THE INTEGRATION INTO THE BRITISH BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY OF RECENT IRANIAN BAHÁ'Í MIGRANTS.

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With any group of exiles there are the alternatives of integration with the host community or isolation. Which path is followed seems to depend on a number of factors. The existence of a community of co-religionists in the host country is not in itself necessarily an assistance towards integration. The large number of Iranian Shi'is that have come to Great Britain since the Iranian Revolution have not integrated to any extent with the Indian, Pakistani, Iraqi or East African Shi'is that also live there. Each has tended to form a separate grouping, interacting with each other but not integrated. Political differences have also tended to divide the Iranian Shi'is more than religion has tended to unite them.

A conceptual framework for analysing exiles has been provided by Scudder and Colson [1]. They classify the stresses of relocation into three categories: (1) physiological (increased morbidity and mortality)] (2) psychological (guilt feelings about having escaped when others suffered, bereavement reaction, depression)] and (3) socio-cultural (economic disadvantage, loss of community supports, crisis of cultural identity). The responses to these stresses often result, at least in the early stages, in the following phenomena: (a) a feeling among the exiles that their situation is transitory and unreal leading to (b) failure to adapt to or identify with the host country] (c) increasing social isolation and failure to take any initiatives to improve their position [2].

The following statements are a preliminary attempt to apply such a conceptual framework to the Iranian Baha'is in the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom is a useful country to take as an example because it falls between the two extremes mentioned above among the countries of Europe and North America in that about 33% of its Baha'i community are Iranians [3].

There is insufficient information to perform a complete analysis of the above factors on the Iranian Baha'is in the United Kingdom. But the Iranian Baha'i exiles appear to have considerably fewer problems than comparable exile groups studied - the only comparable forced relocations over such a great distance and cultural difference that have been studied in any detail are the Vietnamese and Laotian refugees in the West [4]. There are no morbidity or mortality figures available but certainly the Iranian Baha'i exiles in general have not suffered the psychological and socio-cultural disturbances to such a great degree as is described for other groups. However, it should be stated that those Baha'i refugees arriving during and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution were showing adverse psychological and sociological features (they were more socially isolated and tended to seek out and form enclaves of others in their position particularly relatives] they tried to re-establish social and cultural patterns from the society that they had left behind] they took fewer initiatives to alter their situation or to improve their financial position) to a greater degree than those Baha'is whose relocation had occured before the Revolution. Since the former group's departure was more sudden and traumatic, this difference is predicted by Scudder and Colson's model. However, even this group of post-Revolution refugees are already showing signs that many of them are passing out of the "transition phase" described by Scudder and Colson and entering the "stage of potential development" [5].

Without more extensive comparitive work between those Iranian exiles who are Baha'is and those who are not, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions. Two reasons can readily be identified for the successful integration of the Iranian Baha'is, one of which they share with other Iranian exiles and one of which is particular to the Baha'is. The first, predicted by Scudder and Colson's model, is that they were a well-educated urban section of the Iranian population (there are of course also rural Baha'is in Iran but in general these have not managed to flee the country); the second is the emphasis on internationalism and community unity in the Baha'i teachings which encourages the host Baha'i community to assist with their integration into their new environment.

Much easier to demonstrate is the extent to which the Iranian Baha'is have integrated into the British Baha'i community. They are taking a full role in the administration of the community. Although no Iranian Baha'is are on the National Spiritual Assembly (the national administrative body), the delegates to the National Convention which elects the National Spiritual Assembly had 27.4% Iranians among their number in 1986 (see Table One). Since these delegates are voted for by all of the Baha'is in each community, this shows that the Iranian Baha'is were participating fully in the workings of the community.

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TABLE ONE: ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF DELEGATES TO BAHA'I NATIONAL COVENTION IN THE BRITISH ISLES IN 1986

	No.	%age
British	62	65.3
Iranian	26	27.4
Indian	4	4.2
Arab	2	2.1
Unknown	1	1.1
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Total	95	100.1

Source: List of Delegates to National Convention, distributed at British National Convention, Harrogate, April, 1987. Ethnicity has been assumed from the name of the delegate. In a few doubtful cases, oral enquiries were made. Included among the number counted as British are a small number of Americans, but these could not be distinguished by their names. They do not number more than two as far as could be ascertained from oral enquiries. Also included among the number counted as British was one person who is half-British, half-Iranian.

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However, participation in administrative affairs may only signify a superficial level of integration. A more meaningful indication of the level of integration is the level of inter-marriage between Iranian and British Baha'is. It can be seen from Table Two that there were approximately twice as many marriages between British and Iranian Baha'is as between two Iranians. It is of course very difficult to be

TABLE TWO: INTER-MARRIAGE IN THE BRITISH BAHA'I COMMUNITY

	Jun 73 - Apr 79	%age	Mar 84 - Dec 86	%age	Total	%age
European -European	45	56.3	72	45.6	117	49.2
European -Iranian	23	28.8	53	33.5	76	31.9
Iranian -Iranian	10	12.5	26	16.5	36	15.1
Miscellaneous and Unknown	2	2.5	7	4.4	9	3.8
Total	80	100.1	158	100.0	238	100.0

Source: The source for these statistics is an analysis of the names of marriages announced in the Baha'i Journal. Marriages were not announced in it prior to June 1973 (No. 217). During 1979, it ceased publication and a new journal appeared named Baha'i Monthly News Service which did not publish wedding announcements for several years. Then in March 1984, the Baha'i Journal reappeared. Hence the two time intervals in the above table. European is used in the table to indicate all those whose name indicates a European ethnic origin. The vast majority of these were of course British but a small number of Americans and continental Europeans would be included. The miscellaneous category includes a small number of Indians, Chinese and Japanese as well as some four or five whose ethnic origin could not be determined. Of course in a proportion of these marriages only one party is a Baha'i. This information unfortunately ceased to be recorded after June 1974 (No. 223). Up to that time, 5 out of 13 European-European and 1 out of 8 European-Iranian marriages included one party who was not a Baha'i.

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certain of the exact significance of such figures without some comparision with similar figures for Iranians who are not Baha'is but they would appear to indicate a very high degree of integration into the British Baha'i community.

a conceptual framework for the analysis of dislocated people" in Art Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith, _Involuntary Migration and Resettlement_, Boulder, Co., 1982, pp. 267-87.

2) On psychological aspects see _Mental Health and Exile_, London, 1981; in particular Liliana Munoz, "Exile as bereavement: socio-psychological manifestations of Chilean exiles in Great Britain", pp. 6-9; and Ana Vasquez, "Adolescents from the southern cone of Latin America in exile: some psychological problems", pp. 22-34.

3) Oral communication from a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom.

4) See James Pisarowicz and Vicki Tosher, "Vietnamese Refugee resettlement: Denver, Colorado, 1975-77", in Hansen and Oliver-Smith, _op cit_, pp. 69-81; Nicholas Tapp, "The re-creation of culture: Hmong refugees from Laos", _Refugee Issues_, vol. 1 no. 5 (1985), pp. 1-21.

5) Scudder and Colson, _op cit_, p. 274-5.

6) Fazel Mazandarani, *Tarikh-e Zohur al-Haqq*, vol. 6, undated manuscript, pp. 5-8; vol. 8, pt 1, Tehran, 131 badi'/1974, pp. 5, 74-6.

7) H. M. Balyuzi, *The Bab*, Oxford, 1980, p. 108n.

8) Mazandarani, *op cit*, vol. 6, pp. 65, 78; vol. 8 pt 1, 204, 230.

9) For further information regarding the Ashkabad exiles, see M.Momen, "The Baha'is of Ashkabad", paper presented to the conference "Central Asia: Tradition and Change", School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 7-10 April 1987.

10) *The Baha'i World*, vol.13, 1954-63, Haifa, 1970, pp. 449-457. There were in fact probably a greater number of Iranians than this since the names of a number of persons who moved to sensitive areas were not disclosed.

11) Numerous examples of this are mentioned in various texts; see, for example, references to Mirza 'Ali Mohammad ebn-e Asdaq, Molla Mohammad Taqi Boshru'i, and Molla 'Ali Bajestani, in Fazel Mazandarani, *Tarikh Zohur al-Haqq*, vol. 6, pp. 34, 63, 95; Hajji Mirza Haydar 'Ali in *Stories from the Delight of Hearts* (trans. and abridged A.Q. Faizi), Los Angeles, 1980, p. 12.

12) Among those who performed this function were Molla Mohammad Nabil Zarandi and Mirza Aqa Monir Kashani; see H.M. Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah, the King of Glory*, Oxford, 1980, p. 131, 479.

13) Hajji Mirza Haydar 'Ali, *op cit*, p. 8.

14) Browne, *Year...*, pp. 522-3; Momen, *Selections...*, pp. 115-6.

15) The Baha'i World Centre in Haifa recently announced that their collection of these letters of Baha'ullah numbered some 15,000; and of 'Abd al-Baha some 27,000; *The Seven Year Plan*, Haifa, 1983, p. 22.

16) In 1873, for example, when there were difficulties in Akka for the Baha'is, permission for pilgrims to proceed was cancelled; see Balyuzi, *Baha'u'llah, the King of Glory*, p. 347.

17) E.G. Browne, *A Traveller's Narrative written to illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, Cambridge, 1891, vol. 2, pp. xxvii-xxix.

18) See Fazel Mazandarani, *Tarikh Zohur al-Haqq*, vol. 6, p. 9, 20, 22; vol. 8, pt 2, p. 73, 91.

19) E.G. Browne met this man in Shiraz; see *A Year among the Persians*, p. 527-8; also M. Momen, *Selections ...*, pp. 118-9.

20) Mazandarani, *Tarikh...*, vol. 6, pp. 9, 21; vol. 8 pt 1, p. 120.

21) *Ibid*, vol. 6, p. 468.

1) Thayer Scudder and Elizabeth Colson, "From Welfare to Development:

ADDENDUM

Since completing the above survey, I have become aware of a paper by
Chantal Saint-Blancat of the University of Padua which in fact
represents the results of the research for a doctorate in sociology.
She surveyed 115 Iranians in Venice. Of these 46% were practising
Shi'is, 22% were non-practising Shi'is and 32% were Baha'is. Saint-
Blancat finds that the Iranian Baha'is are more successful in
integrating into Italian society. This broadly agrees with my findings
above for Iranian Baha'is in the United Kingdom. I append the title
and English summary of the paper.

NATION ET RELIGION CHEZ LES IMMIGRÉS IRANIENS EN ITALIE

This article examines the role of mediation assumed by religion in the structuring of identity among iranian emigrés to Italy and, in particular, the typology of the relationship existing between social, national and religious identities. Also evalued here is the real impact of identity constructs on the life strategies of the subjects and on their behavior in the host society.

Survey results revealed the following two elements: 1) it is not really religious identity as such which determines life choices, but rather the typology of the relationship existing between this latter and a national identity. The case of the Bahai's successful choice of integration into Italian society thus appears in sharp contrast to that of the Shiites for whom the national reference, in coincidence or in opposition with religion, remains the determining dimension of identity which structures the future of the subjects. 2) The second crucial element in determining life choices is their different conception of the social role of religion.

The bipolarism observed in identity illustrates the non-resolved conflict between two representations of Iranity, two visions of Shiism and its social interpretation, thus raising the issue of an "immigration" deludingly experienced as a parenthesis.