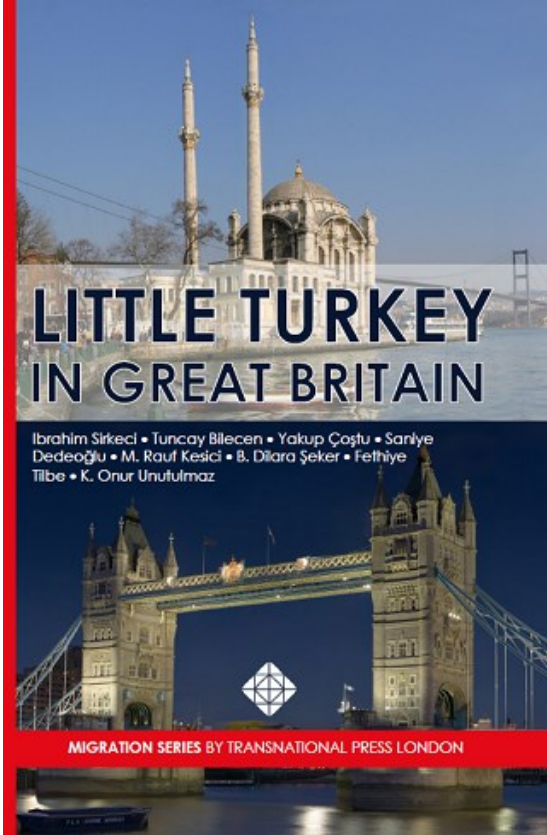


Little Turkey in Great Britain

Ibrahim Sirkeci, Tuncay Bilecen, Yakup ořtu, Saniye Dedeođlu, M. Rauf Kesici, B. Dilara Őeker, Fethiye Tilbe, K. Onur Unutulmaz

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LITTLE TURKEY IN GREAT BRITAIN

Ibrahim Sirkeci, Tuncay Bilecen, Yakup ořtu, Saniye Dedeođlu, Mehmet Rauf Kesici, Betül Dilara Őeker, Fethiye Tilbe, Kadir Onur Unutulmaz

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Introduction

Turkey saw mass labour migrations in the 1960s and 1970s, refugee migrations in the 1980s, asylum seeker flows through the 1990s, and irregular migration flows over decades from the late 1980s onwards. Migration to the UK was part of these larger population flows from Turkey. In all five distinct periods of Turkish emigration, there were some destined to the UK: 1) Unskilled and skilled workers's migration dominated the first period from 1961 to mid-1970s; 2) Family reunifications from the late 1970s onwards; 3) Refugees and asylum seekers along with contract workers to Arab countries from the late 1970s onwards; 4) Irregular migration to Western Europe in the late 1990s and 2000s; and 5) Contemporary migration from Turkey which is more varied in composition and mechanisms since the 2000s. The last two periods are also marked with the emergence of a Turkish culture of migration which ensures steady outflows but also attracts inflows from the countries where sizeable Turkish populations are present (Sirkeci, Şeker, Çağlar, 2015).

Nevertheless, migration from Turkey to the British Isles do not fit to this story line perfectly but there is still a long history producing a sizeable diaspora population and enclaves of people with origins in Turkey that have emerged in the last four to five decades. Earlier groups that arrived were Cypriots fleeing the troubled island in the Eastern Mediterranean whilst many Turks and Kurds of the mainland were not even considering the UK as a destination in the 1960s and 1970s. Migration flows from mainland Turkey to the UK have been influenced by the three key political events in Turkey. The 1980 military coup in Turkey brought a subsequent wave of Turkish movers to the UK. Prior to the 1980 military coup, a sizeable group of Alevis had arrived as refugees following the Maraş massacre in the late 1970s. The third wave of movers from Turkey was the Kurds who arrived mostly as asylum seekers mainly from south-eastern Turkey in response to the protracted armed conflict between Turkish troops and the PKK which also involved forced displacement of local populations by the State in southeastern Turkey. Though UK's Turkish diaspora community is not as large as some other ethnic groups such as Indians, it is similarly fragmented through ethnic, religious and political differences.

In line with the propositions of the conflict model of human mobility, Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Cypriots, Laz, Circassians, Zazas, Alevis, Sunnis, and others fled Turkey to avoid conflicts, to overcome difficulties and barriers, and to escape from disagreements, tensions, dislikes over the last six decades. Each and every group as well as every individual within those groups has a unique story of conflicting interests and disagreements with

what was at offer back in Turkey. Some of these are latent tensions quietly left behind whereas some others are explicit and gross conflicts which cannot be ignored and preferred not to be ignored. The latter has been brought and cultivated in 'diaspora'. Kurdish and Alevi identities are prominent issues among these brought over conflicts. This book's title emerged out of another such discussion of whether to call some communities as 'Turks in Britain' or 'British Turks'. It feels more like a half-way house between the two. The tensions between the Turks and Kurds as well as Alevis and Sunnis are as alive in the UK as they are back in Turkey and are so many shades of these tensions on a spectrum so colourful. These distinct groups that may look identical to a foreign eye have their own communities, institutions and ways in which they integrate with the mainstream and other minority populations in Britain. In any sphere of life, one may spot several nearly identical, competitive initiatives. Several think tanks reflecting the crack lines of politics in Turkey, several mosques representing different interpretations common in certain parts of Turkey, even academic groupings divided along certain political lines set in stone long ago back in Turkey.

It is important for us to clarify our definition of the population we examine here. Choice of a name is always problematic but for migrants from Turkey and Turkish Cyprus, the term 'Turkish speaking community' is commonly used. It is meant to refer to three major ethnic communities, i.e. Turkish-Cypriots, Turks, and Kurds from Turkey as well as some other minor groups such as Bulgarian or German citizens with Turkish ethnic origins. There are various analytical reasons to justify referring to these very diverse groups of people as a 'Turkish speaking community' which is widely used as an operational definition (e.g. Aksoy, 2006; Atay, 2010; Issa, 2005; Lytra & Baraç, 2009; King et al., 2008; Küçükcan, 1999; Mehmet Ali, 2001; Strüder, 2003; Unutulmaz, 2014; Wright & Kurtoglu-Hooton, 2006). Turkish is not the mother tongue for many of the individuals who are referred to in this book, however it is spoken and understood by a vast majority of them. There are Kurds speaking Kurdish and Zazaki as well as many individuals from second and third generations who express themselves in English better than any other language. Nevertheless, the focus of our study is all these groups who are either migrants from Turkey (including Turkish controlled part of Cyprus) or their descendants. These groups share a geographical and more importantly political, cultural and socio-economic space in London and elsewhere in the UK. Thus, they are engaged with one another, if not totally integrated. There is no intention to suggest or imply a cultural or otherwise homogeneity.

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Turkish migration, like any other migration stream, has also been coloured by various conflicts. Population movements from mainland Turkey and Turkish part of Cyprus are outcomes of major conflicts at the macro level as well as not so openly expressed conflicts at micro level. While the mass movement of Kurds and Alevi from Anatolia are linked to open confrontations and violent clashes particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, Turkish Cypriots have fled the Mediterranean island in response to the protracted conflict between Turkey, Greece, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots since the 1950s. As presented in chapter four, detailed accounts of a new wave of movers benefiting from the Ankara Agreement of 1963 show that individual narratives refer to rather subtle conflicts, clashes of interests, dissatisfactions, disagreements and difficulties among their motives for migration.

This book is about these contemporary movers originating from Turkey, their movement trajectories, experiences, practices, and integration in Britain. Eight researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds and methodological schools came together to do the groundwork for students of this emerging subfield of migration studies. Turkey is now at the forefront of accommodating large-scale inward mobility mostly due to the crises in Syria and Iraq. This also brings some attention to Turkey's own diasporic populations as well as Turkey's migration history.

Unlike large Turkish communities found in countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, and Switzerland; Turks, Kurds and Turkish Cypriots are relatively small minority groups in the United Kingdom. Despite some unsubstantiated claims by several NGOs, thinktanks and some 'careless' academics, the number of movers originated from Turkey and Turkish section of Cyprus and their descendants born in the UK are estimated to be somewhere between 180,000 and 250,000 (Sirkeci & Esipova, 2013). We believe anything beyond this range are unsubstantiated claims, which, unfortunately, are very common. The number of arrivals, asylum seekers, settlements, naturalisations, and some demographic trends are presented in this book. Nevertheless, this relatively small population has been part and parcel of a British-Turkish culture of migration. That is to say that now a two-way migration corridor is established between the two countries and increasing exposure to what is "Turkish" have made Turkey a potential destination for British to visit more often and settle in thousands. Perhaps not comparable to the size of Turkish population in Britain but a significant number of British citizens have already settled in Turkey, particularly in southwest coastal areas.

The events unfolded in Turkey since 2011, Gezi protests, 17-25 December operations, general and presidential elections, restarting conflicts between the state and PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), the failed military coup on 15 July 2016 and the purge that followed have provided more fuel to the fire. Thus, one should expect more immigration from Turkey to Britain in the near future. These flows may include some asylum seeking movers but given the established culture of migration between the two countries, all types of movers arriving in various channels are more likely. While the purge pushes more intellectuals and academics arriving, Ankara Agreement and education opportunities are likely to be exploited more often by Turkish citizens who seek security.

Starting with the migration of Cypriot Turks in the 1940s, growing with Turkish immigrants from Turkey in the 1970s, and also the Kurdish immigrants from Turkey in the 1990s, nowadays Britain has a sizeable population composed of Cypriot Turks, Turks and Kurds from Turkey (Ladbury, 1977; Robins & Aksoy, 2001; Mehmet Ali, 2001; Issa, 2005). These immigrant communities have a heterogeneous composition owing to differences in their life styles, experiences, ideas, feelings, hopes and expectations. Therefore, these immigrants have been observed living in the different ethnic, ideological, cultural and religious communities for decades.

Content of this book

In this book, we have attempted to provide a comprehensive account of social, economic, cultural, religious, and demographic aspects of the population in London who originally came from Turkey and Turkish part of Cyprus. In chapter one, we present the facts about the size, spatial characteristics and some other features of this particular population.

In chapter two, we are outlining the main patterns of ethnic and religious identity, mother tongue, preferred languages used on a day to day basis, as well as employment and education as indicators of integration. There are significant differences between Turkish and Kurdish segments as well as men and women regarding various aspects of identity and integration.

Chapter three discusses findings from our study on political participation in London. It is clear that political interests and participation levels differ between Turkish Cypriots, Turks and Kurds partly determined by the contemporary political agenda, political baggages brought in from Turkey, and migration history.

Ankara Agreement has a special place in Turkish movers in London as when the other “doors” for immigration faded this special agreement signed in 1973 (and became binding for the UK in 1963, when the country

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joined the European Economic Community) emerged as another formal channel to move to the UK. We dissect the moves and challenges faced by these particular movers in chapter four.

Chapters five and six focus on labour market and employment experiences of movers from Turkey with a particular focus on London where majority resides. The role of ethnic economy and women's -often hidden- contribution is discussed in these chapters.

Chapter seven begins with a snapshot of remittances by Turkish movers in the UK before moving onto outlining the ways and mechanisms used and invented at the face of cost and security challenges when sending usually small – and sometimes large- sums of money to Turkey.

Chapter eight offers an inventory of religious organisations formed in the UK by movers from Turkey. The diversity of religious convictions is obvious while the main purposes of these organisations univocally include the desire to preserve the heritage cultures. Some organisations are seemingly more politicised than others.

In chapter nine, we move away from what is “political” but still serious as we look into football and its magic power in bringing adversary groups together literally on the same pitch. We look into ways in which identity is negotiated and renegotiated through ethnic community football leagues established and organised by Turkish speaking communities for over four decades.

This book is an attempt to offer a comprehensive understanding of multiple facets of diaspora communities of Turkish origin in the UK. We have covered certain aspects better than others and surely there are features and issues left out. Nevertheless, we do hope our effort will be perceived as a first step to better understanding this particular group of movers and will be of use in understanding others in other contexts and countries.