Abstract: Although thirty million Muslims currently reside in the European Union, and adherents to the Islamic religion now constitute the majority of immigrants and the second largest religious group in European society, the influence of Islam on the culture of Central Europe was and is small, with the notable exception of Poland. There, a small traditional group of Polish Muslims has made a considerable contribution during six centuries of history to Poland's cultural and religious heritage: Polish Muslims or “Tartars” fought for Catholic Poland against the Catholic State of the Teutonic Order, and almost always stood by their Polish kings against incursions from the Sunni Turks, highlighting the importance of the loyalty felt to the Polish homeland. By the same token, Polish culture has been greatly enriched by Tartar customs, in a gradual and complex process of acculturation - a process that was ‘necessary’, ‘extended’ and ‘complete’ in its various phases. More recent migrants and refugees arriving in Poland have increased the ethnic and religious diversity of the Polish Muslim community, with marked social and theological implications. These are reflected today in the plethora of organizations representing the interests of various Muslim groups and organizations in the country. Furthermore, the advanced extent of Christian-Muslim dialogue, something well developed in Poland, manifests a true “dialogue of life” and reflects the shared desire to promote understanding, stimulate communication, and work collaboratively on specific problems of mutual concern.

Introduction

More than thirty million Muslims currently reside in the European Union, and adherents to the Islamic religion now constitute the majority of immigrants and the second largest religious group in European society. The largest Muslim communities are found in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, and their rate of growth continues to accelerate. The vast majority of Muslims living in Western Europe are of immigrant origin: most of them are the consequence of economic migration in the 1960s and 1970s, and their descendants, second and third generation, born and raised in Europe, as well as recently arrived political refugees from Muslim countries.

The central Europe countries are an exception, with small Muslim communities, constituting less than 0.1% of the population. This relatively small group of Muslims originate from the traditional group of Polish Muslims, which have
a history that is a few hundred years old along with recent Muslim migrants, refugees, workers and students from modern Muslim countries.

The lack of exact figures for the current Muslim population makes it difficult to estimate future population growth. Census information about residents’ religious identity eliminates some guesswork, but a trend among immigrant populations to adjust family size downward and among women to delay childbirth makes prediction difficult.

Traditionally, the influence of Islam on the culture of Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary was and is small. Poland is an exception, although the number of Polish Muslims is not high. The small traditional group of Polish Muslims made a considerable contribution to Poland’s cultural and religious heritage.

**Traditional Polish Muslims**

During the one thousand years of Poland’s history, Muslim-Tatars have lived together with Poles, who are predominantly Catholics, for over 600 years. The Polish language has become the mother tongue of the Muslims residing in Poland although they originated from the circle of the Turkish languages. Although these Muslims are a minority, they have worked for the benefit of their homeland and have often given their lives for it. In principle, the examples discussed here concern the special cases of acculturation and cultural-religious transformations, accompanying contacts of two social groups belonging to different civilisations.

The number of Muslims in Poland has been steadily increasing over the last 15 years: from about 7,000 in 1995 to 20,000-30,000 in the year 2010. They constitute 0.06% of the Polish population, mostly immigrants from Islamic countries, albeit with a certain number of Polish converts to Islam. One can hardly speak of a distinct cultural contribution of this group. A considerable portion treat Poland as a transit country, and those who choose to settle in Poland represent various forms of Islam.

Followers of Islam in Poland traditionally come from the Tatar community, “Polish-Lithuanian Tatars” who number between 3,000 and 5,000 among Muslims. Those Muslims who have resided in Poland for a long time were described in Old Polish as “muślimi”. The first Muslim Tatars came to Poland in 1397 as prisoners of the Golden Horde, which began its conquest of present day Russia and Ukraine in the 13th century. The western Mongols adopted Islam as their state religion in the early 14th century. More than half of the European portions of Russia and Ukraine were under the suzerainty of Muslim Tatars and Turks, from the 13th to the 15th century. The Crimean Khanate became a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire in 1475 and subjugated what remained of the Great Horde by 1502.
The leading occupation of the Tatars in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was service in the army, which often put them in paradoxical situations: they fought for Catholic Poland against the Catholic State of the Teutonic Order, and Polish Muslims almost always stood by the Polish kings against the Sunni Turks. This speaks volumes of the loyalty of Polish Tatars toward their new homeland.\textsuperscript{12}

The first Tatar settlements were built close to the border of the State of the Teutonic Order so that it would be easy to mobilise them in case of war. This is the reason for the localisation of the traditional Muslim communities in north-eastern Poland nowadays. There are several Muslim communities there as well as three old mosques in Kruszyniany and Bohoniki.\textsuperscript{13}

The Tatars had the right to teach their religion and build their sanctuaries. They also received plots of land for their obligation to serve in the Polish army, forming their own units under Muslim commanding officers. As a result, the Muslims participated in most wars Poland waged until the partition of the country,\textsuperscript{14} and fought in one of the most important battles in Poland’s history, the battle of Grunwald, in which 2,000 Tatars took part.\textsuperscript{15}

The fact that the Polish army consisted of both Catholics and Muslims caused both groups grief. For example, the Catholic enemies of Poland often saw the presence of Muslims in the Polish army as a betrayal of Christianity, as seen in the anti-Polish propaganda of the Teutonic Knights before the Pope and in European courts. In turn, during conflicts with the Ottoman Empire many Turks regarded the Muslims fighting for Poland as traitors of Islam. That could be the reason why the Polish Tatars wrote to their brothers in Crimea in the year 1508, “Neither God nor the Prophet orders you to plunder and us to be ungrateful; we regard you as plunderers and conquering you with our sabres we kill rascals and not our brothers.” The Polish kings appreciated the faithfulness of Polish Muslims in the awkward situations during the wars between Poland and the Crimean Khanate and Turkey.\textsuperscript{16}

Polish Muslims many a time distinguished themselves with fortitude and bravery in the 19th and the 20th centuries, after the fall of Poland. They participated in all uprisings against Poland’s occupiers, i.e., in the Kościuszko Insurrection (1794), the November Uprising (1830-1831) and the January Uprising (1863-1864). After Poland regained independence in 1918, the Tatars fought to protect her. Józef Piłsudski, Poland’s greatest hero and founder of the post WWI independence movement, created a military unit consisting of Tatars, the Regiment of Tatar Cavalry with 600 soldiers. The Tatars fought against the Bolsheviks under their own green banner with a crescent during the Polish-Russian war in 1919-1921.\textsuperscript{17}

Apart from their military contribution, the Polish Muslims showed unique invention in the field of literary interaction. Since they did not know the Arabic
language, they began creating texts in Polish or the Polish-Belorussian dialect written in the Arabic alphabet. These works, although relatively few, constitute an original, Oriental segment in the Polish literary texts. The Tatars created first of all religious works in Polish using the Arabic letters, e.g. *tefsiry* (from the Arabic *tafsīr*, “commentary”), Koranic texts with Polish translations: *tedżwidy* (from the Arabic *tajwīd*, “recitation”), textbooks containing the principles of reciting the Koran, Muslim textbooks, prayer books of less official character, *dalawary* (from the Turkish *dualar*, “prayers”), scrolls of prayers and finally, *hramotki*, talismans protecting against misfortune.\(^{18}\)

The Tatars have always been aware of their identity. Nevertheless, those living in Poland have not shown any separatist tendencies.\(^{19}\) Rooted in Poland for good and bad, they have carried all burdens equally with the rest of the Polish population during World War II, as their ancestors did in all the wars that afflicted Poland in the past.\(^{20}\)

The Polish army adopted many elements from the Tatar military tradition such as clothes or arms.\(^{21}\) It is worth knowing that the valued Uhlan tradition,\(^{22}\) which we associate with the most beautiful chapters of Poland’s history, actually comes from the Polish Tatars. Recognising the Tatars’ merits, Poland’s President unveiled the ‘Tatar of the Republic of Poland’ Monument on 25 November 2010.\(^{23}\)

Polish Tatars replaced their native language with Polish. Terms from the Polish culture were applied to express Islam. The Polish culture was enriched with military Tatar customs.

The first stage that both groups passed was **necessary acculturation**, i.e., the first stage of living in a new culture that meant accepting necessary changes in one’s behaviour (adjusting to an indispensible cultural minimum). It was an external acculturation, adjusting one’s traditions and behaviours to those accepted in a given society. In the case of the Polish Muslims it was the acceptance of principles prevailing in Poland. They were granted permission to build mosques and found their schools; they had the opportunity to use their property freely, on equal rights with the Polish gentry. But they could not participate in the political life in the country.

Second, Muslims passed through the stage of **extended acculturation**, which embraced new areas in the process of integration with a new culture. This type of acculturation meant entering into the semantic sphere of defined behaviours, getting to know the language, adopting certain customs at work and in one’s environment. Thus Polish Muslims accepted the Polish language, customs and laws, at the same time preserving elements of the Turkish people’s culture.

Finally, traditional Polish Muslims are now at the stage of **complete acculturation** embracing new ways of thinking and self-identification. These Polish Muslims are fully recognised as consistent elements in their societies.
Complete identification is visible: Polish Muslims are recognised as Poles accepting the Polish heritage; they are sons of their homeland\textsuperscript{24}.

Polish Muslims show that preserving one’s religious identity does not require enclosing oneself within one primary culture, thereby testifying that culture can be a dynamic reality, amenable to changes. These analyses show that the changes occurring in cultural patterns can lead to mutual enrichment and are not necessarily a taking over of elements of one culture by the other.

**Modern Muslim Migrants**

After World War II only about 10% of the traditional Muslim Tatar settlements remained within the new Polish borders. There were only two old Polish Tatar settlements on the post-1945 Polish territory in Białystok and Warsaw. However, the postwar migrations also attracted for the first time in modern history large numbers of workers and their families from the Tatar community. They migrated inside Poland and created new Muslim communities in Gdańsk, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Szczecin and Oleśnica\textsuperscript{25}.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Polish government renewed diplomatic relations with many Muslim countries. The majority of initiatives promoting inter-cultural contacts were from the University of Łódź, which organised a Polish language study program for students from the Third World, including a considerable group of Muslims. This helped to set the guidelines for the 9\textsuperscript{th} General Council of UNESCO in New Delhi\textsuperscript{26}, India, for its East-West Project. The Polish government systematically established new economic contacts with Arabic countries. During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s many Polish workers as well as engineers, doctors, scientists were employed in Tunis, Libya, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, remaining there for several years\textsuperscript{27}. At this time economic contacts between Poles and Arabs were frequent. This was not about interreligious dialogue, being rather more linked to the political-economic situation in socialist countries. Poland enjoyed an improvement in relations with several Arabic states, and Polish professionals had opportunities to learn about Islamic culture.

On the other hand, since the 1970s the number of Arabs and Muslims from non-Arab countries in Poland has increased. Some of the Muslim graduates (mostly from technical and medical universities) have remained in Poland, considering it as their second homeland. A portion of them stayed in Poland only for several years before moving to Western Europe. Other Muslims returned to their country of origin. Many Muslim students married Polish Catholic women. A considerable group of Muslim migrants from Asia or Northern Africa have businesses in Poland; they are especially well known for preparing traditional Middle East food\textsuperscript{28}. 

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A special case is that of Muslim refugees, whose situation is completely different from that of Muslims who have come voluntarily to Poland without the so-called “refugee experience”. In the language of anthropology, that means a stage of painful exclusion from their old community and then being forced to cross certain thresholds (connected with the refugees’ escape, administrative procedures, staying in a refugee centre) to be included again, but this time in a different society.

Beside migrants from Islamic countries, there are also some ethnic Poles (ca. 2000) who converted to Islam, but who have no Tatar roots. The Polish Shi’a community is made up of almost entirely of Polish converts.

A real challenge faced by the Polish Muslim community is their ethnic and religious diversity. One of the leaders of the Tatar community in Poland, Professor Selim Chazbijewicz characterised the relations between the traditional group of Muslim Tatars (united in Muslim Religious Union - Muzułmański Związek Religijny w Rzeczpospolitjej Polskiej) and the modern Muslim migrants from Arabic countries in the following way:

“Bernard Shaw used to say that: I had had a friend who taught me so long to drink tea without sugar that he ceased to be my friend. In the same way the Arabs had taught us [Polish Tatars – KP] to be proper Muslims, that we went separate ways.”

This separation not only highlights a tension between traditional Polish Tatars and modern Muslim migrants, but also presents an organisational obstacle to setting up the Muslim League (Liga Muzułmańska w Rzeczpospolitjej Polskiej) in 2001, founded by Polish Arabs.

Muslim immigrants in Poland come from different countries, cultures and traditions. Most Muslims are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Asia, especially from the Middle East. Arabs constitute a group estimated at around 50%, and then there are Turkish (or Turkish-Kurd), Chechen, Pakistani and Iranian Muslims. In this situation of pluralism, one ethnicity does not dominate. A national background is sometimes significant for its capacity to integrate. The majority of Muslim migrants are Sunnis, but none of them follow the Hanafi madhhab as Polish Tatars do, considered to be the school most open to new ideas and situations.

Perhaps this explains why Polish Tatar beliefs are a mix of Turkish pre-Islamic traditions and Christian elements taken from the local Slavic population. For example, a cult of a local “saint”, a certain pious man, on a mountain near Bohoniki (Szorcowa Góra), shows that Polish Tatars have assimilated a tradition relating to some Christian hermit. Although the presence of four different schools of religious law within Sunni Islam should not be viewed as a schism, some Muslim
migrants consider Polish Tatar beliefs as “not pure”. These Muslims working to spread “pure Islam” believe that the only valid system of rule for Muslims is that based on Sharia law. Consequently, they think that Polish Tatars must first relearn the basic, correct beliefs of Islam: the proper understanding of God, correct prayer, and personal interaction.

It is estimated that about 20% of Polish Muslims belong to Muslim minority groups: Shi’ah, Alevites (Turkish), Alawis (Syrian), Ismailis and the Ahmadis, who like the Alevites are often not considered to be Muslim by other Muslims. The number of Shi’a Muslims in Poland accounts for up to 10% of all the Muslims in Poland. The Polish analyst Daniel Boćkowski, in his *Polish foreign policy towards the Muslim world: an attempt to define the problem*, notices that Poland is one of the areas of expansion of many forms of Islam from Sunnism to radical Wahhabism.

As a consequence, the modern Muslim group in Poland, born in the second half of the 20th century, is a very colourful and sophisticated segment of Polish society. Diversity has social and theological implications. Some of the practices that have enraged the European public such as forced marriages and patriarchal control are ethnic and not religious practices and should not be attributed to all Muslims. Variety in language and history across many Muslim traditions and practices is also a source of differentiation. The diversity varies from group to group and depends upon migration settlement patterns. Among Sunni Muslims, the various movements taking different views of the meaning of religious law (Sufism, Wahhabism) poses the question of who represents Polish Islam. Consequently, diversity is a source of intra-Muslim conflict over representation, with different groups taking different views on many issues, and of ideological conflict.

Muslim immigrants have created their own relations to Polish reality. There occur three types of Muslim reactions. The first one is represented by Muslim migrants who simply reproduce the Islamic way of life of the country of origin. They try to protect Islamic faith from the modern secular society where, according to their opinion, Muslim traditions could be easily destroyed. The European host society is considered a dangerous place and should be avoided as far as possible. This group is inclined towards exaggerated rigidity. They believe that dress, behaviour, relations between the sexes and patterns of worship should differentiate the Muslim from his or her European counterpart. Some Muslims accepting such principles constitute a specific group of refugees who arrived in Poland after 1989 from Afghanistan and Chechnya.

A second response comes from Muslims developing a religious identity adapted to Polish cultural surroundings. They try to work to build a “Polish Islam”, integrating what is good from the local cultures and making their own Islamic
contribution to the future of European societies. This point of view is based on the belief that Islam is a way of life which can be fully lived in any political and cultural context and is developed by the Moroccan Yakob Mahi in Western Europe and echoed by some Muslims in Poland. According to supporters of the idea of “Polish Islam”, the adaptation of religion to new environments has been central to the development of Islamic faith. They promote the concept of Shari’a as the way of life ordained by God for mankind which should not be turned into a code of punishment as it is in many Muslim countries, taking into consideration that less than 1% of the Koran consists of penal rules. In Europe, Mahi says, “We can see Shari’a not as law, but as a path to be understood in its context. When we transform it into daily European life, we see that Shari’a doesn’t mean cutting off the hand of a thief. Rather it’s a spirit present in many things we enjoy in Europe: the principles of democracy, the rule of law, the freedoms of expression and association.”

That dynamic interpretation makes Muslim law compatible with its European secular counterparts. Therefore Mahi proposes a idea of “spiritual citizenship” in which Muslims “respect the laws [of the secular state] but try to give a spiritual impulse to everything they do.”

A third tendency is Muslim “missionary movement”, the aim of which is to win Europe (with Poland) over to Islam. This desire is motivated by the conviction that Islam is the ultimate revelation of the original revelation, and hence the religion for all. The failure of the ideologies of the last century and the moral degeneracy of liberal capitalism mean for some that Islam, and Islam alone, can offer salvation.

Intergroup relations within the Muslim population in today’s Poland differ markedly across the two community organisations: the Muslim Religious Union (Muzułmański Związek Religijny hereafter MZR) mostly represented by Polish Tatars and the Muslim League (Liga Muzułmańska w Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej, hereafter LM) led in 2001 by Polish Arabs.

Although in Poland there are 11 organisations representing the interests of various Muslim groups, there are, in fact, two major groups that speak in the name of all the Muslims, MZR and LM. Other smaller Muslim organisations in Poland are the following:

- The Association of the Muslim Students in Poland (Stowarzyszenie Studentów Muzułmańskich w Polsce),
- The Muslim Association for Cultural Formation (Muzułmańskie Stowarzyszenie Kształcenia Kulturalnego),
- The Association of Muslim Unity (Stowarzyszenie Jedności Muzułmańskiej – Shi’a Muslim organizations),
- Ahl-ul-Bayt - Islamic Assembly of Poland (Islamskie Zgromadzenie Ahl-ul-Bayt - Shi’a Muslim organisations),
In the eyes of the Polish State, the oldest Muslim organisation in the country, the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland (established in 1925), plays the most significant role. From 1936 to 1989 MSR was officially recognised by the Polish state as a Muslim organisation. The Mufti of Poland, imams and muezzins were paid by the Polish state and originated only from the ranks of MSR. After 1989 new legislation allowing the establishment of new Muslim organisations automatically caused MZR to lose its monopoly as the sole representative body of the Muslims in Poland.

It is important for Polish policy to take into consideration differences between the Muslim world as a whole and the Arab world, which has apparently dominated Poland’s perception of Islam in terms of religious and political trends. The main principles of Polish policy are respect for the Muslim faith and tradition, supporting the Muslim path to modernity, strengthening modernisation (apart from efforts towards democratisation) of Muslim societies and hoping that Polish Muslims will reject the most extreme Islamic formations. Respecting democratic systems, policy makers should be alert to any infusion of radical Islam through the Internet and monitor the actions of the EU and NATO in Northern Africa and the Near East.

As followers of an officially recognised religion, Polish Muslims have the right to construct mosques. They often use private mosques, so-called “home mosques” for the Friday prayers. Diplomats from Muslim countries pray at the mosque in Wiertnicza Street in the Wilanów district of Warsaw. Polish Muslim minorities, who settled primarily in big cities, are relatively well organised. The most active Muslim centres are probably those in Wrocław, Poznań, Lublin, Katowice, and Kraków. They all have an Islam Center founded by the Muslim League in Żwirowa Street in Warsaw. The Muslim League is building the Center of Muslim Culture with a mosque according to the Polish law.

Since 2004, The Muslim League has published a socio-cultural magazine “As-Salam”. The Institute of Islamic Studies also operates in Wrocław. Both the magazine and the Institute are dialogue-oriented. Shi’a groups are present in Poland; one of them, the Warsaw based Association of Muslim Unity, has existed since the late 1970s (although it was not formally registered until 1989).
It founded the Muslim Institute, which publishes the Rocznik Muzułmański ("Muslim Yearly") periodical\(^{46}\). This group is very much committed to dialogue with the Catholic Church.

In Poland, there is no ban on any item of Muslim clothing, and no regulations restricting the wearing of hijab or niqab. Some Polish Muslim women, especially converts of Polish origin, wear hijab in public. Traditional Polish Tatar women wear hijab only during prayers\(^ {47}\).

Summing up, the new Polish Muslims create small but colourful and diverse communities. Substantial effort is called for to counter any social isolation of Muslims in Poland and to prevent the construction of a negative identity, such as currently can be discerned with some Muslims migrants remaining in opposition to their surrounding socio-cultural environment. Until now, however, efforts to set up an organisation that would allow all Polish Muslims to speak with one voice to the government and the mass-media have been unsuccessful.

**Dialogue: A Challenge for the New Century**

Poland has been a predominantly Catholic country (more than 90% of the 38.500,000 population\(^ {48}\)), and for most Poles being Catholic is part of the Polish identity. Poland spent 123 years under the occupation of Prussia, Austria and Russia (1795-1918), but it did not lose its culture, language or identity. Catholicism was the major factor that protected “Polishness,” distinguishing Poles from other countries that tried to absorb Poland. In Communist times (1945-1989) the Catholic Church had a renaissance, contrary to the dreams of Communist and Socialist leaders. The Roman Catholic Church is naturally the main Christian partner in the Christian-Muslim dialogue in Poland.

The growing Muslim population in Poland and the modern notion of dialogue in the Catholic Church resulted in the preparation of a document by the Council for Religious Dialogue of Polish Bishops’ Conference (PBC) entitled *Dialog – zadanie na nowy wiek* (Dialogue: A Challenge for the New Century)\(^ {49}\). The text was accepted on 23 November 2003 during the General Meeting of the Polish Bishops at Jasna Góra in Częstochowa. The first section of this interesting document, “Church on dialogue and in relation to dialogue”, presents the theological perspective of interreligious dialogue. In the second part, “Situation in Poland: diagnosis and recommendations,” particular forms of relations with Muslims are presented among other issues. The document states that the Muslim Tatar minority has been present in Poland for more than six hundred years. Recently, the number of Muslims in Poland is on the increase, which is caused by migration from various countries. The majority of Muslims are not connected with fundamentalism and terrorism, and adherents of Islam engage
in ongoing debate on an adequate interpretation of Islam in the modern world. The document *Dialogue: A Challenge for the New Century* introduces the annual Day of Prayers Dedicated to Islam (currently known as the Day of Islam in the Catholic Church in Poland) at the end of January. Polish Catholic Bishops advocate a spiritual growth through the acceptance of God’s will and effort to develop their own understanding and respect for Muslims, “younger brothers” who seek to discover and obey God’s will, in accordance with the most important precept of Islam. Looking for platforms for mutual understanding and amicable coexistence, the Catholic Church in Poland follows the guidelines of the Second Vatican Council and John Paul II. This initiative is very important and fruitful for the Church even though Christians realise that in countries with a Muslim majority, they are often exposed to persecution, or simply do not enjoy the same rights as Muslims. The fragment discussing relations with Muslims ends with a very interesting suggestion: It would be advisable to establish and operate joint scholarly institutes and civic institutions that would work for the promotion and development of the Christian-Muslim dialogue in various areas of life. The fruits of such work in Poland may have an effect reaching far beyond Poland.

Many Polish Catholics and Muslims recognise today that in the century of globalisation, shared human imperatives must outweigh economic and political expediencies. How to evoke or instil common values in the broader community is still an open question. People cannot live without some security of identity, a sense of dignity and respect for others. It could be called the soft security of self; such security is not innate but learned and experienced.

In 1997 The Joint Council of Catholics and Muslims was established with a small and specific membership. Among many Muslim groups in Poland only the Tatars from the Religious Union of Muslims participate in the exchange of views and opinions. It is headed by two co-chairpersons: a Christian and a Muslim. According to the rule of the Joint Council only traditional Muslims can be members of the organisation. The Muslims from non-Tatar communities (e.g., Arabs, Shi’as and other) are not accepted there.

After World War II, Poland became one of the most religiously homogenous countries in Europe with more than 90% of the citizens declaring adherence to the Roman Catholic Church. Being a majority, Christians have a particular responsibility for bringing about a fresh, constructive relationship which can contribute to the well-being of the human family, and the peace of the world. Dialogue is the work of patient love and an expression of the ministry of reconciliation. It involves understanding, affirmation and sharing.
Conclusion

Tatars who for ages have inhabited the north-eastern region of Poland constitute a very important page not only of Polish history, but of history in general. The Polish Muslim Tatars community is a useful model of a Muslim community which belongs in Europe, retaining their own culture and identity, and that contributes positively to these wider communities. Polish Muslims might help in understanding the contemporary Islamic world’s questions about the process of acculturation: whether (and under what circumstances) intercultural integration can be applicable, and complete or successful, in the context of a multi-cultural and multi-religious society, such as in Poland.

The Christian-Muslim dialogue in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in Poland, is well developed. On the Christian side, the main partner is the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, the Muslim partners of modern dialogue represent a variety of Islamic movements and factions. The most distinctive forms of dialogue include the dialogue of life and dialogue of religious experience. The dialogue of life is expressed in Catholic help for Muslim refugees at 13 refugee centres. The Muslim refugees have entered Poland legally and illegally from Afghanistan, Chechnya, Pakistan, India and other regions in Asia. Catholic priests and young Catholic volunteers have regularly visited some of these centres.

There is a pragmatic need for better understanding and cooperation among followers of Christianity and Islam. Such a dialogue of life, which has been known in Poland for ages, involves the desire to promote understanding, stimulate communication, and work collaboratively on specific problems of mutual concern, and to facilitate testimony and cooperation.

Notes

* Father Krzysztof Koscielniak is a professor at the Jagiellonian University and Pontifical Academy of Theology in Krakow, Poland, and the author of the several scientific papers and books including: The influence of Biblical Demonology on the Koranic Concepts of Satan in the Context of the interaction of Ancient Religions (Kraków 1999), Muslim Tradition on the Background of Christian-Islamic Acculturation in the 7-10th Centuries. The Origin, History and Meaning of New Testament Borrowings in Hadith (Kraków 2001), Twenty Centuries of the Christianity in the Arabic Culture, vol. I (Kraków 2000), Jihad: “The Holy War” of Islam (Kraków 2002), Christentum und Islam. Perspektive und Probleme des Dialogs, (Kraków 2005), Greeks and Arabs. History of the Melchite Church in the Muslim Word (634-1516) (Krakow 2004), History of Central Asia (VI-XIIIth), History Africa (VI-XIIIth) in: World History vol. IV(Kraków 2005); Christianity in the Context of the World Religions (Kraków 2001); Sunna, Hadiths and Traditionists. Introduction to the Muslim Tradition (Kraków 2006); Thematic Concordance of the Koran (Kraków 2006). He is a member of the UEAI (L’Union Européene des Arabisants et Islamisants), Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Committee of Byzantine Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

1. The total population of Europe is 727 million, of which about 49 million are Muslim (3% of the world Muslim population). See: H. Kettani, “Muslim Population in Europe: 1950 – 2020”, International Journal of Environmental Science and Development, 1 (2010), no. 2, 154-162; H.


3. Ibid.. In 2001 the Czech Republic population was 10,230,060, however Islam was not among the listed religions in this or previous censuses. Nevertheless, O’Connor points out that there are 20,000 Muslims in the Republic, constituting 0.20% of the total Czech population enumerated in the 2001 census. See: O’Connor, “The Czech Muslim community: A beacon of piety in a predominantly atheist country”, Czechs Today, August 16, 2006, http://www.radio.cz/en/section/czechstoday/the-czech-muslim-community-a-beacon-of-piety-in-a-predominantly-atheist-country. Accessed 5.08.2012.


5. According to the Hungarian 2001 census the total population this country was 10,198,315, out of which 3,201 or 0.03% were Muslims. See: H. Kettani, “Muslim Population in Europe”, 32.


16. Zdanie sprawy o Tatarach litewskich, 258; J. Bartoszewicz, Pogląd na stosunki Polski z Turcją i Tatarami na dzień Tatarów w Polsce osiadłych, na przywileje im nadane, jako też wspomnienie o znakomitych Tatarach polskich, (Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff,1860); S. Kryczyński, Tatarzy litewscy..., 8.


22. The Polish term “ulan” as a Kipchak form (Turkish “oğlan”) means a young man, brave, S. Kryczyński, Tatarzy litewscy, 74.


40. J. Johansen, Critical Perspectives, 142-143.


52. A. Nalborczyk, S. Gródź, Poland, 410.