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MIGRATION AND RELIGION

A Special Relationship

The relationship between region and migration can be approached in two ways. What is the significance of religion in the context of migration? And: what significance does migration have for religion? Normally the emphasis is on the first of these two questions. People then ask how important religion is in the self-organisation and mobilisation of migrants. The second question is largely passed over.

In this text the emphasis is different: it asks in what way the experience of migration endows the religious search with a specific orientation, what questions it raises and what answers it presents. Anyone who leaves his home village to seek work abroad has to cope with many changes and discontinuities: the transition from a peasant existence to life as an industrial worker, the passage from a highly socially integrated village existence to an urban situation with great freedoms accompanied by many insecurities, the divergence between the culture of the homeland and that of the new country, the leaving behind of a largely religiously-determined life and the establishment of oneself in a predominantly secularised universe. These discontinuities shape the dynamics of individual biographies and of migrants' family histories. They are reflected in tensions between generations. A parental generation closely linked with its country of origin and its home in a specific region confronts a second generation which grew up in the new country. The considerable demands made of migrants in terms of individual and collective adaptation are intensified by the fact that the immediate environment is usually extremely difficult. The accommodation into which immigrants move is usually in the cheapest districts – working-class areas and slums – largely abandoned by the middle class. Reports from immigrant areas – Brooklyn, and Berlin's Scheunenviertel in the 1920s; the suburbs of Marseille, Lyon, and Paris; Neukölln, Kreuzberg, and Wedding in Berlin – all present a similar picture of anomie, high unemployment, delinquency, youth gangs, overburdened schools, drug and alcohol problems, street violence, broken families, and prostitution.

PLACES OF WORSHIP IN MIGRATION

These districts are the places which shape the immigrant religions that develop there. Turning to religion is initially one way of finding answers to the problems resulting from migration. This is reflected in the character of the places of worship. Storefront churches,

Jewish corner prayer rooms and backyard mosques are much more than places of worship where people meet to pray. They are community centres and self-help organisations, refuges for new arrivals, places that provide help in cases of emergency, social clubs, and information networks. Here flats and jobs are found and cars sold. Crucially, these are also places where the norms and values of religion are handed down to the next generation. Not infrequently the close relations established here are further strengthened and stabilised through marriage. For members of a community these places of worship are islands amid the chaos. That is most obvious when they are situated, as is often the case, between nightclubs, brothels and pubs. Anyone crossing the threshold of these churches, synagogues, or mosques leaves the surrounding environment and enters a space where the homeland is present in aromas, ways of behaviour, and furnishings. Suddenly they feel they have been transported to Turkey, Greece, or China. The gulf between this space and the surrounding world supplies an initial key to understanding the first generation's attitude towards religion. This is a defensive religiosity, determined by the wish to counter anxieties about losing themselves in a foreign land and the crises of meaning which afflict every migrant ('What am I actually doing here?'), and by the fear of alienation from one's children who were the main reason for emigration. People turn their backs on the majority society and encounter it only with extreme distrust. This often leads to a process of circular reinforcement. Immigrants cut themselves off, and the more they are among like-minded people the less they get involved in the majority society, and the more grotesque the dangers appear, until they see sex-and-drugs-and-rock'n'-roll in every corner, a threat from which children above all must be protected. But the majority society also observes with scepticism and distrust the foreigners who gather in backyards wearing outlandish clothing: black kaftans, white talars, green turbans. In such immigrant communities there arises a conservative and not infrequently severe religiosity which tends towards ritualism and the fetishisation of rules.

THE EXAMPLE OF IRISH MIGRANTS

Irish migrants in England thus continued to adhere strictly to Friday abstinence when the post-Vatican

Council Catholic Church had long been urging people to spend that day more meaningfully – in personal acts of charity and altruism, for instance. Probably rightly, Mary Douglas interprets this custom as an answer to the feeling of being abandoned and ostracised. 'And from there Friday abstinence can be filled with new symbolic content, expressing solidarity with an impoverished home in Ireland and with the great tradition of the Roman Catholic Church – ties that help preserve pride in the face of the humiliations of an unskilled worker's existence.'[1] The religiously conservative impulse that could be observed among Turkish migrants in Germany, particularly at the start of the 1980s, revealed the same spirit of preservation and adherence to convention. At that time many immigrants began to exchange Western clothing for a consciously Islamic style of dress. In many households television sets were removed, to the children's indignation. When travelling home on holiday migrants often saw with astonishment that religious practices were less strict there. That was confirmed by new arrivals in Germany who reported that there were far more headscarves on the streets of Kreuzberg than in Istanbul.

EMPHASIS ON THE FAMILY

In migrant religions, concern about the family often leads to an emphasis on domestic values. That was no less true of the Wesleyan communities which sprang up[2] in the first half of the 19th century among incomers to industrial areas of Northern England than of today's Muslim immigrants to Europe. In both cases sexual asceticism was preached – with concern mainly focused on daughters, who were thought more sexually vulnerable than sons. Family ethics easily become a symbolic battlefield with the majority society on the other side. The bitter and humiliating experience of finding oneself 'at the bottom of the heap' economically and socially in the new society is countered by asserting one's own moral superiority – particularly within the family, but also in the sphere of good behaviour. At first glance the emphasis on regulated relations between the sexes and the generations makes immigrant religions seem patriarchal. This appearance is often deceptive. Time and again it can be observed that in such situations women gain influence – initially often imperceptibly, but then all the more lastingly. In a situation characterised by strong centrifugal forces, they increasingly become the integrating and often moral power in the family. I personally was very impressed by Fatma Eren, a first generation migrant from the Turkish village of Subay, who in Berlin became a religious and moral authority to whom everyone in the family listened. She thus took over the position which would have been her husband's in their home village.[3] Women in particular have a considerable interest in re-establishing structures that integrate men and bring them back to their families – particularly in situations where reduced social controls make it easy for their husbands to evade their obligations. It is only logical that in many immigrant communities women take over the organisation and management of religious duties – as was the case among Protestant fundamentalists in England at the start of the 19th century where women preachers played a central part,[4] or among Hindu communities in England.[5] In Islamic communities in Germany women are today viewed as the most active element – and it is only a question of time before that also leads to the assumption of positions of responsibility. However, probably the most important characteristic of migrant religions is the fact that these are always and everywhere lay movements. The initiative for the establishment of places of worship in the new surroundings regularly comes from below – or is at least supported from below. The setting up of Islamic communities in Germany provides an outstanding example. At the start of the 1970s, motivated by families following their men to the new country, mosques were founded in all German cities. The impulse came from religiously inclined immigrants, some of whom were without any ties while others belonged to brotherhoods or associations. They set up these places of worship; they are the sources of support, appointing preachers and also firing them if appointees' opinions displease the community. They gained the support of like-minded people and together with them founded mosque associations. Even if sooner or later the local mosques usually joined an umbrella organisation – which was advisable, since a single community was hardly in a position to develop a religious infrastructure (organising preachers, clarifying legal issues, etc) – lay influence remained considerable.

NEW UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION

As everywhere, where religion was re-established from below there were disputes over exactly how it should be understood. Abroad, different views about the role of Islam in society could be expressed – unlike in the motherland, where a religious bureaucracy called the shots. The outcome was a 'dramatic story of mosques being taken over by changing majorities, divisions within communities, or even reconquests of mosques which had fallen into the hands of other people'.[6] There is a precise parallel with the transplanting of European state churches to the USA where 'no institution of immigration [...] experienced as much controversy and division as the church'.[7] Of course, the violent clashes of the initial years decline with the passing of time. Local communities have combined to form larger associations or umbrella set-ups for organisational reasons: attracting preachers, arranging pilgrim-

ages, and writing statutes. No-holds-barred conflicts have been replaced by regulated competition between district communities and mosque administrations. In this context new ways of providing for lay-persons' religious needs are developed, giving such people a specific role. What that signifies for Islam, for example, cannot be overemphasised. The usual hierarchical and authoritarian style, characterising Islam in all the countries of origin, could only be upheld to a limited extent within a free religious market in the diaspora. The power of definition possessed by scholars integrated into a nation-state was broken. Instead of the faithful being told what to do, they now have to be wooed. That leads to differentiation in accordance with the target group involved. Some communities limit themselves to a segment of the market and present, say, a tailor-made offer of spiritual exercises for religious virtuosi. Others aim for a broad impact and offer pilgrimages 'involving a moderate degree of strain' (in the
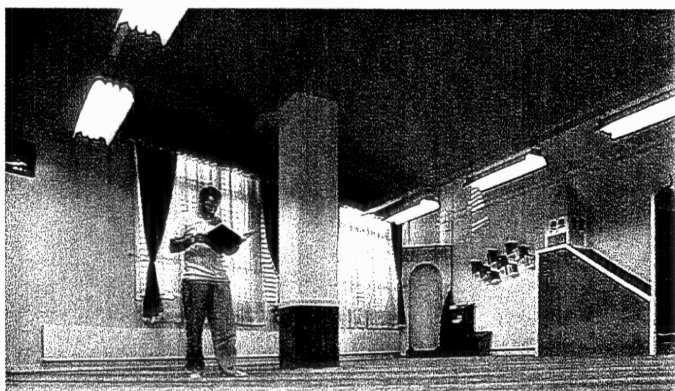
Switzerland: Dealing with Opinions on Islam. *From the exhibition:* Urban Islam. Zwischen Handy und Koran (Urban Islam: Between Cellphone and Koran). *Museum der Kulturen, Basel, 25.1. – 2.7.2006*

words of the director of a large Islamic association in Germany). In this situation religious possibilities are developed for a new clientele – for women or children – and new spheres of religious activity opened up, such as spiritual welfare and social work. Not least of all, new religious styles are developed. Some aim at purification of what is already available, while others seek mass effectiveness. In the latter case this frequently involves the cultivation of the religious kitsch characteristic of many migrant communities. In this process the close links between state and religion, which in many cases characterise the situation in the home countries, break up. In the U.S. the former European state churches had to compete for members on the free market with new sects and faith communities, thereby transforming themselves into denominations. Something similar is happening at present among Islamic communities in

Europe. They are liberating themselves from the clutches of the state, which is the norm at home where almost everywhere Islam has been set to work on behalf of nation-building. The decline of 'caesaro-papal structures'[8] abroad has two important consequences. The first is that religion starts to speak with many voices. This leads on its own accord to more conscious and individual religious practice. People begin to think about the diversity of religion – and make personal decisions about turning towards one community and away from others.

RELIGIOUS ENERGY IS DISCHARGED MORE FREELY

The second outcome is that the discipline and integration guaranteed by a bureaucratic and centrally-directed religion (and its priesthood) are weakened. In this situation a desublimation of religious practice occurs. Religious energy is often discharged more purely and freely – with a force that leaves the middle classes speechless. It leads to 'an eruption born out of despair and carried by wild enthusiasm'.[9] The emotionality and group enthusiasm that characterised the revivalist piety of many American immigrant churches are well-known. There is a wonderful description by Martin Beradt of the atmosphere in a Scheunenviertel Jewish prayer-house frequented by immigrants in 1920s Berlin. The communal prayer became increasingly emotional and compelling: 'Suddenly, just when it seemed that everyone would have to pause in despair out of sheer exhaustion, two men rose onto their almost-touching toes, wailed with arms raised, and flung out the song as if with their hoarse screaming the soul would now succeed in rushing out of their bodies directly through the ceiling into the firmament'.[10] R. Niehbuhr describes middle-class distaste for Methodist practices 'because of his [Wesley's] tears, sighs, and outpourings of love, because of [...] the unshakeable dogmatism with which he treated the holiest of themes, because of his narrowness [...] and his extreme insensitivity to many influences which expand and embellish life, and because of his syncretistic credulity and the self-assurance with which he imagined that the entire course of nature changed to suit him [...]'.[11] But then Niebuhr continues: 'The characteristics which impaired his influence in one sphere also helped him in another. His passionate prayers and exhortations moved the hearts of innumerable people left completely unmoved by a more discreet sermon. The supernatural atmosphere of miracles, judgements, and inspirations in which he moved furnished the most prosaic life with romantic glory.'[12]

In the more political communities the emotional aspect is linked with radical criticism of society. Such communities provide great opportunities for charismatic preachers who give expression to migrants' anger

and demand a radical change in society. Taking as his starting-point Protestant congregations in England and the U.S., Niebuhr (1987) presents a picture of the workers' religion that develops in this context. It is characterised by a demand for social reparations, the cultivation of millenary hopes anticipating redemption through establishment of a heavenly Jerusalem on Earth, and a call for solidarity and fraternity. As E.P. Thompson (1987) has shown, these congregations were precursors of the labour movement. 'In sermons the theme of exile and diaspora is of major importance. Elaboration of this motif very much depended on the type of migration involved. Migrants in the U.S.A., who saw themselves as immigrants in a new homeland, expressed their self-image in the Exodus motif: leaving behind tyranny and reaching the promised land.'[13]

LONGING FOR RETURN

Unlike Christian migrants to the U.S., Jews in the diaspora cultivated a yearning to return and linked redemption with the reversal of their scattering across the face of the earth. Joseph Roth views as an icon of this longing the model of Solomon's temple constructed during seven years of labour by a certain Herr Frohmann from Drohobycz, who went from ghetto to ghetto exhibiting it. 'I believe that Frohmann is an expression of this yearning, the yearning of an entire people. I saw an old Jew standing in front of this miniature temple in the same way as his brothers stand, cry, and pray at the *only* surviving holy wall of the devastated temple in Jerusalem.' The motif of redemption from what is alien is different again for the Muslim migrants who came to Europe during the postwar period. They viewed themselves as 'guest workers'. Most of them were determined to return home after some years in Europe – but the great majority failed to implement their original plan. They were stranded in Europe for a variety of reasons. For these reluctant immigrants, redemption from an alien existence abroad in a Christian country became a central aspect of salvation. The way this motif is dealt with says a great deal about individual communities. Among those that took an affirmative stance towards the Turkish Republic (such as the mosques of the State Office for Matters of Faith, or also those of the Grey Wolves/idealists' associations) the theme of exile took the form of nationalistically-tinged rhetoric about the homeland. Mediation of Islamic norms and values was identified with socialisation as Turks and imparting love of the motherland. In other mosque communities, however, the exile motif was directed critically against Turkey. Thus in the Milli Görüs communities at the start of the 1980s this was embedded in the old distinction between *dar al harb* ('Territory of War'[14]) and *dar al Islam*

('Land of Islam'). The term 'Land of War' expressed the fact that in principle Germany was a foreign country, a country to which one did not belong, had no claim to, and thus would not help shape. That was contrasted with the 'Land of Islam', one's own country – although that entailed a demagogic gibe: Turkey is 'actually' – but at present not really – the Land of Islam, and must therefore become this once again. Recollection of the actual Islamic legacy would make possible a restrengthening of Turkey – in other words, a return to the greatness of the Ottoman Empire. All this promised an end to suffering abroad (*gurbet*) and the migrants' triumphal return. Chiliastic elements were frequently present here. It would thus entail an ending of humiliation – of the fact that the grandsons of the Ottoman Empire had now, as street-cleaners, to clear up the filth of unbelievers. Things would turn into their opposite. Now 'Hans' would come and work in Turkey, and those who had been powerful would experience powerlessness and helplessness.

The Cemaleddin Kaplan community made even more radical use of the theme of exile. It saw in exile a repetition of the Hejira, the migration of the young Islamic community to Medina in the year 622. Just as at that time the Islamic state was founded in exile, establishing a base for the triumphant return to Mecca, so too Kaplan set up an Islamic state, appointing himself the Caliph. At the annual assemblies, otherwise very conventional believers chanted *'Islami Devlet – Gelecek elbet'* ('The Islamic state will come') with an enthusiasm imbued with all their hopes of redemption. Kaplan's dreams in particular manifest a derealisation, probably in itself a consequence of migration: the loss of social integration led here to the development of a political programme that was out of touch with reality.

REORGANISATION OF RELIGION

The religion of the first generation of migrants is a delocalised religion – a religion re-established in a foreign land. In this situation a complex and often apparently paradoxical attitude to religion develops. On the one hand, religion – and community membership – increasingly becomes an individual affair. Religious belief and the choice of a community are more and more a personal decision. On the other, a new kind of ritualism, dogmatism, and strictness develop that are unknown at home. On one hand, the home becomes the centre of religion and patriarchal rhetoric establishes itself; on the other, the importance of women in the communities grows. On one hand there is a synthesis of homeland and religion, nourished by the hope of redemption; and on the other the rift between everyday world and religion becomes obvious. All these tensions will influence the religious attitudes of the second generation.

THE DIASPORA – RELIGION OF THE SECOND GENERATION

The dynamics of migrant religion are largely determined by the breach between the generations, which is more sustained and obvious abroad than at home. A second generation completes a reorientation: for them, the country to which their parents immigrated, or in which they are stranded, is their home. For this generation the programme of 'redemption from being abroad' seems meaningless. Their future lies in the new homeland. This generation therefore has the task of relocalisation. It has to establish its religion as a minority religion in the new homeland. This process is carried forward by the educated elites who grew up in the communities. The backing they received there enabled them to complete schooling successfully. They are shaped by the warmth and solidarity of communities, but also by their dogmatism, narrowness, and insularity. At the same time they are also moulded by the immigration country's school system with its promise of an expanded intellectual horizon, freedom, and self-realisation – accompanied too by arbitrariness. These elites have strong ties to both sides and are faced with the challenge of succeeding in a balancing-act between those two worlds. To some extent this generation is the product of its parents' religious self-organisation. Its members have internalised the rigid rules to which their parents adhered. That also allows them to deal with these rules more flexibly and with greater authority. For these believers of the second and third generation faith has changed from armour with which everyday dangers had to be warded off to a skeleton that allows them to walk upright. The relationship between the migrant religion and the majority religion is crucial to how the former is established in the new homeland.

The more unproblematic this relationship is, the simpler it is for a second generation to create a space for its religion. As a new generation takes over a community will relatively quickly shed the characteristics of a workers' and migrants' religion and become one among many denominations (if it isn't simply absorbed altogether by a larger association). That very quickly leads to gentrification. 'Mild respectability' replaces radical criticism – as the somewhat romantically idealising Niebuhr remarks.[15] Radical preachers are controlled and integrated; the strident depiction of everything in black and white that characterised the first generation's cry for redemption gives way to a multitude of shadings and subtle tones. The demand for collective justice is often replaced by an individual search for meaning. The situation is more complex if the relationship between immigrant religion and majority society is strained. That was the case with Judaism and is currently the case with Islam. Both religions have been seen, in different ways, as the 'Other' facing 'Christianity' or the 'Christian West' (whereby outsider religions themselves helped to create this antithesis). In such cases establishment of the new religion is viewed with great distrust by the majority, and there are remarkable parallels between anti-Semitic discourse before the Holocaust and contemporary Islamophobic discourse. In both religions the clash with an environment which is hostile on principle led to the formation of three different positions: an assimilationist, individualist trend, a neo-orthodox, communitarian emphasis, and an ultra-orthodox, escapist tendency. These trends differ in the way they comprehend the place of religion in immigrant society.

ADVANCE THROUGH MODERNISATION

The assimilationist and individualistic tendencies see the future of their own faith in its modernisation. The intention is to become one denomination or religion among others, which entails restricting religion to the private sphere. Public visibility is maintained by prestigious religious buildings – and can be limited to that. The neo-orthodox and communitarian trend, on the other hand, seeks to maintain a positive relationship with both modernity and the structures of Jewish/Islamic law and traditional life. It sees assimilationist movements as ultimately involving the surrender of one's own religion. For supporters of neo-orthodoxy the right to difference is at the centre of discussion. Ultra-orthodoxy adheres uncompromisingly to a revelation that has not been 'diluted'. In the ultra-orthodoxies of both religions there is a quietist, world-rejecting, often mystical element, and a political, world-embracing, revolutionary group. Theologically, all these different approaches are concerned with how revelation and rationality can be brought together, and socially with the question of whether in the struggle for recognition the focus should be on seeking equality (assimilationist), the right to difference (neo-orthodox), or – because those two positions demand compromises – a stress on authenticity and purity. This question is ambivalent because in situations of discrimination social recognition can often only be achieved by renunciation of special characteristics, or because claiming the right to such characteristics can quickly result in exclusion and then inequality. With the second generation the relationship with the homeland that characterised the generation of their parents begins to decline – without vanishing completely. Overall, the idea of returning loses the significance it had for the first generation. Nevertheless, the special link with the parental homeland generally remains – and, here too, usually more strongly and emphatically the more difficult relations with the immigration society are. For some individuals this link assumes the significance of 'roots' that provide identity (and thus also of authenti-

city and a mythical past). Others stress '"routes", the paths of origin, and thus of history and change'.[16] With regard to the Jewish diaspora this difference is made particularly clear by Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin (1993). Their argument is that the 'real' Jewish identity, its distinctiveness, developed in the diaspora, and that Judaism's great cultural achievements arose out of exile. The pursuit of nationalism in the state of Israel is thus to be judged as a rejection of the realisation of Jewish identity: it is precisely their distinctiveness that Jews are giving up. In a third variant often heard today – and, remarkably, especially among young Muslims of the second generation – it is argued that the special relationship with one's origins must also be cultivated because developments in recent years do not exclude the possibility that a place of refuge will be needed at some time. The diasporic element is also intensified among religions experiencing exclusion – at the same time as ties with the parental homeland are getting weaker. In other words, people feel greater identification than a first generation with the Jewish world community, the Islamic umma, or the Armenian diaspora. These new loyalties are strongly influenced by the overall political landscape. Nowhere is that as clear as in feelings of solidarity among Jews and Muslims worldwide with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Issues of self-justification also seem to play a part on both sides. Muslims in Europe must find a convincing answer to the charge, raised in the conflict zones, that they have made themselves comfortable amid the fleshpots of affluent unbelievers living in falsehood.

PRESSURE TO JUSTIFY ONESELF

Young Jews seem to have to justify the relative security of their life in Europe or the U.S. when the situation in Israel is worsening. Development of identification with the respective 'world community' is ultimately helped by the formation of multinational communities among second and third generation immigrants, usually accompanied by switching from the language of their parents to that of the new country.

It is no coincidence that stories of migration are at the beginning of all three Abrahamic religions: the story of the Exodus, the story of Jesus the wandering preacher, and the story of the hejira. These stories advocate and emphasise a breaking-away from the everyday world. The revolutionary aspect of religion becomes clear in these new departures, criticising the compromises entailed in daily existence and religious life when religion becomes the source of the exaggeration, legitimation, and transmission of social order, and is thus assimilated and domesticated. Jan Assmann confronts the God of Moses with the God of Egypt: 'Religion, strictly defined, is in no way the same as "culture". Instead it acts as an authority critical of culture and power; it establishes an Archimedean point from which it becomes possible to change the political and social order. "Strictly defined" religions depend on the existence of religions 'in the broader sense' of culture, and develop by way of polemical dissociation from them.'[17] It is as if migrants rather than sedentary peoples were the model for monotheistic religions. That is given particularly clear expression in Sufi Islam where migration was set as a spiritual practice. The stranger has no status; he is not integrated, he is despised. Thrown back on himself, he comes to know himself and God. The primal movement within religion is repeated on a small scale in every migration: the history of religion's uprooting and re-establishment in an unfamiliar place, of new departures and renewed domestication within a fresh context.

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