

# The Muslims of Hong Kong and their Religious Symbols<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The history of the Muslims in Hong Kong, or we can say in this area, dates back to 7th century AD, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad sent one of his companions to Canton, now Guangzhou, in China, thus started the Muslims religious and cultural life in this part of the world. The Muslims have their distinct religious and culture values and norms and the Muslims of Hong Kong are no exemption. The Muslims of Hong Kong like other Muslims in other parts of the world have preserved their religious life and culture through their religious symbols. Amongst these religious symbols the most important and omnipresent are their worshiping places known as Mosques and their burial places known as graveyards. Mosques are not only the prayers places but also community gathering places where the Muslims are supposed to not only pray five times daily but also to discuss their worldly as well as religious problems. The graveyards are the last abode of Muslims, which are visited by the Muslims on all auspicious occasions for the remembrance of their dead family members as well as friends.*

**Keywords:** Muslims arrival in Hong Kong, Religious and cultural life in Hong Kong, Mosques, Muslim graveyards of Hong Kong

## Introduction

Hong Kong is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious society as there are hundreds of thousands of non-Chinese living and working in this mini-state city. Though the dominant section of the population is ethnic Chinese, majority of whom profess either Buddhism or Christianity, there is also quite large number of ethnic Chinese Muslims living in Hong Kong. However, these Muslim Chinese are mostly undistinguishable from the rest of Chinese people in Hong Kong.

The Muslims of Hong Kong are ethnically diversified which includes Chinese, Indonesians, Pakistanis, Indians, Malays, etc etc. Though at present majority of the Muslims in Hong Kong are Indonesians, their role in the city Muslims' religious lives is non-significant because more than 90 per cent of them are females who work here as housemaids. The religious life of Muslims in Hong Kong is generally dominated by Pakistanis and to some extent by Indians.

If we look at different mosques and madrasahs in Hong Kong, they are run by the Muslims from Pakistan. The Imam of the central mosque of Hong Kong is a Pakistani and for most of its existence this position is held by a Pakistani. The main organization of the Muslims which in short is known as "Trustees" is also having significant number of Pakistanis on their board and some have even chaired the board.

The Muslims of Hong Kong has preserved their distinctive religious and cultural life by establishing their religious institutions and symbols. In this paper an effort is made not only to trace the history of the arrival of Muslims in this area but also to dilate upon their religious symbols in Hong Kong, primarily mosques and cemeteries.

## Arrival of Muslims

The arrival of Muslims in this part of the world can be traced back to 7<sup>th</sup> century in the nearby Chinese territory of Canton (now known as Guangzhu). According to some sources the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) sent one of his companions *Hazrat Sa'ad Bin Abi*

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*Waqās* to China for the propagation of Islam in 629 A.D. He made Canton his headquarter for his missionary activities and succeeded in bringing many Chinese to the fold of Islam. *Sa'ad Bin Abi Waqās* after his death was buried in a Muslim cemetery in Canton, where his tomb is still visited by many Muslims. Later some Muslim Arabs, Persians, and Indian traders also came to China for their business activities and thus the population of Muslims increased with the passage of time.<sup>2</sup> (Haji Kafayatullah Rahmani 2012: 1 & Ahmad Balal, Interview 2013)

When the British arrived in South China they found five Muslims' mosque flourished. The Muslims had also established their settlements in Macau, where the Europeans used to visit during and between trading season with Guangzhou. In Hong Kong some Muslims lived in modern Central District known as Lower Lascar Row, the Street of the Moros, or 'Moro Kai, then situated near the harbor before reclamation even before Hong Kong became British colony. Later these Muslims dispersed into other parts of the colony like Tsim Sha Tsui, and the original road became famous as 'Cat Street', home of numerous curio and antique dealers.<sup>3</sup>

When the British extended her imperial territorial control to Hong Kong in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the South Asian Muslims also accompanied the British Masters. In the early days the South Asian Muslims were not easily distinguishable from Parsees, Hindus, and Sikh countrymen. These early South Asian Muslims were mostly seamen and traders who after arrival into Hong Kong gave a sense of identity to the Indian sub-continent Muslims. These were later joined by people from the Pakistani territories of present days Attock, Hazara, Lahore and Gujrat who were mostly traders and contractors. With the growing British Empire more people arrived from these areas as security staff which included the services of, military, police and prisons.<sup>4</sup>

Anita M. Weiss giving reference of K.N. Vaid writes in her article that there were four reasons which facilitated the arrival of South Asian Muslims in Hong Kong and later joining these services:

“Firstly, the British actively recruited South Asians into the military in India and transported them throughout the Empire to maintain law and order. Secondly, many Indians (mostly from Tamil Nadu) were sent to the Straits Settlements in Southeast Asia to work as either indentured or free laborers. In time, some of these individuals migrated to Hong Kong as sailors or traders, often with Malay Muslims. Thirdly, South Asian traders (generally from mercantile communities) were able to spread throughout the British Empire without restriction until the 1930s. Finally, the British enabled a small number of South Asians to work as petty clerks in various parts of their empire. Descendants of traders acknowledged to us that given their aptitude for English, they were able to be recruited to work in clerical positions for both the colonial government and private British trading firms, thereby enhancing their socioeconomic position in the Colony.”<sup>5</sup>

The early Pakistanis/Indians who were consisted upon seamen, traders and different security personnel started living in Central on the Hong Kong Island. The total numbers of these people were 346 men, 12 women, and 4 children out of the total population of the colony numbering 24,000 in 1845. Later these Indians also started living in Tsim Sha Tsui

when the Kowloon area was ceded to the British.<sup>6</sup>

The contacts and influence of Pakistanis/Indians was not limited to army or trade relations. Pakistanis/Indians played a significant role in the development of young territory of Hong Kong. Governor, Sir Henry Bowring in 1850 recognized the importance of all races in Hong Kong by declaring that all landholders should be equally given the right to vote.

“He listed qualified landholders as sixty-nine British, forty-two Chinese, and thirty other nationalities, which would have included Parsi and Bohra Muslim Indians, Portuguese, and a few others.”<sup>7</sup>

The number of South Asian Muslims, principally Punjabi Muslims from the present day Pakistan territories increased, as the British established firmly their colony in Hong Kong. They were working to the British government and firms in different capacities like Army Personnel, Police Constables, Marine Guards, Dockyard Guards, Watchmen, Bank Clerks, Royal Naval Dockyard Police, Ferry Supervisors, Post Office Mail Launch Guards, Sanitary Foremen and Government Drivers.<sup>8</sup>

After the creation of Pakistan two main periods are important in the context of Pakistanis' arrivals in Hong Kong. One boom period of such arrivals was 1970s and the 2<sup>nd</sup> was 1997. During these two periods hundreds of Pakistanis arrived in Hong Kong. It may also be of interest to note that it was also the 1970s period which saw the boom in cotton yarn import from Pakistan. This may be one of the reasons for the arrivals of many Pakistanis in Hong Kong. The post-1997 boom in the arrival of Pakistanis can be the result of many reasons, which include the migration of many whites, Sikhs, and other Indians as they feared that the handover to China would not be favorable to them. Though some Pakistanis also migrated, those were very few as Pakistan enjoyed very cordial relations with China, so they were not afraid of any negative impact on their lives. When thousands of people migrated from Hong Kong it created a labour vacuum which was filled by the fresh arrival of Pakistanis. There is another reason for the labour vacuum as well in Hong Kong. Around 40 per cent of Hong Kong girls of child bearing age neither have children nor do they want to give birth to, which obviously affects the labour market. To fill the labour market vacuum the Hong Kong government imports labour from other countries including Pakistan. Since Pakistanis presence in Hong Kong is spread over hundreds of years, the already settled Pakistanis bring their relatives or acquaintances whenever such opportunity arises.<sup>9</sup>

### **Muslims' Religious Life in Hong Kong**

The Hong Kong Muslim community is quite diverse in nature, however, in spite of its diversity the good aspect of their religious life is that they are overwhelmingly non-sectarian and followers of different sects can be seen intermingling with each other quite easily in religious functions. This is clear from the non-sectarian nature of main Islamic organization known as “The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong”, which is the guardian of 5 mosques out of six and all the Muslim graveyards in Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup> Though majority of the Muslims in Hong Kong are Indonesians per se, however, since almost over 95 per cent of them are working as female maids (domestic helpers) their role in the Muslim community is negligible. The other dominant group(s) are Pakistanis and Chinese Muslims who are almost equally numbered (around 25 to 35 thousand) but the Chinese Muslims have, over a period of time, become more Sinicized. Thus the Pakistani Muslims have become dominant in the overall religious life of Muslims in Hong Kong. This is also obvious from the fact that many Muslim organizations, *madrasahs* and mosques are

under the control of Pakistanis.<sup>11</sup>

Amongst host of organizations which are either founded by Pakistanis or they are playing the dominant role in those are *Madani Mashāwrat Da'wat-e- Islami*, Hong Kong, Minhāj-ul-Qur'an Organization, Hong Kong, Khatme Nubuwwat Islamic Council Limited, Hong Kong, Hong Kong Shia Asna-i-Ashari Association Limited, Hong Kong. These organizations are involved in host of religious activities like organizing regular five times daily prayers, *Eidain* prayers, special functions on religious days like *Eid Milād un Nabi*, organizing *Taraveeh* in *Ramadhan* (the fasting month), the Shia organization also regularly organizes Muharram and other days *majalis (matam)*. Besides these functions these organizations also make special arrangements for *Holy Qur'an* learning both reading and learning by heart (rote learning). There are about 25 such *Madrasahs* (religious schools) for children where they are not only taught Qur'an reading but also given basic knowledge about Islam.<sup>12</sup>

### Mosques(Shelley Mosque)

The Muslims including Pakistanis/Indians and Malay held their first congregational prayer (*Namāz Ba'a jamma'at*) at an open area at Lower Lascar Row for some time. In those days the non-Muslims were very respectful of the Muslims' religious sensitivities and they never passed through the Muslims' area when the prayers were being held and they were holding pork.<sup>13</sup>

Around 1844 for the first time the Muslims in Hong Kong applied for a piece of land for the construction of a mosque to the Government of Hong Kong. The Government allotted them on 3 December 1850 on a 999 years lease a plot called Inland Lot No. 268. This was the highest land point within the developing land of the Island. With the passage of time as the numbers of Muslims increased they started constructing a structure for their gatherings and their regular five times worshipping every day. According to the map drawn by Gordon, one British official who was posted in Hong Kong in 1843, one square structure existed within the mosque area which looked like a primitive structure of the mosque. Later they were able to build the first proper mosque at the present site of Jamia Mosque aka Shelly mosque in 1849, which can be seen in the map of the city of Victoria in 1850 at the same site where it stands today. However, there are other accounts which mention the date of construction of the mosque differently, for example while the Antiquities and Monuments office of Hong Kong mentions the date of construction of the mosque as 1849, the Government Information Service published a report about Jamia mosque in 1968 and recorded that the mosque was constructed in 1880.<sup>14</sup>

Besides prayers the mosque was used for another important function as well which was the provision of accommodation to Muslim travelers. The founders of the mosque constructed two travelers' lodges (*Musffir Khana*) with the mosque with the intention to accommodate Muslim travelers passing through Hong Kong. In those days the Muslims in the region were using Hong Kong as a transit while going to pilgrimage (*Haj*) to Mecca, so these lodges were constructed to provide them accommodation. For long these were used by the pilgrims on their way to Mecca until the modern airplanes came into use.<sup>15</sup>

This accommodation was also given to those poor Muslims who came to Hong Kong in search of jobs. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War even the Muslim women and children were allowed to stay in the lodges. Currently there are many such families who have been living there for more than 30 years and they have established their own social network.<sup>16</sup>

The present structure of the mosque was the result of a generous donation by a rich businessman from Bombay, H.M.H. Essack Elias. The reconstruction of the mosque was

inaugurated by Nakoda Suliman Curimmohamed on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1915. The reconstructed mosque is around 70 feet long, 40 feet wide and 20 feet high with a portico and minaret above that. The rebuilt mosque was now bigger than the previous one and could accommodate about 400 people.<sup>17</sup>

Syed Muhammad Noor Shah from Rawalpindi, Pakistan, was the first Imam of the mosque who served the mosque for a long time and finally returned to Pakistan after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. He died in Rawalpindi at the age of 86 in 1980.<sup>18</sup>

### **Kowloon Mosque**

Haji Kafayatullah Rahmānī, Chairman, Kowloon Mosque Reconstruction Committee in his booklet on the mosque titled *Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre, Kowloon, Hong Kong*, 2012 writes that “On May 7, 1892 ‘Mohammadans of Upper India (Khattaks & Yusufzais tribes and men from Jhelum, Shahpur, Rawalpindi, Hazara and Gujrat arrived in Kowloon to serve in the Hong Kong Regiment of the British Army.”<sup>19</sup>

Since they were accommodated in Whitfield Barracks within the Kowloon Park, they had started praying at a makeshift place within the park. Later Colonel E.G. Barrow granted them a piece of land for proper mosque which they constructed with their own donations in 1896. Along with the mosque they also constructed an ablution pond, the Imam quarter and a *Musfir Khana* (guest house) for the Muslim travelers. The original marble foundation stone is still preserved in the Kowloon mosque and it mentions Maulvi Gulāb Shāh as its first Imām.<sup>20</sup>

The writings on the foundation stone are in Persian which are translated in English as following:

**“THE HONG KONG REGT. BUILT THIS MOSQUE IN 1896 UNDER THE KIND SUPERVISION OF COL. E.G. BARROW AND REPAIRED AND REPAINTED BY THE HELP AND PERMISSION OF MAJOR BERGER IN 1902**

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Praise be to Him who is the Creator and Allah

Every person is a witness to it. It was E.G. Barrow who authorized

The construction of this place of worship. It became a reality in 1896 Of the Christian calendar. The beautiful Masjid was constructed Exclusively with the money from Muslim soldiers. Double M showed the way. Maulvi Gulāb Shāh was the Imām. It was the year 1902 Twenty second of January was the date (when) The Hong Kong Regiment Masjid was Renovated by Mir Asadullah. We thank Allah for the repairs and Pray that He protects it from destruction.<sup>21</sup>

The Kowloon mosque was initially managed and run by the Muslim soldiers of the Hong Kong Regiment but when Pakistan came into being on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the Muslim soldiers left for Pakistan and the management of the mosque was assumed by Pakistan Society/Association. After some time this responsibility was given by the Hong Kong government to the “Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong”, which is still running its affairs.<sup>22</sup> Though the mosque was run by the Muslims the land was not deeded to them upto 1972. It was only in this year that government of Hong Kong leased 16,000 sq feet of plot for 77 years to the Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong. In the early 1970s it was felt that the dilapidated conditions of the mosque, Imam quarters and guest house needed repair. Further with the passage of time the prayer area became insufficient to accommodate the growing number of Muslims. However, the government was not granting permission for its repairs. It became possible only when Tsim Sha Tsu station of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) station was

initiated that damaged the building beyond repair which made the reconstruction inevitable.<sup>23</sup>

For the damage which was caused by the MTR construction work the Mosque committee submitted a claim for HK\$1.5 million, however, the MTR corporation finally paid HK\$66,000 in June 1980. The Board of Trustees did not go for litigation as that would have cost them lot of money.<sup>24</sup>

In May 1977 the Board of Trustees appointed an Ad Hoc committee with Haji Kafayattullah Rahmānī as Chairman for the reconstruction of the mosque. After protracted correspondence with the government of Hong Kong finally the government granted permission for the construction of the Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre on 13 October 1978 and the construction work on the mosque started on 6 March 1981. In order to complete the mosque and Islamic Center in a befitting manner donations were requested from the Muslim community within and outside of Hong Kong. The bank account for donations was opened with the National Bank of Pakistan, Hong Kong. The Muslim community donated generously and collected upto August 1987 (this shows that donations continued even after the completion of the project) a total of HK \$ 24,724,652.40. Out of which a total expenditure of HK\$24,396,734.04 was incurred on the project leaving a surplus of HK\$327,918.36 in the hands of the Committee. The project was completed in 1984 and was opened for regular prayers on Friday, 11 May 1984.<sup>25</sup>

### **Happy Valley Mosque**

Happy Valley Mosque was constructed in late 19<sup>th</sup> century after the government of Hong Kong provided the land for the Muslims' cemetery there. Initially it was a small mosque especially for *janāza* (funeral) prayers. As the population of Muslims increased on the Hong Kong Island, the mosque was used more frequently by those Muslims who were living nearby. After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War the mosque was reconstructed and expanded, which continued to be used until December 1978 when the government of Hong Kong resumed it for the construction of Aberdeen tunnel approach road. The government as a compensation provided another plot to the Muslims on Oi Kwan road, Wanchai along with an amount of HK\$2.5 million.<sup>26</sup>

### **Masjid Ammar and Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre**

The Muslim community decided to make maximum use of the plot and the money, which had been given to them as compensation to the Happy Valley Mosque acquisition by the Government of Hong Kong. Thus an eight story building was constructed on the site. The Ammar Mosque is part of the larger complex of the Osman Ramju Sadick Islamic Centre. The Centre was rightly given the name of Osman Ramju Sadick, a local Muslim business man, who endowed large sum of money for the purpose. Masjid Ammar is run by the Islamic Union of Hong Kong and is a reflection of the melding of Pakistani and Chinese culture. It seems that as the intermarriages increased between the Chinese and Pakistanis, the local boys importance and influence also increased. It is also to be pointed out that with the passage of time and particularly after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War the local boys' community became the back bone of both the Islamic Union and Muslim Ummah in Hong Kong. The Islamic Union has around 700 members which mostly sounds like Pakistanis, however, 'a group photo would invariably look mostly Chinese'. Amongst the local boys most would recognize themselves as Pakistanis but some would not consider themselves as part of any single ethnic background. They consider themselves as part of a religious community rather than ethnic.<sup>27</sup>

The Islamic Union of Hong Kong organizes lunch every Friday at Masjid Ammar after Jumma Prayers. The menu of the lunch is also evident of the Pakistani culture, which includes potato and chicken curry.<sup>28</sup>

### **Cape Collinson Mosque**

The Muslim Cemetery of Ho Man Tin in Kowloon Peninsula was taken over by the government of Hong Kong in 1963 and as compensation the Muslims were provided land for cemetery at Cape Collinson. The government also constructed a small mosque for the Muslims which was opened on 4 August 1963. The mosque was constructed particularly for *janāza* (funeral) prayers and regular prayers are not offered in the mosque as the mosque is in an isolated area where no Muslims live nearby. The mosque also does not have a permanent Imam (prayer leader).<sup>29</sup>

### **Stanley Mosque**

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century around 400 prison guards were working in the Hong Kong Prison Department. Initially they were posted in Aberdeen/Victoria Prison where Shelly Mosque was nearby and the Muslims could go there to perform their prayers. However, later in the 1930s some of them had to be moved to Stanley where the government was constructing a new prison complex.<sup>30</sup>

Most of the Muslims devoutly and regularly pray. In order to provide the praying facility to around 200 Muslim guards of the Stanley Prison the British allotted a piece of land for the prayers, where they constructed in 1936 a beautiful mosque in typical Punjabi rural style in earth-brown color. The mosque was constructed near the guards' quarters and still serves the Muslim community in Hong Kong.<sup>31</sup>

With the decrease in the number of Muslim Prison guards the prayers are not regularly offered in the mosque. Further it is in a faraway place from the town where very few Muslims live and is in a restricted area, however, on special occasions like *Eidain* or *Eid Milād un Nabi* the authorities allow the Muslims to come to the mosque and offer prayers. On such occasions special buses are arranged to take the Muslims and their families to the mosque to offer prayers.<sup>32</sup>

### **Muslims' Cemeteries/Graveyards**

The burial of dead bodies of Muslims is a religious obligation for all Muslims. The first Muslim cemetery in Hong Kong was located on 7, Seymore Street, however, it did not remain operational for long as after the burial of 5 or 6 bodies the cemetery was resumed by the government of Hong Kong and the Muslims were allotted a place for cemetery at Happy Valley where the earliest graves can be found dating back to 1864.<sup>33</sup>

Cognizant of the religious sensitivities and requirements of the Muslims on 15 July 1870 Major General Henry Wase Whitfield on behalf of the colony of Hong Kong deeded a plot for Muslims' cemetery. This piece of land was located on the west side of Wong Nei Chong road which the Land Office registered as Inland Lot No. 288 in the name of "the Mussalman Cemetery".<sup>34</sup>

After the acquisition of the land for Cemetery the Muslims of Hong Kong soon built a mosque alongside the Cemetery in Happy Valley in order to perform the burial rituals. For the look-after and management of the Cemetery and the mosque, guardians were appointed by the Muslim community who happened to be invariably from the areas which are now parts of Pakistan. The boundaries of the land were specified and adjusted in 1938 along with the pronouncement "...that the Guardians should 'at their own expense maintain and repair

to the satisfaction of the Director of Public Works any buildings, paths, drains and channels [of the cemetery] and pay the wages of all servants employed by them.”<sup>35</sup>

Though the land was deeded to the Muslims, the ownership remained with the Crown, which ultimately resulted in the shifting of the mosque and many graves to the Cape Collinson Cemetery in the late 1970s when the Hong Kong government decided to build the Aberdeen Tunnel on the route which passed directly through the Muslim Cemetery of the Happy Valley.<sup>36</sup>

Another cemetery which the Muslims had established in Hong Kong was at Ho Man Tin. This was the result of the Muslim soldiers of the Hong Kong Regiment of the British Army request to their Commanding Officer to allocate them a separate place for the burial of their dead bodies in Kowloon Peninsula. The Commanding Officer accepted their request and temporarily allotted them a piece of land in the Ho Man Tin Hill, just behind the present Pui Ching School on Waterloo Road. The Muslim forces with volunteers on every Sunday used to go to the site to develop it as cemetery. They also constructed a small mosque in the cemetery for funeral prayers. Besides that they dug out a well which could be used for ablution and drinking. The fresh water of the well became an attraction for all inhabitants of Ho Man Tin and they used to come to fetch the water from the well. The cemetery and mosque were named as “Moro Garden” for its enthralling view and fresh drinking water.<sup>37</sup>

The Ho Man Tin Muslim cemetery having 50 graves was handed over to the Indian Muslim Society in 1930. The Society for the repair of the cemetery small gate, construction of the boundary wall and a small monument at its entrance started a subscription of 10 cents per member. Initially it was allotted for the burial of Muslim soldiers in the British army but after “... the Second World War, it was opened for the use of all Muslims in Hong Kong, and operated until it was closed in 1961 and the bodies subsequently exhumed and transferred to the new Muslim cemetery in Cape Collinson on Hong Kong island in 1972”.<sup>38</sup>

Though cemeteries are available for the burial of dead bodies of Muslims in Hong Kong, right from the beginning the Pakistanis take their dead ones back to Pakistan. It became particularly easy for them when Chaudhri Shujaat Hussain, became Prime Minister of Pakistan for a short period (June 2004 to August 2004) and announced free transportation of expatriates dead bodies to Pakistan by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) free of cost.<sup>39</sup> The Hong Kong cemeteries are also evident of this trend as only 5% graves belong to Pakistanis and 15 % belong to local boys while the rest are those of Chinese Muslims. These figures clearly show that Pakistanis consider themselves as visitors to Hong Kong and always yearn to be buried back at home. Even those who are buried in Hong Kong identify themselves as Pakistanis. A grave stone in the Happy Valley cemetery is evident of this thinking:

“Born in Pakistan, June 11, 1934, Died February 26, 1979”.<sup>40</sup>

Though in 1934 there was no Pakistan, still many of those who came to Hong Kong at that time or earlier consider themselves as Pakistanis. Even those who have no ties with Pakistan regard themselves as Pakistanis. “A spinster of the Arculli family identified with Pakistan (which she had never visited) to the extent that she left a large part of her estate to build a mosque in Rawalpindi.”<sup>41</sup>

Another such case is that of Syed Dawood Shah Bokhari hailing from Peshawar city, Pakistan and came to Hong Kong before the creation of Pakistan. His younger son Syed Kemal Bokhari, who retired as senior judge of the Hong Kong Appellate court, was born in Hong Kong after the creation of Pakistan; still keep mostly their Pakistani habits



of diets and other aspects of Pakistani culture. Dawood Bokhari, who is around 94 years old is sponsoring many philanthropist projects in Pakistan and has constructed a large mosque in the outskirts of Peshawar, his native town. He has also sponsored another mosque construction in the city of Karachi.<sup>42</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Migration and resettlement of the human beings in new territories is as old phenomenon as human beings themselves. In the religion of Islam it has a special importance and significance as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself embarked upon migration and resettlement in new territory when his and his followers' lives were threatened.

One of the basic principles of religious life of Islam is preaching to non-Muslims, which encourages them to go to new territories where the message of Islam has not yet reached. Islam also advises his followers that if their financial position is not good in their place of abode; they should migrate and venture into new territories for the improvement of their financial position.

In the case of Hong Kong we see both principles followed as the first arrival of Muslims in this part of the world, as early as 629 AD, was for the purpose of propagation of Islam, which resulted in conversions of some Chinese to the religion of Islam. The later arrival of Muslims particularly during the British period can be termed mostly as economic migration to this area.

The Muslims have their unique religious life which also encompasses their cultural lives. One of the most important religious institutions/symbols/places of their religious lives is the mosque, which primarily plays the role of a place of worship but the same place also provides an opportunity for the Muslims to develop contacts with each other, take cognizance of each other problems, extend support to each other and even discuss national and international issues because Islam does not make distinction between religious and political lives. Muslims are required to pray five times a day and praying collectively has more rewards than praying individually. Thus when the Muslims arrived in Hong Kong, in order to fulfil this religious obligation they started praying together and then established their mosque(s). With the increase of Muslim population in Hong Kong they needed more mosques and that's how more and more mosques were constructed in different parts of Hong Kong.

Another important religious symbol of the Muslims is graveyard. The Muslims respect their dead people by offering regular prayers in their honor and visiting their last abode of living. To fulfil this religious obligation they also have established their graveyards in Hong Kong. Though most of the expatriate Muslims of Hong Kong still prefer to take their loved ones' dead bodies to their ancestral homelands, yet there are also many of them who bury their relatives in the graveyards of Hong Kong.

The religious life of the people of Hong Kong in general is very tolerant, which also had a great influence on the lives of Muslims. This is the reason that we see the followers of different sects of Islam living and working together very amicably in the city. Even the mosques are multi-sectarian, and all sects are comfortable in praying in these mosques without any discrimination.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> This paper is the partial result of a research project which the author had carried out with the financial support of SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka in the year 2013-14.

- <sup>2</sup> Haji Kafayatullah Rahmānī, . Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre Kowloon, Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Kowloon Mosque Reconstruction Committee, 2012), 1 & Ahmad Balal, Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Hong Kong, Interview by the author, tape recording, 27 February, 2013.
- <sup>3</sup> Barbara-Sue White, *Turbans and Traders: Hong Kong's Indian Communities* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1994), 59
- <sup>4</sup> Mohammad Khan et al, *The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong* (The Trustees Board, Hong Kong, N.D), 1, Anita M. Weiss, "South Asian Muslims in Hong Kong: Creation of a 'Local Body' Identity", *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (July, 1991), 419 & Barbara-Sue White, 1 & 59.
- <sup>5</sup> (Anita, 419-420).
- <sup>6</sup> Barbara-Sue White, 18.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., 19.
- <sup>8</sup> Mohammad Khan, 1.
- <sup>9</sup> Ahmad Balal, Interview.
- <sup>10</sup> Amirali Bakerali Nasir, Solicitor & Member, Equal Opportunities Commission, Hollywood road, Central, Hong Kong, Interview by the author, tape recording, 27 November 2013.
- <sup>11</sup> Mufti Muhammad Arshad, Chief Imam, Kowloon Mosque & Islamic Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Interview by the author, tape recording, 23 November 2013.
- <sup>12</sup> Qari Muhammad Tayaib Qasmi, Chief Imam, Khatme Nubuwwat Islamic Council Limited, Shah Shui Po, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Interview by the author, tape recording, 07 December 2013 & Maulana Syed Hassan Imam, Imam, Hong Kong Shia Asna-i-Ashari Masjid and Imam Bargah, Husseini House, Wyndham Street, Central, Interview by the author, hand-written, 25 March 2013.
- <sup>13</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 420.
- <sup>14</sup> Ng Yat Fai, *A Covert Heritage: Musafir Khana and the Associated Community of the Jamia Mosque Area* (MSc unpublished dissertation submitted to the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, July 2007), 4, 9, 11 & Haji Kafayatullah Rahmani 2012, 1.
- <sup>15</sup> Ng Yat Fai, 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid., 4-5.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 18-19 & Haji Kafayatullah Rahmani 2012, 1.
- <sup>18</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 425.
- <sup>19</sup> Haji Kafayatullah Rahmani 2012, 3.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3 & 6.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., 6.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 6.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 16-68.
- <sup>26</sup> H.K. Rahmani, "Muslims Constructed a Mosque soon after their arrival in Hong Kong", *Daily Hong Kong Standard*, (4 December 1984), 10-11.
- <sup>27</sup> Muhammad Khan, *A 'Local Boy' & Chairman Building Management & Games Islamic Union of Hong Kong*, Wanchai, Hong Kong, Interview by the author, tape recording, 28 June 2013 & Anita M. Weiss, 443.
- <sup>28</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 443.
- <sup>29</sup> H.K. Rahmani, 11.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 432 & Barbara-Sue White, 116.

<sup>32</sup> H.K. Rahmani, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>34</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 425 & Barbara-Sue White, 60.

<sup>35</sup> Anita M. Weiss 1991: 425-426 & foot-note: on page 425, "This was specified in the 'Substitutional Deed of Appropriation of Inland Lot NO. 288 for the Purpose of a Mussulman Cemetery' dated 12 May 1938 (C.S.O. No. 6634/1909, Part II.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 426.

<sup>37</sup> The Incorporated Trustees of the Islamic Community Fund of Hong Kong, Information letter regarding Halal Declaration, N.D., 3 & Mufti Arshad, interview 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 427 & Mufti Arshad, Interview 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Haq Nawaz alias Abid, Managing Director, Caravan Travels, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong, Interview by the author, hand-written, 25 January 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Anita M. Weiss, 444.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Syed Dawood Shah Bokhari, Retired British Service Personnel & member of Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Interview by the author, tape recording, 05 November 2013 & Justice Syed Kemal Shah Bokhari, Non-Permanent Judge of the Hong Kong's Court of Final Appeal, Interview by the author, tape recording, 27 November 2013.

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