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Religion, Immigrants and Integration

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Introduction

The religious activity of immigrants in western societies has become of increasing interest among scholars of religion during the last decades. One of the main areas of interest, even though not necessarily explicitly stated, has been the ways in which the cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds of immigrants affect processes of integration in particular local and national societies. Much of the interest, especially in Europe, has been directed to Muslim communities (e.g., Haddad & Smith, 2002; Nielsen, 1995), but increasing efforts are taking place with regard to other religious traditions as well (e.g. Baumann, 2000; Knott, 1997; Min & Kim, 2002). However, only rarely have the processes of immigrant settlement and integration been conceptualised or discussed to a large extent (exceptions include Baumann, 2000, 2002; Rex, 1996).

The lack of theoretical clarity in religious studies with regard to integration is worth noting, because all of the immigrant-receiving societies have specific cultural, structural and political features that affect the process. Furthermore, the immigrants have highly different reasons to migrate and varying backgrounds, which further complicate the phenomenon. International migration has also affected western societies in different ways and, as a phenomenon, it is also becoming increasingly complex (Castles & Miller, 2003: 1-9). It can, thus, be assumed that specific, nationally bound assumptions have guided thought more than is apparent at first glance. Conceptual clarity would give more ground for comparative analyses on the role of religion among immigrant populations in different countries. Therefore it should be of importance to give attention to the general as well as the particular features of immigrant religious activity and integration. Especially, as religion is often identified as a central factor affecting the integration process. Religious identity and organisations are among the most persisting features that descendants of immigrants retain, even long after the role of language and other cultural aspects has diminished (Baumann, 2002: 95-98; Warner, 1998).

In immigration and ethnic studies, theoretical discussions of migrant settlement and integration have moved from earlier assimilation models to contemporary

theories of multiculturalism. Whereas previously both national policies and theoretical reflections assumed assimilation to be the end of integration, recently many states as well as researchers have recognised more complex relationships between migrant settlement and the host society. The shift has, to a large extent, been a reflection of the changed nature of international migrations, which have led to growing ethnic diversity in western societies since the 1960s (Castles & Miller, 2003; Kivisto, 2002). In turn, the multiculturalist approach has been criticised by post-modern thinkers, among others, for essentialising culture (Featherstone & Lash, 1999). Discussions of globalisation (e.g. Appadurai, 1996; Held *et al.*, 1999), transnationalism (e.g., Hannerz, 1996; Levitt, 2001) and diaspora (e.g. Cohen, 1997; Wahlbeck, 2002) have also added to the stew and shown the many ways in which the migrants' lives are intertwined with global developments and transnational connections.

This paper will discuss the relationship between religion, immigrants and integration as follows: First, it shortly defines integration. Second, it will look at the process of immigrant settlement to a new host society and discuss the specific role of religion in it. This section will also discuss some of the relevant previous findings on religion and immigrant settlement. Third, the article will conclude with a discussion on the ways in which a clearer understanding of the process of integration may shed new light on the ongoing debates of immigrant religious activity in the West. The paper will not address to any large extent issues related to globalisation, the role of media and the experiences of different generations of immigrants. These aspects will be included in a subsequent extension of this paper.

Integration

There are a number of theoretical models of the settlement process of immigrants to a new host society. Some of them will be referred to in the following, but the main aim of this section is to provide a scheme for locating various focal points regarding the process of integration. Several concepts are used in the research literature of the subject, which is here referred to as 'integration'. Among the most known ones are 'assimilation' and 'acculturation', but also 'multiculturalism' is a common concept these days. The various notions have somewhat different meanings, but essentially they refer to the processes by which newcomers become members of an existing socio-political community, such as a nation-state. Often these notions imply normative ideas about the desired outcome of the process (for a general discussion, see Bloch, 2002: 80-98; Castles & Miller, 2003: 21-49; Kivisto, 2002: 13-42; Rex, 1996). However, even deliberate politics of exclusion should be taken into account in the discussion of integration, as it is generally by no means the case that all immigrants want, or are allowed, to become full members of the host society, let alone its mainstream. Examples of such groups are slaves, guest labourers, illegal migrants and sectarian religious groups. Nevertheless, they still are in various ways incorporated in society at large.

Let us first take a look at two early, influential theories and see how they were later criticised. The Chicago School of Sociology formed a classical approach to migrant settlement in the 1920s. It differentiated between four stages of integration, or assimilation in their terms, the so-called 'race relations cycle'. They were contact, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. The cycle was an evolutionary model that would inevitably take place, unless some external factors (e.g. racism) would hinder it. Assimilation entailed that all differences between various ethnic groups would eventually disappear. Intermarriage was seen as particularly significant. The model was a theoretical formulation of the American Melting Pot ideology. Milton Gordon offered a slightly different model in his *Assimilation in American Life* (1965) that distinguished seven types and stages of assimilation. They were cultural or behavioural, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional (absence of prejudice), behavioural receptional (absence of discrimination) and civic assimilation (Kivisto, 2002: 27-29).

Later research has criticised these theories for their evolutionary aspects. The models also entailed an implicit or explicit idea of a homogeneous society to which the migrants would eventually be assimilated. Especially since the 1960s, it became evident that ethnicity was a persisting factor in social relations and assimilation in its fullest meaning was not usually the case. Even though Milton Gordon already brought in structural features, and in both cases were included a possibility of 'non-integration', the models were seen as presenting a too static picture of the host society as well as of the possible outcomes of integration. Today integration is seen as a significantly more complex process, both with regard to its possible outcomes as well as the view of the host society (Bloch, 2002: 80-82).

I have opted to use *integration* as the general concept, as both assimilation and acculturation place more emphasis on 'becoming alike' than is suggested in the following. Furthermore, 'multiculturalism' places too much attention on difference. In this context, integration is defined

> as the processes by which individual and groups of immigrants are incorporated into various social arenas and segments of the new host society. Integration is a two-way process whereby both the immigrants and the host society adapt new features as a result of their interaction. Integration may also have transnational dimensions.

Immigration has the potential to affect all sectors of society. These are here viewed as the cultural, structural and political arenas of integration. *Cultural integration* is about how both the immigrants and their communities relate and adjust to local values, norms and behavioural patterns as well as the host society's reactions to aspects of immigrants' cultural life. The framework of cultural integration is the civil society and, in today's world, increasingly the media. Successful and positive cultural integration manifests itself in the form of good ethnic relations. Through *structural integration* migrants gain access to

different sectors, institutions and organisations of the host society and also create their own parallel forms of them. Such sectors, institutions and organisations include economy, education, political parties and religious communities. Incorporation in the local labour market is one of the most important features of structural integration. Also intra-ethnic organisation is attributed a significant role by many scholars (e.g., Baumann, 2002; Castles & Miller, 2003: 228-229). *Political integration* refers to the ways in which the state incorporates the migrants. Central issues include the availability of citizenship and other legal rights needed for full participation in the host society. That the immigrants themselves may become political decision-makers is also significant. Possibilities or restrictions with regard to gaining citizenship as well as legislation against discrimination are central parts of political integration (e.g., Kivisto, 2002).

This way of defining integration is neutral with regard to the outcomes of the process itself. The emphasis lies more on the necessity that large-scale immigration always creates turbulence in any society and that this turbulence will, in one way or another, be dealt with. While integration often takes place outside the view of the general public, occasionally also tensions and conflicts arise. These can be best understood as natural causes of the two-directional adaptation process, and they do not necessarily lead to unwelcome outcomes, even if that is also possible. An example of a contemporary religiously motivated conflict is that of Muslim women using headscarves in France, which has become a major political threat in the country. In this context it is also necessary to recall that the host society is not a homogenous unit. It is always in some ways differentiated, so that there is no singular 'host society' to which the migrants could be integrated. As a matter of fact it has often been found that whereas integration in one way or another always happens, it is not necessarily to the mainstream society (Bloch, 2002: 82). The immigrants can equally well be integrated into ethnic enclaves, into a specific social class or into client status in the social welfare system (Kamali, 1997). To complicate the issue even more, the immigrant community can also live in diaspora or have important transnational dimensions, so that some of its main frames of reference are outside the state in question (Wahlbeck, 1999).

The immigrants can also both as individuals and groups make choices regarding the level of interaction they wish to have with the host society. Castles and Miller (2003: 236-238) have noted three different ways in which integration generally takes place. First, some of the migrants can and will *merge with the general population*. Such people include, for instance, many of the European-origin migrants in the European Union and the United States. This can also include the cases when people are being socialised to an existing marginalised group (e.g. alcoholics, drug users or a criminal subculture) of the host society. Second, some of the settlers form *ethnic communities*. Whereas the ethnic communities might have originally been formed due to racism and discrimination, the groups in question have by now full citizenship rights and equal op-

portunities. Examples of such groups are some European-origin groups in North America, e.g. Italians and Poles, and in the United Kingdom, e.g. the Irish. Third, part of the migrants form *ethnic minorities*. They are among the most disadvantaged people and share experiences of racism, weak legal status and segregation from the mainstream society.

John Berry has created a social-psychological model of immigrant acculturation. According to him, the immigrants can adopt four different acculturation strategies: *assimilation*, *integration*, *separation (segregation)* and *marginalisation*.[1] Assimilation means replacing one's previous identity with that of the new host society. Integration refers to the capacity to access aspects of the dominant culture, while simultaneously retaining an ethnic identity. By separation the group also retains its own culture, but does not want to have contacts with the dominant one. (Segregation refers to the society's policy of exclusion.) Marginalisation implies losing one's cultural background, but being simultaneously denied access to the dominant culture. While Berry's model has been criticised for being based on simplified assumptions, it still rightly points to the agency and capacity of the immigrants to make choices themselves (Bloch, 2002: 81-82).

Immigrant settlement and religion

There are many common features between migrations to different societies. According to Castles and Miller (2003: 220), the migratory process functions in a similar manner in all countries with respect to 'chain migration and settlement, labour market segmentation, residential segregation and ethnic community formation. Racism and discrimination are also to be found in all countries, although their intensity varies'. Differences can be seen in 'state policies on immigration, settlement, citizenship and cultural pluralism (ibid.)'. The authors relate the differences to the particular historical experiences of nation-state formation. According to Alice Bloch (2002: 80), there are four key issues that have been identified in the research literature as central for the settlement process of immigrants.[2] They are related to the political system of the host society, social networks of the immigrants, the individual characteristics of the immigrants and the circumstances of migration. They include such diverse matters as reasons for migration and aspirations of particular migrants, cultural distance from the new host society, language skills, educational background, support from co-ethnics and possibilities of attaining civic rights. Table 1 summarises these as properties of the immigrants and their communities, and as features of the host society. The process of migrant settlement has, thus, both common and

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[1] In this passage, the notion of integration is reduced to a particular path of acculturation. The four alternatives stem from answering the following issues either positively or negatively: 1) Is there contact between the group and the host culture? 2) Is there value placed on the group retaining its discrete cultural identity?

[2] Bloch actually discusses refugees and asylum seekers, but the notions she uses are applicable for other permanent immigrants as well.

society-dependent features. In the following section we will take a closer look at these factors as well as introduce the specific role of religion in the processes of immigrant settlement and integration.

Immigrants / Immigrant communities	Host society
Cultural integration – cultural distance – language skills – social networks Structural integration – educational background – economic participation – residential segmentation Political integration – legal status Migration – voluntary or forced migration – aspirations	Cultural integration – ability to incorporate new elements – ethnic relations and racism Structural integration – economic situation – possibilities for education Political integration – citizenship – legal rights – strategies of incorporation

Table 1 Central issues affecting the settlement process and integration of immigrants

The immigrants: from migration to settlement

Contemporary migration system theories have largely disregarded earlier neo-classical, economic theories of migration, which were known as the push and pull factors, for being too simplistic and not giving enough attention to contextual factors. The migration system approach emphasises instead a more complex set of factors that jointly explain the migratory movements. One key finding in this tradition is that the historical links between the country of emigration and that of immigration are of primary importance. These links can be based on trade, cultural connections, imperial-colonial relations and the like. Another main finding is that also migrations that are originally intended to be temporary often lead to permanent settlement, at least for a proportion of the migrants (Castles & Miller, 2003: 26, 253). This means that most of the immigrants come from countries to which there have already been previous connections of some kind, and that if migratory movements start, it is most likely that they will also lead to permanent settlement and the creation of ethnic communities. Furthermore, if a new migratory link becomes established, there is a strong likelihood that it will continue in the future.

The reason for migration is one of the most crucial factors affecting the settlement process. In the case of voluntary migrants, the people in question are often highly motivated to better their economic status and social welfare. If they are not able to progress themselves as much as they aim for in the host society, they are usually motivated to better the living conditions of their offspring. Voluntary migrants, initially, tend to be young people in their best working years, even though later migration waves bring their families along. Regarding forced migration (refugees, asylum seekers, slaves), the migrants themselves

are of more diverse origin, including people of all ages and different ways of life. The migrants have also had much less to do with the decision to emigrate. The departure from the country of origin is often more traumatic than in the case of voluntary migration. Indeed, many would not have chosen to migrate if it had not been necessary. Even though the distinctions between voluntary and forced migrants are not always clear-cut in real life, it has been argued that it plays a large role regarding the settlement of the immigrants in a new host society (Bloch, 2002).

Sometimes religious issues contribute to the reason or decision to migrate. People can be persecuted because of their religious beliefs, such as Bahais in Iran, where emigration is one way out. As some states have more liberal policies, they might receive migrants because of their freedom of religious expression. For example, the United States was in its early days an important refuge for many persecuted religious minorities, and to some extent that is even the case today (Joselit, 2001). Also, all Jews, in principle, have the right and possibility to settle in Israel, which has led to mass international migrations, for instance from the former Soviet Union. Sometimes one's religious conviction is the reason and the trigger for migration, Christian missionaries being a good example. According to Robert Montgomery (2003), there could be as many as 400,000 missionaries from North America sent to the rest of the world, so we are not speaking of insignificant numbers. Even though migration researchers argue that most international migrations are economically motivated (Castles & Miller, 2003), we cannot rule religious reasons and aspirations out as possible triggers for migration. In this setting, religions can affect both the reason to emigrate as well as the selection of the country of immigration.

The cultural and social features of the immigrants are central. Issues related to language skills, education, social networks and cultural distance of the surrounding mainstream society play a major role in the integration process (for a larger discussion of these factors, see Bloch, 2002; Castles & Miller, 2003). While a common stereotype of immigrants, especially those representing a cultural other, is that they either aim to assimilate or to continue with their 'traditional way of life' in the new host society, the reality is quite different. Most immigrants attempt to preserve some aspects of their background, but also actively try to create new practices. The same is also true with regard to religious issues. If the surrounding society does not support the cultural and religious practices of the immigrants, it will almost inevitably lead to some changes. This process of cultural integration with regard to religion has been called by different names, including 'inculturation', 'contextualisation', 'indigenisation' and 'syncretism' (Warner, 1998: 9).

Through structural integration the immigrants become part of the society's structures. Regarding the religion-specific aspects of structural integration, there is no doubt that religious collectives are among the most common social gathering places for many immigrant groups. Christian, Muslim, Buddhist,

Hindu, etc. organisations play an important role both as representing the people outwardly and in terms of uniting the groups in question. These collectives are places where integration is discussed through practical issues, such as clothing, diet, gender roles and relations to the surrounding society. The organisations form some of the most salient gathering places for many immigrants, but they can also function as platforms for contacts with the majority population. They are places for developing social capital, finding work and partners, and communities that give comfort in an initially alien environment. One central feature of the religious organisations is that only rarely are religious specialists from the country of origin present in the initial phases. This leads to an increased role of lay-people, which may corrode traditional forms of religious authority. Immigrants often also appear to be more religious than the local average (Park, 1994: 153-154; Warner, 1998).

In my own studies of immigrant religious organisations in the city of Turku, it became evident that the process of religious organisation is a major means of structural adaptation to Finnish society. In this case it was through the conscious efforts of both immigrants and local authorities that many of the religious organisations were founded. Immigrants needed ways to handle practical issues related to the hiring and support of religious premises and the authorities needed discussion partners for their multiculturalist integration project (Martikainen, 2004). Thus, within the framework of this paper's theoretical vocabulary, it could be interpreted both as structural and political integration. Furthermore, the local immigrants became, through organisation, players in the civil society as well as creating social spaces of their own, so that there is an element of cultural integration included. The example shows well how difficult it is to assume clear-cut boundaries between different arenas of integration.

If we look at the cultural and structural integration process through the notions defined by Stephen Castles, Mark Miller and John Berry, the possible outcomes regarding membership in religious organisations are as follows: A merger / assimilationist strategy is the case when the migrants join an existing, mainstream religious organisation. For instance, the Evangelical Lutheran and the Orthodox Churches in Finland have received many new members of immigrant origin. In most cases there are no further structures created on their behalf, but the migrants take part in existing activities. Sometimes also small group activities take place in native languages within larger parishes. These can be seen as examples of ethnic communities or integration (according to Berry). Another common option is the foundation of ethnicity-specific religious organisations, such as Russian Orthodox or Anglican congregations. In Europe, many of the new Christian minority churches can be understood as examples of ethnic communities. These religious groups have not been at the centre of attention in the general discussion of immigrant religions in Europe, but rather far from the focus of interest (Martikainen, 2004). Regarding religion and ethnic minorities (separation/segregation) we find the bulk of material produced in religious

studies on immigration and religion. Most notably Islam has been at the centre of attention.[3]

Regarding political integration, the immigrants are mostly dependent on the host society's policies. Legal rights, citizenship and the ability to participate are either given to them or not. In any case, it usually takes a long period of time until the political system has incorporated the immigrants, so that they are able to promote their own cause themselves. Exceptions to this rule are, for instance, European Union citizens in other EU countries, some of the immigrants from former colonies and citizens of states that have other bilateral agreements, such as the common labour market in the Nordic countries. In these cases, the immigrants might be able to cast their vote in local elections, even if they are not allowed to participate in national elections, and thus attempt to better their position is society.

The host society: opportunities and constraints for the newcomers

The state has a one-sided right to decide who can enter the country and it also grants different rights to different kinds of immigrants, which affect their possibilities in the country. Whether one has the status of, for instance, a legal alien, temporary visitor, asylum seeker or refugee, it defines what one is able to do and what one is prohibited from doing. The case becomes most obvious with regard to illegal immigrants, who are, more or less, without any acknowledged protection and rights. The host society plays, thus, a crucial role regarding the possibilities of newcomers to become equal members of society. There are numerous, both historical and contemporary, examples of societies that have explicitly restricted migrants' possibilities for equal opportunity. These restrictions include the denial of citizenship and human rights and limit the practice of culture and religion. Such actions have often marginalised the groups in questions effectively, of which the slave trade to the Americas is a prime example. The African-American minority is still suffering from the consequences of slavery (Kivisto, 2002: 62-71). In short, the host society can make it virtually impossible for the newcomers to create anything more than an ethnic ghetto within very restricted boundaries (Bloch, 2002; Castles & Miller, 2003). In this setting, the state controls most of the possibilities for political integration.

According to Castles (Castles & Miller, 2003: 249-252), there are three different main options for modern states . They are the *differential exclusionary*, *assimilationist,* and *multicultural models*. The differential exclusion model is the case when the immigrants are allowed into certain areas of society (e.g. labour market), but are denied access to some others (e.g. welfare system and citizenship). Such countries include the traditional guest worker societies of Western

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[3] The state of research seems to have developed in the opposite way in the United States, where only recently the non-Christian communities have become of broader interest (see Warner, 1998).

Europe, like Germany and Austria. The assimilationist model can be defined as one-sided integration, in which the migrants are expected to become like the majority population. Of contemporary western societies, France comes closest to this model, but the approach has mostly been abandoned in the West. The multicultural (pluralist) model accepts a large degree of cultural pluralism, but still expects loyalty to the state. Many of the large-scale immigration countries have adopted the multicultural approach to some degree at least. Sometimes religion has been a motivating factor for these policies, but rarely explicitly. While the official state policies are highly central there are also further factors that need to be taken into account. Beside explicit, legally defined restrictions, a number of less-visible, but nevertheless effective, barriers also exist. These include direct and structural racism, as well as difficulties in obtaining employment because of ethnic origin or religious belonging and the 'glass-ceiling' effect.

Regarding religion, structural integration first and foremost takes place through religious organisation, as already noted earlier. The newcomers are expected to follow the local legislative and organisational traditions in their effort to create religious institutions. Stephen Warner (1998) notes that irrespective of the religion, immigrant religions in the United States are usually organised as voluntary, non-profit associations, reminiscent of Protestant congregational forms. Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) have similar findings regarding a number of different faith communities in Houston, as have Svanberg and Westerlund (1999: 15) in regard to Muslim communities in Sweden. The structural integration of immigrants and their religious organisations have been of central interest in multicultural policies. Local and state authorities expect and encourage migrants to organise themselves, so that they can become negotiation partners in the multiculturalist project. Religious organisations may be expected to form national councils, to participate in local interfaith networks and the like. Multicultural policies, thus, expect and promote the organisation of difference, as perceived by the mainstream society.

Regarding cultural integration, the host society has usually one or two main religious traditions that have shaped its cultural life, value system and customs. Examples of these include the calendar (annual and weekly rhythm), gender relationships, and diet. Some religions, for instance, prohibit the consumption of alcoholic beverages, which might be a central feature of social life in some others. Matters such as these can restrict the immigrants' possibilities to be incorporated into mainstream society. One aspect of cultural integration is the religious closeness or distance between the mainstream society and the immigrants. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (2000: 325-330) note that it is of major importance whether the religion of the immigrants is that of the mainstream society or not. The less cultural and religious distance there is, the easier it is for the migrants to continue with their religious activity. Migration can also include a change from a minority to a majority position, or the opposite way round. The point is very simple, but it can make a large differ-

ence, especially for previous religious minorities. It is also good to remember that people from the same geographic-cultural area can be of different religious backgrounds. Thus, immigrants from Iran can be, for instance, Muslims, Christians, Bahais or Mandaeans. All of these religions have a somewhat different legal status locally, but also in the host society their position can be quite different. The matter may, however, be fundamental regarding integration in the host society. Furthermore, in many cases it has also been noted that a different religion than that of the mainstream's can lead to religious revitalisation (Warner, 1998).

Summary and discussion

This paper has presented an overview of issues related to populations of immigrant origin, their integration in a new host society, and the role of religion. Integration was defined as 'the processes by which individual and groups of immigrants are incorporated into various social arenas and segments of the new host society. Integration is a two-way process whereby both the immigrants and the host society adopt new features as a result of their interaction. Integration may also have transnational dimensions.' This general definition was then subdivided into cultural, structural and political forms of integration. In addition, some general features of international migrations were also discussed. Within this framework the specific role and place of religion were looked at as one factor affecting integration.

In the context of immigration and ethnic studies religion is often portrayed as one factor among many others. Considering the poles of our investigation, individuals as well as groups of immigrants and the host society, it became clear that religion can play a role in a number of different ways. For individual immigrants and their families religious issues may be central with regard to cultural integration. They may not, for instance, accept some common customs of the host society, such as the consumption of alcohol as part of social relations. As for structural integration, immigrant religious organisations are often closely related to ethnicity, and the churches, mosques and temples are social gathering places, where it is possible, among other things, to create social networks and capital, ask for guidance and seek employment. They serve both as social gathering places and as public representations of the minority to the surrounding society. Political integration, however, is largely dependent on state policies and there the immigrant populations have significantly fewer opportunities to affect the process.

The central message of this article is that integration is a complex process and follows no single central trajectory. There is a large number of different variables, whose specific importance depends on the context, which should be taken into account when we study the particular processes of integration in a given social environment. The position of religion varies between individuals and groups, but essentially it seems to fall into the following fields: group for-

mation, family life, and individual-society relations, especially values and customs. However, religion may play a role basically in all dimensions of the integration process. This seems to indicate that religion should be allocated a more central place in the analysis of cultural interaction and integration, and not be reduced solely to an aspect of ethnicity. It is not without reason that interest in the religious lives of immigrants has soared in recent years.

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