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A Comparison of the Refugee Resettlement of Ugandan Ismaili Muslims and Cambodian
Theravada Buddhists in Canada

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Abstract

This paper will compare the resettlement and ability to recreate religious identities of refugees from Uganda and Cambodia. The specific religious identities of focus are Ugandan South-Asian Ismaili Muslims and Cambodian Khmer Theravada Buddhists, and their resettlement in Ontario, Canada. This paper will argue that the three predominant factors that have made Ugandan Ismailis more successful in their integration into Canadian society than Cambodian Buddhists are; leadership, pre-migrational skills for adaptation and integration, and transnational connections. It is apparent through the findings of this paper that pre-migrational characteristics and experiences as well as leadership and transnational connections serve to assist in optimal societal integration.

I. INTRODUCTION

Canada opened its doors to thousands of non-Christian refugees at a time when turmoil plagued the homelands of Cambodia and Uganda. For Cambodia, it was Pol Pot's ideological notion that the nation be transformed into a Khmer Communist State.¹ Likewise, for Uganda, it was President Idi Amin's ideology that Africa was for Africans, and all other inhabitants were not committed to the economic development of the country.²

This paper will compare the resettlement and ability to recreate religious identities of refugees migrating from Uganda and Cambodia. The specific religious identities of focus are Ugandan Shi'a Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims (Khojas) and Khmer Theravada Buddhists.³ The resettlement area of focus will be Ontario, Canada. This paper will argue that the three predominant factors that have made Khojas⁴ more successful in their integration into Canadian society than Cambodian Buddhists are: leadership, pre-migrational skills for adaptation and integration, and transnational connections.

This paper will look at the social capital of the Khojas and Khmer Theravada Buddhists in their resettlement process; that is, which groups displayed bonding, bridging, and linking capital, and how this affected their resettlement in Ontario, Canada. Social capital can be defined as the capacity for people can come together to assist one another in attaining their goals and serves as an exchange for resources.⁵ Social capital is especially important for resettling refugee communities because there is typically little to no planning involved in their migration, and they generally come to the host-land with little material wealth.⁶ One form of social capital is bonding, which is closely associated with family, community, and religious ties.⁷ This form of social capital would be the most prevalent in refugee communities, but may serve as a handicap to those resettlers that come to the host-land

¹ McLellan, J., (2009). *Cambodian Refugees in Ontario: Resettlement, Religion, and Identity*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press Incorporated. (p.24)

² Jamal, Arif., (2006). "Linking Migration and Education Across Generations: Ismailis in Vancouver". Unpublished Thesis. Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University. (p.6)

³ Theravada Buddhism is "the way of the Elders" and relies heavily on monks, nuns and lay people.

⁴ Khoja was a honourific title given to South-Asian Ismailis by Pir Sadr al-din during the lifetime of the 30th Imam, Islam Shah, in the 15th Century.

⁵ Coleman, James S., "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure. (1988), pp. S95-S120. (p.98) & Janjuha-Jivra, Shaheena., "The Sustainability of Social Capital within Ethnic Networks". *Journal of Business Ethics*. 47: 31-43, 2003. (p.32)

⁶ McLellan 2009: 10

⁷ Ibid: 10

with little to no education, language skills, urban skills or wealth because their resources are limited to members within the refugee population.⁸ In the case where this may be the only form of social capital available to migrant community, a religious institution would be very effective in initiating this form of social capital. Those communities that are unable to form such an institution are not likely to prevail economically.⁹

Another form of social capital is bridging capital, which extends beyond simply bonding with the rest of the host-land community.¹⁰ For example, some Cambodian refugees were assisted by Christian churches in both Thai refugee camps and upon arrival into Canada.¹¹

The last form of social capital is linking capital “which expands on bridging capital to facilitate relations between different groups to enhance social recognition, wealth, or influence.”¹² An example of this would be the resettled community reaching out to the greater community and offering their services and assistance.¹³ McLellan and White found that Chinese Buddhists in Toronto, Ontario displayed linking social capital by taking part in food drives, blood banks, and other Canadian charitable organizations.¹⁴

Through the framework of social capital, this paper will look at the qualities of leadership, trust, and communication within the two groups. Furthermore, it will look at the influence of leadership, how this influences emotional coping, the resettlement process, and the prevalence of migration success.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT, PRE-MIGRATIONAL EXPERIENCES, AND MIGRATION PROCESS

A. UGANDAN ISMAILI MUSLIMS:

Before the analysis, a brief identification is required about the Ismaili understanding of Islam and of their spiritual leader, His Highness, The Aga Khan IV (Shah Karim al-

⁸ Ibid: 10

⁹ Guest, Kenneth J., “Religion and Transnational Migration in the New Chinatown”, Leonard, K. I., Stepick, A., Vasquez, M. A., & Holdaway, J., (Editors) (2005). *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. (p. 150)

¹⁰ McLellan 2009: 10

¹¹ Ibid: 36-40 & 48-9

¹² Ibid: 11

¹³ McLellan, Janet., & White, Marybeth,. “Social Capital and Identity Politics Among Asian Buddhists in Toronto” *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, Volume 6(2), 2005 (pp. 235-253). (p.239)

¹⁴ McLellan & White 2005: 239

Hussayni).¹⁵ This provides the basis to assess the historical context, pre-migrational experiences, and the influence of the Aga Khan IV on the South Asian migration from Uganda to Canada.

Ismailism is an Islamic school of thought which believes that the Prophet Muhammad, before his death, proclaimed his successor to be his cousin and son-in-law¹⁶ Ali,¹⁷ at Gadir-e-Khumm.¹⁸¹⁹ These Ismaili Muslims believe that the succession continues through the bloodline²⁰ of the Prophet's family.²¹ The appointed successor is referred to as the Imam in Shi'a thought; there can only be one Imam at a given time. The spiritual role of the Imam is "to ensure that the Qur'anic message is preserved and interpreted" for the current day and age, "in accordance with changing times and circumstances" for all Ismaili followers.²² The second role of the Imam is the concern for the safety and material progress of his community of murids.²³ This is known as "the practice of *taqiya* or pious dissimulation to guard against persecution."²⁴ Through this role, Ismailis and non-Ismailis across the globe have received assistance from the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in health, cultural, educational, rural, and economical development,²⁵ regardless of culture, religion or ethnicity. Within this brief identification of Ismailism and the role of the Imam, the historical context and pre-migrational experiences of the Khojas in Uganda can be developed further.

Through the influence of British colonialism, "Indian farmers were encouraged to colonize portions of East Africa so as to fulfill Britain's dream of reaping the benefits from this vast new land."²⁶ It was through this endeavour that the 1885 proposal to build the Ugandan Railway, which would run from the coast of Mombasa to Lake Victoria, was

¹⁵ He is the 49th Imam to the Shi'a Nizari Ismailis and a direct descendent of the Prophet Mohammad

¹⁶ Son-in-law through marriage of his only surviving daughter Fatima

¹⁷ He is the 1st Imam to the Shi'a interpretation of Islam, and specifically to the Shi'a Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims

¹⁸ This is the location where the Prophet Mohammad declared Ali to be his rightly guided successor

¹⁹ Nanji, Azim., "The Nizari Ismaili Muslim Community in North America: Background and Development", Waugh, Earle H., Abu-Laban, Baha., and Qureshi, Regula B., (Editors) (1983). Muslim Community in North America. Edmonton, AB: The University of Alberta Press. (p. 150)

²⁰ The current Imam's bloodline can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad

²¹ Nanji 1983: 150

²² Nanji 1983: 150

²³ Spiritual Followers

²⁴ Ibid: 150

²⁵ AKDN, "About the Aga Khan Development Network". Aga Khan Development Network: <http://www.akdn.org/about.asp> (Accessed; October 22, 2010).

²⁶ Jamal 2006: 2

raised.²⁷ The work force needed for this project required the British government to import Indian workers into Uganda.²⁸ Some Ismailis were living in economically disadvantaged parts of India and the Imam of the time, Hasan Ali Shah (Aga Khan I), suggested to his murids to emigrate for a chance at a better life.²⁹ This led thousands of Ismailis to migrate to East Africa. In 1913, the number of Indian migrants in East Africa was around 25,000,³⁰ and by the 1960s the amount was over 50,000.³¹ In 1971, the majority of the South Asian population in Uganda consisted of Ismailis, approximately 30 percent, and Gujarati Hindus, approximately 50 percent; Sikhs, Goans, and Punjabi Hindus comprised the rest of the South Asian population.³²

As the South Asian migrants were not allowed to settle on the land and harvest crops, they moved into the business sector of trade and processing of cash crops.³³ South Asians dominated the business sector of Uganda by “providing skilled labour, capital and entrepreneurship, and reaping corresponding rewards.”³⁴ Tensions grew between the South Asian and African populations. The South Asians were generally viewed as being private and segregated from the mainstream society.³⁵ The hostility between these two groups led some professionally qualified and economically advantageous Ismailis to emigrate to Great Britain and North America in the 1960s.³⁶ These planned migrations became one of President Idi Amin’s arguments for the expulsion of thousands of South Asians, claiming that South Asians were not committed to the economic advancement of Ugandan society, even though the majority of Ismailis were looking to obtain Ugandan citizenship.³⁷ This led to the expulsion order by President Idi Amin in August 1972.³⁸

²⁷ Ibid: 2

²⁸ Adams & Bristow, 1978 as cited in Jamal 2006: 2-3

²⁹ Nanji 1983: 152

³⁰ Melady & Melady, 1976 as cited in Jamal 2006: 3

³¹ Nanji 1983: 152

³² Adams, Bert N., “Urban Skills and Religion: Mechanisms for Coping and Defense Among the Ugandan Asians”. Published By: University of California Press on Behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Vol. 22, No. 1 (Oct., 1974), (pp. 28-42). (p.30)

³³ Jamal 2006: 3

³⁴ Jamal, V., (1976). “Asians in Uganda, 1880-1972: Inequality and Expulsion”. *The Economic History Review*, 29,602-616. (p.602)

³⁵ Nanji 1983: 154

³⁶ Ibid: 155

³⁷ Jamal 2006: 5

³⁸ Jamal 1976: 602

On August 8, 1972, President Idi Amin declared the “war of liberation” on all South Asians³⁹ and ordered the expulsion of all Asian Ugandans, only allowing them 90 days to evacuate Uganda.⁴⁰ Idi Amin argued that South Asians dissociated themselves from other Africans and exploited the Ugandan economy.⁴¹ South Asian homes, possessions, and businesses were to be left behind and handed over to the Africans; as a result, the power and riches were transferred to the allegedly suppressed African population.

By November 9, 1972, approximately 50,000 South Asians, including 10,000 Asian-Ugandan citizens, were exiled from the country, forced into refugee status, and sought homes in other countries.⁴² Approximately 23,000 South Asians were airlifted and accepted into Great Britain while 5,000 were brought to Canada.⁴³

According to Ismaili sources, it was through the friendship of the Aga Khan IV and the then Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, that Canada intervened. This was based on a mutual understanding that if there was ever a racial crisis in Uganda, Canada would assist the Ismaili population.⁴⁴ Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan⁴⁵ served as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) during this troubled time.⁴⁶ He assisted greatly in the relocation of thousands of displaced South Asian Ugandan refugees.

Jamal found that “Canada applied their own immigration criteria in accepting ex-Ugandan citizens” and readily accepted Ismaili Ugandans for their English and urban skills.⁴⁷ It was through this historical event and Canadian generosity that Canada had become the new home for future Ismaili settlement,⁴⁸ and marked the first non-Christian refugee resettlement into Canadian society.

B. CAMBODIAN THERAVADA BUDDHISTS:

³⁹ Gupta, Anirudha., “Ugandan Asians, Britain, India and the Commonwealth”. Oxford University Press. Vol. 73, No 292 (Jul., 1974), (pp. 312-324). (p.320)

⁴⁰ Jamal 2006: 5-6

⁴¹ Ibid: 6

⁴² Jamal 2006: 6-7

⁴³ Gupta 1974: 321 & Citizenship and Immigration Canada, (July 1, 2006). “Forging Our Legacy: Canadian Citizenship and Immigration, 1900-1977”. Citizenship and Immigration Canada: www.cic.gc.ca

⁴⁴ Siddiqui, Haroon., (October 3, 2000). “Prince Aga Khan Was Among the Honorary Pallbearers”. Toronto Star: <http://ismaili.net/timeline/2000/20001002.html>

⁴⁵ Son of Aga Khan III (48th Imam), Sultan Mohammad Shah, and uncle to the Aga Khan IV

⁴⁶ UNHCR. “Sadruddin Aga Khan (Iran) 1965– 77”. UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0aed6.html> (Accessed; December 6, 2010).

⁴⁷ Jamal 2006: 13

⁴⁸ Ibid: 7

In this section, a brief identification of the Cambodian Theravada Buddhists, specifically of Khmer origin is also given. This follows with a look at the historical context, pre-migrational experiences of the Khmer, and how they came to Ontario, Canada.

The majority of the Cambodian population is Khmer, 6,200,000 out of 7.3 Million.⁴⁹ The Khmer are a people of Indochinese origin and influence that predate back to the 15th Century BCE.⁵⁰ The Khmer people were primarily rice cultivators and animal farmers,⁵¹ which led them to need minimal educational and vocational skills. Cambodia, formally known as Kampuchea, was influenced greatly by India, which helped to shape their religious beliefs and cultural practices.⁵² Although the Khmer kept their language of origin, many of the people took up Theravada Buddhism as their religious tradition.⁵³ The marvelous historical temple city of Angkor Wat still stands today, and is symbolic to the Khmer people, reminding them of their historical achievements and cultural identity.⁵⁴

Cambodia was colonized by France in 1863, which greatly influenced politics, religion, education, and language.⁵⁵ The French speaking Khmer were greatly affected by the events that transpired under the Pol Pot regime and thereafter.

In April 1975, the Khmer Rouge, under the leadership of Pol Pot, took over Cambodia immediately following the collapse of Saigon^{56,57} Pol Pot renamed Cambodia ‘Democratic Kampuchea’ and led the Khmer Rouge forces to invade all the cities, including the city of Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975.⁵⁸ The events that transpired under Pol Pot’s regime (1975-1979) were horrific and inhumane. The Khmer Rouge forced all inhabitants out of the city and into labour camps; anyone who resisted was immediately shot and killed.⁵⁹ No food or water was provided to these civilians and as a result, people died from illness and

⁴⁹ as cited in McLellan 2009: 20 & 22

⁵⁰ as cited in McLellan 2009: 20 & 22

⁵¹ McLellan 2009: 20

⁵² Ibid: 20

⁵³ Ibid: 20

⁵⁴ Ibid: 20-1

⁵⁵ Chandler 1991 as cited in McLellan 2009: 21

⁵⁶ The collapse of Saigon occurred when the Americans pulled their army out from Cambodia during the Vietnam war

⁵⁷ McLellan 2009: 24

⁵⁸ Ibid: 24

⁵⁹ Ibid: 24

starvation.⁶⁰ The Khmer Rouge regime proclaimed this event ‘Year Zero,’ the beginning of a radical communist state.

Ebihara found that close to 150,000 Khmer escaped to Vietnam, and roughly 35,000-40,000 to Thailand;⁶¹ however, the majority of the Khmer spent the remaining four years suffering and trying to survive in labour camps. The Khmer Rouge targeted monks, professionals, government officials, the French speaking, and their families for torture and execution.⁶² The Khmer had to keep their class and identity secret in fear of being targeted. Friends and family members were forced to turn on one another; these victims could trust no one.⁶³

In early 1979, Vietnam invaded Cambodia and a Vietnamese-backed Khmer government was put into power.⁶⁴ Slowly, the labour camps crumbled and people began to look for family members. McLellan argued that due to the people “fearing oppression by the Vietnamese communist invaders and the possible return of the Khmer Rouge, thousands of Cambodians sought asylum in Thailand.”⁶⁵ However, Thai soldiers and bandits prevented the Khmer from entering Thailand and they were forced back into the jungles of Cambodia, where many died from land mines left by the Khmer Rouge.⁶⁶

In September 1979, international pressures forced Thailand to open its borders again, allowing some 500,000 Cambodians into Thai refugee camps, managed by the UNHCR.⁶⁷ Many women refugees within these camps were targets of rape by Thai soldiers and bandits; however, these camps were the only safe refuge for them until they were accepted for resettlement in other countries.⁶⁸

Christian relief agents were stationed throughout the Thai refugee camps.⁶⁹ They displayed favouritism to those refugees willing to convert to Christianity and assisted them

⁶⁰ Ibid: 25

⁶¹ as cited in McLellan 2009: 25

⁶² Douglas, Thomas J., “Chapter 7: Changing Religious Practices among Cambodian Immigrants in Long Beach and Seattle”, Leonard, K. I., Stepick, A., Vasquez, M. A., & Holdaway, J., (Editors) (2005). *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. (p.125) & McLellan 2009: 25

⁶³ McLellan 2009: 26-9

⁶⁴ Ibid: 30

⁶⁵ Ibid: 30

⁶⁶ Ibid: 30

⁶⁷ Ibid: 30

⁶⁸ Ibid: 32

⁶⁹ Douglas 2005: 123

in attaining private sponsorships in North America.⁷⁰ Many of the Khmer Buddhists that converted to Christianity claimed to have done so solely to gain access to social services and priority in resettlement; the term given to those people falling into this circumstance is known as “rice-bowl Christians.”⁷¹

Khmer Cambodians were not readily accepted into Canada through government sponsorship because, unlike the Ugandans, they were not considered good candidates.⁷² McLellan argues that, “[since] most Khmer refugees came from rural cultural settings, it was assumed that Western foods, technology, values, and styles of interpersonal interaction would be too overwhelming for them.”⁷³ Considering all the applications, only a small number of Khmer were accepted into Canada. Those accepted were well-educated French speaking professionals. These refugees were offered resettlement in Quebec.⁷⁴ There was definitely a bias in the processing of applications. McLellan conducted an interview with one of the private sponsors where it was revealed that, “[t]he [then] head of Canadian immigration in Thailand called Cambodians ‘betel-nut chewing women and uneducated people. If I put all of them on a plane you would not want them when you see them.’”⁷⁵ Another reason for the delay was the concern that some Khmer Rouge soldiers might be mixed in with the rest of the refugees.⁷⁶ Once these issues were resolved, Canada began to accept some of the applicants into the country based on humanitarian considerations.

III. CANADIAN RESETTLEMENT COMPARISON

A. SKILLS FOR ADAPTATION AND INTEGRATION: UGANDAN KHOJAS AND CAMBODIAN BUDDHISTS

This portion of the paper will compare the high social capital of skills such as English, urban skills, professional skills, and prior economic success that rendered Ugandan Khojas more successful in resettlement than their Cambodian Buddhist counterparts. This may also be due to Khojas being secondary migrants in Canada; they first came from India to Uganda and had, therefore, already developed and acquired coping strategies and economic advancements. These

⁷⁰ Douglas 2005: 123

⁷¹ Ibid: 123

⁷² McLellan 2009: 32-3

⁷³ Ibid: 32

⁷⁴ Ibid: 33

⁷⁵ Ibid: 33

⁷⁶ Ibid: 33

pre-migrational skills greatly aided in the establishment of Jamat Khanes,⁷⁷ jobs, and education for refugees—there was a lack of such skills and social capital in Cambodian Buddhist refugees.

The transition from Uganda to Canada was not a major adjustment for Ugandan Khojas as they had already adopted the language, cultural dress and, to an extent, they were already accustomed to the western lifestyle.⁷⁸ As mentioned earlier, Ugandan Khojas are secondary migrants in North America and have had the advantage of developing good urban and entrepreneurial skills in Uganda. The younger generation was more prepared to move to a different country than the older generation.⁷⁹ For the older generation, it was a matter of getting used to the colder climate, busy lifestyle, and home maintenance.⁸⁰ Those Khojas who resettled in larger cities felt the advantages of proximity to other Asian ethnic groups who had already set up businesses for ethnic foods and other items.⁸¹

Studies suggest that the majority of South Asian Ugandan refugees found work in Canada; however, a large number of these refugees experienced downward mobility.⁸² South Asians with university degrees had to re-qualify so that their degrees would be recognized in Canada—in some cases this took years.⁸³ Other Khojas relied heavily on their community connections to find work and support; this is where the importance of the Jamat Khane comes into play and is also a prime example of bonding capital.

An important factor in the resettlement process was the establishment of a local Jamat Khane. The Jamat Khane serves as a place for daily congregational worship and “religious observances specific to the Ismaili tariqa⁸⁴ of Islam.”⁸⁵ Nanji argues that “for early [Khoja] migrants, one important element in the reinforcement of their religious identity was missing.”⁸⁶ However, as the number of Ismaili (re)settlers increased in Canada, “school halls, or similar locations were rented so that at least once a week there could be a congregational prayer.”⁸⁷ In Ontario today, there are at least 10 Jamat Khanes in the Toronto area alone that are open for the

⁷⁷ Jamat Khane literally means “congregational place,” and serves as a place for gathering and worship.

⁷⁸ Nanji 1983: 159

⁷⁹ Ibid: 159

⁸⁰ In East Africa, many Khojas were use to having domestic servants and drivers

⁸¹ Nanji 1983: 159

⁸² Jamal 2006: 14

⁸³ Adam & Jesuason, 1984 as cited in Jamal, 2006: 14

⁸⁴ Tariqa is a religious order observing Islam through the esoteric path and practices guided by the Imam of the time.

⁸⁵ Nanji 1983: 160

⁸⁶ Ibid: 160

⁸⁷ Ibid: 160

observance of the three main daily prayers—once in the morning and twice in the evening.⁸⁸ The more populous Jamat Khanes in North America commonly observe dhikr, which is an Ismaili practice of personal meditation in the hours just before dawn.⁸⁹

Jamat Khanes also serve as an exchange for traditional foods and as a centre for religious Islamic rituals specific to Ismailism such as zakat,⁹⁰ khums,⁹¹ and sadqa⁹².⁹³ Therefore, Jamat Khanes were not only necessary for Ismailis to practice their faith, but also in establishing meaningful social connections with others going through similar situations. Today, Ismailis are serving to assist in the (re)settlement of new migrants into various countries; this is evidence of high levels of bridging capital.

In comparison, surviving Cambodians that came to Canada had low levels of social capital, beginning with an absence of family networks; since some members were separated or killed by the Khmer Rouge Regime. In Cambodia, many Khmer were uneducated and rural, which placed them at an economic disadvantage in Canada. On the other hand, those Cambodians who were economically successful were particularly targeted for torture and killings, as they would have posed greater threats to the communists. Those targeted included, but were not limited to: government officials, professionals, monks, doctors, and business people. People in these categories who survived were more readily accepted into France and Quebec based on professional and French language skills. Those that did not possess urban skills, English, French, or professional education were more likely to be resettled in Ontario.⁹⁴

The Khmer came into Canada either through government or private sponsorship. Private sponsorship was primarily through Christian congregations under an agreement with the Canadian government called the “Master Agreement.”⁹⁵ An added benefit of private sponsorship was the social capital of the sponsors. McLellan asserts that the private sponsors “provided housing (sometimes in their own homes or nearby apartments); took people shopping for

⁸⁸ Ibid: 160

⁸⁹ Ibid: 160

⁹⁰ Obligatory service or charity

⁹¹ Khums is an obligatory ritual where Ismailis give a fifth of all earned income. This money is given to the Imam where he makes the decision of where the money should be placed in society. Examples would be for a hospital, production of clean water, or a school in a developing country.

⁹² Voluntary charity

⁹³ Nanji 1983: 161 & Virani, Shafique N., “Symphony of Gnosis”, Lawson, Todd., (Editor) (2005). Reason and Inspiration in Islam. New York, NY: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd. (p.523)

⁹⁴ McLellan 2009: 36-7

⁹⁵ Ibid: 38

clothing, food, and kitchen utensils; enrolled the children in school and adults in ESL classes; advised on vocational training and other educational opportunities; and arranged for medical appointments.”⁹⁶

McLellan argues that private sponsorship was more successful than government sponsorship in finding employment for the Khmer resettlers;⁹⁷ this may be due to private sponsors having a relational bond with the sponsored family. Private sponsors also assisted in the mediation between employers and medical practitioners, as the Khmer did not speak English.⁹⁸ One downside to private sponsorship was the pressure to convert to Christianity and abandon their religious identity as Theravada Buddhists;⁹⁹ however, Douglas found that Cambodian parents in the U.S. willingly sent their children off to Christian organizations and churches to better integrate them into their new societal context and increase their social capital.¹⁰⁰

McLellan found that not only did the Khmer have the least amount of knowledge when it came to urban skills, but “over half of the Khmer men and the majority of Khmer women were functionally illiterate.”¹⁰¹ These statistics show that the Khmer were in desperate need of language skills as well as vocational training in order to secure jobs and to successfully integrate into Canadian society. Some services were set up by the government for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes; however, they were only available for the first six months after arrival, only offered for the head of the household, and discontinued after a job was secured.¹⁰²

Not only were the Khmer disadvantaged by their lack of language and education, they also found themselves to be very uncomfortable in Canada as they were not used to the western lifestyle. McLellan found in her interviews that the Khmer were not eating as they were used to eating solely rice.¹⁰³ She also found that they lacked trust because of the pre-migration events involving authority figures and family members.¹⁰⁴ Those that resettled in Toronto were at an advantage as it was the only city in Ontario where the Khmer had the support of the Canadian Cambodian Association of Ontario (CCAO); this offered very limited but essential mental-health

⁹⁶ Ibid: 38-9

⁹⁷ Ibid: 39

⁹⁸ Ibid: 39

⁹⁹ Ibid: 40

¹⁰⁰ Douglas 2005: 123-4

¹⁰¹ McLellan 2009: 45

¹⁰² Ibid: 46

¹⁰³ Ibid: 46-7

¹⁰⁴ Ibid: 46-7

support in their native language.¹⁰⁵ The Khmer that resettled in other cities would have been at a disadvantage in obtaining the assistance necessary to cope with the traumatic events that occurred under the Khmer Rouge Regime.

In terms of religious identity, hopes for establishing temples remained unfulfilled because there was a lack of monks since they had been targeted for torture and execution in Cambodia. In Theravada Buddhism, temples serve as the location for Theravada traditional practices of worship and education, the performance of rituals, and merit making ceremonies and offerings. Without a temple, the Khmer were limited in how they could continue to practice their faith.

B. LEADERSHIP IN RESETTLEMENT: UGANDAN KHOJAS AND CAMBODIAN BUDDHISTS

This section will first discuss how the Aga Khan IV gave advice to the Ismailis for optimal integration into society by stressing educational and vocational training. It will also discuss how having a leader decreases stress and increases hope for successful integration. Apart from the continuous guidance given by the Aga Khan IV, there were other leadership opportunities within the community that needed filling, such as a leader to assist in the establishment of a Jamat Khane. Second, this section will address how Cambodian refugees in Ontario were at a disadvantage in finding a leader due to their pre-migrational experiences. Cambodian leaders that did survive resettled in France or Quebec. This posed many challenges for the establishment of temples for education, ritual practice, and increasing levels of social capital in Ontario.

Ismailis are fortunate to have a ‘present living Imam’¹⁰⁶ to guide them in the current day and age. Ismailis receive this guidance through the Imam’s farmans, which are interpretations from the Qur’an relevant to the current day. Ismaili sources identify some farmans to be about suggested vocational opportunities, the importance of education, dealing with suffering, the importance of abstaining from harmful social activities, the importance of health, and the importance of volunteering and charity.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid: 48

¹⁰⁶ This is how Shi’a Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims refer to their current Imam

When the Ugandan Khojas arrived in Canada, the Imam stressed finding a job, continuing with education, saving for the education of the children, and most importantly, making Canada their new home.¹⁰⁷ Ugandan Khojas made a conscious effort to integrate into society because of the guidance of their Imam.¹⁰⁸ Adams found that Ismailis were more successful in the integration into the U.S. when compared to Ugandan Hindus because they had a stronger community, which served to provide mutual support of various kinds, and they had a leader to guide and help them solve their problems.¹⁰⁹ Adams contends that “Ismailis find it easier to live in the modern world” which is seen in their “expressions of psychological and behavioural adaptations.”¹¹⁰ Ismailis were more successful than their Hindu counterparts in integrating into the U.S. because they found security in knowing that they could depend on the Imam for guidance.¹¹¹

Jamat Khanes are necessary in transferring farmans from the Imam to his murids. There is limited literature on how the first Jamat Khanes in Canada came into being; however, it is my understanding that murids donate money, get permission from the city to build, and send a request for approval to the Imam. Once there is a Jamat Khane, there are leadership positions that need to be filled: Mukhi Saheb, Kamadia Saheb, Mukhiyani Ma, Kamadiyani Ma. Ismaili sources advise that these positions of leadership require both men and women and are said to symbolize the left and right hand of the Imam; that is, doing the Imam’s work and taking care of the members of the local Jamat Khane. These men and women are responsible for the maintenance of the Jamat Khane and act as educational resources to the murids. These positions have designated term lengths and are completely voluntary. Once the term is up (usually 3 years), other members of the Jamat Khane are chosen to take leadership. These positions require a great deal of commitment as there are daily demands.

Other roles of leadership required in the Jamat Khane are badged volunteers.¹¹² They have many responsibilities such as opening the Jamat Khane, organizing the food exchange, orchestrating parking, security, organizing social events, coordinating ceremonies, and maintenance of the congregation. It is important to understand that the operation of the Jamat

¹⁰⁷ Jamal 2006: 97

¹⁰⁸ Adams 1974: 33

¹⁰⁹ Ibid: 33

¹¹⁰ Adams 1974: 33

¹¹¹ Ibid: 38

¹¹² Badged volunteers have a higher commitment level to the Jamat Khane than non-badged volunteers; non-badged volunteers assist when they are available.

Khane depends entirely on volunteers. Volunteering in Ismailism is taken very seriously and could take as much time and effort as a part or full time job. Volunteering is looked upon very highly in Ismailism and is also seen to develop management and leadership skills.

For Cambodian refugees, their pre-migration experiences were shaped by trauma, fear, and distrust for authority figures. In regards to their religion and culture, they tend to be passive and non-confrontational in nature, which poses some disadvantage in the Canadian social milieu.¹¹³ Culturally, they are limited to who they would readily respect as a leader. For example, the leader could not be a woman nor could they be a youth.¹¹⁴ Religiously, they would have monks as leaders; however, monks were targeted for execution in Cambodia.¹¹⁵ It is estimated that fewer than two-thousand out of sixty-five thousand monks survived the Khmer Rouge Regime.¹¹⁶ Due to these pre-migration characteristics, the Khmer found it very difficult to elect and maintain suitable leadership. Without effective leadership their resettlement needs could not be expressed, let alone met.

The Khmer were hesitant and suspicious of anyone in, or aspiring to be in authority positions.¹¹⁷ Without a leader, there was little hope for establishing a temple, which is necessary for Theravada Buddhists in performing their rituals, building social networks, and having a place for religious identification.

The shortage of monks hindered and delayed the full religious expression and practice of Khmer Theravada Buddhists. The monks that were available for sponsorship often left the monastery shortly after arrival into Canada.¹¹⁸ McLellan found that potential sponsors were concerned these monks may have only joined the monastery to seek educational and vocational opportunities, or to simply escape impoverished conditions.¹¹⁹ McLellan also found that several Cambodian communities in Ontario only recently established temples since the late 1990s.¹²⁰

C. TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS: UGANDAN KHOJAS AND CAMBODIAN BUDDHISTS

¹¹³ McLellan 2009: 78

¹¹⁴ Ibid: 76-7

¹¹⁵ Ibid: 85

¹¹⁶ Ibid: 89

¹¹⁷ Ibid: 76

¹¹⁸ Ibid: 90-1

¹¹⁹ Ibid: 90

¹²⁰ Ibid: 90

The Ismailis are a very tight-knit community and they know that they can depend on one another locally or transnationally, to assist them in (re)settlement. The Cambodians also have transnational connections; however, their connections are limited because of the genocide and exploitation that occurred in Cambodia.

Transnationalism can be defined as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement.”¹²¹ Transnational connections can be used in establishing sponsorship, building the economy and social institutions in the homeland, and setting up transnational associations dedicated to the benefit of a population.¹²² According to Faist, there are “three kinds of transnational social spaces that reflect different degrees of integration and interaction within diasporic contexts: transnational kinship groups that focus on families and small scale reciprocity; transnational circuits with a focus on cultural, economic and ideological networks for exchange; transnational community as an agency wherein a diasporic collectivity and sense of solidarity are articulated.”¹²³

Ugandan Khojas have arguably expressed all three transnational social spaces through the local Jamat Khane, the Tariqa Council,¹²⁴ and the Aga Khan Development Network. It could be argued that the reason Ismailis are successful in (re)settlement is due to the stability of well organized transnational associations.

Khmer Buddhists in Ontario were limited to “transnational kinship groups that focus on families and small scale reciprocity.”¹²⁵ These connections assisted greatly in the Khmer resettlement in Ontario. McLellan argues that, “over time, easier access to the homeland and others in resettlement has aided the first generation’s transnational maintenance of traditional Buddhist identities, practices, institutions, and monastic/lay relations.”¹²⁶ The Khmer in Ontario also assist in financing the rebuilding of social structures in the homeland.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Guest 2005: 159

¹²² Guest 2005; McLellan 2009 & Levitt, Peggy, “Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life”, *Sociology of Religion*, 65:1 (Spring 2004), pp. 1-18.

¹²³ as cited in McLellan 2009: 179

¹²⁴ The Tariqa Council is a council that governs all Jamat Khanes globally, facilitates religious and cultural education, and promotes awareness of the Imams endeavours.

¹²⁵ McLellan 2009: 179

¹²⁶ McLellan 2009: 179

¹²⁷ *Ibid*: 180-1

Second generation Cambodians are now representing the greater Khmer community in positions of leadership, board members, fundraising, and social agencies.¹²⁸ Those first generation Cambodians that wish to retire in Cambodia will find that these transnational connections will assist them in returning to and resettling in the homeland.

IV. CONTINUITIES AND TRANSFORMATIONS RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES OF UGANDAN ISMAILIS AND CAMBODIAN BUDDHISTS IN CANADA

It will look at how Ismailism is adaptable in any social-context by the means of its very belief in the Imam,¹²⁹ whereas practitioners of Buddhism may find it difficult to adjust to Canadian society due to the lack of monks for guidance and leadership. Although some Buddhists will transform their religion to suit Canadian contexts, many have found themselves vulnerable to Christian-conversion. This final section will look at the factors which made Ugandan Khojas more likely to continue their religious practices compared to Cambodian Buddhists; these factors are skills for adaptation and integration, leadership, and transnational connections.

Ugandan Khojas found it easier to maintain their religious identities based on positive experiences through pre-migrational skills for adaptation and integration, continued guidance through the Imam, and transnational support on various levels. For the majority of Khojas, their pre-migrational skills assisted them in successfully adapting and integrating into Canadian society. Second, the Imam is a significant part of their religious identity and has continued to support them through their resettlement process. Finally, the transnational connections of the Khojas, as well as the Imam,¹³⁰ served to safely bring the Khojas to Canada, and continued to assist them in their resettlement process. The advantages of all these contributors assisted in the Khojas maintaining their religious identity as Shi'a Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims.

The Khmer Theravada Buddhists, upon arrival into Canada, were at a greater disadvantage considering their pre-migrational experiences. This hindered them in finding and maintaining jobs due to their trust issues, lack of education, and lack of language and urban skills. Second, their pre-migration experiences of religious and cultural devastation hindered

¹²⁸ Ibid: 198

¹²⁹ The present living Imam is there to interpret the Qur'an and to guide and protect them in the current day and age

¹³⁰ Speaking directly about the Aga Khan IV's relationship with the Late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and his uncle's position as United Nations High Commissioner for refugees

their ability to find and maintain suitable community and religious leaders. Finally, transnational networks aided the Khmer to connect with surviving friends and family in the homeland, and in some cases aided eventual Canadian sponsorship of friends and family. It is noteworthy that the Khmer's language and educational limitations would have inhibited bureaucratic processing and advancement for citizenship applications. The lack of skills for adaptation and integration along with not having a supportive leader made Cambodian Buddhists more likely than Ugandan Ismailis to transform their religious identities through hybrid expressions of Christianity or by fully converting to Christianity.

Many Buddhists maintained their Theravada religious identity, eventually built temples, and sponsored monks to assist them in religious practices. The second generation greatly aided in the establishment of temples and continued to take up positions of leadership to assist in the maintenance of their religion.¹³¹

Douglas found that many Khmer men and women participating in Christian churches were also engaging in Buddhism.¹³² Khmer individuals in resettlement argue that Buddhism and Christianity can be observed harmoniously, because both Buddha and Jesus were good people.¹³³ McLellan also found through her interviews that the Khmer were identifying themselves as both Christian and Buddhist;¹³⁴ to the Khmer, they did not feel the need to be exclusive to any one religious practice. Those Khmer that did convert entirely to Christianity and attempted to reject Buddhism found themselves practicing Buddhism again once they felt more comfortable in society and had access to a temple for ritual practice.¹³⁵ For some Khmer, converting to Christianity was a means of preserving their Khmer identity through congregational worship and social gatherings. It did not matter whether one was Christian or Buddhist—what mattered was that they were Khmer and part of a religious community.¹³⁶

Through McLellan's research, she found that the small number of Cambodians that were converting to Christianity in refugee camps were under the impression that having a Christian identity would gain them access to numerous resources and aid them in resettling by means of

¹³¹ McLellan 2009: 198

¹³² Douglas 2005: 135

¹³³ Ibid: 135-6

¹³⁴ McLellan 2009: 133-4

¹³⁵ McLellan 2009: 136

¹³⁶ McLellan 2009 & Douglas 2005

educational and vocational training.¹³⁷ Upon arrival into Canada they received clothes, food, money, and social assistance from their new church.¹³⁸ Arguably, many Khmer Christian converts felt obligated to convert because they accepted the assistance that they were offered by the Churches. Christianity gave the Khmer populace an opportunity to start over in a new country. McLellan found that Christianity offered some Khmer a way to psychologically cope with their pre-migrational experiences of torture, rape, execution of friends and family, and their horrific experiences in the labour camps.¹³⁹ Therefore, it appears that the Khmer converted to Christianity in order to absorb Christian social capital for better integration, feelings of obligation, and because Christianity offered explanations for the experiences endured in Cambodia and offered them salvation.¹⁴⁰

V. CONCLUSION AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The Ugandan Khojas and the Khmer Buddhist had two things in common, they were both from non-Christian backgrounds and were both refugees; however, the Ugandan Khojas were expelled from Uganda while the Khmer Buddhists chose to leave Cambodia due to persecution. South-Asian Ugandans left with minimal collateral damage, while the Cambodians witnessed the torture and execution of their family members and the entire disintegration of their society and all its institutions.

Cambodians were already at a great disadvantage coming into Canada due to their pre-migration experiences and characteristics. South-Asian Ugandans were able to help one another in resettling due to their variety of urban and English skills and being having built up social capital as twice migrants. The Ugandan Khojas were fortunate to have the guidance of their Imam and his transnational connections to assist them in the resettlement process. The Cambodian Buddhists were not as fortunate, as those that resettled in Ontario were the least educated and had little to no knowledge of urban life.

Today, Cambodian Buddhists have built temples across Ontario; the first two were organized in the 80s and 90s in Toronto and Ottawa.¹⁴¹ Through the direction of Kampuchea Krom monks, three new temples were established in Hamilton, London, and Windsor after

¹³⁷ Ibid: 125

¹³⁸ Ibid: 125

¹³⁹ Ibid: 126

¹⁴⁰ Ibid: 123-5

¹⁴¹ McLellan 2009: 90

1999.¹⁴² Cambodian Buddhists in Toronto also purchased a large home in Maple, Ontario and successfully converted it into a monastic institution.¹⁴³ The Canadian-Cambodian refugees have survived the events that occurred in their homeland, and in resettlement have overcome struggles and gained substantial accomplishments.

In comparison, however, Ugandan Khojas have established greater bonds with Canada and have numerous markers to demonstrate that this country is now their permanent home.¹⁴⁴ They are establishing new developments to mark their claim on Canadian soil. Such developments in Ontario include architectural notable Jamat Khanes, the Ismaili Center and Aga Khan Park and Museum in Toronto. They have also assisted in the establishment of the Global Center for Pluralism in Ottawa, which Prime Minister Stephen Harper declares is “dedicated to the promotion of ethnic, cultural and religious interchange, education and harmony.”¹⁴⁵ Stephen Harper commented on the Ismaili Center and Aga Khan Museum and Park:

Even more exciting are the proposed contents of the Museum, a rich repository of art and artifacts tracing the evolution of Muslim culture through the ages. It will be a grand destination for Muslim visitors from across Canada and around the world, and it will introduce Canadians from other faith and cultural backgrounds to the compelling history of Islam, one of the world’s great religions and the inspiration for countless major advancements in art, science, music and philosophy. In this, it will serve Your Highness’s lifelong mission to promote pluralism, peace and tolerance through the expansion of knowledge and understanding. The importance of this work, in a world divided by sectarian strife that subjects millions of innocent people to violence, oppression and poverty, cannot be overstated.¹⁴⁶

Through these developments, the Canadian government is assisting the Ismaili global mission for pluralism.

The findings of this paper suggest that in terms of adaptation and integration skills, leadership, and transnational connections significantly assist in the successful resettlement of refugees. In light of these findings government officials and resettlement workers need to acknowledge pre-migration characteristics and experiences. Pre-existing leadership capacity

¹⁴² Ibid: 90-1

¹⁴³ Ibid: 91

¹⁴⁴ Jamal 2006: 110

¹⁴⁵ AKDN “Speech by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the Foundation Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, Toronto, the Aga Khan Museum and their Park” <http://www.akdn.org/Content/994/Speech-by-Canadian-Prime-Minister-Stephen-Harper> (Accessed on October 26, 2010).

¹⁴⁶ “Speech by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the Foundation Ceremony of the Ismaili Centre, Toronto, the Aga Khan Museum and their Park”.

within refugee communities appears to have had a positive impact in the case of the Ismaili community, and efforts to identify and support this form of social capital within other refugee groups would be of value for successful settlement.

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