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## Diversity Within Islam and Its Institutional Representation in Poland<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The article is dedicated to the Muslims in Poland, with a special focus on their institutional representation. This religious minority encircles a diverse populace in terms of the path in Islam they adhere to, ethnicity, country of origin, but also the legal status they have in Poland. It includes Muslim Tatars, former students from Arab countries who have been living in this country for decades, as well as transient groups war refugees from Chechnya, Afghanistan or the Balkans, esp. Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author argues that institutionalized entities of religious character which associate Muslims in the country, organize their presence in religious terms and represent them, reflect major divisions within the Muslim populace in the country. A key factor is the duration of their settlement – it is concomitant to, if not more important than, tensions between the Sunnis and Shiites.

### Keywords:

Islam, Muslims, Poland, religious minority, institutional representation, religious diversity

### INTRODUCTION

The article argues that existence of religious entities which claim to represent the *umma* in Poland do not mirror the whole panorama of Islam worldwide but they rather reflect major divisions within the Muslim populace in the country. Those

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relate not only to the faith itself, i.e., particular paths of Islam, but also their power of representation. It translates to their survival ability which is contingent on support within the community, capacity to grant relevant infrastructure, incl. houses of worship and services of religious and non-religious character. Such services entail maintaining organizational resources allocated for the purpose of proper worship and observance of religious holidays, spiritual guidance based upon written and oral interpretation of the doctrine, providing ministers or reverends, community leaders, role models or other persons of reference for the purpose of solidifying the moral framework for everyday activity of the adherents, sense of belonging to the community, support in the event of doubts concerning the most adequate fulfilment of religious instruction and, last but not least, spiritual, cognitive and psychological assistance in the times of crisis. Those may be even more desired when adherents have a minority status, in quantitative and qualitative terms, which is definitely the case of Muslims in Poland. This paper presents the panorama of institutional representation of Islam in Poland together with a key division within the Muslim populace in Poland in terms of their representation, based on a colossal difference in the duration of their settlement. Alongside with discrepancies concerning the faith itself, the extent of time they have spent in the country is of note. This factor is concomitant to, if not more important than, tensions between the Sunnis and Shiites with reference to representation of Islam in Poland.

### **MARGINAL PRESENCE OF THE FAITH IN ALLAH IN POLAND**

Compared to other EU member states, presence of Islam is marginal in Poland (Kubicki, 2006; Pędziwiatr, 2011) and its visibility is exceptionally low in this country. Estimations concerning the number of Muslims in Poland are from as little as 15 up to 40 thousand persons in the society having a total population which amounts to approximately 38 million people. This discrepancy results from the fact that those encircle a very diverse populace not only in terms of a particular path in Islam they adhere to, their ethnicity and country of origin, but also the legal status they have in Poland, with the latter contributing to limited possibilities of identifying the factual numbers for statistical purposes. What is more, answering questions concerning one's religious self-identification appeared in the National Census only in the year 2011, which is the first time such data has been collected since the year 1931. Declaration with this respect was voluntary, with a possible answer: *I do not want to answer this question*, provided to respondents and, interestingly, the results

did not even expose the existence of Muslim populace although it is evidently present in the country. This populace encompasses such disparate categories as, just to give examples, Muslim Tatars, former students from Arab countries who have been living and working in this country for decades, including those who are professionals, esp. in the field of medicine, engineering or the academia, and have quite a stable sociodemographic position, as well as groups with a contrary situation, i.e., underprivileged war refugees<sup>3</sup> from Chechnya, Afghanistan or the Balkans, esp. Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Although the total number of Muslims is meager in Poland there are institutionalized entities of religious character established with the aim to congregate them, organize their presence in religious terms and speak for them. This is also the case with other denominations, including Judaism, Protestant and Orthodox churches, which have laid foundations and established institutions in order to provide official representation and the leeway for their disciples to cultivate the faith. Along with other basic rights, incl. freedom of creed and its expression, the Polish Constitution guarantees the right to establish associations of religious character and grants them the right to institute and maintain places of cult for their adherents.<sup>4</sup> The Polish law provides normative acts concerning the material rights (Tomkiewicz, 2013, pp. 215–227) of particular religious associations, incl. the right to own, sell and purchase real estate with the purpose to establish places of cult. Similarly to other European countries, their execution in the case of Islam, esp. construction of mosques, is commonly a subject of protests (more in: Nalborczyk, 2011, pp. 183–193, 2012, pp. 39–61) and moral panic concerning the recurrently professed overflow of the continent with the disciples of Allah.

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<sup>3</sup> Generally speaking, they have a feeble legal, social and material status, many of them reside in Poland with an intention to migrate to Western Europe or Scandinavia. Their participation in institutional activities is minor and they are not of much importance in the dichotomy presented in the next section of the paper.

<sup>4</sup> The Constitution, enacted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1997, guarantees in Chapter 1, Art. 25, Section 2, impartiality of public authorities of the Republic of Poland concerning religious creed, world and philosophical views and assents freedom of their expression in public life. Art. 25, Section 1 stipulates the principle of equal rights for churches and religious associations in the country. Section 3 of the same Article yields respect for autonomy, reciprocal independence in their respective scopes of activity and cooperation with the objective being the welfare of individuals and the common good as the standards governing relations of the State with churches and other religious associations. Freedom of religion and conscience is granted in Chapter 2 of the Constitution titled “Freedoms, rights and obligations of an individual and citizen”, under a heading ‘Freedoms and individual rights’ by Art. 53, Sections 1–7. In particular, Section 2 of the Article specifies that freedom of religion includes the right to possess houses of worship and other places of cult, depending on the needs of the believers, and the right of persons to seek religious assistance.

## DIVERSITY OF INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM IN POLAND

A key feature of the Muslim populace in Poland in terms of their institutional representation is the fact that it incorporates collectivities which may be roughly divided into two categories: 1/ the ones who appeared in this country over 600 years ago, gradually integrated with the society and have been striving to cultivate the Islamic heritage of their ancestors and 2/ newcomers, mostly from the Middle East countries, who have been settling down in Poland since approximately the 1970s, initially attracted to the country upon intergovernmental agreements, commonly with respect to competitive advantages of undertaking university studies in this country and some who came later on, upon accession of Poland to the EU, due to immigration or exile, including the ones from the former Yugoslavia, and small numbers from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Chechnya. These categories are certainly internally heterogeneous. This division is partially reflected in diversity of institutions which represent them.

Institutional diversity with reference to associations of religious character has been fomented in Poland since the demise of communism. Alongside with the systemic change from communism to capitalism there was an eruption of favourable orientations towards pluralism in legislative, political, cultural and religious terms. Thereby, legal possibilities of establishing new associations of religious, likewise non-religious, character substantially increased. Nalborczyk and Ryszewska (2013, pp. 13–36) refer to this process with respect to presence of Islamic religious organizations in Poland as a changeover from monopoly to pluralism.

To make the picture more structured, there are a few factors which foment diversity of religious organizations that represent Muslims in Poland: 1/ an inflow of Muslims to the country over the past few decades, however scanty in numbers, 2/ new legislative opportunities that have been granted after the collapse of communism which translated religious diversity into an institutionalized form. What is more, there appeared 3/ a need for alignment with European Union legislative recommendations upon the attempts made by Poland to be acknowledged as a candidate state and, later, accepted as an EU-member state. There are also factors of a larger spectrum than the national-scale context. Those include globalization, networking of local organizations, growing power of transnational Muslim organizations which exhibit interest in widening the geographic domain of their influence.

According to GUS (2013),<sup>5</sup> there are five institutionalized entities of religious character which represent Islam in Poland. Those are the Muslim Religious Union

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<sup>5</sup> Abbreviation of Główny Urząd Statystyczny, English translation: the Central Statistical

of Poland, Muslim Unity Society, Ahl-ul-Bayt Islamic Congregation, Ahmadiyya Moslem Association and the Muslim League in the Republic of Poland. The Table 1 (provided at the end of the article) presents the official data on those Islamic religious associations, collected and assembled on the basis of data provided by GUS (2013).<sup>6</sup> The two that are considered the most important in terms of their power of representation are the Muslim Religious Union of Poland and the Muslim League in the Republic of Poland. The remaining three, that is: the Muslim Unity Society, Ahl-ul-Bayt Congregation and Ahmadiyya Moslem Association, are formally of minor impact. Those are small organizations, with the numbers of registered members ranging from 45 to merely 60 and a scanty presence in the mass media or the public sphere. However, they may have relatively large numbers of unregistered supporters in comparison to the official figures.

Aside from the above, there are Muslim organizations in Poland which are not registered as religious associations,<sup>7</sup> that is to say they do not have explicitly established religious objectives. Instead, their statutory operations are related to preservation and patronage of Muslim culture while significance of religious functions remains implicit. It is worth mentioning the existence of the Common Council of Catholics and Muslims.<sup>8</sup> It has been operating since the year 1998 with the objective to foment the dialogue between the two religions as well as the Latin and Muslim civilizations. The Council provides knowledge on those religions, their history, tradition and culture, whereby helps to overcome stereotypes, promotes the moral atmosphere which contributes to the freedom of religious practice and respect for diversity.

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Office. As the status of one of them, which is Ahmadiyya Moslem Association, is dubitable within the umma, it is likely that their number might be unofficially curbed by Muslim commentators to four.

<sup>6</sup> I add the official webpages of those associations.

<sup>7</sup> Those organizations include: The Muslim Association of Education and Culture (original name: Muzułmańskie Stowarzyszenie Kształtowania Kulturalnego, abbreviated as MSKK, with its seat in Białystok), Muslim Students Society in Poland (original name: Stowarzyszenie Studentów Muzułmańskich w Polsce, abbreviated as SSM). There is also the Association of Tatars of the Republic of Poland (original name: Związek Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, abbreviated as ZTRP). Due to its rather ethnic character and objectives dedicated to cultivation of Tatar identity, this association may only halfway promote Muslim heritage as Polish Tatars are divided between Islam and Christianity.

<sup>8</sup> Original name: Rada Wspólna Katolików i Muzułmanów, official webpage: <http://www.radawspolna.pl/>.

## THE MUSLIM RELIGIOUS UNION AND THE CATEGORY OF 'POLISH MUSLIMS'

In the times of the previous political regime, the sole organization of religious character representing adherents to Islam in Poland was the Muslim Religious Union. Founded in the year 1925, the Union was officially registered in 1936 (GUS, 2013, p. 121) upon the law issued with this objective which stipulated a legal possibility of such representation. After the Second World War, it was reactivated and maintained its mission to represent Muslims in the country. To be more specific, the Union aimed to congregate and provide institutional representation for the so-called Polish Muslims of Tatar origin which, generally speaking, almost equated with representing Islam in Poland at the time.

Nowadays, the Union, with its headquarters in Białystok, is one of the five organizations in the country with such a statutory objective. Holding the position of the Islamic religious organization in Poland with the longest history, it also prides itself on forgatherng the oldest community of believers in Allah in the country. What is more, the line of ancestry of its members precedents the operations of the organization by several centuries. Despite having lost the status of the sole Islamic association of religious character upon the demise of communism and a transformation of the Muslim community in Poland into quite a heterogeneous one, it remains an important entity in terms of representation of adherents to this religion. It boasts of its status as the one with the longest tradition, both in institutional terms, i.e., with reference to the time when it was founded, as well as with respect to the cultural heritage of the populace it represents. What is more, it enjoys the reputation of the second oldest Muslim religious organization in Europe (Nalborczyk & Ryszewska, 2013, p. 16, Table 2.1). It needs to be stressed that the Union not only gathers Polish Muslims, but also congregates foreigners of the same faith, with a special focus on Turks domiciled in Poland. The latter have a relatively strong position as there are numerous businessmen and professionals among them (e.g., Pędziwiatr, 2011), which translates to their vast social, symbolic and material capital.

The category of 'Polish Muslims' or 'our Muslims', as they get to be conventionally labelled within the mainstream society and the mass media, practically means Polish Tatars adhering to Hanafi school, which is one of the oldest Sunni doctrines. Otherwise, they are referred to as Lipka Tatars,<sup>9</sup> Lipkowie, Lipcani, or even – by extension from the latter three names and quite confusedly in the context analyzed herein – Lithuanian Tatars. This is intelligible upon the fact that their presence is

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<sup>9</sup> The name Lipka is hypothetically derived from the ancient Crimean Tatar name of Lithuania.

antecedent both to the current borders between Poland and Lithuania and national identities which started to develop in the 19<sup>th</sup>, or at the most not earlier than the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However appropriate in a historical context, it might not be quite relevant to the contemporary generations as the Polish national identity has become another important axis of self-definition of the ones living in Poland. Muslim Tatars have been present in Poland for over six hundred years (Chazbijewicz, Bohdanowicz & Tyszkiewicz, 1997; Dziekan, 2005, p. 199; Warmińska, 1999, 2011, pp. 17–21; Pędziwiatr, 2011; Lewicka, 2011, p. 144; Nalborczyk & Grodź, 2013, p. 501) and their multiple identities which combine religious, ethnic and national elements, encircle being Polish<sup>10</sup> as a vital element of the way they self-identify themselves. The ‘our’-attribute of Polish Muslims serves as a solid argument which shields them against any act of discrimination or devastation of places of religious cult. Such incidents are rare and bring about the atmosphere of scandal, massive condemnation in the society and feeling of shame that they ever happened.

As the territories where they have been living for centuries are predominantly Roman Catholic, or, to a lesser extent, Orthodox, some of them at a certain time in history discontinued the faith of their ancestors while others have developed a local variance of Islam, sometimes referred to as *oft*. Certainly, the elongated process of integration with the Roman Catholic mainstream society and the fact that the heritage of ancestors had been gradually fading away over the centuries, the attempts of its devout preservation brought such an effect. The heritage of the Polish Muslims can be traced back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is the Union that evokes this over 600 years’ history of Islamic presence in the Polish territories and accentuates strong links it has with the country. This organization congregates Muslim Religious Communities<sup>11</sup> throughout Poland and serves as their supervisory organ. Each of those has the status of a legal person, has its seat and is in charge of organizing religious services for the believers in particular regions. The Union is currently headed by mufti Tomasz Miśkiewicz, an imam of Białystok Muslim Religious Community, and confederates 1,132 members (GUS, 2013). The Union itself, likewise the Lipka Tatars, have little presence in the public sphere or the mass media. They are by no means antagonistic towards the mainstream society. As intermarriages with the Polish have been quite common for centuries,

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<sup>10</sup> More on multiple identities of Polish Tatars, their self-understanding and strategies of narrative identity management in Cieślak & Verkuyten (2006, pp. 77–93). Those authors empirically distinguish two prevailing strategies of narrative identity management as exhibited by Polish Tatars, namely: 1/ layered understanding and 2/ reconciliation between their multiple identities.

<sup>11</sup> Original name: Muzułmańska Gmina Wyznaniowa (sing.), Muzułmańskie Gminy Wyznaniowe (pl.)

they are characterized by little discernability in terms of their ethnic difference. Alongside with a high proportion of exogenous marriages and adopting Polish as their mother tongue early in history, they have developed a double Polish-Tatar ethno-national identity. Inter marriages with Poles and linguistic assimilation throughout centuries have resulted in a gradual decline of uncompromising groups who avoid any intermingling in the struggle to preserve the cultural and religious heritage of their antecedents. Nowadays, they are well rooted in the local landscape and barely raise major religious or political controversies within the mainstream society, being an object of historical and ethnographic interest due to the almost extinct character of their culture. The position of Polish Muslims cannot be ignored due to factors such as the historic memory of their loyalty to Poland and high level of integration with the mainstream society, thus they were given credit for having maintained solid bonds with the country. What is not without meaning with respect to their position in the mainstream society. They are distinguished as such from the Muslim newcomers who have appeared in the country over the past few decades and are mostly represented by the other organizations which are described further in the paper.

### **MUSLIM UNITY SOCIETY. ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE AND EUROPEAN ISLAM IN POLAND**

Monopoly over representation of Islam in Poland, which had been granted to the Muslim Religious Union, was a fact until the systemic transformation. The Union eventually lost it once the Muslim Unity Society was established in the country. As opposed to the Union which congregates Sunnis, it advocates a Shiite version of Islam. As the official webpage of the Society informs,<sup>12</sup> it associates Polish citizens and foreigners who are disciples of the Ithna Aszarija school which recognizes twelve imams. What is worth noticing, this organization consistently declares harmonious relations with other Muslim associations in the country and Shiite organizations worldwide. Despite a vast difference of the doctrine, the Muslim Unity Society asserts in the media having amicable contacts with the so-called Polish Muslims, referred to in the above section. The success of the Society in terms of promoting good relations with Polish Tatars is very likely to be grounded upon the following factors, proposed herein: 1/ the fact that its Imams are Polish

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<sup>12</sup> This is the official webpage of the Muslim Unity Society: <http://www.shiapoland.com/SJM.html>.



themselves, with the imam Mahmud Taha Żuk being of Lipka Tatar origin himself and a convert from Sunni to Shiite Islam, 2/ it favours the idea of accommodating Islam in Europe rather than considering it as an inherently hostile environment, 3/ it has adopted a consistent intellectual program towards preservation of the historical heritage of Polish Muslims. That is to say, its members make an effort to preserve the historical heritage of Muslim Tatars rather than undermining their position. Some members of the Society – as endorsed on its webpage – dedicate themselves to the inquest and renovation of Muslim shrines and taking patronage over the burial grounds of notable personae linked to the Polish Islam. The Society does not express any hegemonic nor militant aspirations and offers ecumenical dialogue within and beyond Islam rather than confrontation. It proclaims itself as being strongly oriented towards scholarly and publishing activity. It publishes two journals: “Rocznik Muzułmański”,<sup>13</sup> in a small number of 200 copies, according to data provided by GUS (2013, p. 122), and the other titled “Al-Islam”. The Society is affiliated to the Muslim Institute founded by Mahmud Taha Żuk, who is also the former head imam of the Society and currently one of its three imams. His ethno-religious origin has undoubtedly played a crucial role in defining the framework of activity of both the Society and the Institute towards nurturing Islamic heritage of Polish Tatars. The Institute was established with the objective of forgathering Muslim literature in numerous languages and boasts of its repository of unique prints and manuscripts. It publishes Muslim literature translated to Polish, organizes reunions and events of scholarly and religious character and actively participates in conferences and sessions of ecumenical character.

## **THE MUSLIM LEAGUE IN POLAND. DIALOGUE AND TRANSCENDING THE ISLAM-WEST DICHOTOMY**

Another entity of fundamental importance in terms of presence of Islamic faith in Poland is the Muslim League in the Republic of Poland. It was founded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2001 and officially registered a few years later, that is on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 2004. The statutory objectives of the League, as presented on its official webpage,<sup>14</sup> include promoting Islam in the Shiite version, teaching and preserving its moral principles, providing religious service to its adherents, constructing and managing the centres of Muslim religious cult, representing interest of the League

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<sup>13</sup> Translation to English: the Muslim Annals.

<sup>14</sup> This is the official webpage of the Muslim League in Poland: <http://islam.info.pl/>

members in the domestic and foreign environment, integrating with the Polish society while maintaining Muslim identity, cooperation between its members and adherents of other religions in diverse domains of life within the Polish society as well as human rights protection and eradication of any manifestations of racism and intolerance. Detailed activities include organizing conferences and lectures, radio and TV program broadcasting of socio-cultural, religious and moral character, publishing articles, treatises and books, among those some translated to Polish and a socio-cultural periodical in Polish titled “As-Salam”, constructing mosques and other places of worship, establishing and enlarging cemeteries, keeping parish records of weddings and funerals.

Although the objectives of the League are clearly peaceful, its activities are aimed to be harmonious with functioning of the mainstream society and means are nonviolent, it is a subject of intensive controversies both within the local communities and in mass media.<sup>15</sup> Likewise in other European countries, the fundamental and steadfast object of conflict is constructing mosques. Although the right to establish them, likewise other places of religious cult is granted to associations of religious character by the Constitution of the Polish Republic, they are barely welcome. The League is a member of Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe. When it comes to scholarly activity for the benefit of its members, the League is allied to the Institute of Islamic Studies,<sup>16</sup> which has its seat in the city of Wrocław. What is of note with reference to relations with the Polish society and the will to integrate, the Institute refers to the East-West dichotomy as problematic, thereupon declares that the two are interrelated both due to the historical processes and the globalizing trends of the present times. Likewise, it opposes the Islam-West dichotomy due to a different ontological status of each of them, respectively: religious and geographical, as well as the fact that Islam has been present in Europe for centuries. In concert with the above, the League intends to serve as a bridge between cultures and overtly promotes the idea of multiculturalism.

### **AHL-UL-BAYT CONGREGATION. THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION AND SHIITE FUNDAMENTALISTS IN POLAND**

The Ahl-ul-Bayt Congregation was founded in Poland under the name of the Muslim Brotherhood in the year 1979 to commemorate the victory of Islamic

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<sup>15</sup> Among other issues, those especially relate to construction of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Warsaw, Ochota district, which is aimed to be the future seat of the League.

<sup>16</sup> Original name: Instytut Studiów nad Islamem, official webpage: <http://isni.pl/>.

Revolution under the leadership of Ajatollah Khomeini (GUS, 2013, p. 123). It was officially registered in Poland upon the demise of communistic regime in the year 1990 and since the year 2002 has been functioning under the current name of the Ahl-ul-Bayt Congregation,<sup>17</sup> with the Arabic term in its name meaning *members of the house of the Prophet* (Bazzi, 2014). The Congregation represents the Shiite version of Islamic faith and maintains alliances with other Shiite organizations worldwide, especially in the Republic of Iran (GUS, 2013, p. 123). According to the statute of the Congregation, its governing bodies are the Supreme Imam of Poland – Head of the Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) Islamic Assembly and Shia Muslim Community in Poland and the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council of Poland. It is led by imam Ryszard Ahmed Rusnak, who is titled within the circles of this organization as the head imam of Poland, regardless of existence of other Islamic religious organizations in the country and lack of legitimacy of this title within the umma. The Congregation is officially recognized (GUS, 2013) as an organization of Islamic fundamentalists and a part of three international organizations of a similar profile, that is Ahl-ul Bayt World Assembly, World Ahl-ul Bayt Islamic League and Ahl-ul Bayt Assembly in Europe.

Regardless of the fact that there are other Shiite religious organizations in Poland which are presented in this paper, the Congregation claims to be<sup>18</sup> the legal representative of the entire Shiite Islamic community in the country. What is symptomatic, it declares to provide *religious protection* over the estimated five thousand Shiites domiciled or residing in Poland. This statement is eagerly contested by numerous Muslims living in this country, both Shiites and Sunni. Despite the grandiose statements provided by the Congregation in terms of its representation of the entire umma in Poland, the official number of members, provided by GUS (2013, p. 123), is minuscule, being only 59 activists and other individuals formally allied to this organization and operating for its benefit. Interestingly, it is not recognized as conducting any publishing or scholarly activity and is criticized upon this deficiency within the umma in Poland. The Congregation maintains very close contacts with the government of Iran and, at the same time, has relatively tense relations with other Islamic organizations in Poland.

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<sup>17</sup> This organization also uses the following name in the mass media, incl. its contact details: *Ahl-ul-Bayt (as) Islamic Assembly in Poland*.

<sup>18</sup> According to the statements on the official webpage of this organization: <http://www.abia.pl/index.html>.

## AHMADIYYA CONTROVERSY AND ISLAM. 'PEACE AND LOVE' REVIVAL MOVEMENT

Yet another organization of religious character related to the Islamic community in Poland is Ahmadiyya<sup>19</sup> Moslem Association with a seat in Warsaw.<sup>20</sup> It is linked to and reflects the ideas of a dynamic and fast-growing revival movement within Islam in the international environment. As opposed to Pakistan, where it was initiated and eventually decreed as a religious sect being beyond the boundaries of the umma, in Poland it does enjoy a legal status of an Islamic association of religious character. Although its status within the umma is feeble, it cannot be simply ignored. One fact is that it is registered, thus officially recognized among the five associations of religious character representing Islam in Poland (GUS, 2013), what is more, its members identify themselves as Muslim and declare adherence to Quran, generally in concordance with the Sunni doctrine. Another issue is that there are opponents within the umma of classifying it as an organization that represents Islam due to its problematic character with reference to the doctrine (Stawiński, 1989, 1994; Igielski, 1997). A major criticism from within the umma is grounded upon its heterodox nature (Ross Valentine, 2008). Thereupon, it is sometimes referred to as a quasi-Islamic association or merely a religious sect. There are doctrinal peculiarities of Ahmadiyya that contribute to its controversial status, including its prophetic character. This movement envisages a likely appearance of prophets in the years to come in concordance with the teachings of the Middle Ages thinker Ibn Al-Arabi. Upon this inspiration the initiator of the movement Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad not only managed to earn a distinguished status of 'the champion of Islam' or 'the lone warrior of Islam', as his supporters referred to his personage (Ross Valentine, 2008, p. 38–39), but also declared himself a prophet. The movement was eventually named after him and is generically called as such regardless of discrepancies that appeared within it in the course of time. His works (e.g., 1996), likewise the works of his son and religious successor Basheer-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad<sup>21</sup> (e.g., 1990), which increased the impact of the movement,

<sup>19</sup> A transcription Ahmadijja or Ahmadija is also used, in concordance with the spelling rules in Polish; likewise Ahmadiyyah is a common alternative, frequently used in English language writings on the subject. This comment is necessary with reference to spelling variations which appear in the reference section. Original versions are consistently maintained herein, as adopted in the titles by the author of each cited work.

<sup>20</sup> This is the official webpage of Ahmadiyya Moslem Association in Poland: <http://www.alislam.pl/ahmadiyya>.

<sup>21</sup> In the Polish version, the following transcription of his name is also used: Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad (compare: reference section of this article).

are also translated to Polish, however remain studied in relatively small circles. A cardinal feature of Ahmadiyya in terms of this-worldly issues is the thoroughgoing repudiation of terrorism, thereupon its supporters unanimously give a veto to jihad in its violent variant, i.e., they condemn the so-called 'jihad by the sword'. They propose an alternative in a form of intellectual disputes in defence of Islam, coupled with intensive scholarly activity and humanitarian aid. In each of those areas of its activity, Ahmadiyya promotes peace, tolerance and love, which to an outsider to the world of Islam will surely be a reminiscence of the flower power imagery. Translating those ideals to social action, Ahmadiyya promotes protection of human rights, empowerment and education of women, protection of minorities and, last but not least, separation of religion and the state. This international scale movement has not gained much publicity in Poland and remains the one with the smallest official number of members among Islamic religious organizations. This is regardless of the fact that several of its ideals described above are in concordance with what is highly valued in the Polish society.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many Muslims living in Poland are not members of any organization of religious character. An even stronger statement that nonparticipation characterizes most of them was enunciated by officials from the Muslim Religious Union and the Muslim League in the Republic of Poland several years ago (Kubicki, 2006, p. 125). Tensions between Islamic religious organizations with reference to their power of representation are based not only on differences between particular schools or teachings within Islam but very much upon the duration of their presence in Poland. Rather than being of solely spiritual character, such tensions certainly have a strong pragmatic component. It takes the form of pressure which is exerted by political and economic interest groups, likewise it universally happens and not just within the world of Islam. Spiritual justification concerning who may legitimately speak for the umma in this country, customarily generated by the newcomers, especially the ones from countries dominated by Islam, is that they are the ones who are 'real' Muslims as opposed to the Polish Muslims whose religious tradition is just the relic of their forefathers rather than a replete and alive religion. Discrediting the status of Polish Tatars as misbegotten disciples of Islam is grounded upon argumentation that not only have they merged with the mainstream society but a vast majority of them do not speak Arabic which makes them unable to read the word of Allah. As Cieřlik & Verkuyten (2006, p. 11) claim, it is less

**Table 1. Islamic religious associations in Poland**

No	Official name of the religious association	English translation of the name	Doctrine	GUS index no.	Est.	Official number of members	Official webpage (recent access September 29, 2014)
1	Muzułmański Związek Religijny w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej	The Muslim Religious Union of Poland*	Sunni	4.01	1936	1,132	<a href="http://www.mzr.pl/">www.mzr.pl/</a>
2	Stowarzyszenie Jedności Muzułmańskiej	Muslim Unity Society	Shiite	4.02	1989	60	<a href="http://www.shiapoland.com/SJM.html">http://www.shiapoland.com/SJM.html</a>
3	Islamskie Zgromadzenie Ahl-ul-Bayt**	Ahl-ul-Bayt Islamic Congregation	Shiite fundamentalist	4.03	1990	59	<a href="http://www.abia.pl/index.html">http://www.abia.pl/index.html</a>
4	Stowarzyszenie Muzułmańskie 'Ahmadiyya'	Ahmadiyya Moslem Association	Heterodox/ Islamic revival movement	4.04	1990	45	<a href="http://www.alislam.pl/">http://www.alislam.pl/</a>
5	Liga Muzułmańska w Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej	Muslim League in the Republic of Poland	Shiite	4.05	2004	3,800	<a href="http://islam.info.pl/">http://islam.info.pl/</a>

\* A comment is needed here to help the readers interested in presence of Islam in Poland and looking for documentation and other materials avoid the following terminological discrepancy. That is to say, there exist sources, including academic and non-academic ones like tour guides or tourist paper and online catalogues, which rely on an alternative translation of the name of this Union to English, i.e., they adopt one of the versions: The Muslim Religious Association of the Republic of Poland, The Muslim Religious Association in the Republic of Poland, The Muslim Religious Association of Poland, alternatively The Muslim Religious Association in Poland. However, I suggest adherence to the name The Muslim Religious Union, as it is the one adopted by the Union itself and provided by it for supranational purposes in official reports, halal directories and yellow pages.

\*\* Formerly, that is until the year 2002, it operated under the name Stowarzyszenie Braci Muzułmańskich (English translation: The Muslim Brotherhood).

than 1 per cent of Polish Muslims who have comprehension skills in this language and, consequently, can read quotations from Quran without relying on the Polish translation. On the other hand, Muslim Tatars also have argumentation at their disposal concerning representation of Islam in the country. It is grounded upon their stable status in Poland, citizenship rights, Polish identity, historic memory and all other factors which make them at home as opposed to immigrants who are less welcome in the country and, which is common, treated as either guests or outsiders but not very much integral to the Polish society.

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- Official webpage of Institute of Islamic Studies/Instytut Studiów nad Islamem, Wrocław, <http://isni.pl/>.
- Official webpages of Islamic associations of religious character in Poland are provided in Table 1 in the main part of the paper.