

The Spatial Evolution Of The Asian Community In Glasgow

-Sheela Shrivastava*

The urban geographer looks at communities as the spatial expression of the city's social characteristics. Perhaps the very important task which confronts urban geographers in the 1970's is the need for more thorough and systematic work on the life styles of distinctive groups. We know very little about the minority groups and their differences in language, religion, home background and other social attributes. As suggested by Berry¹, this is an important topic for urban geographers to know more about the people who live in what places and to know something of the characteristics of the people who live at differential densities. Rex and Moore² argued that ethnic conflicts in the 'twilight' areas of British cities were primarily the result of competition for housing among people whose position in the market could be understood in terms of several competing housing classes. Most of the coloured immigrants settled near the sources of unskilled employment. The central business districts in the beginning, seemed to provide the largest source of unskilled employment opportunities and many of the adjacent residential areas had been abandoned by their original residents (because of centrifugal movement and decentralisation), so that the majority of the new comers tend to concentrate in these areas and thus pressure on the lower end of the housing scale is increased. Also due to their different culture, custom, language, religion, socio-economic & home background, and due to their different perception of residential areas, they tend to settle in different concentrations in different parts of the British cities. Thus spatial distribution of the minority group in a British city seems to be more interesting.

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1. B.J. L. Berry and F. E. Horton— **Geographic Perspectives on Urban Systems.** (New Jersey Prentice Hall 1970), p 306.
2. J. Rex and R. Moore— **Race, Community and Conflict, A Study of Sparkbrook** (London: o.u.p., 1967), pp 19-41.

Literature

Immigration seems to have become a relevant subject for urban research. Although a number of studies³ on immigration has been accumulated, important literature on the coloured immigrants in Britain only became available after 1960. In United Kingdom some valuable work had been done by sociologists but they had tended to concentrate largely on problem residential areas, using an intensive case study, social anthropological approach almost exclusively. Ruck's⁴ study is based largely on an analysis of enquiries made by Citizen Advice Bureaux and casework offices. It was, therefore, primarily a study of the problems of immigrants taking no account of the immigrants who did not need to resort to any social welfare agencies at all. R. Glass⁵ had also worked on West Indians and had used records collected in the Migrant Service Division of the West Indies Commission but had apparently not followed this up by any form of interviewing among the immigrants themselves on a systematic basis.

Glasgow Problem

Although studies have been made in some other areas in Britain, Glasgow situation seemed not to have been intensively researched. It seems that the sum of information concerning the population of Glasgow is incomplete without some analysis of the Asian population and the general planning problems of the city can not be fully analysed without a detail information concerning immigrants in Glasgow.

3. A. H. Richmond, **Colour Prejudice in Britain** London, (London O.U.P., 1950). J. Chandra - "Migration & Social Change, A Survey of Indian Communities overseas." *Geog. Review*, 58, 1968, pp. 437-38; K. Little - **Negroes in Britain** (London, Routledge, 1947). N. Deakin, **Colour Citizenship & British Society**, (Herts: Panther; 1970), M. Banton, **The Coloured Quarters of London** (Cape Jonathan, 1955) P. Collison, "Immigrants & Residence," *Sociology* 1, (1967), pp. 292-99; R. Glass - **New Comers, The West Indians in London**, (London: Allen & Unwin; 1960), R. B. Davison, **The Distribution of Immigrant Groups in London**, *Race*, 5, (1963), pp. 56-70; R. Huw Jones & Maureen Davenport, "The Pakistani Community in Dundee," *Scottish Geog Magazine* 88, (Sept. 1972), pp 75-85; R. L. Morrill, "The Negro Ghetto, Problems & Alternatives," *Geog. Review* 55, (1965), pp. 339-361; S. Patterson, **Dark Strangers** (London: Tavistok Pub. 1963); S. K. Ruck, **The West Indians Come to England** (London: Routledge, 1960.)
4. S.K. Ruck-Op. Cit.
5. R. Glass-Op.Cit.

The present study aimed to investigate the Asian Community in the city of Glasgow. Besides the obvious advantage in choosing a local city, there were other good points which made Glasgow's immigrant community particularly interesting. Glasgow is exceptional among major British cities in that a very high proportion of its immigrant population is Indian and Pakistani, with the expected West Indian population notably absent. The overall proportion of immigrants is quite low, with an estimated population of 12,000 representing about 1.3% of the total population of the present city of Glasgow.

In recent years Glasgow has received an influx of coloured immigrants an experience which it shares with most other major British cities. As elsewhere, they have settled in a few small areas, where they form a distinctive sub-group within the urban population. In doing so, they have given rise to a set of specific planning problems particularly within the fields of housing and education. Inevitably, the planner's response will be conditioned by the spatial extension of the immigrant community, and it is the purpose of this study to describe the spatial evolution that has taken place in the past, to examine their present distribution in the city, and to attempt to recognise the major processes involved so that one might rightly reasonably speculate about the future.

In the case of immigrant communities, it is often assumed that they will endeavour to attain goals and emulate life-styles that are concomitant with those of the host society through a process of centrifugal diffusion. Where this is not taking place one is tempted to look for explanations involving some form of discrimination, lowly economic status or some other form of social injustice. In such case the role of the planner is perceived as one which promotes integration and assists the fulfilment of essentially European residential and societal goals, through some manipulation of the urban system. Studies of the Negro ghettos of North America⁶ have emphasised the element of compulsive segregation that is to be found, and have sought to model the outward mobility of the Negro population in terms of white aspirations and life-styles by the use of, for example, Monte Carlo simulation and Markov Chains⁷.

For a number of reasons such studies seem inappropriate in the case of Glasgow's Asian community, and one is led to believe that their response to

6. C.R. Hansell and W.A.V. Clark, "The expansion of the Negro ghetto in Milwaukee", *Econ. Soc. Geogr.*, 60, (1970), pp. 267-277; H.M. Rose, "The development of an urban sub-system: the case of the Negro ghetto," 60, (1970), *A.A.A.G.*, pp. 1-17.
7. R.L. Morrill, *The Negro Ghetto: problems and alternatives*, *Geog. Review*, 55, (1965), pp. 339-361.

the environment and society within which they find themselves is substantially different to that of the American Negro or Commonwealth citizens of Negro origins. Of fundamental importance to this issue is the immigrant's own perception of his role and status within the host society. Just as the American Negro considers himself to be a fully fledged citizen identifying with that society's goals, so does the West Indian immigrant hope to be accepted by British society. Asians, however, remain conscious of their vastly different cultural background, and appear to regard Britain as a place of work where they might settle for a while, and whence they remit substantial sums of money to families to whom they intend ultimately to return. Living in self segregated communities, they tend to retain as much of their way of life as possible, and not to value social integration. The prediction of patterns of spatial evolution is further complicated by the fact that the Asian population is itself sharply differentiated along national, religious and class lines, each sub-group of which is capable of exhibiting an individual environmental response.

For the above reasons it was felt that the spatial evolution of the Asian community in Glasgow merited investigation.

Data Base

Unavailability of adequate data appears to have been one of the main causes which hindered research on the immigrant groups of British cities.

In the beginning great difficulties were encountered in this study, since no records have been kept by the Census Office about the details of immigrant in Glasgow. The 1961 Census was the first to publish statistics on the number of immigrants based on birthplace. Unfortunately, there are a number of problems which result in the census being of little use for this kind of research work.

So in the absence of precise census data the difficulties of estimating Asian immigrants in Glasgow are considerable. Unlike the West Indian Govt., the Indian and Pakistani Governments have issued no figures of emigrants from their countries to the United Kingdom. The British Govt. has not published

8. The majority of the coloured immigrants in Glasgow are Indians and Pakistanis, so this work is mainly concentrated on the study of these groups. For the convenience of discussion the term "Asian Community" has been used in the context for both Indians and Pakistanis.

records of actual migrants from these countries either. However, the information gathered from different Indian and Pakistani associations and the concerned High Commissions in Glasgow in 1972 indicates the size of the Pakistani Community as about 7,000 and the Indian about 5000, giving a total of 12,000 Asians altogether.

After estimating the size of the Asian community in Glasgow one can proceed to further investigation. A properly constituted field survey was the only effective means of obtaining reasonably reliable detailed information about the Indians and Pakistanis in the city, so that the primary research technique in this study was a sample survey. The basic instrument used was the personal interview,⁹ conducted by means of a structured questionnaire with persons chosen according to random sampling. There were many advantages in the use of the interview survey as a research method, especially in the case of Asians. The interviewer could make sure that an Asian respondent fully understood the nature of the information that he or she was being asked to give. Other advantages which were felt with the Asians were that the interview generally yielded a high response, either because people were usually willing to co-operate when approached personally, or for the negative reason that they did not wish to appear uncooperative. Also the interviewer could obtain supplementary information about the respondent and could discuss subjects about which the respondent was likely to be sensitive.

The first requirement for this kind of survey is a complete list of persons belonging to the Indian and Pakistani groups, so that an appropriate sample can be selected for an intensive study. This sampling frame presented problems since there is no available list of names and addresses. The telephone directory records kept by the Health Officer, lists available from the different associations of the Asian community were all consulted, but none of them seemed to be of any use.

Similarly the 'snowball method' where in one proceeds from an initial contact to others nominated by him, and 'points of contact' method, where in one consults organised bodies, mentioned by Rowley in the I. B. G. conference in Birmingham 1972, did not appear to be very helpful in the city like Glasgow with 12,000 Asian immigrants.

Although there are many ways of identifying the general present day

9. C.A. Moser and G. Kalton, *Survey Methods in Social Investigation*, (London: Heinemann, 1971), p 270.

location of the Asian community, when one attempts to carry the investigation into the past the number of available sources is sharply reduced. Inevitably one is obliged to consult documentary evidence, of which the most useful is the annual Register of Electors. Unlike the census it provides an annual rather than decennial record, and provides information on individual households, so that a high level of locational precision is possible. It is the best available source to be used for the purposes of sample frame and general location, and thus the distribution of electors at a number of dates has been mapped. And then for the more detailed information, it has been followed by a questionnaire survey of 10% of all households in the main concentrations of Asian inhabitation, and also in suburbs to include the people from different socio-economic status, and the opportunity was taken to check the locational patterns revealed by the electoral register, which proved to be surprisingly accurate throughout. Each household was asked a range of questions concerning demographic structure, housing condition, residential mobility, employment and education. To overcome the limitation of the closed-questions and to avoid the loss of spontaneity most questions were 'open-ended' in order to obtain more detailed & qualitative informations. The replies were spontaneous, free and in respondent's own words.

The Evolving Spatial Pattern---

The distribution of Asian electors was mapped for three different periods since 1951, and on this basis four areas of main Asian concentration, two on the north of River Clyde and the other two in the South, were identified. Figure 1 shows the location of Asian electors in 1951. It seems that main concentration of residences was in the Gorbals, the slum area of Glasgow. Particularly noticeable is the extreme concentration in Nicholson Street. Other locations were similar to the Gorbals in that they, too, were close to the city centre. At that time Asians were normally to be found working in poorly-paid jobs with irregular hours, such as in transportation, in ware housing or as waiters and washers-up in central restaurants, where they acquired skills that have since given rise to numerous Asian restaurants throughout central Glasgow. In such jobs, easy access to their place of work was clearly important. Equally important was their demand for cheap rented accomodation, and like many other incoming groups, they found this in the twilight zone around the central business district.

Continuing immigration through the 1950s raised the Asian population to around 3,000 by 1961. It was becoming increasingly obvious that, in the near future, Britain was likely to impose controls on immigration, so that by the

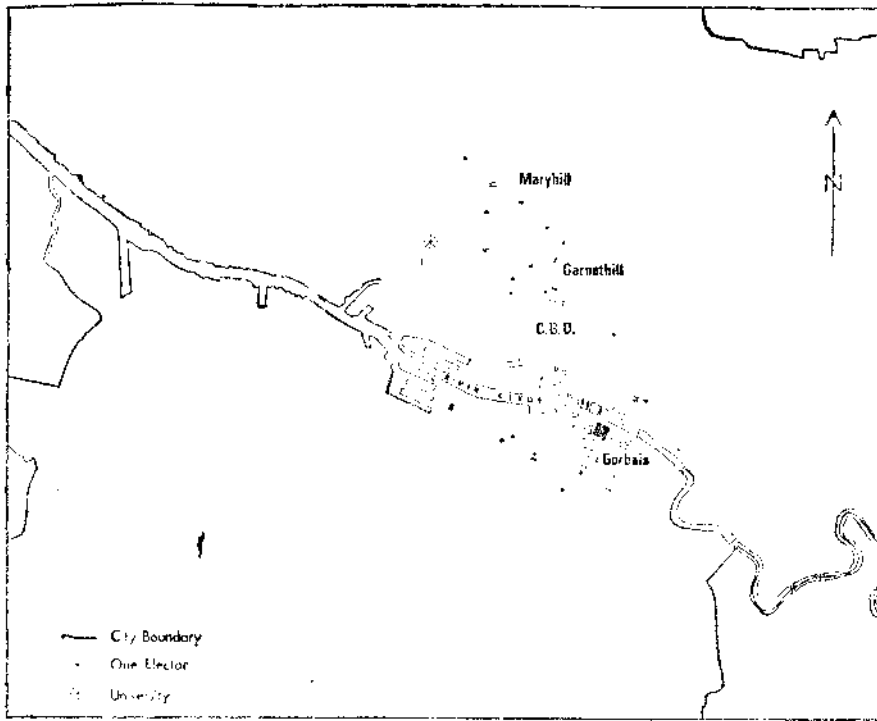


Fig. 1—The Distribution of Asians in 1951.

end of this period the flow of immigrants increased, especially as heads of households secured their entry. Their locations in 1961 depicted in Fig 2, seem to be the result of diffusion from the nuclear areas already identified. The primary nucleus of the Gorbals appears to have extended to areas of newer tenement housing in Pollockshields and Govanhill. Many of the Asians moving in at this time enjoyed a higher status than did the earlier arrivals. In general they came from a more affluent backgrounds, had a better education & had often owned small business prior to their emigration. Accordingly at this time, a new occupational structure began to emerge with a shift from fairly menial employment towards the establishment of small family businesses.

To the north of the River Clyde a similar set of movements took place from Garnethill to the more substantial properties of Woodside. A few leaders went as far as Hillhead, which, although in decline to a certain extent, still contained substantial property, and which was used to the rental Market as a result of the proximity of the university. Elsewhere, the declining dockland areas attracted a few arrivals.

From 1961 to 1971 the locational pattern was once more extended, as is shown in Figure 3. During this period the Gorbals were more or less evacuated, partly through voluntary migration and partly because of the extensive demolition then going on in that area.

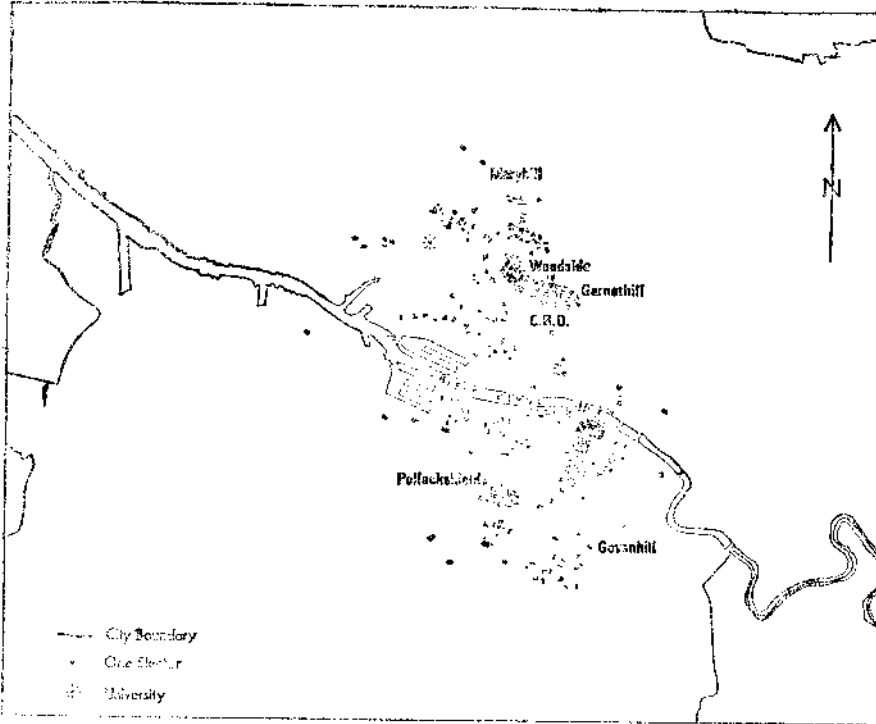


Fig. 2--The Distribution of Asians in 1961.

In the South of the city one of the most distinctive features was a massive accumulation in Pollockshields East. This is an area of tenement buildings formerly associated with the Corporation tramworks, the gas-works and a variety of industrial activities, most of which have now disappeared. These industrial zones, both functioning and derelict, continue to provide a perceived barrier to expansion in the North and East. Further barrier of high-cost villa housing effectively prevent outward diffusion in the South and West, so that the area of Asian occupation is very much isolated and spatially constrained.

An extensive area of tenement housing in Govanhill provides the second nucleus and has proved most attractive in the last ten years, particularly to the

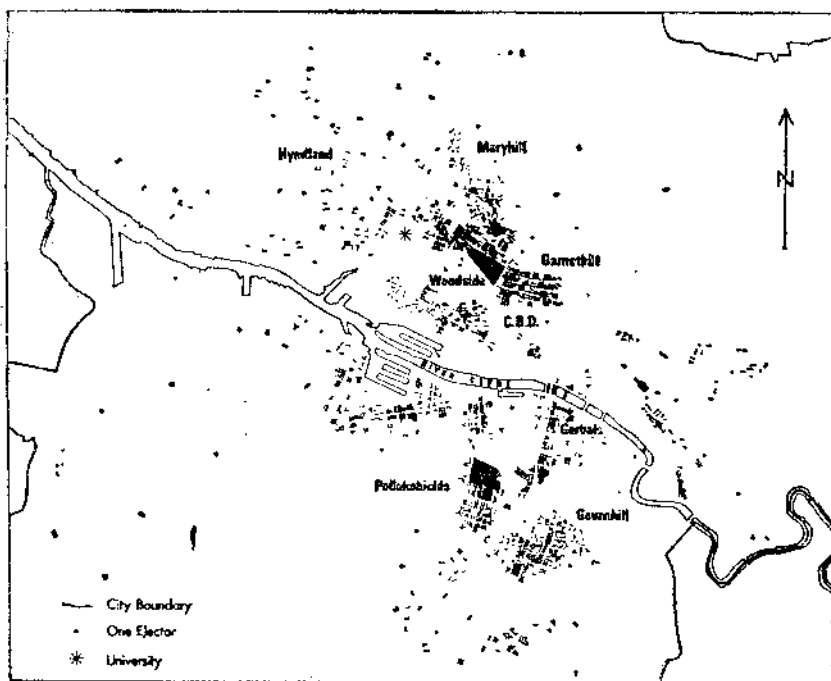


Fig. 3—The Distribution of Asians in 1971.

Pakistani population. New sources of accommodation have been tapped in the last ten years & the Asians are now to be found following the main westward routes.

In the North, apparent diffusion in a North-westerly direction came up against the virtually impenetrable barrier of high cost, high status Kelvindale, and split into two main directions. One ran due northwards along the line of Maryhill Rd; again in tenement property, while the second ran south of Kelvindale past the university and on to Partick. Only in a very few cases have Asians moved to the suburbs or even out of grey sandstone tenements, although recently a number of families have been able to acquire much more substantial red sandstone¹⁰ flats in the relatively newer and more prestigious area of

10. Red sandstones is usually harder than grey and is thus more difficult to work, and because it has been much less corroded and weathered than the latter, it is in very good condition in most cases. In Glasgow a red sandstone tenement is believed to be indicative of a higher social status than a grey.

Hyndland. Pakistani polarisation is discovered in the south of the river where as Hindus are mainly located in the North.

The Processes of Residential Mobility—

The patterns of movement thus described appeared to accord well with the concept of centrifugal diffusion, in that the spatial expansion of the Asian community has been away from the city centre in an axial pattern. Fig. 3, particularly, gives the impression that this is being carried out at a considerable speed. The specific process involved would seem to be one of uncontested filtering rather than aggressive invasion and succession, for only in a few limited areas Asian households form more than 40% of the total.

The channels along which the diffusion has taken place reflect nothing more than the occupance of a particular building type, the grey sandstone tenements. These were built along the main routeways of the city, especially in the years before 1880. Normally those tenement areas closest to the city centre are the most heavily occupied while those furthest away have hardly been reached as yet. The barrier effect of high cost, high status housing has already been noted, while at the other end of the housing scale, local authority housing covers extensive tracts from which Asians are debarred by residential qualifications and their extreme reluctance to rent property.

The situation thus seems to be one where in it would be relatively simple to predict future trends through the simulation of the processes described¹¹. However, when one examines the residential goals revealed in the questionnaire survey, it becomes apparent that the position is by no means as simple as it might seem. 90% of those interviewed, either indicated that they did not wish to change their address at all or else nominated location within the major Asian concentrations. This latter choice was particularly expressed by those families who were living at the periphery of the cluster or who were located at the apparent wave-front of the diffusion. Detailed analysis of individual household moves and their motives for residential change, recorded in the questionnaire survey shows that past behaviour has accorded closely with declared intentions. Not only it contradicts the assumption of outward diffusion but also confirms the process of concentration wherein a newly formed household

11. In this context it is particularly tempting to attempt simulation through the use of Monte Carlo methods.

moves to a peripheral location in a cluster only to relocate more centrally as soon as the opportunity arises.

Conclusion

The majority of individual movements within the sample areas did not support the concept of outward diffusion from a nucleus area. The distribution of Asian households appears to indicate just such a process, but this seems to be largely illusory and one does not seem to be justified in imagining that a sectoral distribution pattern implies a sectoral expansion process. In this case there is no direct relation between process and pattern, except that group expansion contrasts with individual concentration. Since the grey sandstone housing has traditionally been the sole type of housing available to Asians in terms of cost, location and vacancy, it is hardly surprising that there should be a high level of coincidence in their respective distributions and that of the Asians should thus replicate the pattern of centrifugal linear expansion. The analysis of individual moves confirms that the majority of relocations are centripetal to the city as a whole and virtually all are centripetal to the main Asian residential concentrations which have become established self segregated clusters. A great deal of work remains to be done here because housing availability involves the study of the rate at which the housing comes into the market within specific areas, the pattern of social areas within the city, Asian perceptions and images of these and the pattern of information flows within the Asian community, search behaviour and is a topic which merits further investigation.

The intensity of this syndrome appears to vary by ethnic group & social class. Within the Indian population in particular, a proportion of the community have adopted middle-class British residential goals, nominating ideal addresses in those suburbs which are generally perceived as having a high environmental quality. Those who have achieved such goals tend to be professional men, especially doctors & teachers & these people tend to leave the concentrated areas as soon as possible & move directly to the suburb without stopping at a temporary point on the way. But a very small minority is considered as a professional class, and even in suburbs they tend to concentrate in particular areas.

On the basis of the above study some specific planning problems seem to be recognisable in the field of education and housing.

Glasgow has adopted a policy of Area comprehensive in the field of education, so it is apparent that the proportion of Asian children will rise very considerably in a limited number of schools. Already propositions of up to 2/3 may be seen in the primary schools in Glasgow, while large number of children have yet to reach school age. Although the effects of high concentration on the Glasgow school system are difficult to forecast at the moment, there seem to be a language problem, a comparatively low performance of the Asian pupils and problems raised by different parental attitudes.

A second major problem is related with housing. A considerable proportion of Asian property is marked for eventual demolition in the redevelopment plan. With their deep-seated aversion to renting property except as a very temporary expedient, and with quite low re-housing priority, it seems likely that the Asian population will suffer considerable disruption as a result of redevelopment.

What is felt very essential is the need of systematic statistical records. Some people argue that to differentiate people by colour and racial origin is discriminatory, but statistics are needed to measure the extent of the specific educational, housing and other problems of the Asians in the city, otherwise proper planning will be impossible.