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TURKISH AND PAKISTANI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES IN BRITAIN; A COMPARATIVE APPROACH*

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Abstract

The entity of immigrant populations of Muslims in Britain constitutes a significant proportion. From Muslim countries to Britain, people have migrated at different times and for different purposes and settled in different regions in Britain. Nowadays, they have constituted heterogeneity in the social, cultural and economic life of Britain. This article will focus on Turkish and Pakistani Muslim Communities in Britain. The choice of the two communities is due to serious differences in their religious, social, and cultural structure, although both of them migrated to Britain about the same period. Therefore, this article examines and compares their adventure of migration, ethnicity and language status and religious life in Britain.

Keywords: Muslim Immigrants, Turkish and Pakistani Muslim Communities, Britain.

1. Introduction

Since the early 1900's, Muslims started to migrate to Britain due to various reasons. As a consequence of increasing migration waves, they have constituted a significant proportion in the social and cultural life of Britain. These Muslim immigrants living in Britain have become permanent due to various reasons such as waves of chain migration (family unification, marriage, etc.), economic concerns, the formation of the second and third generations, and the growth of British citizenship. The immigrants who are permanent residents in a foreign country increasingly diminish their hopes of returning to their homelands. Thus they have been forced to create their own identity. In this respect, it is to be considered that Muslim immigrants have established the associations/foundations/charities to provide services in various fields, as one of the important steps taken towards establishing their identity. These civil organizations have differed in accordance with the ethnic, cultural, ideological and political discourses of each Muslim community. These organizations have been concentrated in populated areas by immigrant groups. There are associations/foundations/charities carrying out several activities such as education, culture, art, sports, religious services, etc. in various fields.

In this paper, it will be focused on the Turkish and the Pakistani Muslim Communities in Britain. These communities have been chosen because of serious differences in their religious, social, cultural life, although both communities migrated to Britain during the same period. This paper will examine their adventure of migration, ethnicity, language, and religious

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structure. In doing so, it will try to compare and contrast the religious structure of the Turkish and Pakistani Muslim Communities.

2. Muslim Immigrants in Britain

Muslims in Britain have been part of the British social and cultural landscape for almost a century and a half (Buryova, 2005). The first relatively permanent Muslim populations were established in Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, South Shields and London's East End in the mid-nineteenth century. Since the Second World War, Muslims have migrated to Britain in relatively much larger numbers, with the majority coming from South Asia (primarily Pakistan and Bangladesh). In addition, smaller Muslim communities from a variety of regions, including parts of Africa, Cyprus, Malaysia, the Middle East, and more recently, Eastern Europe (primarily Bosnia), have also settled in Britain. Immigration from Muslim countries remained fairly low throughout the 1950s, more or less corresponding to the demand for labour at that time. It rose dramatically in 1961 as news spread of the impending Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962), which curtailed automatic entry to Britain for Commonwealth citizens. It then continued until the early 1970s when it tapered off as a result of further legislation. Despite the virtual halting of primary migration, and even some movement back to countries of origin, the reuniting of families and the movement of refugees and asylum-seekers, including that of Muslims, increased in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s (Ansari, 2004).

According to the 2011 census, around 2.7 million Muslims live in England and Wales (Census, 2011: KS209EW). This statistic shows that Islam is the second-largest religion after Christians. The Muslim population in Britain comes from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Around three-quarters of Muslim population in Britain are from an Asian ethnic background, particularly Pakistani (43 percent), Bangladeshi (17 percent), Indian (9 percent) and Other Asian (6 percent). A further 6 percent of Muslims are of Black African origin (especially Somalia, Nigeria and other North and West African countries). Some 4 percent of Muslims described themselves as of white British origin, and a further 7 percent from another white background including Arabs, Turks, Cypriots and East Europeans- especially refugees from Bosnia, Albania and Kosovo (Peach, 2005). If we take its rich ethnic diversity into account, we can say that the British Muslim community as a whole can be described, in a borrowed term, as "a microcosm of Islam's global variety" (Ansari, 2002: 6).

3. Comparative Approach; Turkish and Pakistani Muslim Communities

There are mixed groups based on migration history, ethnicity, language, religion, and economic and cultural status. All of these can lead to considerable fragmentation within the Muslim communities in Britain. Most of these differences reflect the religious, political, ethnic and social divisions among communities. To understand Muslim communities in Britain it is necessary to understand their migration histories, ethnic, linguistic and religious structure. Therefore, this paper first examines migration histories, ethnic structures of the Turkish and Pakistani Muslim Communities, and then compares their religious life in Britain.

3.1. Migration, Ethnicity, Language

Turkish Muslim Community in Britain consists of Turks, Kurds mainland Turkey and Turkish Cypriots migrating for different purposes at different times for immigration and asylum (Küçükcan, 1999). Turkish Cypriots migration to Britain started in the 1940s after the following years of the World War II and increased in the 1960s (Ladbury, 1977; Robins and Aksoy, 2001). Turkish migration from mainland Turkey to Britain started in the early 1970s (Mehmet Ali, 2001; Issa, 2005). Ethnic Kurds from Turkey began to immigrate in larger numbers during the late 1980s and early 1990s, often seeking refugee and asylum status (Robins and Aksoy, 2001; Atay, 2006). According to 2011 Census, there were about 150.000 Turkish populations (including Turks, Kurds mainland Turkey and Turkish Cypriots) in England (Census, 2011: QS213EW). But, according to my estimate, nowadays the population is about 250.000 - 300.000, when taken into account unrecorded immigrants. The Turkish speaking

community is heavily concentrated in the Greater London region (approximately 75 %). Outside of London there are smaller communities in Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Luton, Manchester, Sheffield, New Castle and Leeds. A few percentages of them have lived in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Within the community, excluding English, Turkish and Kurdish are the most widely spoken language (Communities and Local Government, 2009a).

Pakistani Muslim Community in Britain consists of a number of distinct regional and linguistic groups including Pathans, Punjabis, Mirpuris, Sindhis and Balochis (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). Immigration to Britain from Pakistan began in the 1950s and increased significantly prior to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act -1962- (Ansari, 2002). In the 1970s and 1980s, Pakistani populations are rapidly increased in Britain. Migration patterns from Pakistan to Britain have developed according to a complex mix of socio-political, cultural and economic factors (Murtuja, 2005; Werbner, 2005). According to 2011 Census, there were about 1.112,282 Pakistanis in England (Census, 2011: QS201EW). More than half of the Pakistani population growth since 1991 is accounted for UK born Pakistanis. The Pakistani community is concentrated in particular areas, Lancashire, Yorkshire, West Midlands and Greater London. There are no accurate figures available but it is estimated that 60 percent of the Pakistani population is from the Mirpur District of Kashmir and settled mainly in Birmingham, Bradford, Oldham and surrounding towns. Within the community, excluding English, Urdu and Punjabi are the most widely spoken language (Communities and Local Government, 2009b).

It is seen that the adventure of migration of Turks and Pakistanis corresponds almost same dates. The push and pull factors of migration in these two communities are mostly similar such as economic and educational opportunities, refugees and asylum seekers, result of war, conflicts and social breakdown in their countries, etc. But, owing to the fact that there is not any bilateral agreement between Turkey and England, it seems that migration from Turkey is less intense than Pakistan.

As far as I could observe, there is a partial similarity in the socio-economic structure of both communities. First generation Muslim immigrants with unskilled and semi-skilled occupations worked in the manufacturing sector. With industrial decline after 1990s, many immigrants had to run alternative means of economic activity such as self-employment and service sector opportunities –as taxi-driving, market-trading and catering. The second and third generation in these communities have experienced a number of changes in their economic activities and employment areas. The well-educated second and third generations are employed in virtually all sectors of the economy and in all levels of politics, education, business, medicine, law, media, arts, engineering and so on.

3.2. Religion

For immigrants living in foreign countries, religion plays an important role in identity formation and protection of national culture. To understand the status of immigrants living in a foreign country it is necessary to look at their religious life, religious activities and religious organizations. So while most Muslims in Britain share a common religious identity, the expression of their faith is likely to be shaped by their ethnic or national origins (Gilliat-Ray, 2010).

According to the 2001 Census, 83 percent of migrants born in Turkey, and 26 percent of migrants born in Cyprus are Muslim. In Britain, the majority of the Turkish speaking community belongs to the Sunni sect of Islam, mainly adhering to Hanafi School of thought. Sunni Kurds, who are originally from Eastern Turkey, tend to follow the Shafi School of thought. There are also small communities of Alevi, Ismaili and Jafaris among the Turkish community in Britain (Communities and Local Government, 2009a). Within the Turkish community, there are various Sufi orders (the followers of Sheikh M. Nazim Kibris¹, the

¹ Sheikh M. Nazim Kibris is a Sufi religious figure in Northern Cyprus. He is Sheykh of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. The

followers of Mahmut Ustaosmanoglu², the followers Muhammed Rasit Erol / Menzil³, religious movements (the followers Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan / Suleymancis⁴, the followers Fetullah Gulen / Hizmet⁵, Alevis⁶), religious-political movements (National Vision / Milli Gorus⁷, Milliyetciler - Nationalists⁸, etc) and a semi-official religious organization (Turkish Religious Foundation of the UK/Diyanet⁹). Each religious group has associations /foundations /charities carrying out cultural, educational and religious services.

According to the 2011 Census, 92 percent of the Pakistanis in England identify themselves as Muslim (Census, 2011: DC2201EW). This statistic shows that forty-three percent of all Muslims in England are Pakistani. The majority of Pakistanis are Sunni Muslims, though there are smaller numbers of Shi'a Muslims. Some religious movements from South Asian origins in Britain are the reformist Deobandis¹⁰, the revivalist Tablighi Jamaat¹¹, the conservative and a Sufi order Barelvi¹², the Islamist Jamaat-e Islami¹³, a religious movement the Ahl-e-Hadith¹⁴. These broad schools of thought have their institutional embodiments in the Pakistani Muslim community in Britain. They carry out several activities in the social, cultural and religious fields. Also, they shape the character and identity of the Pakistani immigrants in the host country (Communities and Local Government, 2009b).

According to my researches, in the early years of migration, the religious lives of the Turkish and Pakistani immigrants seem to be very little organized. It was only seen some individual endeavours. In these years the individuals are said to have performed Islamic practices which were limited to the daily prayers. But with increasing migration waves, an institutional restructuring in the religious field was needed. While the first generation yielded

followers of him have an association in London; 'Sheikh M. Nazim al-Haqqani Dergahi' (Costu, 2009: 84-85).

² The followers of Mahmut Ustaosmanoglu in London are known as a fellowship of Aziziye Mosque. They have an association; 'United Kingdom Turkish Islamic Association' (Costu, 2009: 88-90).

³ Muhammed Rasit Erol is a Sufi religious figure in Turkey. The followers of him have an association in London; 'Menzil Trust' (Costu, 2012).

⁴ The Suleymancis follow Suleyman Hilmi Tunahan's Islamic discourse. The followers of him have foundations; 'UK Turkish - Islamic Cultural Centre Trust', (Costu, 2009: 90-91).

⁵ Hizmet Cemati (Society) follows Fetullah Gulen's ideas and teachings. They have become very active in Britain. They have some organizations in London; 'Anatolian Muslim Society', 'Dialogue Society', London Centre for Social Studies' (Costu, 2009: 96-97).

⁶ Alevis are one of the Sufi orders in Islam. There are some Alevis religious practices different than Sunni versions. There is an Alevi cultural centre and Cemevi, which is the community's place of gathering and worship; 'London Alevi Cultural Centre and Cemevi' (Costu, 2009: 92).

⁷ This organization linked to the Islamic Community Milli Gorus in Germany-based. They have political-Islamic discourse. There is a foundation in relation to this organization in London; 'Islamic Community Milli Gorus U.K.' (Costu, 2009: 93-94).

⁸ This group linked to nationalist political discourse in Turkey. They have mainly conservative religious-political discourse. There is an association in London affiliated with Turkish Federation in Germany; 'London Islamic Turkish Association' (Costu, 2009: 85-86).

⁹ This foundation is semi-official religious organization in relation to the Counsellor for Religious Services affiliated to the Turkish Embassy in London; 'Turkish Religious Foundation UK' (Costu, 2009: 94-96).

¹⁰ Associated with the Indo/Pakistani reformist movement centred in the Darul Uloom of Deoband are known by the name Deobandis. Deobandis are considered to be within the confines of Sunni Islam. They follow the Ash'ari and Maturidi schools of aqidah (creed). They maintain a predominant position in the supplementary school and mosque sectors in Britain (like Darul-'ulum-Islamic Seminaries) (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 85-88).

¹¹ Indian reform movement is founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas in 1927 in Delhi. Tablighi Jamaat came forth as an offshoot of the Deobandi movement. They have the largest mosque (in West Ham/London) and some religious and educational centres (like Jamiat Talimul Islam - Institute of Islamic Education) in Britain (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 89-92).

¹² Barelvi sufi order founded in northern India in 1880s, based on the writings of Mawlana Ahmad Reza Khan Barelvi. His followers the movement is known as Ahle Sunnat wal-Jama'at (People of the traditions of Muhammad and the broad community). They have some organizations in Britain such as; 'the Sufi Muslim Council', 'the British Muslim Forum' (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 92-98).

¹³ Pakistani Islamic revivalist party founded by Mawlana Abu al-Ala Mawdudi in 1941 in Pakistan. They have three key organizations in Britain; 'the UK Islamic Mission', 'the Islamic Foundation', 'the Islamic Society of Britain' (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 98-103).

¹⁴ This Islamic reform movement originates in the Indian sub-continent. The term Ahl al-Hadith is often used interchangeably with the term Salafi (Gilliat-Ray, 2010: 104-105).

primarily to build masjids to perform basic religious duties, the second and third generation tended to construct institutional complexes that become integrated with the surrounding parts.

At the end of the 1980s some shifts were seen in the way in which Muslim organizations conducted themselves in public life. The Turkish and Pakistani immigrants living in Britain have established a number of non-governmental organizations working in cultural, social, educational and religious fields within the framework of the legal rights granted to them by the hosting country (Communities and Local Government, 2009a: 52-55; 2009b: 58-62). They became much more visible in the public sphere and more robust in their representation of wider Muslim interests. So that, the Turkish and Pakistani immigrants, through these organizations, have tried to solve their problems coming out during the integration process, and kept their integrity, and ensure the continuity of their community. One type of these civil organizations is religious organizations which aim to protect religious and national identity, to transfer cultural values to the second and third generation, and to contribute the process of integration in the host country. The Turkish and Pakistani communities believe that the vital function of the religious and cultural values is to preserve their national identities. The national and Islamic values are taught by those religious organization's services. Immigrants have perceived them as a shelter.

When I look at religious structure within the Turkish and Pakistani communities in Britain, it seems that Pakistanis have more intensive activities than Turks. For example, as far as I have detected, there are about 27 Turkish places of worship (mosque/cemevi/Sufi centre) in Britain (Costu 2012), whereas Pakistanis have approximately 360 mosques in Britain.¹⁵ In addition, looking at the numbers of the foundations/associations that have been established around these mosques, there are similar differences. Undoubtedly, this is directly related to the rate of the population of both communities in Britain. To have a dense population of Pakistanis, it can be said that they have an intensive structuring in the religious field as well as social and cultural fields.

As far as I could see, faith-based organizations and mosques play a central role as community hubs and venues. In these religious places, a large scale of religious undertakings has been performed. In addition to this, religious organizations provide a wide range of services including supplementary schools, women's groups, advice centres, organizations specializing in job training, and informal groups which allow people to come together to discuss common problems and community events. The positive effects of these religious activities are also observed in both the integration of the immigrant Muslim communities into Britain's social life and the minimization of the effects of assimilation and hidden and overt Islamophobia that have been faced.

In addition to community specific organisations, there are a number of Muslim umbrella organisations aiming to represent the needs of Muslims as a whole, like 'the Muslim Council of Britain'¹⁶, 'the British Muslim Forum'¹⁷, and 'the UK Islamic Mission'¹⁸, etc. According to my researches, among religious organizations belonging to the Turks, almost no one has been determined that a member of these umbrella organizations. However, Pakistanis' many association or foundations carrying out religious activities are members of them and also located in its management.

Also, it can be said that the religious organizations which have been formed by the Turkish and Pakistani communities differ considerably according to the ethnic, ideological and

¹⁵ See. www.muslimsinbritain.org/resources/masjid_report.pdf (accessed 13.07.2013).

¹⁶ The MCB is the largest Muslim umbrella organization in the UK with over 500 affiliated national, regional and local organisations, mosques, charities and schools. See. www.mcb.org.uk (accessed 03.03.2011).

¹⁷ The BMF is an organization with over 600 mosques in the UK. See. www.thebmf.org.uk (accessed 03.03.2011).

¹⁸ The UKIM is an organization with over 45 branches and Islamic Centres across the UK. See. www.ukim.org (accessed 03.03.2011).

political shape of their mainland, as well as religious diversity. The fact that the Turkish and Pakistani immigrants do not have a monolithic culture with monolithic practices and beliefs in terms of religion also seems to have some effect in the establishment of different religious organizations in Britain.

The reality is that within the Turkish and Pakistani communities there are complex groupings based on different religious discourses. These can lead to considerable fragmentation in their religious life. For example, each religious group in both communities has different calendars / schedules determining daily prayer times and public holiday (eidul-fitr / Ramada Feast and eid al-adha/sacrifice holiday) for their members.¹⁹ There are significant differences among those tables. Performing common Islamic rituals in different time zones have caused a certain separation among the religious groups in particular and communities in general. Undoubtedly, these and other differences in the rhetoric of the religious groups have functions as a parser and realm of existence. However, performing basic Islamic rituals in the different ways can lead to a differentiation among Muslims. That may cause serious problems experienced in the integration of both themselves and the host country.

4. Conclusion

The Muslim communities in Britain have a non-homogeneous structure owing to differences in their life styles, experiences, ideas, feelings, hopes, and expectations. Therefore, those Muslim immigrants are observed to have lived for a long time in the different ethnic, ideological, cultural, and religious communities in Britain.

In this paper, the aim is to focus on the Turkish and Pakistani Muslim immigrants living in Britain. According to both literature about these communities and my observation and investigation on them, I have examined and compared their migration histories, ethnic and language structure, and religion life. Thus, I have reached these following conclusions:

Similarities: Migration from Turkey and Pakistan to Britain is corresponds almost the same dates. The push and pull factors of migration within the two communities are mostly similar. Also, Turks and Pakistani communities have different ethnic groups. There are three ethnic groups (Turkish, Kurdish, and Turkish Cypriot) within the Turkish community, and five ethnic groups (Kashmiri, Pathan, Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi) within the Pakistanis. The ethnic diversity can often contribute to religious, cultural and ideological segregations within these communities. In addition, there is a partial similarity in their socio-economic situation in Britain.

Differences: When it is observed and compared religious life of the both communities, it is seen that there are a similar divisions within the each community. Those divisions reflect ethnic, ideological and religious discourses that Turk and Pakistani immigrants have experienced in their countries of origin. All of these diversities have effects on their religious life, cultural status and political structure in Britain. Also, this diversity shows that they are evolving and dynamic communities.

In the establishing worship places, foundations/associations and in the religious, cultural and educational services for immigrants, Pakistanis have more intensive activities than Turks. Also, most of Pakistani religious organizations are members of various Muslim umbrella organisations in Britain. But, almost none of the Turkish religious organisations are a member.

As a result, scientific research on religious, social and cultural lives of the Muslim immigrants in Britain is important for making correct resolutions according to their existence in the current and future in host country. Therefore, the studies and researches about Muslim immigrants living foreign countries should be increased

¹⁹ For different calendars/schedules, see. www.mosquedirectory.co.uk (accessed 03.03.2011).

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