

Islamic and Chinese minorities as an integration paradox?

How can it be explained that the Dutch society prefer the Chinese minority group above the Turks and Moroccans?



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Course *Inclusion and Exclusion in Contemporary European Societies*

Inter University Centre, Dubrovnik, Croatia

April 2004

Introduction

All over the world immigrants have left their home country to construct a new life in a new country. There are a lot of reasons for immigration. Mostly immigrants left their home country because of political or economic reasons. It does not matter what reason they left for. In all cases immigrants are newcomers in a settled culture where they have to find a way to deal with the dominant group. The Netherlands is not an exception when we are talking about immigration. There are a lot of differences between minority groups in case of their integration in the new country. The Dutch population also differs in their way of adaptation for the several minority groups in the Netherlands.

In this paper I want to compare two minority groups in the Dutch society. On the one hand I will take the Turkish and Moroccan minority group as one group¹. On the other hand I will take the Chinese minority group as the other group.

The Turkish and Moroccan group causes a lot of problems in the Dutch society, while the Chinese minority seldom provides problems. I want to look for the reasons of this phenomenon.

The research question which follows out here is *'How can it be explained that the Dutch society prefer the Chinese minority group above the Turks and Moroccans?'*

First I will write something about immigrants, integration and assimilation in general. After that I will give a short outline of the immigration in the Netherlands, whereby there is a special focus on the two minority groups where this paper is about. In the third place I will look at the differences between the two groups and the reasons for the preference of the Chinese above the Turks and Moroccans by the Dutch population. In this part I will also try to connect these reasons with the integration issue.

¹ Later in this paper I will explain why I do this

Minority groups and their integration/assimilation

Moving to another country to work, live or both calls migration. Groups or individuals who come to a new country always form a minority group. A minority group simply because they do not overwhelm the host population in numbers. Not just in numbers they do not overwhelm the host population, also in culture, religion and language. A definition of minority is given by *Junger-Tas* as 'minorities are non-dominant population groups with stable ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics and traditions that distinguish them from the rest of the population and that they wish to retain'.(Junger-Tas, 2001, 6)The status of minority groups entails exclusion from full participation in society.(Junger-Tas, 2001, 6) There are two policies regarding immigrants where the discussion is about in Holland; integration and assimilation (Bagley, 1971, 19). Integration is a process whereby the dominant group and the ethnic-cultural groups adopt certain elements of each other's culture, without disappearance of all cultural differences. A precondition for a good process is the mutual respect and appreciation of the other culture. Assimilation thereby means total immersion in the receiving society and accommodation to its dominant culture. (Musschenga, 1998, 202) A study from van Oudenhoven and Eisses, shows that immigrants who assimilate feel less prejudice from the majority group and feel treated with more respect than the integrating immigrants (1998, 301). This is logic, as we know people in general do not like things they do not know; seeing assimilated people do not have the wish to maintain their own culture.

Ethnic minority groups can be characterised as follows (Junger-Tas, 2001, 7):

- They have an ethno-cultural position different from that of the majority of the population;
- They have a low social-economic position;
- They are too small-skilled as a group to can have much (political)impact on policy;
- And this unfavourable situation can continue for more than one generation;

There are three dimensions of integration (Engbersen, 2004, Dubrovnik): functional, moral and expressive integration. An immigrant is functional integrated when he or she participates in the labour market and education. The moral integration is about rule, law and citizenship. At last the expressive integration is about identity formation. An example is the head squares of the Muslims.

Immigrant groups in the Dutch society

The population of most countries in the world are a mix of original inhabitants and immigrants. The first big group of immigrants to the Netherlands were the Huguenots and the Jews in the 16th and 17th Century. The Huguenots disappeared as a distinct group by marriages with the original population.(Musschenga, 1998, 201) They were assimilated, while the Jews retained their cultural background. For the Huguenots it was easier to find their way in a Protestantism society, because their religion was also Protestantism. The Jews on the other side were hardly accepted because a lot of Christians believed Jesus Christ had been murdered by the Jews (Musschenga, 1998, 202).

Religion is a big issue when we are talking about integration of minority groups as we have seen in the illustration above. Nowadays the biggest group of immigrants in the Netherlands are the Turks and the Moroccans. As the biggest minority group they also have a religion that does not fit in the Dutch society. We are talking about the Islam. In several studies results shows the preferences of the host population about minority groups. Striking is that Islamic groups such as Moroccans and Turks mostly stands on the bottom of the ladder.(Verkuyten, 1997, 4). The number of the Turks in the Netherlands is 340.000, while the Moroccans are represented with 295.000 people(cbs.nl).

Another minority group in the Netherlands are the Chinese people. Since the beginning of the 20th century, small communities of Chinese people have been living in the Netherlands (Musschenga, 1998, 203). They came here to open Chinese restaurants what usually turns out in a successful business. This attracted more Chinese to the Netherlands to give it a try.

Nowadays there are 57.500 Chinese who live in the Netherlands (google.nl).

There a much more minority groups in the Netherlands like the Surinamese, the Moluccans, Indians, etc. But it is not relevant to my research question to say something about it.

A study around the different minority groups in the Netherlands

In this part of the paper I will focus on two minority groups in the Dutch society. On the one hand I focus on the Chinese minority group in the Netherlands. On the other hand I focus on the Turks and Moroccan as one group, because of their common religion. I already wrote that religion plays a big part around immigrant problems. The reason to compare these two groups is the fact that the Turkish and Moroccan minority group in the Netherlands brings lot problems in the society. These while there are almost no negative sounds about the Chinese group, also a minority group in the Dutch society. So what are the reasons of this? Is it just the big cleave between the two cultures or is there something more. Why does the Dutch society include the Chinese group and exclude the Turkish and Moroccan Group? A response to exclusion can be develop in a criminal lifestyle (Junger-Tas, 2001, 10). If we may believe the newspapers, crime is the biggest problem around the Turkish and Moroccan minority group. Especially under the youth, which proves one of the characteristics of a minority group; that the unfavourable situation can continue for more than one generation.

To give you a good view of the position of the two minority groups in the Dutch society, I will use a study from Maykel Verkuyten(1997). In his study he used three ethnic target groups: Chinese, Surinamese and Turks. Because the host population usually sees the Turks and Moroccans as one and the same, I think the results about the Turks also are representative for the Moroccans.

The attitudes of the respondents in Verkuytens' study were most favorable toward the Chinese and relativeley lowest for the Turks. These attitudes are related to three components which were involved in the study; stereotypes, symbolic beliefs and emotions. Stereotypes are beliefs about group members' attributes, and in particular, traits, such as the belief that typical members of groups are friendly or aggressive. Symbolic beliefs refer to all thoughts about minority that violate or promote the attainment of cherished norms, customs and values. Emotions at last have four clusters; positive affect, irritation, anxiety and concern (2-3). Against my expectations, stereotypes do not play a role in the attitudes to the minority groups. The attitudes towards the Turks were mostly related to emotions, while the attitude towards the Chinese were related to symbolic beliefs (10). Verkuyten think the less salient and distinctive position of the Chinese in Dutch society compared with that of the Turks, and also the Surinamese, is an important factor looking at the results of the study.

As we have seen, the Turkish and Moroccan group is the last preferred minority group by the Dutch society. Now I want to look for reasons which for the preference to Chinese above Turks and Morrocans by the host population in the Netherlands. I think it could be possible that the motives of immigration play a role. Many Chinese people who came here started a Chinese restaurant with succes which attracted more Chinese people to come over(Musschenga, 1998, 203) while the Turks and Moroccans come here to do the jobs the Dutch people do not wanted to do. These were the uneducated jobs in fabrics. The level in the work society also plays a role. In general people do have more respect for someone who is higher in the social ladder.

Another reason is the big difference in religion between the two minority groups. As we have seen in the previous chapter, religion is a big issue in the immigration process. The most Chinese people adhere to the Buddhism. This forms a less treat to the Christians than the Islam that is the religion of the Turks and Moroccan. In the first Buddhism is not a real religion, but a way of living that is closely related to the nature. Thereby a number of Chinese are also Christians. The Islam thereby is the second largest religion in the world that is a big treat to the Christians, who are now the biggest religious group in the Netherlands. The Dutch

government also do not have much participation when it considers religious cases. This is because of the separation of state and church in this constitution (Shadid, 1991, 358).

A third reason for the more positive attitude towards the Chinese facing the Turks and Moroccans is the number of immigrants. The Chinese group is much smaller than the Turkish and Moroccan group (Musschenga, 1998). The influences from the Islamic group in the Dutch society is thereby logically bigger the influences of the Chinese group in the Netherlands. As we can see, there are nowadays Islamic schools and almost each city does have a mosque, while there are barely temples in the Netherlands. The Islam had become more visible in the Dutch society, also in radio and at television. The Dutch constitution offers the freedom in religion that results from the pillarization period in the past. In the time that the Netherlands was pillarized, the several pillars, based on religion, had their own schools, unions etc. The constitution also guarantees freedom of education as well as the subsidizing of private schools founded on religious bases.(Shadid, 1991, 357)

A fourth reason I can think of is the period the two groups are in the Netherlands. Small Chinese communities already come to the Netherlands in the beginning of the 20th century, while the guest workers, mainly Turks and Moroccans, came here in the 60's and 70's(Musschenga, 202-203). The Chinese group also came in small groups by degrees. On the other hand the Turks and Moroccans came at once with a large number.

Musschenga mentioned about the difference in culture. The Chinese culture is also different from the Dutch culture, but the Moroccan and Turkish culture differs more from the Dutch cultures because of the big influence of the Islam (1998, 206)

At last I want to remember you to the role of the media in this whole game. I am convinced of the strong role the media has in the image we have of minority groups. The finally decide what the newspapers write and in what way. Verkuyten also mentioned the media in his study as a influent factor in attitudes towards minorities (1997, 12) Research on racist views in schoolbooks also points out that in the educational sector very little, and mostly negative information is given about ethnic minorities and their cultural backgrounds (Shadid, 1991, 358)².

Bagley mentions a few factors of influences in his study of migrant behaviour which correspond with the most reasons given above (1971, 19):

- The number and rate of entry immigrants. I already mentioned that the Chinese group are smaller in number and they came in degrees, while the Turks and Moroccans came at once with a large number.
- The immigration system and type of immigrants. This point correspond with the motives of the immigrants for coming to the Netherlands. The Chinese group came here and were mostly successful in the horeca branche. The Turks and Moroccans came here as guest workers. They are both economic immigrants, but on an other level.
- The composition of immigrants in terms of wealth, economic skills and ethnic categories. Here above there is already said something about the economic situation of the two groups which influence the attitude of people.
- The territorial distribution of the immigrants is also mentioned. I have not said something about this yet, but the fact is that Turks and Moroccans are concentrated in the big cities while the Chinese are more dispersed throughout the country (Verkuyten, 1997, 4). This corresponds a little with the fact that the influence of the Islamic group

² I do not know if this information is still relevant nowadays seeing that this research is done in the 80's. Since the 80's there are a lot of school methods developed. But I think the results are still visible in the Dutch society, because the children from that time are the adults from nowadays.

- in the Dutch society is big. Because of the amount of this group, but maybe also because they are so concentrated which makes the influence bigger.
- A last factor Bagley mentions is the interaction of cultures of migrants and host. I already said that the difference between the Dutch and the Islamic culture is bigger than the differences between the Dutch and Chinese culture.

We have seen that the Dutch population accept the Chinese more than the Turks and Moroccans. But does this also mean that the Chinese are more integrated than the Turks and Moroccans. There are different dimensions in the society when we are talking about integration. As we have seen the Chinese people are integrated in the Dutch society at the dimension of participation in the labour market³. And this is also the only dimension the Chinese are integrated in. The Chinese population is a very closed community. An example in my own life is the fact that the most Chinese people in the town where I live do not speak the Dutch language and that they all know each other without having friends of another nationality. I also know a few people who also want to go back to their home country in the future. There are a lot of Chinese Students, but they mostly stay together and they also forms a community. My own experience is that I am very surprised when I see a young Chinese with Dutch people in an informal situation. When you will look around in the cities the most Chinese are together. In my case I am a special Chinese, because the Chinese community does not attract me to join in. So, of the three dimensions Engbersen gave, the Chinese are only integrated at the functional dimension (Engbersen, 2004, Dubrovnik).

The Turks and Moroccans participate in more dimensions of the Dutch society than the Chinese.⁴

So there is no correlation between integration of minorities and the acceptance of them by the Dutch population. Acceptation is more based on other things, like the matter of problems in the society that a group cause. These problems are a result of the big difference between the Dutch-Christian and Turks and Moroccans-Islamic culture.

³ Participants presentation 23-04-2004, IUC Dubrovnik

⁴ Participants presentation 23-04-2004, IUC Dubrovnik

Conclusion

'How can it be explained that the Dutch society prefer the Chinese minority group above the Turks and Moroccans?'

It can be explained that the Dutch society prefers the Chinese minority group above the Turks and Moroccans by several reasons. The most important reason is the difference between the cultures/religions. The difference between the Dutch and Chinese culture is not that big as the difference between the Dutch and Turkish and Moroccan Culture. The Turkish and Moroccan culture is strongly influenced by the Islam, while the Dutch culture is strongly influenced by the Christianity. Because the Turkish and Moroccan group is far bigger than the Chinese (635.000 Turks and Moroccans and 57.500 Chinese) in the Netherlands, their influence is also bigger. The Turks and Moroccans are also more concentrated, while the Chinese are more dispersed. Another important subject is the media who plays a big role in the issue of the attitude of the Dutch population towards minorities. Turks and Moroccans are always viewed as negative, while the Chinese are not in the picture and when they, it is not in a negative way. Other reason, which also plays a role, is the economic situation of both groups. The Chinese are in a better economic position than the Turks and Moroccans because of their successfully business in Chinese restaurants, while the Turks and Moroccans came as guest workers with low wages. The Chinese were here also earlier and they came in degrees, while the Turks and Moroccans came here at once with a lot of them. So the Dutch population had the time to get used to the Chinese.

These are the reasons that the Chinese are more accepted than the Turks and Moroccans, but it does not mean that the Chinese are also more integrated than the Turks and Moroccans. In fact, the Chinese community is a more closed community than the Turkish and Moroccan community.

So we cannot speak about an integration paradox, because the acceptance of the Chinese people by the Dutch population is not correlated to integration.

Dutch Policy

Before the 80s policy was focussed on remigration, because the intention was that the immigrants would go back to their home countries when the Netherlands do not need them anymore. In the 80s it became clear that the immigrants would not return to their own countries, which resulted that policy began to focus on minority groups. From the 90s the policy is focussed on integration at the individual level. Participation is a keyword in this policy⁵

In the first official government statement on ethnic minority policies in 1983, the Turks and Moroccans were mentioned as groups, which deserves special attention, while the Chinese were scaled under the group of flexible adaptation. Until now, these groups have kept this specific official recognition in official documents (Muskens, 1996, 65).

Policymakers think that the people, who constitute a problem in the Dutch society, are individual migrants who show a high degree of 'backwardness' and show distance to the major institutions of society, particularly the labour market. The backwardness is a result of the different language and the alienation from Dutch culture and society (Muskens, 1996, 64). The main fields where minority policy is about are housing, education, labour qualification and welfare (Muskens, 1996).

Suggestions for intervention or policymaking

One reason for the preference of the Chinese above the Turks and Moroccans is the difference in economic situation. My suggestion is to improve the labour market for the Turks and Moroccans. That begins with better education possibilities, because the most Turks and Moroccans are low educated. After education they will have a better opportunity in the labour market. Teachers on the primary and secondary schools can take care of the task to stimulate minority children to study. They are the one where the children do have the most contact with besides their parents. There should also be more attention paid for what is possible for continuing education after secondary school. Now a lot of children, and not only the one of the minority groups, make mistakes by chosen their continuing education. This follows out the less information they are given about continuing education.

On the other side the government can also make agreements with organizations to hire more people out of the minority groups. To make this more attractive to organizations, it is necessary to reduce the prejudices towards minority groups. This can be done by contact the host population with the minority group in the form of mixed meetings. By knowing each other more specific and not only based on the media and others, there will be more respect for each other's culture. This respect was also mentioned as a condition for a good process of integration. As we have seen the media has a big influence on the attitude the Dutch people have towards minority groups and especially the Turks and Moroccans. A suggestion of one of the participants of the course is to let the Turks and Moroccans publish articles by themselves. Another suggestion was to inform the journalist about the influence they have on the people.⁶

⁵ Participants presentation 22-04-2004, IUC Dubrovnik, Masja van Meeteren

⁶ Participants presentation 23-04-2004, IUC Dubrovnik, Wing Che Wong

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