

Libyan Residents in Britain and Identity of Place

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Abstract : Large-scale Libyan emigration is a relatively new phenomenon. Most of the Libyan families in the UK are new immigrants, unlike the other neighbouring countries of Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria and even Sudan. Libyans have no particular history of large-scale migration. On the other hand, many Libyan families live in modest homes located in large Muslim communities of Pakistanis and Yemenis. In the UK as a whole, there are currently 16 Libyan schools most of which are run during the weekend for children of school age. There are three such weekend schools in Sheffield that teach a Libyan school curriculum, and Libyan women and men run these schools. Further, there is also a Masjid (mosque) that is operated by Libyans, beside the other Masjids in the city, which most of the Libyan community attend for prayer and for other activities such as writing marriage contracts. The presence of this Masjid increases the attraction for Libyans to reside in the Sheffield area. This paper studies how Libyan immigrants in the UK make their decisions on their housing and living environment in the UK. Libyan residents in the UK come from different Libyan regions, social classes and lifestyles; this may have an impact on their choices in the interior designs of their houses in the UK. A number of case studies were chosen from Libyan immigrants who came from different types of dwellings in Libya, in order to compare with their homes and their community lifestyle in the UK and those in Libya. This study explores the meaning and the ways of using living rooms in Libyan emigrants' houses in the UK and compares those with those in their houses back in their home country. For example, the way they set up furniture in rooms acts as an indicator of the hierarchical structure of society. The design of furniture for Libyan sitting rooms for floor-seating is different from that of the traditional English sitting room. The paper explores the identity and cultural differences that affected the style and design of the living rooms for Libyan immigrants in the UK. The study is carried out based on the "production of space" theory that any culture has its needs, style of living and way of thinking. I argue that the study found more than 70% of Libyan immigrants in the UK still furnish the living room in their traditional way (flooring seating).

Keywords : place, identity, culture, immigrants

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