends to set them apart as ethnic groups. I have argued elsewhere (Vertovec 2000), too, that it is possible to talk of a “Hindu diaspora” especially because, no matter where in the world they live, most Hindus tend to sacralize India and therefore have a special kind of relationship to a spiritual homeland.

Other scholars are quicker to work with notions of “diaspora religion” (such as Smart 1999). John Hinnells (1997a: 686) defines diaspora religion as “the religion of any people who have a sense of living away from the land of the religion, or away from ‘the old country’”; he even extends the term to cover situations in which a religion represents “a minority phenomenon” (Hinnells 1997a: 686). Gerrie ter Haar (1998) connects religion and diaspora through the assumption that migration means diaspora, migrants practice religion, and therefore diaspora implicates religion.

However, this is where conceptual waters begin to get muddy. Firstly, we begin to obfuscate the relationships of religion and diaspora, not to mention diaspora itself, if we regard it as involving any kind of migration or dispersal. It broadens the term far too much to talk – as many scholars do – about the “Muslim diaspora”, “Catholic diaspora”, “Methodist diaspora” and so forth. These are of course world traditions that span many ethnic groups and nationalities that have been spread by many other means than migration and displacement. Hinnells (1997a) himself flags up one problem with his own definition: are Muslims in Pakistan part of a diaspora religion because Islam is derived from and broadly centred on Mecca?

Secondly, to co-equate migration and subsequent minority status with diaspora also unnecessarily lumps together related yet arguably distinct conditions. “[O]ne does not announce the formation of the diaspora the moment the representatives of a people first get off the boat at Ellis island (or wherever)” Cohen (1997: 24) quips. The same holds for patterns of “transnationalism”, a concept that also tends to be wrongly used interchangeably with diaspora. Migration and minority status, diaspora and transnationalism are intuitively linked, of course (Vertovec and Cohen 1999). But linked does not mean synonymous. Each of these abstract categories can be seen to comprise specific processes of socio-religious transformation.

Here, I argue that religious and other socio-cultural dynamics develop distinctively within the realms of (a) migration and minority status (of course a dual category that, given space to discuss, needs much unpacking as well), (b) diaspora, and (c) transnationalism. I consider migration to involve the transference and reconstitution of cultural patterns and social relations in a new setting, one that usually involves the migrants as minorities becoming set apart by “race,” language, cultural traditions and religion. I refer to diaspora here especially as an imagined connection between a post-migration (including refugee) population and a place of origin and with people of similar cultural origins elsewhere. By “imagined” I do not mean such connections might not be actual. Rather, by this I emphasize the often strong sentiments and mental pictures according to which members of diasporas organize themselves and undertake their cultural practices. This recalls Richard Marienstras’ (1989: 120) definition of a diaspora as a group based on “a degree of national, or cultural, or linguistic awareness” of “a relationship, territorially discontinuous, with a group settled ‘elsewhere’.” By transnationalism I refer to the actual, ongoing exchanges of information, money and resources – as well as regular travel and communication -- that members of a diaspora may undertake with others in the homeland or elsewhere within the globalized ethnic community. Diasporas arise from some form of migration, but not all migration involves diasporic consciousness; all transnational communities comprise diasporas, but not all diasporas develop transnationalism.

These categories, their associated patterns and processes are discussed below. The list of themes or types of change briefly summarized under each heading is not meant to be exhaustive but suggestive, having been sieved from a variety of studies.

Patterns of Change surrounding Migration and Minority Status

In many of the classic studies on immigrant incorporation processes, researchers have pointed to the continued salience of religion among immigrants (Herberg 1955, Glazer and Moynihan 1963, Gordon 1964). Although remaining important, the social organization and practice of religion is usually modified, nevertheless, by a variety of factors involved in movement and resettlement in a new context. Dimensions of change, and some of the factors impacting upon them, include the following.

Organization and mobilization. Upon settling in a new environment, immigrants often soon set about collectively organizing themselves for purposes of religious worship. The formation of associations is one prominent kind of socio-religious organization, established to raise and distribute funds and coordinate activities (Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987). Sometimes immigrant associations seek to draw upon a remembered past in an attempt to replicate as nearly as possible an old ethnic-religious community in a new setting, such as Nancy J. Wellmeier (1998) describes among Guatamalan Mayans in Los Angeles. Pre-migration social and cultural factors play important roles in the creation of immigrant religious institutions (Clarke, Peach and Vertovec 1990), as do residential patterns in the new setting (Ebaugh, O'Brien and Saltzman Chafetz 2000).

The establishment and maintenance of religious institutions among immigrants not unusually involves a high degree of conflict and contestation. John Bodnar (1985: 166-7) states that in the 19th century, for instance, “no institution in immigrant America exhibited more discord and division than the Church. ...Usually the church and other religious organizations were the only immigrant institutions to contain an entrenched, premodern cadre of leaders ...[who] labored feverishly to centralize authority, revitalize faith, and maintain the loyalty of their flocks in a rapidly changing world.”

Processes surrounding associations and other institutions also reflect the size and development of the immigrant population itself. Aspects of this are described with reference to successive stages of community “fusion” and “fission” reflecting the size and distribution of migrants drawn from distinct caste/social status, regional and linguistic backgrounds (Dahya 1974, Bhardwaj and Rao 1990, Williams 1992).

David Bowen (1987) has described such organizational phases among Gujarati Hindus in Bradford, England. These are characterized by: (1) the establishment of homogeneity among new immigrants looking for some kind of commonality through religious lowest common denominators, (2) the emergence of specific devotional congregations based upon demographic factors (such as neighbourhood) and devotional orientations (especially adherence to certain parochial traditions of a homeland), (3) the formation of caste associations as families were reunited and numbers of Gujaratis grew, and (4) the re-establishment of homogeneity by way of umbrella organizations created to interface with local government (cf. Vertovec 1994a).

The politics of recognition. Another important set of activities that immigrant associations engage concerns campaigns for legal tolerance or cultural rights surrounding specific practices, freedom from discrimination, and access to public resources offered to other groups (Vertovec and Peach 1997, Vertovec 1999b, 2001). Such needs arise not only due to immigrant but to minority status. Some areas and examples of such engagement are (Vertovec 1998): modes of practice such as religious slaughter of animals and, for Muslims, the provision of *halal* food in public institutions; aspects of education (from ensuring modesty of dress among female pupils through approaches to religious education to questions surrounding sex education, as well as the entire issue of separate religiously-based schools); law (especially family law governing matters including marriage, divorce and inheritance) and legal protection against religious discrimination or incitement to religious hatred; and access to public resources and social services (state funding for community activities, the recognition of special community needs in health and housing).

Women's position and roles. Following migration the position of women in families and in the wider immigrant community often undergoes considerable transformation (see Willis and Yeoh 2000). This is particularly the case if women take up post-migration employment in contrast to their pre-migration status. In many cases more significant and decisive functions of women arise in religious community associations and affairs: women often take the lead in the organization and management of collective religious activities. What remains central, or indeed may be enhanced, following migration is the key role women play in reproducing religious practice -- particularly by way of undertaking domestic religious practice (for example among Hindus, see Logan 1988, McDonald 1987, Rayaprol 1997).

Generations. Issues of religious and cultural reproduction naturally raise questions concerning the maintenance, modification or discarding of religious practices among the subsequent generations born and raised in post-migration settings. Everyday religious and cultural practices, religious nurture at home and religious education at school, and participation at formal places of

worship all shape the identities and activities of the so-called second and third generations (Larson 1989, Jackson and Nesbitt 1993). Some conditioning factors affecting identity and activity among second and third generation youth which sets them apart from their immigrant parents include: education in Western schools and the inculcation of secular and civil society discursive practices; youth dissatisfaction with conservative community leaders and religious teachers who do not understand the position of post-migrant youth; growth of “vernacular” religious traditions across Europe; compartmentalization of religion (see below); and immersion in American/European popular youth culture (Vertovec and Rogers 1998).

Ethnic and religious pluralism. The situation of being migrants from another place and, thereby, of being minority “others” often stimulates a mode of religious change through heightened self-awareness. As Barbara Metcalf (1996: 7) puts it, “The sense of contrast – contrast with a past or contrast with the rest of society – is at the heart of a self-consciousness that shapes religious style.” The process has been observed by Kim Knott (1986: 46), who states “Many Hindus in Leeds are only too aware that their religion is one amongst others. Not only are there indigenous faiths, generally grouped together by Hindus as ‘Christian’, but there are also other South Asian faiths. ...In this country Hinduism is just one minority faith amongst others. An awareness of religious pluralism has affected the way Hindus think about themselves and their faith.” And in Penny Logan’s (1988: 124) research on culture and religion among Gujaratis in Britain, “many adults reported that they had become more aware of their religion in Britain, as a result of belonging to a minority group in a predominantly irreligious society. They could no longer take their religion and their children’s assumption of it for granted.”

We should not assume that religious pluralism only refers to the co-presence of different faiths. Migrants – like travellers – newly often come across, for the first time, members and practices of distinct traditions within their own religion. As Eickelman and Piscatori (1990: xv) point out, “the encounter with the Muslim ‘Other’ has been at least as important for self-definition as the confrontation with the European ‘Other’. ...The ironic counterpart to travel broadening one’s consciousness of the spiritual unity of the umma is that travel may define frontiers between Muslims and thus narrow their horizons.”

The self-consciousness of migrant minorities due to a condition of pluralism relates to, and may in certain ways overlap with, the identity dynamics associated with the condition of diaspora.

Patterns of Change surrounding Diaspora

As Shaye and Frerichs (1993) emphasized above, matters of cultural and religious adaptation-yet-continuity are foremost on the agendas of most diasporic groups. “[W]hat we have to grasp is a diasporic duality of continuity and change,” suggests Martin Sökefeld (2000: 23), while we remain cognizant that “The rhetoric of continuity obscures that [sic] actors constantly re-constitute and re-invent (or refuse to re-constitute) in diverse manners what is imagined as simply continuing.” [We must appreciate, too, that parallel forms of change may well be happening in the homeland as well, stimulated either from the diaspora or by non-diasporic factors altogether.] The “diasporic duality of continuity and change” is evident in a number of socio-religious domains.

Identity and community. “[R]eligious identities,” writes R. Stephen Warner (1998: 3) , “often (but not always) mean more to [individuals] away from home, in their diaspora, than they did before, and those identities undergo more or less modification as the years pass.” One reason this occurs, he suggests, is because “The religious institutions they build, adapt, remodel and adopt become worlds unto themselves, ‘congregations’, where new relations among the members of the community – among men and women, parents and children, recent arrivals and those settled – are forged” (Warner 1998: 3). One example of this is to be found among Cubans in the United States who make pilgrimage to a purpose-built shrine in Miami. There, “through transtemporal and translocative symbols at the shrine, the diaspora imaginatively constructs its collective identity and transports itself to the Cuba of memory and desire” (Tweed 1997: 10).

“Identities change over time,” Eickelman and Piscatori (1990b: 17) emphasize. Moreover, diasporic identification involves complexities and permutations: some people “continue to regard their land of birth as ‘home’, while others come to identify primarily with their land of settlement [Karpat 1990]. Others, such as Turkish workers in Germany [Mandel 1990], or indeed such intellectuals as Salman Rushdie (1988), may feel at home in neither place, at ease in neither their land of settlement nor their land of origin. There may also be multiple, co-existing identities” (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990b: 17).

Ritual practice. Complexities and permutations also often characterize processes of modifying or “streamlining” religious practices in diaspora (Hinnells 1997b). By way of illustration, in some places outside India basic Hindu ritual procedures have become truncated (as in Malaysia; Hutheesing 1983), refashioned (in Britain; Michaelson 1987), or eclectically performed (in East Africa; Bharati 1976); in others, much of the style or corpus of rites has been virtually “invented” in conjunction with social change in the community (evident in Trinidad; Vertovec 1992), and in still other places, basic rites have been mutually “negotiated” so as to provide a kind of socio-religious

bridge between migrants from regionally distinct traditions (in England, Knott 1986; in Scotland Nye 1995; and in the USA, Lessinger 1995). In most places, many rites have been popularized in order to appeal to young, diaspora-born Hindus even to the chagrin of conservative elders: in Malaysia, for instance, Hindu leaders have complained that the inclusion of India-produced music has wrought the “disco-ization” of Hindu ritual (Willford 1998)!

“Re-spatialization”. Jonathan Z. Smith described how, in the ancient world of the Mediterranean and Near East:

For the native religionist, homeplace, the place to which one belongs, was *the* central religious category. One’s self-definition, one’s reality was the place into which one had been born – understood as both geographical and social place. To the new immigrant in the diaspora, nostalgia for homeplace and cultic substitutes for the old, sacred center were central religious values. ...Diasporic religion, in contrast to native, locative religion, was utopian in the strictest sense of the word, a religion of “nowhere”, of transcendence. (1978: xiv, emphasis in original)

Barbara Metcalf (1996) seems to recapitulate Smith through her interest in religious/diasporic “spaces” that are non-locative. “[I]t is ritual and sanctioned practice that is prior and that creates ‘Muslim space’,” Metcalf (1996: 3) proposes, “which thus does not require any juridically claimed territory or formally consecrated or architecturally specific space.” She extends the spatial metaphor through reference to the “social space” of networks and identities created in new contexts away from homelands, the “cultural space” that emerges as Muslims interact, and “physical space” of residence and community buildings founded in new settings. Together, these spaces comprise the “imagined maps of diaspora Muslims” (Metcalf 1996: 18).

Pnina Werbner (1996) echoes Metcalf’s “imagined maps” by suggesting that Muslims in diaspora connect via a “global sacred geography.” This is created anew through the ritual sacralization of space in diasporic settings -- a process, Werbner describes among Pakistani Sufis in Britain, which inherently conjoins sites both at home in Pakistan and in Manchester, UK. Similarly for Senegalese Sufis (Mourides) in diaspora, their holy city of Touba is metaphorically “recreated in the routine activities of the migrants and through recurrent parallels of the migrants’ lives with that of the founder of the order, Cheikh Amadu Bamba” (Carter 1997: 55).

Diasporic transformation also involves a changing sense of religious time as well as space. As Werner Schiffauer (1988: 150) recalls among Turkish Muslims in Germany:

The specifically peasant experience of an oscillation of one's social world between states of religious community and society is no longer present. During sacred times, society no longer changes into a religious community but, rather, one leaves the society and enters the religious community – if possible, we must add, since the opposition between secular and sacred times is now determined by the more fundamental notions of the working day and leisure.

Religion / culture. The reconfigured distinctions of sacred and secular space and time that occur in diaspora are matched by the sharpening of distinctions between religion and culture. To illustrate what is meant here: David Pocock (1976) observed that in one branch (the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Sanstha) of the Hindu Swaminarayan movement there has emerged a tendency to consider certain aspects of Gujarati culture (including family structure, language, diet, marriage networks, and the position of women) as quasi-religious phenomena -- that is, as behavioural and ideological facets contributing to the fulfillment of *dharma*. The subsequent problem Pocock discerned for the Sanstha is that of “dis-embedding a set of beliefs and practices - a ‘religion’ from a ‘culture’ which would then be defined as ‘secular’” (1976: 362). This is a critical yet common dilemma for Hindus throughout the diaspora (and, some observe, in India itself). It entails moves toward a self-conscious “rationalization of the distinction religion/culture” (Pocock 1976: 357) despite the everywhere-asserted dictum that “Hinduism is a way of life.”

Processes of self-consciously distinguishing elements of religion/culture are bound to have differing results in various domains (in temples, in religious or cultural associations, in homes, in the workplace). In each case among Hindus in diaspora, such processes inherently involve both some kind of adaptation to religiously and culturally plural environments and the generation or heightening of distinct “ethnic” sentiments.

Martin Sökefeld (2000: 10) considers relevant developments among Alevis in diaspora:

One could speak of an Alevi revival in Germany (and in Turkey) since 1989, but this revival was not a simple renewal of Alevism as it had been practiced until a few decades ago in Turkey. Instead, it implicated a serious transformation of Alevism and its rituals which can be glossed over as “folklorization”: Although originally “religious” rituals were practiced, Alevism was re-constituted mainly as a secular culture. (Sökefeld 2000: 10)

The secularization of Alevism occurred, not least, due to the role of hardcore, anti-religious Marxists within the Alevi community in Germany. A further process of “desacralization” has

occurred, Sökefeld notes, through the core Alevi collective ritual (*cem*) being turned into a public ritual solely to affirm identity based on symbolic cultural difference (from other Turks and Sunni Muslims)

In a similar way, both Madawi Al-Rasheed (1998) and Erica McClure (2000) detail ways in which members of the Assyrian diaspora sharply contend whether religion or ethnicity (or language) forms the basis of community identity. Many young South Asian Muslim women interviewed by Kim Knott and Saja Khokher (1993) are also conceptually establishing a firm distinction between “religion” and “culture” – a distinction between what, for their parents (particularly prior to migration), were largely indistinguishable realms. Further, they are rejecting their parents’ conformity to ethnic traditions that the parents consider as emblematic of religiosity (such as manner of dress) while wholly embracing a Muslim identity in and of itself. Among these young women, Knott and Khokher explain, there is a “self-conscious exploration of the religion which was not relevant to the first generation” (1993: 596).

Patterns of Change surrounding Transnationalism

“Transnationalism” refers to the existence of communication and interactions of many kinds linking people and institutions across the borders of nation-states and, indeed, around the world (see, among others, Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1992, Smith and Guarnizo 1998, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 2000). Among immigrant groups, certainly the existence of such links does not represent a wholly new set of phenomena. One hundred years ago, for instance, immigrants to the United States maintained contact with relatives in the homeland, remitted money, supported homeland political groups, and so forth (see Bodnar 1985, Foner 1997, Gabaccia 2000). However, Nancy Foner (1997: 369) concludes, “Modern technology, the new global economy and culture, and new laws and political arrangements have all combined to produce transnational connections that differ in fundamental ways from those maintained by immigrants a century ago.”

With regard to our current topic of inquiry, it is obvious transnationalism is relevant to more general processes and patterns of globalization, or an intensification of connectedness, affecting religion (Robertson 1992, Beyer 1994, Held et al. 1999, Beckford 2000). Yet this is a discussion that we must leave aside due to limitations of space.

As Susanne Hoerber Rudolph (1997: 1) reminds us, “Religious communities are among the oldest of the transnationals: Sufi orders, Catholic missionaries, and Buddhist monks carried work and praxis across vast spaces before those places became nation-states or even states.” Further, the transference of religion accompanied some of the modern period’s earliest yet perhaps most powerful

forms of globalization and transnationalism – namely mercantilism, conquest and colonial domination.

Coming back to the topic of migrants and diasporas, Peggy Levitt (1998) points to the serious dearth of research concerning the links maintained between post-migration communities and their origins, and how these links lead to globalized, everyday practices, discourses and relations. “While there is a rich body of work on immigrant incorporation,” she (1998: 75) writes, “most of this research does not shed sufficient light on how continued relations between home and host-country institutions transform religious practice.” Importantly, Levitt stresses how the transformations toward “globalized, everyday practices, discourses and relations” affects religious practice in both home and “host” contexts (also see Gardner 1995, Goldring 1998, Riccio 1999).

Networks: horizontal & vertical. Rudolph (1997) contrasts two prominent patterns of contemporary global socio-religious organization. On the one hand she describes many longstanding forms of organization as “hierarchy” (marked by concentration of decision making and coordination of action); these she contrasts to largely emergent forms of “self-organization” (characterized by decentralization and spontaneity). We might also describe this pair of ideal types as bureaucracy v. networks, as well as globalization from above v. globalization from below.

These forms are relevant to Eickelman’s (1997: 27) view that “Modern forms of travel and communication have accelerated religious transnationalism – the flow of ideologies, access to information on organizational forms and tactics, and the transformation of formerly elite movements to mass movements – rendering obsolete earlier notions of frontier as defined primarily by geographical boundaries.” Obviously, new technologies such as computer-mediated communication is now having a considerable impact on transnational religious organization and activity (Castells 1997, Eickelman and Anderson 1999, Miller and Slater 2000)

Transnational networks can function to enhance individual religiosity as well. This is exhibited by Haitian Catholic and Protestant preachers who maintain congregational ties in Haiti and to immigrants in the United States (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994), and by Trinidadian Catholic priests who serve pastoral roles for members of the diaspora via the Internet (Miller and Slater 2000).

Bruno Riccio (1999) describes how Sufi brotherhoods (especially the Mouride) play key organizational roles (including the facilitation of trading networks) in the diasporic experience of Senegalese in Italy (also see Ebin 1996, Carter 1997). The transnational brotherhood provides members with continuous feedback in order to maintain morality. “In other words,” Riccio (1999:

132) writes, “it is the fact that the Mouride movement is embedded in a transnational social field that makes it so successful in controlling potentially deviant behaviour. Within this field Mouride transnational formations are kept alive by oral conversation, the selling of cassettes, where besides prayers and Kasaid [sacred poems] one finds information about *ndiguel* (orders, decrees) from the Kalif or from the Touba establishment.” Riccio also depicts the movement of Marabouts, living saints or spiritual leaders who visit diasporic communities and provide followers with blessings and advice. The visits “reaffirm the link and the identification between the sacred place (Touba [whence the founder of the movement comes]), the Saint... and the diasporic community of Mourides” (Riccio 1999: 133).

A final example of new modes of transnational religious networks is represented by the “milk miracle” of September 1995. As reported by many news agencies, religious images or *murtis* in Hindu temples around Britain (London, Leicester, Birmingham and Leeds) and around the world (including New York, Delhi, Hong Kong and Bangkok) were observed to “drink” substantial quantities of milk. News of such a “miracle” in one temple location was rapidly conveyed to another, where milk was subsequently offered: if “drank” by the *murti*, the news was immediately relayed elsewhere. Practically in the course of a day, news of similar incidents spread around the world. A South Asian religious diaspora, now connected through advanced global telecommunications, had wrought “the age of the instant miracle” (*The Guardian* 23 September 1995). As Chetan Bhatt (1997: 252) describes it, however, the event was created as “The VHP and RSS were quick to mobilize their international networks to generate the miracle globally.”

Patterns of Global Religious Change

Migration and minority status, diaspora and transnationalism each relate to different, but overlapping, grounds upon which religious transformations take place. The social scientific task of comprehending and analyzing these trends calls for a high degree of clarity as to which of these realms we are addressing at any time. Fuzziness and conflation of categories will cause us to chase our theoretical tails.

With special reference to South Asian religions, for instance, useful methodological frameworks for comparative study of the factors conditioning change among religious communities through migration, diaspora and transnationalism are suggested by authors such as Jayawardena (1968, 1980), Clarke, Peach and Vertovec (1990), Knott (1991), Ballard (1994), Hinnells (1997b), and Vertovec (2000). They emphasize the need to take into mutual account pre-migration factors

(including economic patterns, social structure and status relations), modes of migration, atmospheres and frameworks of reception and settlement, and trajectories of adaptation.

Inquiry into patterns of religious change surrounding this set of categories -- migration and minority status, diaspora and transnationalism -- will shine significant light on yet broader processes affecting religion in the world today. The final list of themes and short examples, below, suggest some of these.

Awareness of global religious identities. Smart (1999) points to the fact that, due in large part to migration, diasporas and transnationalism, there are now world organizations for every major religious tradition and subtradition located in most parts of the world. "Such a consciousness of belonging to a world community has grown considerably in very recent times," Smart (1999: 423) writes. "Consequently, the divergences between diaspora and home communities are diminishing." Even for relatively remote groups, transnational narratives "construct and negotiate the relationships between multiple identities" by tying individuals and communities into larger common constituencies (Robbins 1998: 123). Dale F. Eickelman and Jon Anderson (1999) emphasize how such a new sense of collective awareness and connection among Muslims in various parts of the globe has especially been forged through new communication technologies.

Daniel Miller and Don Slater (2000) discovered a perceived need among many local Hindus in an out-of-the-way place like Trinidad -- in a community largely cut off from India for generations - - to connect with a wider, indeed global, form of Hinduism (albeit in the religious nationalist form of the Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh [RSS]).

The Internet allows for an expansion of communication, but in this case it is used to repair a discrepancy, thereby helping communities and people come closer to a realization of who they already feel the "really" are. The mechanics involved require a sense of geography that defies the usual separation of the local and the global. In these cases the increasingly global use of the Internet across the Diaspora is a function of the re-establishment of local communications that had become sundered. (Miller and Slater 2000: 178)

Universalization v. localization. Ira Lapidus (2001) describes how there has always been inherent tension between Islamic universals and the experience of specific traditions being rooted in particular cultural contexts. Much of Islamic history has seen an "oscillation" between the two. Similar tensions are found in every world religion, and processes surrounding migration, diaspora and transnationalism continue to exercise or exacerbate them.

This is apparent in Camilla Gibb's (1998) study of Muslim immigrants from the Ethiopian city of Harar. In Harar there exists a centuries-old Islam of syncretic saints cults. Yet in diaspora (in this case, Canada) there has arisen an Islam constructed to appeal to a multi-national congregation. "As a result," Gibb (1998: 260) concludes, "what appears to be happening is a homogenization or essentialization of Islamic practices, where culturally specific aspects of Islam that are not shared with other Muslim populations are likely to disappear, since they are not reinforced by Muslims from other groups in this context." Indeed, Harari children in Canada are not taught about their heritage, and they are indeed turning against any religious practices directed toward saints cults.

Among the Bangladeshis with whom Katy Gardner worked, too, "Migrants to Britain and the Middle East have moved from an Islam based around localised cultures and moulded to the culture and geography of the homelands, to an international Islam of Muslims from many difference countries and cultures" (1993: 225). On an individual level, Miller and Slater (2000: 179) met a young Trinidadian Muslim woman who was using the Internet "to try to sort out in her own mind which aspect of her practice were orthodox and which were local."

Perhaps at the same time we are seeing a shift to global forms of religion, however, new processes of localization are taking place. In this way Raymond Williams (1988) and Diana Eck (1996) both describe the emergence of an "American Hinduism" alongside a purported process bringing about the "Americanization" of Muslims (Haddad and Esposito 2000).

What is essential in a religious tradition? As we have already seen above, the conscious disaggregation of "religion" from "culture" is sometimes prompted among people in diaspora. Raymond Williams (1984: 191) comments,

The critical assumption here is that there are some aspects associated with past religious practice that are fundamental and essential to the continuation of the religion and others that are cultural accoutrements that are not so fundamental. Thus, the process of searching for an adaptive strategy becomes the attempt to distinguish what is essential in the religion and what is not.

Jacques Waardenburg (1988) points to the growing trend (especially among young people?) for discarding national or regional traditions and focusing upon the Qur'an and Sunna in order to distinguish what is truly Islamic – that is, normative -- from what is secondary. The felt need to make this distinction is often what prompts young people in diaspora situations to join so-called "fundamentalist" movements (Schiffauer 1999).

Politico-religious activity. Religious-cum-political groups and networks that are dispersed across the borders of nation-states -- or indeed, scattered globally -- have in recent times developed their agendas in arguably new and distinct ways. The adoption of diverse modes of communication (including electronic and computer-mediated forms), the changing nature and manipulation of resources (channelling people, funds and information to and from a number of localities), and the maintenance of various kinds of relationships in relation to encompassing social and political contexts (including ties with people in the homeland / settlement land / and elsewhere in the world) are among the factors characterizing many politico-religious movements as diasporic or transnational.

Politico-religious movements in diaspora comprise many possible types. A movement's aim may be to change a particular country's current regime or its entire political system. A diasporic group may be concerned with affecting the religion and politics of a nation-state of origin, it may be seeking to create its own autonomous region or nation-state, or it may be dedicated to the cause of "exporting" a politico-religious ideology from one place of origin to another setting. The composition of a world-wide politico-religious group may be multi-ethnic or made up of people with a single ethnic identity. Other diasporic or transnational dimensions of politico-religious groups are represented in the following examples.

Religious nationalism in India is represented by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the BJP and the RSS. Such revivalist Hinduism, observes Chetan Bhatt (1997: 155), "has relied extensively on its followers in the US, Britain, Canada and Europe to generate global support and funds for its political ventures in India" (also see Rajagopal 1997, Mukta and Bhatt 2000). Yet religion often provides an ally or source for secular nationalists, too, as witnessed among Armenians (Pattie 1997). Thomas A. Tweed (1997) similarly describes how a Cuban Catholic shrine in Miami functions as a place specifically to express a very particular (anti-Castro) diasporic nationalism.

Transnational religious terrorism is now high on the agenda of many security conscious institutions (Hoffman 1998). The network-without-centre manner of organization now facilitated by new technologies is ideal for groups involved in extreme forms of politico-religious activity (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990b, Castells 1997). In this way Eickelman (1997) describes links between Islamist groups, as well as the nature of relationships within the groups themselves, as decentred, multiple, fluid and subject to severance at short notice.

Peter Mandaville (1999) finds that it is usually amongst diasporic Muslims of the Western world that we find the Internet being appropriated for political purposes.

A more sober examination of the situation, however, reveals that very few of the Muslim groups who have a presence on the Internet are involved in this sort of activity. Moreover, there are also those who argue that the Internet has actually had a moderating effect on Islamist discourse. Sacad al-Faqih, for example, believes that Internet chat rooms and discussion forums devoted to the debate of Islam and politics serve to encourage greater tolerance. He believes that in these new arenas one sees a greater convergence in the centre of the Islamist political spectrum and a weakening of its extremes.

Such a view is reinforced by Rima Berns McGown's (1999) work with Somali refugees in Canada and England. She suggests:

The Islamists' influence is obvious in the very way that the practice of Islam has evolved for diaphora Somalis. The old religious symbolism – the local Sufi shaykh, the dhikr, the token Qur'anic memorization – has given way to a sense of Islam as a vital force in understanding how to live in this new world, a force that might require more blatant identification (via, for instance, a beard or the hijab) or personal study (a parallel with the Jewish yeshiva might be made here). While diaspora Somalis may accept or reject one or other Islamist group's interpretation of doctrine or prescription for action, they share the sense of the religion's vitality that is the Islamists' driving force. (1999: 229)

Reorienting devotion. Smith's (1978: xiv) account of religion of Late Antiquity posits that "Rather than a god who dwelt in his temple or would regularly manifest himself in a cult house, the diaspora evolved complicated techniques for achieving visions, epiphanies or heavenly journeys. That is to say, they evolved modes of access to the deity which transcended any particular place." Such modes represented fundamental shifts in belief or religious orientation.

Other core shifts have been observed in connection with migration or displacement. In a study of letters written by nineteenth-century immigrants to the United States, Jay P. Dolan (1998) found it difficult to determine the religious affiliation of the letter writers. In one stirring fact, Dolan observed a complete absence of Jesus, as well as of the Virgin Mary and individual saints. Instead, the immigrants' general religious orientation was toward God as a constant companion and guide, seemingly meant to mitigate another constant theme of this-worldly suffering. The afterlife was commonly thought of as a place of joy and reunion. Dolan (1998: 153) concludes, "This

understanding of the afterlife as a place of reunion mirrored the social experience of the immigrants and the sense of separation inherent in the immigrant experience.”

In a slightly different look at how migrant and diasporic experience affects religious orientations, Bhikhu Parekh (1994) accounts for the centrality of one sacred text, the Ramayana, among numerous overseas Hindu communities. He does so by highlighting several themes, images, and messages conveyed by the text, relating the ways these resonate with and appeal to the diasporic condition. This includes reference to the Ramayana’s themes of exile, suffering, struggle and eventual return resonated especially with the indentured migrant labourers who ventured overseas.

A reorienting of devotion is also evident in the rise of orthodox, universal forms already mentioned in a number of places above. Overall, Smart (1999: 425) reckons “The diasporas of the Global Period [of the last twenty-five years] have become somewhat more orthodox in tone.” Katy Gardner’s work on the social and economic dynamics linking the Sylhet district of Bangladesh with the East End of London (1993, 1995) demonstrates ways in which transnational migration processes and practices lead to increased religious fervour, puritanism and orthodoxy based on scripturalism. As a driving force of such change, Gardner found the richest transmigrants to be most interested in enforcing orthodoxy -- mainly for purposes of demonstrating status and acquiring social capital.

Compartmentalization. In assessing developments affecting religions and diasporas, Hinnells (1997b) stresses the impact of contemporary Western notions of religion on transplanted non-Western faiths. Such notions include secularization, liberal notions of inter-faith dialogue, and a broad tendency to treat religion as just another “compartment” of life. Hence it may come as no surprise that for many Hindus in Britain, Hinduism now “has the status of a ‘compartment’, or one of a number of aspects of life. ...Some are beginning to think of Hinduism as many people do Christianity, something to be remembered during large festivals and at births, marriages and deaths” (Knott 1986: 46).

This kind of religious shift should not be limited to non-Western traditions, however. As Susan Pattie (1997: 214) discovered, “For Armenians today, especially those in London, the sphere of religion is becoming increasingly isolated and definable as a distinct category of experience.” Peggy Levitt (1998) relatedly suggests that Dominicans in diaspora have developed a more formal and utilitarian relationship to their church than do their counterparts in the Dominican Republic.

The problem with the past. Pattie (1997: 231) describes the “double bind” characterizing the situation of the Armenian Apostolic Church among Armenians in diaspora:

On the one hand, its role as a national institution, imbued with visual, linguistic, and musical traditions, forges deep psychological links with the past. Looking at their

diaspora situation, Armenians in Cyprus and London place great value on this continuing, seemingly unchanging aspect of the Church. Yet at the same time the old presentation is not always understood and, worse, not even experienced, as attendance and participation dwindle with each new generation.

In the Armenian example, it would seem the past is of lessening interest to newer generations. On the other hand, “Now that modern communication and travel technology brings dispersed peoples together more than ever, the usual assumption that attachment to the homeland will decline significantly after the first generation, and even more after the second, seems less self-evident” (Tweed 1997: 140). But of course – like with notions of presumed diasporic “continuity” discussed above – the idea of “attachment” to a homeland and a past signals what will most likely be a highly transformed mode and meaning of relationship.

Trajectories. A final theme of change involves the possible trajectories of collective identities and of local/regional or sectarian traditions in contexts of diaspora and transnationalism.

Possibilities for trajectories of identity are represented by Jacques Waardenburg’s (1988) proposed set of “options” for Muslims in Europe (cf. Vertovec and Peach 1997, Vertovec and Rogers 1998). These can be summarized as (a) the secular option -- discarding Muslim identity altogether; (b) the cooperative option – playing upon Muslim identity in the process of pursuing common goals with other groups; (c) the cultural option – maintaining particular social and cultural practices without much religious sentiment; (d) the religious option – emphasizing wholly scriptural modes of religious affiliation at the expense of cultural aspects (an option described by some as “fundamentalist”); (e) the ethnic-religious option – perpetuating a specific national or regional form of Islam (e.g. Moroccan); (f) the behavioural option – expressing Islamic tenets through moral or ritual behaviour only; and (g) the ideological option – identifying with or opposing the “official” Islam of a particular home country.

The possible trajectories of specific sub-traditions, I have suggested (Vertovec 2000), come down to the following: (1) remaining intact, as represented by processes of community “fission” described earlier; (2) homogenizing parochial forms through lowest common denominators of belief and practice (as developed within Hinduism in the Caribbean; van der Veer and Vertovec 1991, Vertovec 1992, 1994b); (3) promoting a kind of ecumenism, in which a number of forms co-exist under a kind of umbrella organization (Williams 1988); (4) universalizing a specific form (such as the Hinduism of the VHP) by claiming it to be all-encompassing; and (5) cosmopolitanism, whereby the possibility of multiple, successive forms is celebrated (cf. Williams 1998).

Conclusion

The possible trajectories of identity and tradition in diaspora – like most of the themes of change suggested throughout this paper – are not mutually exclusive. They are taking place simultaneously worldwide, and often within the same diaspora.

By isolating, as discrete categories, conditions surrounding migration and minority status, diaspora and transnationalism, we can gain more concise insights into processes and patterns of religious change. These tell us as much about a specific group's experience as it does about general characteristics of religious transformation on a broader level of abstraction. While in most ways the rush to study diaspora is certainly welcomed, for it challenges us to reconsider fundamental concepts such as identity and community, culture, continuity and change, it should not lead us to obfuscate the very categories we wish to clarify.

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