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# EUROPE AND ISLAM

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Jaroslav Franc (ed.)



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## Christian Bravery, Islam and Europe

Our answer will always speak not only about what we have to face. It also discovers our way of thinking. When Roman general Scipio defeated Hannibal in 200 BC, he advised Roman politicians not to demolish the enemy city of Karthago. If Rome has to face a competent rival, it will not lose its war capabilities.

All the time we hear that Islam is threatening us.

But we have to say (incorrectly): After WWII Europeans despised “low-level labour” and that is why they invited muslims to Europe. Colonists’ reproachful “silent call” (M. Heidegger) opened the gate for a new wave of migrants with the pride on one side and the humiliation on the other. A consumer style formed conscience of several generations of Europeans. The God of prosperity clouded human mind, there is no place for a child here. From demographic point of view, Europe is dying out.

Christian bravery does not rely on its own strength but is grounded in God’s help. “Trembling limbs do not penetrate mind,” as Jan Klimak says. According to him, cowards are arrogant. To illustrate this, he uses a contradiction: “Night thief, who does not fear digging graves, does not know humbleness.” Tomáš Halík expressed aptly what was actually going on in a therapeutical secular cult of the man filling solitude without God by religious cynism. We are enslaved by political correctness, so we remain modestly silent about how we tolerate our lies as timid children in fear that the truth about ourselves would come out. Let’s answer at least one question in Sokrates’ tradition: Is not a “Je suis Charlie” march an alibism of more comfortable remaining on the surface of our cultural stereotypes than the resolution for encoun-

ter reaching beyond our mental peripheries (said with Pope Francis)? A Christian does not feel at ease in *enslaving ideology of freedom without relationship* (contemporary Western civilization) and he is not at ease in *slave submission to God* without personal choice and personal call, either (Koran's God). However in his mission – to experience all human in God's way and all that is God's in human way – he feels "fear" that people enslaved by "present sins" will miss their aim of life.

Maybe we have several grains for overcoming fear: Fear is expecting the evil – let us learn to "despise" lavishly a set table of mass media which live from expecting the worse. There is not only Islam for me, there are also muslims. A Christian is looking for an impulse for bravery in an idea that his/her way of life he can be likened to Christ in his suffering (and glory). In overcoming stereotypes it proves to be brave to accept inconveniences boldly, since we are not ignorant to their roots. It helps to bravery not to hide what threatens: It is hypocritical to be offended by the fate of women sold as slaves to the fighters of Islamic State and not to see hundred thousands of women sold in our wealthy society. And finally: Patience is the courage not to be overwhelmed by fear when we face the evil which we cannot prevent. We often face this in upbringing. Our own fear can be overcome by education, not by hollow discussions of showmen.

"The most effective antidote against all forms of violence is education towards the discovery and acceptance of differences." (Pope Francis)

Finally the paradox of viewpoint of Jiří Novotný, SJ: Islam has a providential role *for the people of the book*, Christians and Jews (free citizens but with limited powers, *dhimmi*). The most important Christian's virtue is humbleness. Since the Christians are diligent, hard-working and systematic, they are doing well. They quickly forget to be grateful and to be able to thank. That is why there has to be someone, who is sent by God himself, to teach them again to be humble. It is also well expressed by the experience of my faculty colleague who visited a Coptic monastery. After several days of his stay they could speak also about their worries. They prayed for rain so that

they could water their bean fields. Their reasoning was surprising: “It is only a matter of time till radicals come here and slaughter us – there is no doubt about it. We cannot influence it. We are ready for death. But there is another difficulty: Each Sunday Coptic families with children come to visit us. We teach them and we eat together. If there were no beans we would not be able to invite them. And not to pass life with God is worse than to die for faith.”

Pavel Ambros SJ

## Europe has changed: an introduction

*Díváme se na islám jako na orientální vyznání,  
a přece je ve skutečnosti východním výběžkem evropské osvěty.*

(Alois Musil, 1868-1944)

*We are recognising Islam as an oriental religion,  
but yet it has been in fact the Eastern part of European culture.*

Europe in 21<sup>st</sup> century is a continent searching for a new identity of united countries, economic systems and cultures. Roots of contemporary Europe are deeply connected with the ancient Greek philosophy, Roman jurisprudence and the message of the Jewish Bible. Self-portrait of the Europe depicted by the centuries is today facing new cultures and new religious challenges. Institute for intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical research and dialogue originated and managed by prof. Pavel Ambros, S.J., is the outcome of his long term process of cultivating the process of scientific research and education at theological faculty of Palacky University Olomouc. And, of course, it is also product and symptom of the time. Searching for better understanding of European culture and its particular cultures as well as the religions is a challenge for the theology. And the main aims of the Institute are achieving the best possible outcomes in research, both internationally and in the Czech Republic; theological-philosophical understanding of dialogue; the diversity of traditions and identities in the Christian East, East-West dialogue in Europe, cultures and traditions of the so-called Abrahamic religions and their influence on cultural and religious transformation in Europe, Czech contribution to the development of

inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue; strengthening of research centre at Palacky University in Olomouc, and fostering links with research institutions in the Czech Republic and abroad especially by the participation of a visiting research fellow Marie Campatelli from *Centro di studi e ricerche Ezio Aletti* in Rome. Team of researchers is trying to achieve a greater complexity of methodological procedures and experience in research and apply these to publication and educational activities at Palacky University. And also to enrich the culture of Europe by research results and thus accelerate the interaction between society, culture and religion. The building the relationships between new researchers, alumni and students is an ongoing and long-term project.

Today, Islam is spread around the whole world and also Europe meets this religion in a new cultural context and a new scale of numbers. At least since the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century Muslims migrated to Europe for many reasons (guest workers, asylum seekers, etc.), Muslim communities has constantly risen in numbers and the second and the third generations of those migrants are spread throughout Europe. Since the World War II minimum, Islam is no longer oriental religion for Europe and the Western society in general. Islam has been a world religion for centuries, at least since Muslim armies had conquered the first non-Arabic countries and steadily absorbed new countries and cultures. And even on the soil of Europe (Spain, Balkan) mosques were built since the Middle Ages. However, Islam is present throughout the contemporary Europe in new scales and in new conditions at least since the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Considering that it creates certain part of the society, what part of the European culture it is? In contemporary Europe Europeans themselves are seeking a solution for new problems associated with immigrants of Muslim faith, such as alienation, segregation, poverty. New question are waiting for new answers and the Europeans should be ready to understand new important issues. First of all, what are the reasons and causes for such wide instability within the Muslim world? And above all, how can Europeans and incoming Muslims live together and coexist in peaceful way; what is the pattern of the peaceful coexistence? Deeper understanding

of both questions given above could promote intense relationship between the heirs of European culture and Muslims. The worlds of Europe and of Islam (Asia, Middle East, and Africa) are not the separated worlds, and they scarcely were separated in the past, rather the communicating vessels were. Waves on the surface of one of them rouses warranted reaction inside the other one. However, there is a hope for peaceful existence, living together means accepting current cultural values of human rights, as well as the social and political system, as it is and all means remain open to innovation: "The time has come to work together in building a Europe which revolves not around the economy, but around the sacredness of the human person, around inalienable values. In building a Europe which courageously embraces its past and confidently looks to its future in order fully to experience the hope of its present. The time has come for us to abandon the idea of a Europe which is fearful and self-absorbed, in order to revive and encourage a Europe of leadership, a repository of science, art, music, human values and faith as well." (Pope Francis, Address to the European parliament, Strasbourg, France, 25 November 2014)

Europe can be recognized as the world of Christian culture, the culture of unity culture of traditions, and the culture of unity of the traditions, still not uniform. Europe is based on common values which could be described as dignity of man and consequently as human rights embodied into the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms. Today Europe is modern and pluralistic culture, which had been created for centuries, since Renaissance and the Enlightenment, French Revolutions and industrialization until today. After centuries of stagnation Muslim world is expanding worldwide and facing new challenges of Western modernity, at least since 19<sup>th</sup> century. The cultural gap between Europe and the Muslim world is evident. It is the fact that the larger part of the Muslim world suffer from illiteracy and from authoritarian political regimes while the concept of human rights and European idea of the dignity of person is foreign to the large part of them. In spite of all historical facts of glorious period of Muslim world during the Middle Ages, colonial ambitions of European pow-

ers and other historical periods, Europe today is facing the presence of Islam in a new light. And moreover, the question of Islam in Europe is rising in an old and well-known scene. The fate of European culture could be described as a portion of receiving new nations where these new nations brought their own religion and and cultural ideas. The Fall of Roman Empire and rising of “new Europe” with new nations is a foreshadowing antitype. All coming nations arriving on the continent enriched the ancient Greek and Roman roots of European culture together with the biblical message and accepted the values of their new home.

In Europe there was no need for reflecting Islam for centuries. Today, the call for open and critical reflection is urgent. And it is also necessary to say that Islam shares many common elements with contemporary European Christian culture, but of course there are also many differences. However, both groups have to live together in one society. And that raises a lot of questions and bears many tasks for both partners. In Western societies there is a desire for greater knowledge of Muslim world outside the borders of Europe and about communities inside Europe. Such knowledge must be provided without prejudice and without naivety.

This volume is a collection of papers presented at the International conference Europe and Islam, held in Olomouc from 3<sup>rd</sup> of March to 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2015. Venues of the conference were located at Palacký University in Olomouc. It was organised by The Institute for Intercultural Inter-religious and Ecumenical Research and Dialogue which is a part of the Sts. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology. Papers are presented in alphabetic order and short summaries profiles of them are presented on the last pages of the volume.

Fr Laurent Basanese, the French Jesuit (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome) opens the proceeding with actual question of true Islam. The paper “The Question of ‘True Islam’: Europe faces Salafism” deals with burning question of teaching authority in Islam and interpretation of the teaching of Islam by different scholars within different movements inside the Muslim world. He traces the elements of radical

movements in Islam to the deep history. His interpretation of current discussion inside the Islam and with Islam is enriching.

Bert Broeckeaert (Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium) deals with specific topic under the title “European Muslims and End of Life Ethics: A Belgian Perspective”. Considering that from the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century Islam has become the second largest religion, attitude of the Muslim believers towards the bioethics issues is significant more, than ever.

Stanislaw Grodz, SVD (Department of the Study of Religion and Missiology, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland) is approaching the question from different pattern and different perspective. He presents the history of Poland as an example of peaceful coexistence. Muslims and members of Poland nations have been living for centuries in one land and Stanislaw Grodz concludes with question of successful integration as inspiration for contemporary Europe.

Timo Ayac Güzelmansur, (Christlich-islamische, Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle, Arbeitsstelle der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, Frankfurt am Main, Deutschland) presents the Muslim communities in Germany as a challenge for the Catholic Church. And he concludes his paper “Muslimische Präsenz in Deutschland und Antwort der katholischen Kirche – eine Zusammenstellung” with quotation of the Benedict XVI. “Christians and Muslims, we must face together the many challenges of our time.” There is no room for apathy and disengagement, he emphasizes. And he anticipates the vision of cultivating relationships between the different religious communities in the steps of the Muslims and Christians.

Damian Howard SJ (Heythrop College, University of London, London, England) in his paper “Islam in England: a survey of communities, issues and engagement with Christians” stresses the fact that the relation between the Muslim communities and Christian churches can be examined in terms of positive theological(!) and practical engagement between both of them. Before that he describes the Muslim communities in England according to their ethnicity as well as the political and religious issues. Such pluriformity and diversity is in Europe unmatched.

Professor Luboš Kropáček (Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University in Prague) draws the attention of the reader to the small and deeply diverse Muslim communities in the Czech Republic. He presents the Muslim communities in context of specific conditions of Czech society: the secularism and widespread atheism.

Michaela Moravčíková (Institute for Legal Aspects of Religious Freedom, Faculty of Law, Trnava University in Trnava, Slovakia) describes roots of Islam in Slovakia and its present development. And she emphasizes the positive aspect of activities stimulating the acquaintance on the “interpersonal level”(!) which is considered as the important aspect for further development of the relation between the Muslim communities and the Christians.

Francesco Zannini (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome) deals in his paper with the Islam in Italy as the second largest religion after Catholicism with a significant growth of religious life in well-organized way. He concludes the paper with statement that upon long-term historical relationship between Islam and Italy “can find an healthy starting point for a cultural and religious dialogue” in Italy today.

Cornelis Hulsman (Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Translation) is a special guest of the Conference and in his paper he describes political changes in Egypt in the past four years. In the background of those political shifts he describes ongoing insufficiency of the state to promote the law which could moderate the Muslim-Christian relations. In spite of the several church burnings and religious clashes in last few years, he suggests the Western discourse presents “Muslim-Christian relations and human rights in Egypt in a one-sided negative light, largely focused on incidents but insufficiently aware of the wider context which is presented in this paper.”

The proceedings of the Conference might be evaluated as the contribution to better understanding of the relationship between the roots of the European culture and newly planted seed of the particular religion of Islam in Europe. That also belongs to the main goals of the Institute for intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical research and

dialogue established at Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology, Palacký University in Olomouc.

The conference would not be conceivable without the patronage of the mons. Jan Bosco Graubner, archbishop of Olomouc, and rector of the Palacký University prof. Jaroslav Miller. We are pleased to express thanks and gratitude for their support. And moreover the conference would not be convoked and realised without the keen support of the members of the Institute and encouragement from the dean of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology prof. Peter Tavel, O.P. I am grateful to prof. Pavel Ambros, S.J., for support, helpful comments and suggestions. I also thank Robert Svatoň for insightful discussions, Luisa Karczubová, Tomáš Černošek, Tomáš Karczub, and Jana Odehnalová. To all of them and to others unnamed belongs the gratitude.

Jaroslav Franc  
(Ash Wednesday 2015, Olomouc, Czech Republic)

# The Question of “True Islam”: Europe faces Salafism<sup>1</sup>

Laurent Basanese SJ

*Mal nommer les choses, c'est ajouter au malheur du monde.*

(Albert Camus)

*To name things wrongly is to add to the misfortune of the world.*

Europe is struck by violence once again. This time the threat does not come from neighbouring countries, nor from revolutionary movements, but from “outside” the continent, the secular enemy, “the other one”, the disregarded who already lives inside our borders. They are French, Spanish, English, German, Swiss... but they claim to both live and act according to Muslim precepts. Most of them are calm, well integrated, have even been European for generations, others are violent, unpredictable. Fear and mistrust are rising again in Europe, so much so that for some it evokes a third world war, already started, but “scattered”<sup>2</sup>. The last terrorist attacks in Paris from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2015, which have taken 17 lives, were perpetrated by three French citizens who claimed to act in the name of Islam, with links to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula based in Yemen, or to the Islamic State located in the territories of Syria and Iraq (I.S.I.S. or Daesh). This is not the first time the European continent is struck in this manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Ttranslated by Veronique Scully.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pope Francis : “Today we are in a world at war everywhere! Someone told me, “You know, Father, we are in the Third World War, but it is being fought ‘piecemeal’”. Do you understand? It is a world at war...” (Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Republic of Korea on the Occasion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Asian Youth Day, In-flight Press Conference, August 18<sup>th</sup> 2014): [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/august/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140818\\_corea-conferenza-stampa.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/august/documents/papa-francesco_20140818_corea-conferenza-stampa.html).

Eight other terrorist attacks have branded the new millennium in Paris between July and October of 1995 (8 dead, 200 injured), in Madrid on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2004 (200 dead, 1400 injured), and London on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 (56 dead, 700 injured). In the whole of Western countries, France is the one that has been most struck by Islamic terrorism. The multiplication of arrests since 2002 shows an increased vigilance of authorities in this area, especially since a large number of volunteers left for Iraq to fight Americans troops in 2005, and now to join Daesh<sup>3</sup>.

A simple but serious question torments the French- but not only them- and agitates the media: is this really Islam? These people who shout “Allah akbar!” after killing, are they “true Muslims”? Another, deeper, interrogation pinpoints the possible incompatibility between Islam and Democracy, Islam and modern European culture, especially since the numerous incidents in prisons and schools (*halâl* food demanded more and more, the increasing wearing of veil) and even hospitals (on the grounds that a male doctor could not do a procedure alone with his female Muslim patient). In the following pages, I would like to shed light on these two questions and indicate a possible way out of paralysis and fear.

## **1. The insufficient condemnation of this “false Islam” by Muslim organisations**

The question of “good” or “bad” Muslims comes of course from inside Islam itself, but it is normal that it should be endorsed by European societies, though they approach it with different criteria to settle the debate. The vast majority of Muslims in Europe have condemned the recent terrorist attacks, as well as the violent implantation of Daesh in Mosul. Let us remember for instance the success of the

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<sup>3</sup> In January 2015, around 1300 French citizens or residents would be implicated in *Jihad*. Almost 400 are rumoured to fight in Syria and Iraq and 250 are in transit towards the Islamic State; about 200 have returned to France.

Hashtag #notinmyname<sup>4</sup> endorsed by all those who wanted to distance themselves from the crimes of the Islamic State. In the same way, some important Islamic institutions have condemned the creation of the new caliphate. The great mufti of Saudi Arabia, 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Abd Allah Âl al-Shaykh, thus declared on August 19<sup>th</sup> 2014 that Daesh is not part of Islam but is its n. 1 enemy, comparing its followers to ancient Kharijites<sup>5</sup>, and asserted that Muslims are their first victims<sup>6</sup>. This declaration echoes other leaders or heads of States from Indonesia to Egypt. For instance sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, grand Imam of the al-Ahzar Mosque in Cairo, declared in an international conference on December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014, in front of delegations for example from Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Iran and Morocco<sup>7</sup>, that Daesh activists act "under

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<sup>4</sup> The formula was launched on Twitter on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2014 by the Active Change Foundation based in London.

<sup>5</sup> The Kharijites are people who rebel against the leader around which are assembled the majority of Muslims. Besides the obligation to rebel against the unfair or immoral leader, they excommunicate (*takfir*) Muslims who commit major sins.

<sup>6</sup> 'Abd al-'Aziz Âl al-Shaykh: "Extremist and militant ideas and terrorism which spread decay on earth, destroying human civilization are not in any way part of Islam, but are enemy number one of Islam, and Muslims are their first victims" (August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to notice that this conference took place a few days after Pope Francis' call to all Muslim leaders to condemn unanimously terrorism perpetrated in the name of Islam or by groups such as Al-Qaeda or I.S.I.S., as well as an end to persecutions of Christians in the Middle East: "It would be good to issue a clear condemnation against these kinds of groups. All religious leaders, scholars, clerics, intellectuals and politicians should do this. This way they hear it from their leaders' mouth. There needs to be international condemnation from Muslims across the world. [...] We Christians are being chased out of the Middle East. In some cases, as we have seen in Iraq, in the Mosul area, they have to leave or pay a tax which then makes no sense. And other times they push us out wearing white gloves. For example, in one country, a husband lives in one place and his wife in another... No, let the man come and live with his wife. No, no: let the woman leave, and leave the house free. This is happening in several countries. It's as if they wished that there were no more Christians, that nothing remain of Christianity. In that region this is happening. It's true, it's first of all a result of terrorism, but when it's done diplomatically with white gloves, it's because there's something behind it. This is not good" (Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Turkey In-flight Press Conference from Istanbul to Rome, november 30<sup>th</sup> 2014): [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141130\\_turchia-conferenza-stampa.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141130_turchia-conferenza-stampa.html).

the guise of this holy religion [i.e. Islam] and have given themselves the name ‘Islamic State’ in an attempt to export their *false Islam* [...] All armed groups and sectarian militias who use violence and terrorism... have no relationship with *true Islam*” (I emphasize). But the interesting element in this declaration is not so much the mention of the recurrent thesis of a possible Jewish<sup>8</sup> plot against Islam as the acknowledgment of a possible responsibility of Muslims: “But we should not ignore our own responsibility for the emergence of extremism that has led to the formation of organisations such as Al-Qaeda and other armed groups”<sup>9</sup>.

Seldom does a Muslim leader invite to self-criticism. In general, the culprits are identified: the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamophobia, fanaticism, poverty...the others. Here, the sheikh of al-Azhar shows another way out of violence by suggesting that condemning is not enough. Furthermore, it seems that the troubles that we are seeing in Europe today, and even more elsewhere, will be repeated as long as the sources that feed Islamic fundamentalism are not purified and healed. It can be compared, when it expresses itself through violence, to a new form of Nazism because of the methods used and because of its promotion of racial and religious hatred: attacks against places of worship and culture (schools, exhibitions, cinemas, medias), rejection of freedom of conscience, intimidations against opponents and women... The main adversaries of radicals are actually “all other Muslims”, and more generally all those who do not think like them, starting with the traditional institutions of Islam. It is therefore normal to hear a general condemnation from usually recognized Muslim authorities. But the problem is that Salafists themselves do not recognise the authority of those who condemn them: these judges are disqualified in their eyes

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<sup>8</sup> Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb: “Some feel that our suffering is also a plot by Israel so it remains the most powerful country in the region, and that possibility cannot be excluded”.

<sup>9</sup> <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/egypt/head-of-egypt-s-al-azhar-condemns-daesh-barbarity-1.1421648>.

because they have failed in the accomplishment of their religious obligations by compromising with the United States, Israel, "The West" in general, always considered Christian. And because they are disqualified, any Muslim scholar is authorised to pronounce fatwas or even *Jihad* in their place. The recurring question in Islam since it emerged in the VII<sup>th</sup> Century is in fact that of legitimacy of authority, legitimacy of the one who, according to the Quran and the sharia, must lead and guide closely the Muslim community.

We then infer that "the absence of clergy" so often emphasized as a strong- or positive- point of Islam reaches its limits, even if this view of a religion without regulations is not totally correct<sup>10</sup>. It appears in fact possible to be a "good Muslim" living let us say an enlightened, "autonomous" Islam as Abdennour Bidar<sup>11</sup> does, as well as an Islamic terrorist who finds his legitimacy on jihadist internet websites or local salafist mosque, as the Kouachi brothers did. Because being a "good Muslim" is an essentially subjective qualification, defined by the believer in his personal relationship to the Quran and his God. Let us remind ourselves, in fact, that Daesh and other groups who claim to act "according to the divine will" cannot be considered heretics by the Muslims who condemn them since their followers confess to *shahada* (first pillar of Islam which asserts that there is no other divinity than God and that Mohammed is his messenger)<sup>12</sup>. The Mufti and Imam cannot condemn these movements *per se*, as not being Islam, nor

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<sup>10</sup> Shiism actually acknowledges a hierarchical structure inside itself, whereas in Sunnism there actually exists a specialised professional body which holds the religious authority and always showed itself jealous of its prerogatives. This "clergy" actually does exist, even if it is constituted around the sharia and its mastery and not around its dogma and its knowledge. Cf. CHAUMONT, E., "Sharia", in: AMIR-MOEZZI, M. A., (ed.) *Dictionnaire du Coran*, Paris, Editions Robert Laffont, 2007, p. 820.

<sup>11</sup> The philosopher Abdennour Bidar is the author in France of a book called *Self-Islam*; cf. also his « Lettre ouverte au monde musulman » of October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014 : <http://blog.oratoiredulouvre.fr/2014/10/tres-profonde-lettre-ouverte-au-monde-musulman-du-philosophe-musulman-abdennour-bidar/>.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/8343.htm>.

because it is “wrong”. They only say that this is not the *true* Islam or that the radicals have strayed.

If then Islam, is also “that”, this unheard of violence in numerous countries, what is the effectiveness or the benefit of these official condemnations in conjunction with the incantation that “Islam is a religion of peace”? Their interest is certainly to show a consensus amongst the scholars of Islam, but they do not reach the roots of this evil. Because it is not enough to declare or to believe in something, one has to *prove it* “for oneself and for others” in order to provoke a true adhesion that reaches intelligence and heart and does not limit itself to superficiality and a wave of emotion. Otherwise “a religion which rashly declares war on reason will not be able to hold out in the long run against it”<sup>13</sup>. It is in fact not possible to hold without contradiction that “Islam is a religion of peace” and that “Islam is not a religion of peace” as fundamentalists, who also rely on the Quran and the Tradition or *Sunna*<sup>14</sup> to justify themselves, say with their actions.

## 2. A prerequisite: The recognition of the roots of evil accomplished in the name of God

The first challenge that Muslims, and with them the whole human community, must face, if they do not want to sink deeper into irrationality, the non-human and chaos, is therefore an intellectual challenge. All the Muslim renovators or reformers- from Ibn Hanbal (780-855) to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab’ (1703-1792), the founder of Wahhabis of Saudi

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<sup>13</sup> KANT, I., *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 1793, Preface to the First Edition.

<sup>14</sup> The compilation of Mohammed’s actions (*hadiths*) is the *Sunna*, the tradition he left for future generations. Accomplished in the most varied circumstances, they became, in time, a considerable “data basis” from which those who were in charge of explaining Islam constituted legally binding precedents. This tradition is found in “official” collections of which the most trusted are those of al-Bukhârî and of Muslim.

Arabia and Qatar in particular, through to Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328)- have wanted to retrieve the purity of Islam, "true" Islam. With them we find all the Salafists, and also all those who wished to avoid the "blind following" of the law schools of Sunni Islam- including the enlightened Muslims- although these schools have shaped the religious history of Islamic societies. These schools which spread their science and their fatwas from Cairo, Medina, Dublin, Paris and mostly from Islamabad and Lahore, differ in varying degrees on the importance bestowed on *Sunna*, the consensus of the ulemas or the customary law. Beyond their criticism of the law schools, Salafists in particular, also dispute all books that express "the point of view and opinions" of their authors instead of dealing exclusively with the Quran and *Sunna*. However, all of them claim to preach what they call "true Islam", the original Islam, or even an Islam amended from the deviances professed by other religious movements. The trend is therefore that each current professes to be the only legitimate and truthful form of religious practice, excluding more or less the "others". The danger is clearly to drift into intractable relativism or superstition, in the Thomist meaning of the term<sup>15</sup>. Where then is the truth?

All the reformist movements, especially amongst western Muslims, do not prone *jihad*, even amongst the Salafists. The Quietist movement, in particular, as Wahhabism, claims to be apolitical and simply preaches the immersion into the realm of religious writings. It remains therefore first of all a pious and sanctimonious movement, focusing on individual and family life, exercising an ultra orthodox and literalist reading of religious texts. However, even this "peaceful" movement can become a substratum of a political Islam which is much more militant, and can even be violent. This last form of Salafism, defended by the Muslim Brotherhood, in particular in Egypt or the *Sabwa* (Islamic

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<sup>15</sup> THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologicae*, IIa.IIae, q. 92, Resp.: "Superstition is a vice contrary to religion by excess, not that it offers more to the divine worship than true religion, but because it offers divine worship either to whom it ought not, or in a manner it ought not."

Revival) in Saudi Arabia, promotes the creation of Islamist political parties, of syndicates and associations, in order to attain power or to lobby upon the power in place. Politics and Democracy are clearly seen as modern tools used for the propagation of the Quranic message. In the speeches of these sheikhs, contemporary themes- such as American politics in the Middle East, the Israeli-Arab conflict, the presence of Muslims in the West, the Balkans or the Caucasus- are found alongside a very conservative vision of society. And amongst them, certain groups or preachers advocate *jihad* with its armed struggle component, placing it in the heart of their belief and making it a religious obligation. This “revolutionary” Salafism refuses any thought of commitment or collaboration with the Muslim societies that they consider too corrupt, and of course with western societies. These movements prefer direct action to any other political trend that they discredit utterly, including Democracy.

To work on understanding the roots of evil present in any ideological or utopian proposition, be it secular or religious, is first to get back to basics. This work cannot be undertaken from outside: before anything else is for Muslims to revisit what they say is their life: first the Quran and then their interpretative tradition, be it the *Sunna*, the philosophy, the “mystique”... The non-Muslim, the “outsider”, can only indicate the great bewilderment provoked by certain actions committed *in the name of religion*, and which outrage him. He even demands an explanation about certain issues of which a critical examination is a condition to live in peace.

### **3. Knowing about the justifications of the Quran, the Tradition, the Wahhabis...**

Concretely, what is to be done with the violent verses of the Quran, the “uncreated” word of God according to Muslim orthodoxy? Apparently, the simple “contextualisation” is not enough to prevent some

from applying them literally "today and everywhere". Verses of peace exist of course but, along the centuries, the first ones have been more developed and less interpreted than the second ones. In particular the verses "of the sword" which request to fight until the disappearance of "divisions" (*fitnah*):

Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors. And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and *fitnah* is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Fight them until there is no [more] *fitnah* and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah. But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors.<sup>16</sup>

Or this verse which imposes "humiliation" or the payment of the *jizyah*, the tax of the "People of the Book" (generally understood to be the Jews and the Christians):

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the *jizyah* willingly while they are humbled.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Quran 2, 190-193 :

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ. وَأَقْتُلُواهُمْ حَيْثُ نَفَقْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجْتُمْهُمْ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّى يُقَاتِلُوا فِيهِ فَإِنْ قَاتَلُواكُمْ فَاقْتُلُواهُمْ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ. فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ. وَقَاتِلُواهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ.

<sup>17</sup> Quran 9, 29 :

قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ.

In the same way, what is to be done with the “authentic” Divinely inspired traditions officially collected in the assortment of *hadiths*? These tell of Mohammad’s words, deed and attitudes, the “beautiful model” of the Muslims, forever quoted by all those who try to get closer to the first period of expansion of “true Islam”, for the reason that it would be less contaminated by time and human corruption. Thus:

■ About hand amputations:

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, “Allah curses a man who steals an egg and gets his hand cut off, or steals a rope and gets his hands cut off.”<sup>18</sup>

■ About stoning:

‘Ubada b. as-Samit reported: Allah’s Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: Receive (teaching) from me, receive (teaching) from me. Allah has ordained a way for those (women). When an unmarried male commits adultery with an unmarried female (they should receive) one hundred lashes and banishment for one year. And in case of married male committing adultery with a married female, they shall receive one hundred lashes and be stoned to death.<sup>19</sup>

Jabir b. ‘Abdullah reported that Allah’s Apostle (may peace be upon him) stoned (to death) a person from Banu Aslam, and a Jew and his wife.<sup>20</sup>

■ About apostasy:

Narrated ‘Abdullah: Allah’s Apostle said, “The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Apostle, cannot be shed except in three cases: In Qisas for murder, a married person who commits illegal sexual intercourse and the one who reverts from Islam (apostate) and leaves the Muslims.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Bukhari, Volume 8, Book 81, Number 774.

<sup>19</sup> Muslim, Book 17, Number 4191.

<sup>20</sup> Muslim, Book 17, Number 4216.

<sup>21</sup> Bukhari, Volume 9, Book 83, Number 17.

■ About *jihad* :

Narrated 'Abdullah bin Abi Aufa: Allah's Apostle said, "Know that Paradise is under the shades of swords."<sup>22</sup>

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "The person who participates in (Holy battles) in Allah's cause and nothing compels him to do so except belief in Allah and His Apostles, will be recompensed by Allah either with a reward, or booty (if he survives) or will be admitted to Paradise (if he is killed in the battle as a martyr). [...] I would have loved to be martyred in Allah's cause and then made alive, and then martyred and then made alive, and then again martyred in His cause."<sup>23</sup>

It is reported on the authority of Sa'b b. Jaththama that the Prophet of Allah (may peace be upon him), when asked about the women and children of the polytheists being killed during the night raid, said: They are from them.<sup>24</sup>

Then what can be done with the great teaching masters of the Middle Ages whose authority is still recognised today in Sunni Islam, for instance Ibn Taymiyya, highly quoted by the Wahhabis and the Salafis who broadcast his ideology around the world?

When God and his Messenger order us to browbeat our interlocutor because he oversteps the line and is hostile to the Book and the Tradition, we are ordered to confront him; we are not ordered to speak to him in the best way [...]. Someone who does not prohibit having another religion, after the coming of Mohammed [...] the religion of Jews and Nazarenes, or rather, someone who does not consider them to be misbelievers and does not hate them is not a Muslim- about this Muslims are in agreement.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Bukhari, Volume 4, Book 52, Number 73.

<sup>23</sup> Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 2, Number 36.

<sup>24</sup> Muslim, Book 19, Number 4321.

<sup>25</sup> IBN TAYMIYYA, *Majmu' fatawa*, Rabat, Maktab al-Ma'arif, 1981, [Mecca -Riyad, 1961-1967], vol. 3, 232 and vol. 27, 464.

Let us remember that Ibn Tamiyya, besides the theory of *jihad* that he vastly expanded, is the author of a work about blasphemy, a theme that is far from new and is now very relevant when we think about the Danish and French caricatures, *The unsheathed sword against anyone who insults the Messenger*<sup>26</sup>, of which the title is in itself a whole syllabus. It is his first important book written after the case of “Assaf al-Nasrani”, a Christian accused of having insulted the Prophet of Islam around 1300. In this work, Ibn Tamiyya defends the thesis that every man, Muslim or not, who commits blasphemy or insults Mo-hammad (or any other prophet) must be killed, even if he repents. This book was published a number of times during the XX<sup>th</sup> century, can be downloaded for free from the internet, and is popularised by “scholars” invited on television in the Middle East<sup>27</sup>.

What can be said of Saudi Wahhabism itself even if it claims to be apolitical through a silent loyalty to every Muslim Leader (even if the latter is ungodly or unfair)? This type of official Islam is well represented by sheikh al-Madkhali<sup>28</sup>, who is a leading figure of Salafism in France. But in reality, he does not advocate a separation between religion and politics as we might imagine in Europe: the reason he opposes any form of political participation of Muslims in Europe is that it would imply the recognition of the Constitution of States, which according to him is contrary to divine law, and the acceptance of Democracy, “invention” of Westerners. Furthermore, al-Madkhali, during a telephone dialogue with Al-Qaeda militants in the Islamic Maghreb, on December 9<sup>th</sup> 1999, invited his interlocutors to stop fighting the Algerian power (since it is Muslim) but rather to fight *jihad* in a European State, be it Italy, France or Spain. They are the true unrighteous.

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<sup>26</sup> IBN TAYMIYYA, *Kitab al-sarim al-maslul ‘ala shatim al-rasul*, Beirut – Sayda, al-Maktaba al-‘adriyya, 1990.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. for instance, on Youtube : [https://www.youtube.com/watch?x-yt-cl=84503534&v=sTqasybJiWM&feature=player\\_embedded&x-yt-ts=1421914688](https://www.youtube.com/watch?x-yt-cl=84503534&v=sTqasybJiWM&feature=player_embedded&x-yt-ts=1421914688).

<sup>28</sup> Sheikh Rabi’ b. Hadi al-Madkhali, born in 1931, holds a professorship in the Islamic University of Medina.

Go with your army in a godless country (*kâfir*), sinner (*fâsiq*) through the profanity of its government and people. Ask them to join Islam. If they accept, thanks be given to God. If they refuse, ask them to pay *jizyah*. If they still refuse, then the *jihad* becomes legitimate, but [within] a noble fight, in which honour will be respected, in which women and children will not be attacked.<sup>29</sup>

As a matter of fact, this address was held during an animated debate with jihadist militants, and an attentive analysis shows that in reality the legal conditions for an action "in a godless country" are impossible to meet according to him, so that in reality, the sheikh al-Madkhali discards the possibility of terrorism in non-Muslim countries. The interest of this excerpt is rather to show the type of representation of western societies that is common in *official* Wahhabis environments, slayers of "true Islam".

The fact that the establishment of "Quietist" Salafism in France is partly due to graduates from the University of Medina, returned during the 90s, such as Abdelkader Bouziane, explains in particular the predominance in our country of this trend which is theoretically peaceable. Let us remember that the imam Bouziane, finally deported to Algeria in 2004, preached in the region around Lyon and was known for his radical teachings. At the beginning of the war in Iraq, he had issued a fatwa calling to *jihad* against American interests in France. Polygamous (polygamy is illegal in France), father of sixteen children of which fourteen born in France, he is known mostly for his interview to the monthly "Lyon Mag" in April 2004, where he justifies for a husband to hit his wife:

[...] Beating up your wife, is authorised by the Quran, under certain conditions, in particular if the wife is unfaithful [...]. But careful, the man cannot strike anywhere. He must not hit the face but aim for

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<sup>29</sup> AL-MADKHALI, *Fatawa al-'ulama' al akabir fima abdara dama fi aljaza'ir*, Amman, al-Maktabat al-dhahitiyat, 2001.

the lower body, legs or stomach. And he can strike hard, to scare his wife so that she does not do it again [...].

#### 4. ...but also the Muslim Brotherhood and all the Islamists

What can be said of the populist organisation the Muslim Brotherhood? Even though they are opponents of the Saudi Wahhabis and forbidden on the “two Mosques” territory precisely because of their political ambitions, the Brotherhood lives essentially of the same ideology, whilst being more militant and proselyte. The Muslim Brotherhood have known their pinnacle in Egypt with the rise to power of Mohamed Morsi in 2012, deposed a year later as a result of pressure from the streets and the army. Egypt, Saudi Arabia and The United Arab Emirates (but not Qatar) have even listed the Brotherhood on the list of “terrorist organisations” in 2013 and 2014, much to the outrage in particular of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood<sup>30</sup>.

The Egyptian Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949), the grandfather of Swiss Hani and Tariq Ramadan, created the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, also for a return to Islamic roots. But his call for the return of Islam with his famous slogan “Islam is the solution” did not have, as a major focus to extirpate the roots of religious ignorance as for the Wahhabis, it manifested rather the will to restore the honour of Muslims, through political power and the reintroduction of Islam in society. Around 1945, the abridged program of the Brotherhood could be read on the walls of Cairo: “God is our aim, the Messenger is our model, the Quran is our Law, the holy war (*jihad*) is our way, martyr-

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<sup>30</sup> The French branch of the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, l’U.I.O.F. (Union of Islamic Organisations of France) reacted wrathfully when they learned that they too had been listed as “terrorist” in November 2014 : <http://www.uoif-online.com/communiqués/luoif-liste-organisations-terroristes-emirats-arabes-unis/>.

dom is our desire"<sup>31</sup>. But here is, in more details, what Hasan al-Banna declared in his message at the fifth Brotherhood Congress in January 1939:

“*The Islam of the Muslim Brothers*- Allow me, sirs, to use this expression. I do not want to imply with that that Muslim Brothers profess a new Islam, different from the one established by the Prophet Mohammed [...]. All [the] ideas that people have had about the unique Islam have led to noteworthy differences about the way they understand the Muslim Brothers and imagine their doctrine. [...] We, Muslim Brothers, consider that the precepts of Islam and its universal teachings integrate everything that concerns man in this world and the next, and that those who think that these teachings only concern the worship or spiritual aspect, and excludes the others, are mistaken. Islam is in fact faith and worship, country and citizenship, religion and State, spirituality and action, Book and sword. The noble Quran speaks of all this, considers it substance and an integral part of Islam. [...] Furthermore, the Muslim Brotherhood believes that the basis and support of Islamic teachings is the Book of God and the Tradition of the Prophet. [...] It is because the Muslim Brotherhood conceives Islam as universal and all encompassing that their doctrine covers all aspects of reformism. [...] We can deservedly say that the Muslim Brotherhood is: an invitation to return to our roots [...]; a traditional path [...]; a Sufi reality [...]; a political entity [...]; a sports group [...]; a scientific and cultural league [...]; an economic undertaking [...]; a social doctrine [...]<sup>32</sup>.

A few years previously, the Muslim Brotherhood had sent, as an encyclical, a program that was even more precise, in fifty points, “to the kings and princes of Islam, to the heads of Islamic States, to members of legal organisations and Islamic societies and to people who possess

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“الله غايتنا الرسول قودتنا القرآن شرعتنا الجهاد سبيلنا الشهادة امنيتنا”

<sup>32</sup> HASAN AL-BANNA, « Risalât al-Mu'tamar al-hâmis » (message du 5<sup>e</sup> Congrès), in *Courants actuels dans l'islam – Les Frères Musulmans (1<sup>o</sup> partie)*, Etudes Arabes n° 61, 1981-2, p. 28-41.

judgement and a sense of honour in the Islamic world”. Amongst them they ask that:

“Reform the Law so that it may be in agreement with Islamic legislation particularly in the matters of crime and legal punishment” (for instance amputation, flogging, death penalty).

“Oversee the personal behaviour of civil servants, check that there is not disparity between private life and professional life.”

“Move forward the work schedule in offices, in summer and winter, in order to facilitate the accomplishment of religious precepts and prevent frequent evening gatherings.”

“Oppose the use of wine as it is done for drugs, forbid its consumption and rid the nation of its evils.”

“Fight against provocative clothing and moral license, guide women towards what must be, insist upon that. This goes especially for school-teachers, school girls, female doctors and students, and those of equal status.”

“Prevent the mixing of male and female students. Consider that any relationship between a man and a woman is an offence that must be punished.”

“Close ballrooms and dancing clubs; forbid dancing.”

“Forbid money-lending and organise banks in order to attain this goal.”<sup>33</sup>

Clearly the Muslim Brotherhood want to attain power and rule to present humanity with another *type of society*, be it peacefully or upturning the “apostatic” Muslim regimes, guilty of preferring human Law- often western in origin- to Islamic Law, the sharia, as argued by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), Hasan al-Banna’s disciple:

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Etudes arabes, *Courants actuels dans l’islam (Les Frères musulmans, 2<sup>me</sup> partie)*, Dossier n. 2, 1982-1.

The only gainful thing is for Islam to govern life and transform it, for the State to enjoy Islamic power, to publish edicts based on Islamic Law, which regulates people's relationships, between themselves and between them and the government and between the government and them. There is not only the code relating to personal status, there is also the penal code, the civil code, the commercial code and all the other codes and all the other laws that compose the image of society and bestows it with its specific form and order [...]. Islam must rule to realize its being, to realize this perfect and fair society of which we have delineated most features. And none of all these things will happen as long as Islam is separated from the power on lifestyle. Islam must rule in order to present humanity with another style of society, in which it can find its ideal that communism is trying to achieve, but that it destroys by confining itself in matters of eating and drinking; that socialism in its turn is trying to reach, but its materialistic nature evacuates the spirit and the freedom; that Christianity, finally, is trying to live, but it has not provided laws nor established decrees to reach this ideal. Islam must rule, because it is the only positive and creative ideology that forms, from Christianity and communism, a perfect combination which combines all their goals and adds balance, harmony and good measure [...]. Finally, Islam must rule because it is very conscious of its own nature and the nature of life; it asserts that there is no Islam without power and no Muslims without Islam<sup>34</sup>.

After the Muslim Brotherhood renounced violence in 1970, the Egyptian organisation al-Gama'a al Islamiyya took over the Egyptian Islamic *jihad* at the beginning of the 90s by attacking Coptic Christians and tourists. Its principal attack was the Luxor massacre in 1997<sup>35</sup>. It is of note that during these years, al-Gama'a al Islamiyya was well implanted in the United States through mosques used as cells that conspired regularly in order to organise attacks against Israeli and

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<sup>34</sup> QUTB, S., *Ma'rakat al-islam wa al-ra'smaliyya (The Battle Between Islam and Capitalism)*, 2nd ed., Cairo, 1952, p. 70-79.

<sup>35</sup> The Luxor attacks killed almost 70 people.

American targets, such as the World Trade Centre in 1993. In 2003, the imprisoned leaders of the group renounced violence and the organisation converted to politics following the Egyptian revolution in 2011. They won some ten seats in the next elections.

For all these movements and these sheikhs, the separation between religion and politics, which occurred principally with the suppression of the Ottoman caliphate in 1924 following the end of WWI, is a catastrophe. Their vision of Islam is global and totalitarian. According to them, Muslims, in spite of their differences, consider themselves a unique reality that historical incidents have divided and they believe that it is their duty to bring back to life this international and borderless entity of Islam, as enounced by a Tunisian Islamist who lived in London in exile for a long time before returning to his country thanks to the Tunisian revolution, Râshid al-Ghannushi: “What prevents western scholars from sleeping, is that in the Muslim’s mind, the world is still divided in ‘Islamic territory’ and ‘war territories’”<sup>36</sup>. This mindset is not specific to Sunnites. This type of thought, both encompassing and exclusive, can be found in the words of two great Shiites Ayattollah in particular, the Iranians Khomeiny (1902-1989) and Motahhari (1919-1979):

Islam means everything, Islam includes everything, Islam encompasses everything. For us it is sad to have to put another word next to the word Islam which is a perfect word. If we want Islam, what need is there to specify that we want Democracy?<sup>37</sup>

At the beginning of Islam, the revolution, whilst being Islamic and religious, was also political, and together spiritual and political, was also an economic and material revolution. All that is freedom, justice, lack of social discrimination and class warfare is part of Islamic teach-

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<sup>36</sup> AL-GHANNUSHI, R., *Al-Ma'rifa*, V/7 (01.04.1979), p. 13-20.

<sup>37</sup> Ayatollah Komeiny, interviewed by Oriana Fallaci, in *Corriere della sera*, 26 September 1979.

ings. In fact, none of the above is exterior or foreign to Islam. The success of our movement comes from the fact that it does not only rely on spirituality, but because with the Islamisation of the other two factors, it absorbs them. [...] As the political situation of the world shows, in all Islamic countries, at present, the Islamic movements have taken roots based on an Islamic identity. Even in small countries whose names have not been mentioned by the mass-media, such movements have started to grow. All these movements, as they reveal themselves, have an Islamic nature, which means they are based on the rejection of non-Islamic values. [...] Anwar Sadat accentuated the fact that Islam belongs to the mosque and should be confined to this space, that in principle religion has nothing to do with political topics. This idea of secularism was so frequently exposed in our society that we had almost begun to accept it. [Sayyid Jamal al-Afghani] was maybe the first to realise that to initiate a movement amongst Muslims, he must make them understand that religion and politics are not separate from one another... Later colonialists made considerable efforts to separate politics from religion in Muslim countries<sup>38</sup>.

On this point therefore, Shiites and Sunnites are in accord and unite, in the East as in the West, as this convincing extract shows, published in the monthly bulletin of the *Centro islamico culturale d'Italia* otherwise known as the Great Mosque of Rome, financed by the Saudis:

The rebirth of Islam is not a regressive return to the past or a rejection of all international relations. It is a return to essential roots and a new bond to principles. [...] In Islam, religion is the foundation, and our Holy Quran is the principal basis of social and political life that every Muslim must follow. What evil is there if a country is guided by sharia (or the tradition) and by laws established by our Prophet, who

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<sup>38</sup> Brochure of the Organisation of Islamic Propagation, Tehran, 1985, in AMIN, H. A., (ed.) *Le défi du fondamentalisme islamique*, Genève, Editions Labor et Fides 1988, p. 95-101.

changed the lives of a multitude of people in his time into a normal and fair society, where everyone is free? If we really follow the true path and live according to his teachings, we shall have the best society we can dream of. [...] With western countries, we always have this problem to make them understand or to make know to the public the Islamic Government. Because for a long time they have been governed by a system in which religion was fundamentally separated from the State... In the Islamic State, sovereignty belongs to God. This is the fundamental difference between the two systems of governing world countries... What is written in the Quran must be put in practice... It is imperative for us to reinforce our thought and make a constitution based on the teachings of the Quran, maintaining our aspirations and our ideology... If we behaved otherwise we would be disloyal towards Islam and unfair to ourselves<sup>39</sup>.

## 5. An ideology incompatible with European democracies

Thus Wahhabism, which legitimates the Saud dynasty, which in turn supports it, considers itself to be the true and pure Islam. Their followers are considered “peaceful” because they emphasize worship and a distance from politics which, according to them, only brings corruption and division. With a vision of the world based on the opposition *halâl- harâm* (permitted- forbidden), their religious practice, all encompassing and of sectarian orientation consists in separating themselves as much as possible from “others”, especially from individuals of “moral failings” for the more exclusivists: non-Muslims, Muslims of “weak” or “sick” faith, secular Muslims... They judge the West harshly- Salafists preachers vituperate regularly against its moral, political and social values- and some even call upon faithful Muslims to leave Eu-

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<sup>39</sup> CENTRO ISLAMICO CULTURALE D'ITALIA, *Bolletino mensile*, 1979, in SAMIR, Kh., “Khomeiny e i ‘Fratelli musulmani’ – Un ritorno integrale alle radici dell’Islam”, *Civiltà Cattolica*, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1980, p. 449-450.

rope and North America for "Muslim lands"<sup>40</sup>. They consider, in fact, that to preserve the purity of one's faith in western societies is almost impossible, because the grounds for religious corruption are abundant, be it in the matter of food, dress and social attitudes. Others, less uncompromising, accept more easily the positive laws of secular States, even if a standard contravenes a religious principle, whilst waiting for a change of the legal system in a close or distant future.

The implantation of "Quietist" Salafism in the western world is principally a result of proselytizing former students of Islamic Universities, mostly Saudis. It is thanks to the preaching of the first promotions of European and North American graduates who went to Saudi Arabia to train in religious sciences that this Salafism of the Wahhabi type obtained a foothold in France, in the Netherlands, in Belgium, in the United-Kingdom and also in Canada, the United States and Australia. Their basic ideology is however *identical* to that defended by the Muslim Brotherhood and other more political, even radical movements, including Daesh, even if they describe these as "terrorists" or enemies of Islam. This ideology has its foundation in a literal interpretation of the Quran and the *sunna*, the imitation of Mohammed as it is described in the collection of *hadiths*, and dreams of rebuilding an Islamic society or even an Islamic State or a califate most true to the *Salaf*, the pious ancestors of the VII<sup>th</sup> century. Daesh even claims to be the most orthodox movement in Islam, competing with Wahhabism. It actually relies on the "purity of its doctrine" for recruiting. A survey in social networks published in 2014 only emphasizes the radicalisation of Saudi society: 92% of young Saudis approve of Daesh's ideology and its activities<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> The sheikh al-Madkhali, mentioned previously, is a representative of this movement; he emphasizes— based on *hadith*— the forbidden character of a stay in "godless or Christian" lands and call Muslims to move back to Saudi Arabia in order not to be subject to "positive laws" which have taken the place of God's Law. The sheikh Nasi al-Din al-Albani (1914-1999) is another major reference of this trend.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. <https://muslimstatistics.wordpress.com/2014/08/24/92-of-saudis-believes-that-isis-conforms-to-the-values-of-islam-and-islamic-law-survey/>.

If Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries contribute, at least indirectly to feed the Salafist ideology, be it violent or not, through Wahhabism as the State doctrine and thanks to the financing of madrasas in the East and cultural centres in the West, the Muslim Brotherhood and affiliates are more explicit in their proposition for a new society. Thus, the Salafist of political obedience are explicitly opposed to modern Arab regimes and western societies. Beyond exhorting a re-Islamisation of the countries of origin and the necessity of creating an Islamic State, they also call to a mobilisation to defend and represent western Muslims through demonstrations and petitions<sup>42</sup>. In Europe, some try to make it into the parliamentary arena to try and ensure a space of religious freedom for Muslims and also, of course, to try and reform society in accordance with their view of the world. They introduce themselves to the authorities as privileged interlocutors on matters of religion, racism or delinquency in popular areas. In focusing on trying to define the contours of a Europeanised Islam, they also invite youths of Muslim background to integrate, but in accordance with the British multicultural model: to be both western and Muslim, without it implicating any assimilation of the dominant culture. Many members of the Muslim Brotherhood have thus swapped their traditional attire for an occidental dress code a few years ago, in order to seem more modern. They also broadened their recruitment to graduates from elite universities.

It is important to underline again that all Salafists reject the western influence on Islam, especially philosophical ideas of Enlightenment like Democracy or Secularism. Democracy is theoretically rejected on the grounds that it assumes that power belongs to the majority and not to God. It grants sovereignty to the people, but neither the people nor

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<sup>42</sup> The action of several groups of Danish imams opposed to the publication of “caricatures of Mohammed” by the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005 is well known : they went to the Middle East in order to mobilise institutions and Muslim States to put pressure on the Danish government. The anti western demonstrations happened several months after the publishing of the criticised pictures, which illustrated an article about self-censorship.

parliament could be the source of the law; sovereignty only belongs to God. Furthermore there cannot be, according to their ideologists, a separation between religion and State since Islam is all encompassing and must rule the whole life of the Muslim. Thus, in wanting to exclude the four law schools of Sunnism in the pretension to go back to original Islam, Salafism refuses plurality and diversity in the Muslim community itself, for the benefit of a standardization of theology and doctrine. God being in essence One and Unique, there can only be, according to them, an only and unique way of adoring and worshipping him. On the worship and social scene, "One and Unique" must translate into an only type of religious practice serving one vision of the world. Only their conception of Islam is authentic. The other Muslims have yielded to the illusions of modernity, of syncretism, of secularism, even atheism, and their fate is comparable to that of non Muslims.

As a religious thought that was formed in controversy, Salafism always battled against theological adversaries. Salafist sheikhs today polish their arguments reviving figures that we mentioned previously, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn 'Abd al Wahhab, every time they have to fight views of the sacred text that threaten their methods of interpretation. The first in their line of fire are the liberal intellectual Muslims who try to think of the divine text with the help of social sciences, hermeneutics or linguistics. They also hope, with their proselytizing and their individual and joint influence, to "convert" non-initiated Muslims, and also maybe non-Muslims, to their form of religious practice and Islamic identification. Their political and religious ideology is nevertheless incompatible with modernity. Its power of attraction resides however in the simplicity of the ideas it develops: bringing the complexity of reality down to elementary choices, they describe the world in a Manichaeian way, opposing the "pure" and the "impure", believers and unbelievers, the forces of Good (the Salafists) and forces of Evil (tepid Muslims, non-Muslims). Thus they give their followers a global interpretation of history, along with a feeling of superiority for their members who see themselves as the elected. Based on evidence

they set down an absolute knowledge, accepted by all, always true, which cannot be contradicted without challenging common sense, usually shared by those who know.

Today, having been commented and broadcasted by the principal modern preachers of the Saudi State, Salafists control a great part of Muslim literature. Internet plays a major part in propaganda and development of the international notoriety of this movement, particularly the jihadist trend which knows how to use every resource of modern communications. The “magnifying” effect works perfectly here: cyber-activism translates into the multiplying of websites that seem to create a virtual *umma* in the global world, where everyone nurtures the feeling of belonging to the same borderless Islamic community. These websites also reflect the power struggles fought by the different streams of Salafism, financed by numerous Arabic sponsors of the Gulf countries, with the objective of obtaining a monopoly of expression of legitimate Islam.

To mention only traditional methods, before the emergence of internet, when the Muslim Brotherhood were not yet considered “terrorists”, the Saudis- but also the Americans- gave the Brotherhood the means to establish an Islamist structure just in time to welcome the wave of Muslim immigration in Europe in the seventies. In 1961, Saïd Ramadan (1926-1995), the son in law of Hasan al-Banna and father of Hani and Tariq, established, with the help of the future king Faisal of Saudi (1906-1975), the Islamic Centre of Geneva. A year later, with the same prince, he also crafted the Muslim World League which awards every year millions of euros to promote “true Islam” throughout the world. The League in fact endeavours to officially make known the sharia and promote Wahhabi teaching through the building of mosques, Islamic institutes and schools. Its existence manifests also the permanent concern of Saudis to supervise the management of the “spiritual field” in the midst of the Muslim world. Its ambition is publicly displayed: according to Michel Renard, former director of the periodical *Islam of France* and himself a convert to Islam, “[the Mus-

lim World League] is convinced that, in a hundred years, it will have converted a large part of the French population.<sup>43</sup> A genuine parallel diplomatic structure, it is the precursor and matrix of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (today Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) created in 1969, still in Saudi Arabia, vast gathering of fifty seven countries representing close to a billion people, one of the most important forums of the non Western world. The Cairo conference, gathered on August 5<sup>th</sup> 1990, is known in particular for having adopted the *Declaration of human rights in Islam* which is a true reinterpretation of the human rights in a context compatible with sharia.

After the first oil crisis, during the eighties, and mostly as of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan, the Saudis take direct control of European Islam, bypassing the structures of the Muslim Brotherhood, thanks to a new soaring of the Muslim World League<sup>44</sup>. To safeguard its influence, the Muslim Brotherhood participated in the creation of the Islamic Council of Europe in 1973, whose pinnacle will be the creation, ten years later, of the U.I.O.F., Union of Islamic Organisations of France (recently classified as "terrorist" by the United Arab Emirates as mentioned earlier) then the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, F.I.O.E. in 1989. At the instigation of this Federation, the European Council for Fatwa and Research was created in 1997, located in Dublin and having as president the Qatari preacher (deprived of his Egyptian nationality), Yusuf al-Qaradawi. He is a famous member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and is also president of the International Union of Muslim Scholars based in Doha. He is well known for his television program "Al-sharia wa al-Hayat" (Sharia and life), broadcasted

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. [http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/religion/l-argent-de-l-islam\\_497530.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/religion/l-argent-de-l-islam_497530.html).

<sup>44</sup> It is also during this period that Western Europe acted as a rear base for the "freedom fighters" where sixty Islamic leaders were in residence, fifteen of them as "political refugees", Al-Zawahiri for instance, Al-Qaeda's n°1 after Ben Laden, who was living in Switzerland with the title of Commander of Islamic groups in Europe. He had been sentenced to three years in prison following the assault of the presidential Platform of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, assassinated in October of 1981.

on the Qatari TV's *al-Jazeera* with an estimated audience of 60 million viewers in the world, and also as being the co-creator of IslamOnline. Banned from the United States since 1999, he was refused a visa for the United-Kingdom in 2008, then for France in 2012 when he was invited by the U.I.O.F. to their annual meeting at the Bourget facilities. Al-Qarawadi reveals himself nevertheless as a "classic" Muslim Brother in his declarations and his writings:

Secularism is part of the vices that have been infecting the Muslim world for a few years. This is possible only because Muslim countries are henceforth governed by the laws of men, Divine Law having been discarded from public life. In the time of its decadence, it has been tried to make Islam a copy of Christianity, that is, to separate it from its worldly aspect. But if we can understand that Christians have rebelled against Christianity and the Church, which have always been on the side of obscurantism and despots, we cannot understand why Islam, which is innocent of such sins, should pay for that. Muslims have always lived according to Quran Laws and can never accept secularism because it is contrary to the spirit of their culture. Christianity, which is not a socio-political model, can give itself a secular legislation. In Islam, this amounts to wanting to know more than God, it is therefore to be considered as a form of atheism and apostasy. The concept of secularism goes back to Greek Thought which considered that divinity did not know of terrestrial affairs. In Islam on the other side, God knows and controls everything<sup>45</sup>.

Furthermore he justifies Palestinian attacks against Israelis ("to transform oneself into a bomb is divine justice"), as well as the death of the apostate, as he regularly declares on television studios<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> AL-QARADAWI, Y., *al-Sahwa al-Islamiyya bayn al-jahud wa al-tataruf* (*The Islamic awakening between ingratitude and extremism*), Cairo– Beirut 1984, p. 110-116.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2PSbGLJjV4> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huMu8ihDIVA&list=PLM30HXdcWETkwdSZW720-49QdcL-SaYu5O&index=1>.

## 6. A few questions addressed to Europe, the Church and Muslims

Today the Salafist thought broadcasted by the media and mosques is at the root of Muslim fundamentalism and violence. This thought pretends to represent "pure" or "true" Islam. However it faces a contradiction when it asserts that Islam is a tolerant religion, whereas, at the same time, it continues to support a dogmatic system which is not one (Quranic verses, sharia, fatwa...). Behind the condemnations of principle against terrorism issued by groups or States more or less respectable but often wealthy, and animated by this ideology, we must learn not to be naïve but unmask their true intentions, which are often hidden. Europe, in particular, cannot continue to turn a blind eye on all this without becoming an accomplice to the consequences for the future of its civilisation and its culture. The principle of "reciprocity", in particular, which is a principle of justice, must be exacted when it is a question of places of worship or respect of minorities, especially since that, at this time, it is Christians who, in the world, but especially in countries with a majority of Muslims, suffer the most persecutions because of their faith, and often to their death.

Islam is not similar to Christianity: it is *another* religion. And according to its present doctrine, Islam is a whole, "religion and State", *din wa dawla*. The problem is not that it is another universal offered to the world, indeed a missionary universalism, as it is for Christianity or for the western rationalist tradition; the question is rather to know what type of society we want for tomorrow. To this question is attached another one: what type of peace do we want? The one imposed by the force of the Law (and sharia, as "divine Law" is such a form) or that sought in freedom? As for the Church, it should not renounce, either, its missionary vocation "because the Christian spirit has always been animated by a passion to lead all humanity to Christ in the Church"<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>47</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, *Doctrinal Note on some Aspects of Evangelization*, 3 Dec. 2007, n. 9: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20071203\\_nota-evangelizzazione\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20071203_nota-evangelizzazione_en.html).

It must figure out how to welcome and offer, freely and without fear, the faith in Christ as well as its vision of the world, to all men, including Muslims, in Europe and elsewhere, but with its own method, that is without coercion or undue pressure:

The Church strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the Faith, or alluring or enticing people by worrisome wiles. By the same token, she also strongly insists on this right, that no one be frightened away from the Faith by unjust vexations on the part of others<sup>48</sup>.

What structures does it develop, at the parish or local Churches level, to offer the evangelical message to all people who do not know, or do not know well the Christ they confess?

In his dialogue with Jürgen Habermas, Joseph Ratzinger asked himself in 2004 what were “the sources on which *terror* draws?” He wonders: “How can we succeed in eliminating, from within, this new sickness of mankind?<sup>49</sup>” It is well known that in order to cure any disease, it is of foremost importance to identify its cause. Here it is the desire to impose *in the name of God* the good and the truth by the power of the sword. It is not exclusive to Islam because any system, even secular, who wants to impose its ideas “under the guise of good” can fall into this grievous mistake and into violence, and be led to worship idols<sup>50</sup>. Healing is nevertheless possible, as shown by history or other

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<sup>48</sup> SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree *Ad Gentes* on the Mission Activity of the Church, n. 13.

<sup>49</sup> He added: “It is shocking to see here that, at least in part, terror offers a moral legitimation for its action. Bin Laden’s messages portray terror as the response of the powerless and oppressed peoples to the arrogance of the mighty and as the righteous punishment for their arrogance and for their blasphemous highhandedness and cruelty.” Cf. HABERMAS, J., - RATZINGER, J., *The Dialectics of Secularization – On Reason and Religion*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2006, p. 63-64.

<sup>50</sup> As Benedict XVI was saying again in his *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, “Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace”, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011, n. 8: “The same determination that condemns every form of fanaticism and religious fundamentalism must also oppose every form of hostility to religion that would restrict the public role of believers in civil and political life. It should be clear that *religious fundamentalism*

religious traditions, and as indicated by our faith in a Unique God, and always "Greater" (*akbar* in Arabic), greater than systems and ideologies.

The Old Testament contains violent prescriptions, but it has been read over and transformed by Christ so that it is impossible for a Christian to act unfairly *in the name of God* without sinning. It is the same for post-biblical Judaism which knew how to reinterpret these dangerous passages. Islam as well must go through an intelligent reading over of its tradition, because reason is also one of the greatest gifts of God, otherwise violence committed in his Name will never cease. Without a new reading of religious sources, the violent passages that can be found in texts considered true (Quran), authentic or Divinely revealed (*hadiths*), or legally binding (the sharia, the fatwas) will always resurface. But today, a faithful cannot be satisfied by believing "foolishly", refusing a personal and communal labour of intelligence, otherwise he runs the risk of falling into "bad faith", fideism or fundamentalism. Moreover, he will be constantly provoked by all those who will ask him to account for the motives that make him act violently. For a Christian, in particular, to act meanly in the name of God or consider that he may do wrong is blasphemy:

Truth can never be imposed... To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against human dignity, and ultimately an offence against God whose image that person bears. For this reason, what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. *Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purposes. [...] Consequently, no religious leader can condone terrorism, and much less preach it.* It is a profanation of religion to declare oneself a terrorist in the name of God, to do violence

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*and secularism are alike in that both represent extreme forms of a rejection of legitimate pluralism and the principle of secularity. Both absolutize a reductive and partial vision of the human person, favouring in the one case forms of religious integralism and, in the other, of rationalism":* [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20101208\\_xliv-world-day-peace\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20101208_xliv-world-day-peace_en.html).

to others in his name. Terrorist violence is a contradiction of faith in God, the Creator of man, who cares for man and loves him<sup>51</sup>.

To speak more about biblical monotheism, since in that field the efforts of reinterpretation have preceded Islam, it carries in itself a liberating force thanks to the relativization and criticism *within itself* of all that pretends to be absolute, that is, once again, an idol: unique thought, politics, the caste of priests of scholars, religious or secular ideologies. Even Jesus, as he is confessed by Christians, reflects Another-his Father- and does not compel us to rest our quest with him. On the contrary, he opens forever more our mental, cultural and spiritual frontiers. Furthermore, the God of the Bible, the Transcendent by excellence, is even free of this transcendence, to the point that he foregoes it to identify with *another*, a creature and stoop to *kenosis*. And he does it for love, to accompany man in his encounter, never completed, towards *the other*, towards unknown horizons, towards his own oblation:

Love [...] involves a real discovery of the other, moving beyond the selfish character that prevailed earlier. Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice<sup>52</sup>.

The other questions we ask of Muslims are therefore the following: is there, in your tradition, a way- other than the law, that is not expressed by fatwas, adjustments or condemnations- that would offer the world a renewed and attractive face of Islam, without your religion betraying itself? What deep path of *intelligere* do you plan to go through to reinterpret your *religious* texts some of which are bearers of destruction against yourselves and against the rest of humanity? To mention

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<sup>51</sup> Message of his Holiness Pope John Paul II for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2002, "No peace without justice; No justice without forgiveness", n. 6 and 7: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20011211\\_xxxv-world-day-for-peace\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20011211_xxxv-world-day-for-peace_en.html).

<sup>52</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 2005, n. 6.

only sharia or *hadiths*, wouldn't it be possible to establish a distinction between what seems to be a "divine right" and a right linked to conjecture or "positive"? Every natural and supernatural means can and must be used: sciences, for instance historical and semiotic researches, and also confronting reality, such as life in a plural and multicultural world, and finally spirituality which is the goal, desired by all, that is life with or according to God who alone is Truth<sup>53</sup>. We must all, Christians, Jews, Muslims, and also layman and all people of goodwill, enter into a serious dialogue, intelligent, that is to say not superficial, to end the pathologies of religion and also of reason, that we face today in the European continent and elsewhere. This polyphonic correlation between us is accessible, and God the Highest is waiting for our collaboration.

*I have seen a limit to all perfection;  
Your commandment is exceedingly broad.*

(Ps 119: 96)

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<sup>53</sup> This call correlates the one issued on December 28<sup>th</sup> 2014 by Egypt's president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi speaking before Al-Azhar and the Awqaf Ministry on New Year's Day, 2015, and in connection to Mohammed's upcoming birthday: "I am referring here to the religious clerics. We have to think hard about what we are facing — and I have, in fact, addressed this topic a couple of times before. It's inconceivable that the thinking that we hold most sacred should cause the entire *umma* to be a source of anxiety, danger, killing and destruction for the rest of the world. Impossible! That thinking — I am not saying 'religion' but 'thinking' — that corpus of texts and ideas that we have sacralized over the centuries, to the point that departing from them has become almost impossible, is antagonizing the entire world. It's antagonizing the entire world! Is it possible that 1.6 billion people [Muslims] should want to kill the rest of the world's inhabitants — that is 7 billion — so that they themselves may live? Impossible! I am saying these words here at Al-Azhar, before this assembly of scholars and ulema — Allah Almighty be witness to your truth on Judgment Day concerning that which I'm talking about now. All this that I am telling you, you cannot feel it if you remain trapped within this mindset. You need to step outside of yourselves to be able to observe it and reflect on it from a more enlightened perspective. I say and repeat again that we are in need of a religious revolution. You, imams, are responsible before Allah. The entire world, I say it again, the entire world is waiting for your next move... because this *umma* is being torn, it is being destroyed, it is being lost — and it is being lost by our own hands": cf. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJfnquV7MHM>.

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# European Muslims and End of Life Ethics: A Belgian Perspective

Bert Broeckaert

## 1. Introduction: A Forgotten Group, a Neglected Voice

Since the end of the Second World War, most European countries have gradually developed into postmodern multicultural and multireligious societies. In Belgium, as in the majority of European countries, within a few decades Islam has become the second largest religion.<sup>1</sup> These evolutions constitute an important challenge to the ways in which our society deals with death and dying, as these are still deeply influenced by secular-Western ways of thinking and/or Christian approaches and thus tend to pay insufficient attention to the impact and the perspectives of other traditions.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the high degree of technicality of many ethical issues at the end of life and the highly secularised environment in which many contemporary ethicists operate tend to obscure the role played by religion and worldview in influencing ethical opinions, attitudes and practices. Indeed, religion and worldview provide frameworks that help people deal with matters of life and death.<sup>3</sup> In international research the influence of religion and worldview on ethical decision making has remained out of the picture

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<sup>1</sup> BARRETT, D.B., KURIAN, G.T. & JOHNSON, T.M., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions AD 30-AD 2200*, Oxford University Press, New York 2000.

<sup>2</sup> HALMAN, L. and DRAULANS, V., *Religious Beliefs and Practices in Contemporary Europe*. In *European Values at the Turn of the Millennium*, ed. W. Arts and L. Halman, Leiden – Boston, Brill 2004, p. 283-316.

<sup>3</sup> PARGAMENT, K.I., SMITH, B.W., KOENIG, H.G. & PEREZ, L., *Patterns of Positive and Negative Religious Coping with Major Life Stressors*. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37(4)/1998, p. 710-724.

in an important way. What we do find is a considerable body of literature dealing with the influence of (a specific) religion on ethics from a normative and theoretical point of view, leaving aside any empirical focus on real-world attitudes and/or practices<sup>4</sup> In these theoretical studies the Christian perspective is ‘over’-represented.<sup>5</sup>

Although many empirical studies have been conducted on the attitudes and practices of specific groups –e.g. physicians, nurses– regarding ethical issues at the end of life, these studies hardly ever focus on religion or worldview as an explaining factor.<sup>6</sup> When religion and worldview are taken into account, we often find that the operationalisation of religious or ideological affiliation is extremely limited, often offering respondents, in one question only, the choice between a number of religious categories (e.g. ‘Christian’, ‘Muslim’, ‘Jew’, ‘other’).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, most studies are focused on populations with a predominantly Christian background. Nevertheless the available data show that

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<sup>4</sup> VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B., “Medication and God at Interplay: End-of-Life Decision-Making in Practicing Male Moroccan Migrants Living in Antwerp, Flanders, Belgium”. In *Muslim Medical Ethics. From Theory to Practice*. ed. J. Brockopp & T. Eich: Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 2008, p. 194-208. AL-JELANI, M., Pain: Points of View of Islamic Theology. *Acta Neurochirurgica. Supplementum* 38/1987, p. 132-135. AKSOY, S. & ELMALI, A., The Core Concepts of the ‘Four Principles’ of Bioethics as Found in Islamic Tradition. *Medicine and Law* 21(2), 2002, p. 211-224.

<sup>5</sup> DEL POZO, P.R. & FINS, J.J. “Death, Dying and Informatics, Misrepresenting Religion on MedLine” 2005. *BMC Medical Ethics* no. 6; <http://www.pubmedcentral.gov/picrender.fcgi?artid=1185543&blobtype=pdf> (accessed on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2015).

<sup>6</sup> GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B., Attitudes of European Physicians Toward Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide: a Review of the Recent Literature. *Journal of Palliative Care* 24(3)/2008, p. 173-184. GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B., Religion and Nurses’ Attitudes to Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide. *Nursing ethics* 16(3)/2009, p. 303-318. GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B. The Operationalisation of Religion and World View in Surveys of Nurses’ Attitudes toward Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 12(4)/ 2009, p. 423-431.

<sup>7</sup> GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S., VAN IERSEL, G., BROECKAERT, B., Flemish Palliative Care Nurses’ Attitudes toward Euthanasia. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 15(10)/2009, p. 488-497.

religions and worldview do have an important influence on attitudes towards end-of-life issues.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, recent studies indicate the ageing of the Belgian Muslim population:<sup>9</sup> in 2008 13.381 elderly Moroccans (men

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<sup>8</sup> GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B., Attitudes of European Physicians Toward Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide: a Review of the Recent Literature. *Journal of Palliative Care* 24(3)/2008, p. 173-184. GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S., VAN IERSEL, G., BROECKAERT, B., Flemish Palliative Care Nurses' Attitudes toward Euthanasia. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 15(10)/2009, p. 488-497. GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S., VAN IERSEL, G., BROECKAERT, B., Religion, World View and the Nurse, Results of a Quantitative Survey among Flemish Palliative Care Nurses. *International Journal of Palliative Nursing*, 15 (12)/2009, p. 590-600. GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S., VAN IERSEL, G., BROECKAERT, B., The Diverse Influence of Religion and World View on Palliative-care Nurses' Attitudes to Euthanasia. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 24 (1)/2011, p. 36-56. GIELEN, J., VAN DEN BRANDEN, S., VAN IERSEL, T., BROECKAERT, B., Flemish Palliative-Care Nurses' Attitudes to Palliative Sedation, Results of a Quantitative Study. *Nursing Ethics*, 19 (5)/2012, p. 692-704. VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B., "Medication and God at Interplay: End-of-Life Decision-Making in Practicing Male Moroccan Migrants Living in Antwerp, Flanders, Belgium". In *Muslim Medical Ethics. From Theory to Practice*. ed. J. Brockopp & T. Eich: Columbia: University of South Carolina Press 2008, p. 194-208. VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B. Necessary Interventions. Muslim Views on Pain and Symptom Control in English Sunni e-Fatwas. *Ethical Perspectives* 17(4)/ 2010, p. 626-651. VAN DEN BRANDEN, S. & BROECKAERT, B. Living in the Hands of God. English Sunni E-Fatwas on (non)Voluntary Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 14(1)/2011a, p. 29-41. VAN DEN BRANDEN, S., BROECKAERT, B., The Ongoing Charity of Organ Donation. Contemporary English Sunni Fatwas on Organ Donation and Blood Transfusion. *Bioethics*, 25(3)/2011, p. 167-175. BAEKE, G., WILS, J., BROECKAERT, B., "There is a time to be born and a time to die" (Ecclesiastes 3:2a). Jewish Perspectives on Euthanasia. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 50 (4)/2011, p. 778-795. BAEKE, G., WILS, J., BROECKAERT, B., "We are (not) the master of our body". Elderly Jewish Women's Attitudes towards Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. *Ethnicity & Health*, 16(3)/2011, p. 259-278. BAEKE, G., WILS, J., BROECKAERT, B., American Jewish Approaches to Contemporary Ethical Issues in Medicine: the Case of Organ Retrieval from Brain-dead Donors. *Mortality*, 16(4), 365-379. BAEKE, G., WILS, J., BROECKAERT, B., Orthodox Jewish Perspectives on Withholding and Withdrawing Life-Sustaining Treatment. *Nursing Ethics*, 18 (6)/2011, p. 835-846. BAEKE, G., WILS, J., BROECKAERT, B. "It's in God's hands". The Attitudes of Elderly Muslim Women in Antwerp (Belgium) toward Active Termination of Life. *AJOB Primary Research*, 3 (2)/ 2012, p. 1-12.

<sup>9</sup> LODEWIJCKX, E. Demografische data over veroudering en allochtone ouderen in Vlaanderen en Antwerpen. *Tijdschrift voor welzijnswerk* 34(311)/2010, p. 5-19.

and women aged 55+) and 2.144 elderly Turks (men and women aged 55+) –the vast majority being Muslims– were living in Belgium. This rapid evolution towards an increasing and socially significant group of elderly Muslim patients has also been noted for the Netherlands<sup>10</sup> and other European countries.<sup>11</sup> The demographic evolution as such should not be problematic because it is that the increase of elderly community members in need for adequate home care is not paralleled by the sociological evolutions within the communities. Whereas traditionally many Muslim families hold the ideal of taking care of sick and ageing family members within the extended family model, recent studies have observed that throughout the years a shift has occurred from an extended family model to a nuclear family model.<sup>12</sup> This shift has resulted in an eroding of the traditional social safety net within Belgian Muslim communities and in an increase of the need for adequate organized support of elderly Muslims (Yerden 2010). Yet, till today very little is known about the attitudes, beliefs and practices of Muslim communities in Belgium regarding death and dying.

The basis of our research is the societal necessity to recognize cultural, religious and ideological diversity at the end of life. In the studies presented here we focus on groups whose position in society deserves special attention. Infirm elderly people and terminally ill are in a very weak position in our Western society in which progress and autonomy are central issues. The situation of elderly people and the terminally

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<sup>10</sup> de GRAAFF, F.M. & FRANCKE, A.L., Home care for terminally ill Turks and Moroccans and their families in the Netherlands, Carers' Experiences and Factors Influencing Ease of Access and Use of Services. *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 40: 2003, p. 797-805.

<sup>11</sup> ILKILIC, I. *Der muslimische Patient. Medizinethische Aspekte des muslimischen Krankheitsverständnisses in einer wertpluralen Gesellschaft*, Münster-London, LIT Verlag 2002.

<sup>12</sup> DAMI, S. & SHEIKH, A., The Muslim Family: Predicament and Promise, *Culture and Medicine* 173/2000, p. 352-356. SOKOLOVSKY, J. Ethnic Elders and the Limits of Family Support in a Globalizing World. In *The cultural context of aging: worldwide perspectives*. Ed. J. Sokolovsky, Westport, Praeger Publishers, 2009, p. 289-301.

ill is characterized by looking back at things, by heteronomy, i.e. by being dependent in many ways on informal and institutionalised care. Because of its foreign origin, a growing part of this population has to face a double weakness: elderly Muslims of Turkish and Moroccan origin speak little or no Dutch and they do not succeed, partly because of this, to stand up for their rights and needs. Moreover, Muslims, like Jews and Buddhists, are being confronted with a society, rules, a care model and a care practice which has often very little experience in working with other ideologies than the Christian and secular one.

In a short period of time, Belgium has become a multicultural and multi-religious society. In the care for the elderly and more in particular in the end-of-life care this diversity will become more and more tangible. At this moment, however, there is hardly any scientific research available on a national as well as an international level whose research data and informed policy proposals have enabled a well-founded policy in this field, a policy necessary to be able to guarantee people from minority groups decent and respectful end-of-life care.

## **2. A Research Programme**

Interdisciplinary research on end-of-life issues in contemporary multicultural and multireligious society has been one of the central research axes of the Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Religion and Worldview (Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven) since I became the first director of the centre in October 2001. Since 1998 I was already seriously involved in end-of-life ethics, doing empirical and ethical studies on palliative sedation (a term coined by me and now widely used internationally) and on the relationship between euthanasia and palliative care. Within the framework of this research programme, several empirical studies have been undertaken. Through a large quantitative study sponsored by the FWO (2003-2006) the

association between Flemish palliative-care nurses' and physicians' religion or worldview and their attitudes to end-of-life decisions was assessed. In his doctoral dissertation (defended April 2010) Joris Gielen compared the attitudes of Flemish palliative care nurses and physicians with the attitudes of Indian palliative care nurses and physicians working in New Delhi (India) having a Christian or a Hindu background.<sup>13</sup> I also initiated, conceptualized and supervised the research financed by the town of Sint-Truiden (2004-2005) on the way different world religions in Belgium deal with birth, marriage and death which resulted in a monograph (Broeckaert & Vanden Hove 2005).

In this paper I give an overview of the research we have been doing since 2002 on Muslims and end of life ethics. Dr. Stef Van den Branden studied the attitudes of elderly Moroccan men in Antwerp towards death and dying ('Islamic Ethics at the End of Life. A Theoretically Framed Content Analysis of English Sunni Sources and a Qualitative Empirical Research on the Attitudes of Religious Moroccan Elderly Men Living in Antwerp'; 2002-2006; doctoral grant KU Leuven). Goedele Baeke wrote her PhD on 'Religion and Ethics at the End of Life. A Comparative Study among Elderly Jewish Women and Elderly Moroccan and Turkish Women Living in Antwerp' (2007-2011; doctoral grant Convenant KU Leuven – Radboud University Nijmegen). Since 2013, Chaïma Ahaddour (OT project KU Leuven) is working on Moroccan Muslim women and their attitudes and practices regarding death and dying. Though the specific research projects we have completed and are doing today focus on the situation of Muslims in Belgium (one specific European country), we strongly believe that many of its results and conclusions have an important European dimension and can be a source of inspiration to similar research projects in other European countries.

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<sup>13</sup> GIELEN, J. *Ethical Attitudes and Religious Beliefs at the End of Life: A Study of the Views of Palliative Care Nurses and Physicians in Flanders (Belgium) and New Delhi (India)*, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, PhD Diss. 2010.

### 3. Treatment Decisions in Advanced Disease: A Conceptual Framework

An important part of our research on death and dying in a multicultural and multireligious context deals with a number of delicate medical-ethical decisions that have to be taken near the end of life. Time and again we have pointed out that the ethical issues at the end of life are not just restricted to those of euthanasia. However, we have found that there is still much confusion about for example the difference or the boundary between pain control and euthanasia or between euthanasia and withholding life-sustaining treatment. Therefore, we developed, already in 2006, the following conceptual framework with regard to treatment decisions in advanced disease. It is endorsed by the Flemish Palliative Care Federation, that brings together all palliative care initiatives in Flanders, Belgium and i.a. spread through a brochure (6 editions, 30 000 copies distributed) and numerous lectures and workshops and as a result widely known and used in Belgium. As in the Muslim literature too concepts like euthanasia are often used in many different ways, it is absolutely central, in order to enable a meaningful discussion, to start here too from a clear conceptual framework.

In our framework, we offer a typology about the different kinds of treatment decisions that can be taken in advanced stages of life-threatening illness. In other words, it is about the different ways medicine can help and support patients with advanced disease. We do not do this because we are keen on classifications, but because each kind of treatment decision brings about specific ethical issues which can be misunderstood when no clear boundaries and differences have been set. We distinguish three major categories of treatment decisions in advanced disease: (1) choices with regard to curative or life-sustaining treatment: is such a treatment initiated or withheld, continued or withdrawn? (2) choices with regard to palliative treatment and symptom control: all treatments aimed at maximizing, in an active way, the incurably ill patient's quality of life and comfort. (3) choices with

regard to euthanasia and assisted suicide, where lethal medication is purposefully administered.

In each category choices can and have to be made. A life-sustaining or curative treatment can be started or continued. But it can also be stopped or withheld and this for two reasons: because is no longer deemed effective or meaningful (non-treatment decision), or because the patient simply refuses the treatment (refusal of treatment). As far as our second category - pain and symptom control - is concerned we offer specific and strict definitions of pain control and of palliative sedation. A third category consists of voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide - legalized in a few countries only - and of non-voluntary euthanasia - which is illegal everywhere. Our aim with this framework and these definitions is not to present an ethical evaluation, but just to clarify and separate the different concepts. From the fact that we mention and describe a certain act it cannot be deduced that that we approve of it or advocate it. To find out what Muslims think about these issues one first needs to agree on what exactly we are discussing.

## TREATMENT DECISIONS IN ADVANCED DISEASE – A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK (Broeckaert)

### 1. (FORGOING) CURATIVE AND/OR LIFE-SUSTAINING TREATMENT

- Initiating or continuing a curative or life-sustaining treatment.
- Non-treatment decision: “withdrawing or withholding a curative or life-sustaining treatment, because in the given situation this treatment is deemed to be no longer meaningful or effective”.
- Refusal of treatment: “withdrawing or withholding a curative or life-sustaining treatment, because the patient refuses this treatment”.

## 2. PAIN AND SYMPTOM CONTROL

- Pain control: “the intentional administration of analgesics and/or other drugs in dosages and combinations required to adequately relieve pain”.
- Palliative sedation: “the intentional administration of sedative drugs in dosages and combinations required to reduce the consciousness of a terminal patient as much as necessary to adequately relieve one or more refractory symptoms”.

## 3. EUTHANASIA AND ASSISTED SUICIDE

- Voluntary Euthanasia: “The intentional administration of lethal drugs in order to painlessly terminate the life of a patient suffering from an incurable condition deemed unbearable by the patient, at this patient’s request”.
- Assisted Suicide: “intentionally assisting a person, at this person’s request, to terminate his or her life”.
- Non-voluntary Euthanasia: “The intentional administration of lethal drugs in order to painlessly terminate the life of a patient suffering from an incurable condition deemed unbearable, not at this patient’s request”.

## 4. Muslim End of Life Ethics

The first doctoral study on Muslim End of Life Ethics that was defended under our guidance was the thesis by Stef Van den Branden, defended in 2006 at the Faculty of Theology (nowadays Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies) of KU Leuven, Belgium. In impressive and very well received dissertation Stef Van den Branden discusses Muslim end of life ethics, analysing the attitudes of elderly Muslim men in Antwerp (Belgium) against the background of a theoretical study of Islamic end of life ethics and its sources and a review of con-

temporary Muslim views on death and dying that can be found in what Olivier Roy (2002)<sup>14</sup> has called the ‘virtual ummah’ (community).

In the first part of his doctoral thesis Van den Branden offers the general framework of his study. He points to the central importance of Qur’an and Hadith in Islamic ethics. God appears in Qur’an as the almighty and allknowing creator. Toward him submission (Islam) - not just a question of orthodoxy but foremost of orthopraxis – is the only appropriate attitude. At the Last Judgment God will decide the future of each and every man. In death and dying too this eschatological perspective is crucial. From his own analysis of the most important Hadith collections Van den Branden concludes that both illness and cure are attributed to Allah. Confronted with unbearable suffering suicide is not an option; in these circumstances patience is the central virtue that holds out the prospect of paradise.

As a result of global migration Islam is confronted with a new reality in which large groups of Muslims are leading their lives in non-Muslim countries. Globalization and the ever more important role of the internet have resulted in a globalized Islam and created a virtual ummah of which every Muslim all over the world is a member. An important characteristic of this new globalized Islam is that local traditions tend to disappear from the horizon. In an effort to find answers to the ethical questions of today especially in a migrant situation Muslims tend to rely on and refer directly to Qur’an and Hadith, forgetting the mediation of local scholars, traditions and schools which used to be so important in religion.

In a second and larger part Van den Branden examines what within this contemporary Sunni virtual umma is thought about the big ethical questions at the end of life. He reviews the rare available empirical literature (assessing the real world attitudes and practices of Muslims in this area) and looks for the views of influential international Muslim authors on these subjects (Rashid Gatrad, Abul Fadl Mohsin Ebrahim, Dadil Boubakeur,...). Special attention is given to the position of a number of influential Muslim organisations that have developed

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<sup>14</sup> Roy, O., *L’Islam mondialisé*, Paris, Editions du Seuil 2002.

views on these issues (a.o. Islamic Organisation of Medical Sciences, European Council for Fatwa Research, Islamic Medical Association of North America and Islamic Social Services Association). A lot of time was spent on a thorough analysis of so-called *e-fatwas*, more specifically decisions on medical-ethical issues around the end of life that can be found on a number of important Sunni websites (including for instance [www.islamweb.net](http://www.islamweb.net), [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net), [www.understanding-islam.com](http://www.understanding-islam.com)) – websites that are used in particular by young Muslims in the west to find ‘the’ Muslim view on specific issues: what do I have to do in this specific situation to be a good Muslim?

While doing this review the following specific topics were studied: braindeath (as a criterium to determine the time of death), organ transplantation and organ donation, advance directives, palliative care and the different forms of treatment decisions discussed in our conceptual framework – decisions regarding curative or life-sustaining treatment, palliative care treatments and the active termination of life.

As far as the choices regarding curative and/or life-sustaining treatment are concerned, most organisations, authors and *e-fatwas* show only a very conditional and limited acceptance of non-treatment decisions and refusal of treatment. Such choices seem only acceptable when the patient is actually braindead or at least really dying. Artificial hydration and nutrition can never be withheld or withdrawn. Little is written on pain control and nothing on palliative sedation. As far as pain control is concerned, the dominant view is that pain control is acceptable, even in high doses, as long as the intention remains the alleviation of pain and not the shortening of the dying process. All forms of active termination of life (voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, non-voluntary euthanasia) are seen as radically forbidden.

## 5. Real World Muslim End of Life Ethics

In the lengthy third and final part of his dissertation Van den Branden examines the attitudes of elderly Moroccan men in Belgium

towards the aforementioned medical-ethical issues at the end of life and studies how these attitudes can be related to their religion. In this way we tried to find out if there was any difference between the theoretical, normative ideals and 'official' positions and the real world attitudes of ordinary believers.

Because of the delicate nature of the themes to be discussed (dying and death; religion) and the specific characteristics of the population (often illiterate; not speaking Dutch or French; difficult to access) we opted for a qualitative research method using Grounded Theory as our general framework. 2x10 semi-structured interviews (2 interviews per person; till theoretical saturation) of each between one and one and a half hour were conducted with elderly (60+) Moroccan Muslim men from various districts in the city of Antwerp, Belgium. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded and categorized using MAXqda. We chose to interview elderly Muslims first because of the fact that the Moroccan migrant population in Antwerp is ageing rapidly and because of their age are the ones that are most likely to be personally confronted quite soon with the issues we are studying. We opted for male respondents because of the simple fact that in this population female respondents would be hardly accessible to a male researcher. Apart from these elderly men as a touchstone five specialists were interviewed: two well-known imams, two Moroccan physicians and one Moroccan nurse, all of them working in Antwerp and very familiar with the elderly Moroccan community our respondents belonged to.

For all respondents (we did not find any exception) religion was a very important element in their daily lives. From the answers they gave regarding the five dimensions of religion that are distinguished by Glock and Stark (1965)<sup>15</sup> (the ideological, intellectual, experiential, consequential and ritual dimension), to which we added the social dimension, we learned that this group, without any exception, shows

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<sup>15</sup> GLOCK, C.Y. & STARK, R., *Religion and Society in Tension*. Chicago, Rand Mac Nally 1965.

a high score for all these dimensions of religion. Their daily life is governed by their faith. The ritual dimension is very important here: their daily life is constructed around the 5 fixed moments of prayer in the mosque (with additional prayers on a voluntary basis). The ritual fast (Ramadan) is taken very seriously. All respondents participated at least once in the *Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca (ritual dimension). Though the majority of this our respondents is illiterate they still try to get learn as much as possible about their faith (e.g. by using audio cassettes). Through his presence in Qur'an and Hadith the person of the Profeth is the central reference. The imam plays an important role in the intellectual dimension of their faith. The respondents experience the presence of Allah during the reading or hearing of the Qur'an and during their daily prayers (experiential dimension). The interviews show that the respondents in the reality of each and every day in the different areas of their existence try to be a good Muslim and lead a Muslim life (consequential dimension). They see each other regularly, especially through the visits to the mosque (social dimension). Participants subscribe to the truths and values of their tradition; Islam (a denomination, but most of all a system of commands and prohibition) is the way these men run their lives (ideological dimension).

We studied the attitudes of our respondents towards the different treatment decisions at the end of life by studying their reactions to a number of cases. As an example we give here the cases that were introduced for the category of active termination of life:

#### CASE 5: NON-VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

A patient is in a deep coma and is living already for many years without the aid of machines. Can a physician give him a lethal injection? Who can decide about this?

#### CASE 6: VOLUNTARY EUTHANASIA

A patient is terminally ill, has a life expectancy of only a few weeks and suffers unbearable physical pain that cannot be alleviated. Can the physician end the life of the patient in order to relieve him from his suffering?

#### CASE 7: ASSISTED SUICIDE

A patient is terminally ill, has a life expectancy of only a few weeks and suffers unbearably psychologically or mentally. This suffering cannot be alleviated. Can the physician provide lethal medication to the patient so that he can end his life himself?

For our respondents all forms of active termination of life (voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, non-voluntary euthanasia) are completely unacceptable. It is up to Allah and only him to decide the moment of death of each and every person. Whoever takes control of this himself, puts himself in the place of Allah and thus acts in an incoceivable and totally unacceptable way. Such a person does not show the patience and endurance that his expected from him and thus will not enter paradise. Non-treatment decisions too are, according to our respondents, forbidden. As the Islamic tradition teaches them, people have the duty to look for cure. Not only illnesses, but also their remedies are given by God. For a minority of the respondents refusing a treatment is acceptable, but only when certain conditions are met (including the fact that the patient already and unsuccessfully tried several treatments before). So here too we find important reservations.

Pain medication does not pose a problem for our respondents, even when given in high doses and when one might think they could have a life-shortening effect. Again: treatment is given by God and can and must be taken. Important here is the belief that for our respondents it would not be the physician or the medication as such that would be causing death when giving these high and potentially life-shortening doses.

According to them the possible life-shortening side effect will only be there if God wants it to be. Therefore it is him and no one else (nor the intrinsic effect of the drugs involved – which is denied) who causes death.

Religious motives play a central role in the answers of the respondents to the cases and issues that were presented to them. They refer very explicitly to general directions they find in Qur'an and Hadith. More importantly throughout the interviews they keep repeating that they want to be good Muslims and that they are making this or that choice for this reason. Patience remains the central virtue. At all times people are requested to maintain a good relation with Allah and to be a good Muslim, not less so when one is suffering and one's health is failing.

When we compare the results of these interviews with what we learned about this group from the interviews with the imams, physicians and nurse, we find a perfect match. Not only regarding the specific attitudes towards specific treatment decisions at the end of life, but also regarding the religious vision and background that explains these attitudes. Medical treatments are good and willed by God; a person can and should take them. Putting oneself as a human in the place of God by taking control of one's own dying and death and thus determine oneself one's time of death is radically forbidden.

When we compare the attitudes of our Antwerp respondents with the answers we found in the international authors, the views of the international Muslim organisations and the most important e-fatwas, we find very striking similarities. The active termination of life in all its forms (voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, non-voluntary euthanasia) is radically forbidden. We find also a similar attitude towards the refusal of treatment – which is only allowed if the treatment really doesn't work. As far as non-treatment decisions are concerned, we find some differences. Though if we look more closely the seeming greater openness in the normative sources in reality amounts to the same dismissive attitude. We do however find an interesting difference as far as pain control is concerned. For our respondents, that see no problem in even very high doses of pain medication, God is in control of everything. There is no such thing as a certain autonomy of earthly

realities (e.g. the intrinsic effects of certain chemical substances on the body). The normative sources on the other hand, most likely as result of a much greater familiarity with science, seem to take this intrinsic, automatic operation for granted (“when I give dose x, then, as a result of the intrinsic qualities of the medication given, in this patient the shortening of life a possible or even likely consequence).

We are of course very well aware of the limitations of this research. This is not a large scale quantitative study that can test a carefully constructed hypothesis. And more important: very explicitly we have chosen to study the older generation of Moroccan migrants – a generation that is only in a very limited way influenced by the western context it is living in. A generation that is moreover illiterate, hardly educated, had and has a low socio-economic position and is confronted with important language barriers. But also a generation that brought its traditional understanding of Islam to Belgium. It would be very interesting to compare the attitudes and ideas that they developed against this traditional background with those of the younger Muslim generations that were raised in very different circumstances. And finally: we are of course still dealing with people that are in relatively good health. Not people suffering from an incurable disease or that are terminally ill. How people will respond and act and react when in real life they are confronted with the ethical challenges discussed here on a rather theoretical or hypothetical level is not certain. However, this group of elderly Muslims gives the impression, from their encompassing religious framework, to have deep convictions regarding the ethical choices to be made. The fact that the physicians and palliative nurse we interviewed in their concrete daily experience in the care for the ill and the dying finds the same views and frameworks, points in the same direction.

## 6. Elderly Muslim Women on Death and Dying

*Religion and Ethics at the End of Life. A Qualitative Empirical Study among Elderly Jewish and Muslim Women in Antwerp (Belgium)* – this

is the title of the dissertation that Goedele Baeke defended on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Nijmegen.<sup>16</sup> With this dissertation, consisting of 11 articles, the most of which published internationally, she became doctor in theology at KU Leuven and doctor in religious studies at the Radboud University of Nijmegen. The project was funded through the covenant between the two universities. In this article I focus on the second part of her thesis – the first discusses at length Jewish theoretical views on end of life issues and the results of a qualitative study on the views of Jewish elderly women.

The second part of Baeke's dissertation is an explorative empirical study, in which interviews were taken from 30 elderly first generation Muslim women. 15 women from Turkish origin and 15 from Moroccan origin, all living in Antwerp, Belgium. The women were questioned about their religious views and practices and were presented the same questions and cases as the Jewish respondents and as the male Moroccan respondents in Van den Branden's research. This research is an important addition to the research of Van den Branden as here female respondents are chosen. Again it would have been impossible for a male researcher to conduct these interviews: in these specific groups the worlds of men and women are simply too much separated. Here too we worked with semi-structured interviews that were recorded, transcribed, coded and categorised with the help of MAXqda. In three chapters the attitude of the respondents towards medicine, illness and suffering, their attitudes towards the active termination of life and finally their attitudes towards non-treatment decisions were discussed. In all cases the results were compared to those of other empirical studies (including those of Van den Branden) and the international normative Muslim literature.

For these women illness is caused by God. But also cure is willed by him. They put their faith in physicians and medicine, though in

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<sup>16</sup> Goedele Baeke defended on November 13<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Nijmegen. BAEKE, G., *Religion and Ethics at the End of Life. A Qualitative Empirical Study among Elderly Jewish and Muslim Women in Antwerp (Belgium)*. KU Leuven, PhD Diss. 2012.

the end only God decides whether one recovers or not. In any case man can and should fight illness. At the same time he must endure the illness faithfully and patiently; complaining is inappropriate. For many illness is a test by God, a real exam that determines the fate that awaits a person after death. By illness and suffering a person is also purified from sin. These results are very similar to what Van den Branden found and what can be read in the international empirical and normative literature. Here too a theological framework plays an important role in shaping the way people are dealing with illness and suffering: especially in times of illness and suffering one has to submit, faithfully and respectfully, to the divine will. Interestingly, one elderly Moroccan woman, though still a religious person, did not link illness and suffering to Allah. According to her suffering was not caused or willed by God. God only wants what is good for man; Suffering is just a very bad thing and nothing more or else. This very deviant attitude could be linked to her personal confrontation with illness and death: she had lost her husband to cancer a few years before. On the other hand, she had no children, no family in Belgium, only a limited contact with other Muslims here and never attended mosque. This very specific situation too, very different from that of the other respondents, could explain for the very different attitude she had towards illness and suffering.

The arguments that the respondents give regarding euthanasia and assisted suicide are again very different from the arguments centring around self-determination and quality of life that in a western context are very common. Again: patiently enduring suffering is the motto; decisions on life and death must be left in the hands of God. All forms of active termination of life (euthanasia, assisted suicide) are as forbidden as they are inconceivable: thus man puts himself in the place of God and this is nothing but pure blasphemy.

Strikingly two women (one Moroccan and one Turkish) did show a certain openness regarding euthanasia. In both cases this openness could be linked to the suffering that they had experienced in their personal lives: both their husbands had died a few years earlier and

had suffered a lot. It could indeed be that case that a very real confrontation with suffering and death changes the views and attitudes of people, though this is certainly not a necessity: another respondent, with a very similar experience, was very negative about any form of life active termination of life. What was clear however it was the fact the two respondents who in exceptional cases could accept euthanasia had an image of God that was different from that of the other women: suffering was for them certainly not caused or willed by God.

The same theological framework lies at the origin of the sharp rejection of the withholding or withdrawing of life-sustaining treatment by the vast majority of our respondents. Again they do not reason in terms of autonomy or quality of life. Instead they point to the divine command to take care of one's own body. Man should seek cure and take the treatment that is required. For the rest it is a matter of trust and submission to God. God decides about life and death; he decides when will be the time of death. It is *haram* to cross this divine plan, e.g. by withdrawing a life-sustaining treatment. In a few Turkish women (more influenced by western culture?) we did find arguments for the withdrawing of life-sustaining treatments: they were of the opinion that one should rely on the judgment of the physician, a figure they trusted very much. A few Moroccan men of Van den Branden's study too were a bit more open, though the large majority shared the aforementioned theological framework and the corresponding very dismissive attitude.

In the final chapter of her dissertation Baeke compares the results of the Jewish respondents with those of the Muslim interviewees. Striking is the big consensus between Orthodox Jewish women, Chassidic women and Muslim women. All these groups of women are for the largest part very dismissive regarding all forms of active termination of life, including voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide and non-voluntary euthanasia, and non-treatment decisions that have a life-shortening effect. The image of God of these respondents (God decides about everything, including illness and health; God judges man; God decides the moment of death), their experience of God's nearness; the strict

social control in the rather closes community they belong to – these factors are likely to explain the lack of variation in religious views and ethical positions regarding the topics discussed here. Though it should be noted that even in these very homogeneous groups still a few dissenting voices could be found. Maybe these find their origin in the person confrontation with suffering and death, but this needs further investigation.

Of course we need to be careful with the results gathered so far. Views of Jewish and Muslim elderly women cannot be easily compared, therefor the socio-economic position, the educational background and the cultural and geographical background is too different. And of course is what can be said about these first generation Muslim women in Belgium not be generalized for elderly Muslim women all over the world: elderly Muslim women in Belgium are not a clear cross-section of the global Muslim population of that sex and age. Therefor this group is too specific: unlike Muslim elderly women in many other countries, they share a very similar socio-economic and cultural background (coming from the same region in Turkey and Morocco), a similar socio-economic situation, very limited schooling, limited interaction with the Belgian and western context. Because these factors are of course very different for the younger generation of Muslim women in Belgium it remains an important question to find out how these younger generations of Muslim women, raised in Belgium and much more exposed to western influences, see the ethical issues at the end of life we are interested in.

## 7. Ongoing research: a broader perspective

With resources of the KU Leuven research fund, we have been pursuing the line of research outlined above since. *Attitudes, Beliefs and Practices Regarding Death and Dying of Middle-Aged and Elderly Muslim Women of Moroccan Descent in Antwerp, Belgium* is the title of the doctoral project conducted by Chaïma Ahaddour within this

framework.<sup>17</sup> Her research focuses specifically on Moroccan women. A parallel research project focusing on Turkish women, for which a FWO fellowship was obtained and which was being carried out by a second researcher, has unfortunately been cancelled. The researcher in question decided after a year to discontinue her doctoral research due to personal reasons.

The aim of this new project is to take an important new step in two directions. First, we no longer focus exclusively on elderly Muslims. For the first time we are also including middle-aged Muslim women in the study. These women, who often take care of the older generation, can provide us with rich and valuable data on how Muslims in Belgium deal with death and dying, because of their significant involvement with the older generation. We also seek to discover if there is a shift in beliefs and attitudes when comparing this generation with the previous one. This generation is no longer raised in a homogenous, rural, traditional Islamic environment and lives in Belgium far less isolated from the broader Belgian society. For that reason, we are also curious to know their views. We are especially keen to learn if this generation adopts a similar comprehensive religious frame of reference and if this frame of reference also determines their perceptions on a number of ethical issues at the end of life.

A second reason why this ongoing research is broader is because we no longer focus exclusively on a number of bio-ethical issues at the end of life, but we chose resolutely for a broader perspective that goes from care for the elderly to the period after dying. The following concrete new themes will be discussed during interviews: elderly care (formal and informal); attitudes regarding death, dying and the afterlife; attitudes and practices regarding mourning and remembrance; rituals and practices regarding death and dying; repatriation of the dead body, and choice of cemeteries. Methodologically, we will once again be engaging with a wide body literature regarding the topics on the one hand and with a qualitative empirical study on the other hand. We will interview

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<sup>17</sup> Chaïma Ahaddour.

15 experts and 30 Muslim women, making use of the same methodological starting points as in our previous studies.

## 8. And the future?

We wish to continue the line of research outlined here in the future. Not least because the number of Muslims in elderly care and palliative care will continue to increase, as a result of which specific demands and needs and their own religious-ethical orientations will appear increasingly clear on the surface.

As researcher, I am especially looking forward to finding out how the younger generations of Muslims in Belgium and Europe perceive illness, ageing and the subject of death and dying. In their case, it is no longer the traditional religiosity, which they have imported from their country of origin and have held onto in relative isolation since then, that determines their identity, beliefs and attitudes. They have been brought up in a western environment and have a strong connection with western society through language, education and work. And in that context – influenced by it but just as well reacting to it – they experience and develop their own (religious) identity. For many of them Islam is important, though their beliefs cannot be easily compared with the traditional beliefs of their grandparents. The great advantage of this population is its greater accessibility in comparison to the older generation. Large scale quantitative studies are possible, which naturally yields harder data.

If we want to improve elderly care and palliative care, then it is of course important to conduct specific research of people, in this case Muslims, in formal elderly care and palliative care. Although, we have a lot of experience with palliative care research, we have so far not wanted to conduct research about these religious-ethical beliefs among palliative patients with a Muslim background. Such research, barely offering immediate advantages for the patient in question, will only be done when we have acquired extensive knowledge of Muslims and the

end of life. We believe that research on these very vulnerable groups to which time is very precious, is only justified if we have enough background knowledge at our disposal to minimize the burden of the research for the patient and at the same time to ensure the maximum respect for possible sensitivities. We intend to conduct this research in the near future.

To conclude, the comparative aspect is and remains of significant importance for us. Hence, we have for example also conducted research of Jews and of Hindus and on the role of philosophy of life and ethics in the attitudes of physicians and nurses. However, comparative research means that we want to increasingly look at how comparable and incomparable our Belgian results are if we put them alongside the results received in other European countries.

I sometimes receive the request from hospitals for concrete guidelines regarding best practice for dealing with patients belonging to religious or cultural minorities. Preferably, on one A4 page and as clearly and univocally formulated as possible. I regularly teach or give training sessions on these topics. I do, of course, not respond to the requests for a one-page document. My greatest aspiration is to make clear on each occasion that our Belgian and European society has indeed changed radically in terms of religion and culture. Nowadays, we are faced with a diversity of attitudes, beliefs and practices that are not familiar to us and sometimes may lead to other choices and needs. It is important to have an eye for the cultural and religious roots of certain beliefs. On the other hand, it is equally important to clearly recognize the internal diversity in all groups. “The” Jew or “the” Muslim does not exist. The only beliefs and attitudes relevant for concrete care are those of the concrete patient who is looking you in the eye, not of the group to which he or she according to your schemes belongs.

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## Muslim Presence in Poland – A Marginal Issue in Contemporary Europe?

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Recently, in the post-‘Charlie Hebdo’ attack situation someone sent me a text of an interview with Alain Bensaçon published in the Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita*, in which the French historian and political analyst stated strongly that history contains no example of a successful assimilation of a Muslim population in a new host society. In his opinion, either the Muslims expelled and murdered the host ‘unbelievers’, or they were subjected to the same fate.<sup>1</sup> This may be taken as his private opinion but similar views seem to be quite common at present in the public debate throughout the Western world. The interviewing journalist took that statement for granted, though had he had a slightly better knowledge of the history of his own country, he should have objected.

The impact of the tone of the contemporary discourse concerning Islam and Muslims is so strong that most people – asked about Muslim presence in Europe – would most probably immediately mention at least three issues: 1/ Muslims live in the countries of that part of Europe that is commonly considered as ‘Western Europe’; 2/ their presence is closely linked to immigration matters (forgetting or overlooking the fact that the second and consecutive generations are often citizens and not ‘immigrants’); 3/ Muslim presence has been increasingly perceived as a constantly growing threat to the stability of the host society.

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<sup>1</sup> He explicitly mentioned the examples of Malta, Spain and Greece. BIELECKI, J. - BENSAÇON, A., “Nie przyjaźnię się z żadnym muzułmaninem”, J. Bielecki interviews A. Bensaçon, in *Rzeczpospolita*, 15 January, 2015, <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/1171826.html> (accessed 18 January, 2015).

It seems forgotten that up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup> another part of the continent would have been indicated as the obvious area of Muslim presence, i.e. the south-eastern part of Europe.<sup>3</sup> The local situation there has not changed in that regard, meanwhile, in the popular perception the contemporary Muslim presence there seems not to be treated as a part of 'Islam in Europe' discourse. The perception of the direction of 'the Muslim threat' has changed, too. Previously it was seen as an exclusively 'external' factor, while recently it has become to be perceived also as an 'internal' one, with the latter dimension considered as posing the most immediate threat.

In both periods (before and after 1945) Poland would not have been indicated as an obvious place of Muslim presence, as the country featured at the margins, being situated either too far north, or too far east. However, not being 'obvious' does not mean that there were no Muslims present in the area that from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century used to be called the Commonwealth of Both Nations (*Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*) and now belongs to several different political entities (mainly Poland, Lithuania and Belarus). The Muslim presence in the Commonwealth has never been numerically big but it was significant enough to be noticeable. Not being obvious does not also necessarily mean that it has been negligible.

I am arguing that, though from the point of view of the numbers and currently discussed hot issues in the European, Western debate, the Muslim presence in Poland is (may be seen as) marginal, yet that 'marginality' may (should?) not be equalled with being irrelevant for the situation in the rest of Europe (or even in the world). Having said this I want to underline that I do not consider the developments of any possible patterns of that presence, that have been worked out over the centuries, as exemplary for the other parts of Europe. The times and conditions are certainly different, so there is no easy comparison

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<sup>2</sup> The end of the World War II (1945) can be taken as a symbolic turning point.

<sup>3</sup> Russia has always been problematic whether it is a part of Europe, or Asia, or a 'world on its own'.

possible. The characteristic features of the Muslim presence that I am going to highlight simply could (or should) be taken as an evidence of a possibility of existence of a variety of forms of Muslim presence in the world. They can also be taken as a reminder of the fact that the contemporary tense relationships between different cultural/religious groups especially in Western Europe could have developed differently, as the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims do not inevitably lead to violent confrontation. The Muslim presence in the Commonwealth was not completely unproblematic. The Muslims in question were warriors, present in the country that was at a long-lasting war with the Ottoman Empire (the neighbouring country ruled and inhabited by a Muslim majority) and with its vassal state of Crimean Khanate, with the inhabitants of which not only religious but also close ethnic connections existed. Yet, the difficulties were overcome as the overall context for that process within the country was basically non-confrontational. The settlers evolved into extremely loyal citizens of their host country.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of the Muslim presence and the growing intensity of diverse contacts with the Ottoman empire (including heavy cultural artistic and technical borrowings<sup>5</sup>) Islam was never attractive as a religious system for the majority of the nobility in the Commonwealth. In the Crimean Tatar version Islam was perceived as a 'pagan' religion and presented as such in the literature and entrenched in people's minds. In the Ottoman version it was seen as the essential component of a political system that was inimical and threatening to the freedom enjoyed by the nobility of the Commonwealth. Thus, becoming a Muslim was

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<sup>4</sup> Though the general context, especially in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, was saturated with hot debates, the Muslim communities were hardly ever targeted. See e.g. KEMPA, T., *Wobec kontrreformacji. Protestanci i prawosławni w obronie swobód wyznaniowych w Rzeczypospolitej w końcu XVI i pierwszej połowie XVII wieku*, Toruń, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> BOGUĆKA, M., 'Szlachta polska wobec Wschodu turecko-tatarskiego: między fascynacją a przerażeniem (XVI-XVIII w.)', *Śląski kwartalnik historyczny Sobótka*, 37 (1982), p. 185-93.

considered as an act of complete irresponsibility (even stupidity), or of dire despair.<sup>6</sup> From the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century till the Vienna campaign of 1683 there was anxiety over the ‘Turkish threat’ at times whipped up by orators and writers acting mainly in the interests of foreign powers and not the Commonwealth as a prospect of an open war with the Ottomans was unpopular among the nobility, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The particularity of the Muslim presence in Poland and its (possible) significance will be presented by highlighting characteristic features of that presence. However, in order to make them comprehensible I will start with giving a brief historical outline of Muslim presence and some remarks on the terminology used.

## 1. A brief historical outline

The name ‘Commonwealth of Both Nations’ (or Republic – as some would like to translate the Polish word *Rzeczpospolita*) – which is not easily recognisable for people with no knowledge of the history of the region – was a political entity that developed out of the situation in which the main political players of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, governed jointly by the Jagiellonian dynasty, made a series of moves that created a monarchical state but governed jointly by the king and the nobility represented in the Parliament. That series of moves began in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Sigismund August, the last king of the Jagiellonian dynasty, together with some of the nobles managed to join the two states (the Kingdom

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<sup>6</sup> BARANOWSKI, B., *Znajomość Wschodu w dawnej Polsce do XVIII wieku*, Tow. Naukowe, Łódź 1950, p. 177; KOPAŃSKI, B., ‘Znajomość państwa tureckiego i jego mieszkańców w renesansowej Polsce’, in *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*, 1977 no. 3(103), p. 224. I wrote a bit more on this in the forthcoming article: GRODŹ, S. ‘Islam – a (almost) redundant element in the Polish/Lithuanian-Ottoman encounters between 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century?’, in PRATT D., (ed.) *The Character of Christian-Muslim Encounter. Essays in Honour of David Thomas*, Leiden 2015 (forthcoming).

of Poland – ‘the Crown’ – with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – ‘Lithuania’) into an entity that did not only depend on the personal union of the monarch. That union did not go without turmoil and it did not mean that both states merged completely into one. A visible duality in the sphere of the state administration lasted till the political end of that entity. There were a number of parallel offices for the Crown and for Lithuania. There was some oppression and resentment.<sup>7</sup> The whole situation has been also complicated by the fact that the high culture, increasingly adopted by the Lithuanian and Ruthenian nobility, was Latinized and gradually evolving into a ‘Polish’ one with not so much ethnic-based component but the Polish language as its vehicle. At the same time the features of the other ethnic cultures were left out in the sphere of the popular, or rustic only.<sup>8</sup>

This explanation is not entirely superfluous as it helps to understand the difficulties in applying the proper contemporary names to the Tatars who have lived in the area for over 600 years.

The first Tatar settlers appeared in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and were not only prisoners of war but also political refugees from the then internally troubled state of the Golden Horde. Grand Duke Vytautas (Witold), the Lithuanian ruler became a player in the political games within the Horde and attempted to extend his control over the new territories to the east and south.<sup>9</sup> The Tatar settlers were dependant on the duke and were loyal to him rendering military service. That dependency contributed to the fact that some of the Tatars were settled close to the Lithuanian capital and some important castles as a supportive-defensive force. They lived in the Lithuanian territories and could have been called the ‘Lithuanian

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<sup>7</sup> This, in my view, in the form of ‘historical memory’, still colours – now international – relations between all parts of the former Commonwealth.

<sup>8</sup> See e.g. DAVIES, N., *God’s Playground. A History of Poland*, vol. 1-2, New York 1982.

<sup>9</sup> He was following the earlier Lithuanian foreign policy in that area, trying to increase his power and counter the position of his predecessor Jogaila (Władysław Jagiełło) who became the king of Poland in 1386. Vytautas’ hopes were brought to naught after the military defeat of his army in the battle of Worskla in 1399.

Tatars' with the provision being made that they absorbed some of the local cultural elements (like the language) but were generally aspiring to participate in the high culture of the Commonwealth, which was highly saturated with Polish elements, and laid claims to the nobility status.<sup>10</sup> The Tatar settlers appeared in the lands formally considered as the Crown (in Podlachia) in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and were settled there by King Jan Sobieski in recognition of their military services to the state.<sup>11</sup>

The post-World War 2 border arrangements incorporated the heartland of the Tatar settlers into the then republics of the USSR, leaving only a tiny part of that area within the Polish borders. Some of the Tatars from the Lithuanian-Belorussian settlements chose to migrate west and today can be found scattered across the northern and western Poland. The devastation caused by the war and separation inflicted on the Tatar communities still does have an impact on them.<sup>12</sup> There is a debate, then, among the scholars and those interested in the topic on how these Tatars should be called. Are they 'Lithuanian', 'Polish', or given the fact that a significant number of them lives in the present day state of Belarus – 'Belarusian'? In view of all these complications, perhaps calling them 'the Tatars of the Commonwealth' (*Tatarzy Rzeczypospolitej*) would be the best solution, as they aspired to be part of the Commonwealth society.

We can be certain that at least some of the settlers were Muslims from the beginning and being allowed to practice their religion freely

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<sup>10</sup> BORAWSKI, P. - DUBIŃSKI, A., *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa 1986, p. 136. Similar pattern was followed when the Tatars were settled in the estates of the important aristocratic families. For summary of the discussion on whether the Tatars belonged to the nobility or not see KONOPACKI, A., *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI-XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2010, p. 56, fn. 204.

<sup>11</sup> They came from Lithuania, receiving the land in place of soldiers' pay. SOB CZAK, J., *Położenie prawne ludności tatarskiej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim*, Warszawa-Poznań, 1984, pp. 34-38.

<sup>12</sup> The Tatar archives held in Vilnius and the collections in the museum were burnt during the war.

they preserved that trait of their identity, while gradually losing some other features (like their Tatar language).<sup>13</sup> As they were bound by loyalty to the rulers or wealthy noble patrons they enjoyed certain freedoms, including the freedom to practice their religion. Not only were they left largely untroubled by Christian missionaries (though quite a number converted under the social pressure) but the local nobility often helped them to construct the required religious infrastructure (e.g. in terms of mosques but also creating foundations to support the existence of mosques and people who were religious functionaries).<sup>14</sup> During the period of hot religious-ideological debates in the Commonwealth between the mid-16<sup>th</sup> and mid-17<sup>th</sup> century they were not targeted by the Counter-Reformation activists, though there were certain (unsuccessful in practice) attempts either at their direct Christianisation, or at putting them under a number of social and political restrictions.<sup>15</sup>

Gradually merging into the Commonwealth society some of the Tatar families obtained the nobility status, mainly in recognition of

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<sup>13</sup> BORAWSKI, P. - DUBIŃSKI, A., *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 199-202.

<sup>14</sup> KONOPACKI, A., *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI-XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 110-19; NALBORCZYK, A.S., 'Budowa meczetów w Polsce – historia, liczba i rozmieszczenie, obecny stan prawny oraz protest przeciw budowie meczetu w Warszawie', in WIDY-BEHIESSE, M., (ed.) *Islam w Europie. Bogactwo różnorodności czy źródło konfliktów?*, Warszawa, 2012, pp. 42-45; NALBORCZYK, A.S., 'Mosques in Poland. Past and present', in GÓRAK-SOSNOWSKA, K., (ed.) *Muslims in Eastern Europe. Widening the European discourse on Islam*, Warszawa 2011, pp. 183-84.

<sup>15</sup> On conversions – e.g. BORAWSKI, P. - SIENKIEWICZ, W., 'Chryścianizacja Tatarów w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim', *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, 34 (1989), p. 90-92; KONOPACKI, A., *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI-XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2010, p. 56. Konopacki quotes findings of A. Rachuba that the military service provided a platform on which cultural borrowings were very effective (and that despite lack of any ideological actions to efface the differences). RACHUBA, A., 'Armia Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego jako czynnik unifikacji narodowej i kulturowej', in *Przegląd Historyczny*, 88 (1997), p. 237-46; see also Antonio Possevino's attempts during the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the contents of the anti-Tatar work published by certain Czyżewski in 1617 – CZYŻEWSKI, P., *Alfurkan tatarski prawdziwy na czterdzieści części rozdzielony*, Wilno, 1617, reprint KONOPACKI, A., (ed.) Białystok, 2013.

military services provided for their new homeland. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century their citizenship status ceased to be questioned while they continued to be actively patriotic, preserving not only their distinctive Tatar traditions but also often becoming the champions (cultivators) of the Polish-Lithuanian culture of the Commonwealth. There were documented cases of the Tatars rebuking their nobility Christian neighbours for behaviour that led to the political ruin of the Commonwealth, or arguing that they could not become Christians as that would make them indistinguishable from those who ruin the Commonwealth. Retaining their Muslim faith and practicing their traditions developed in the Commonwealth they saw themselves as true patriots, wardens and transmitters of the rich cultural heritage of the Commonwealth.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Recent developments and contemporary situation

The situation after the World War II made a huge impact on the Tatar communities. Only three out of nineteen existing before the war communities found itself on the Polish side of the border. Some Tatar families decided to resettle in the new, western and northern territories, thus the Tatar community appeared in Gdańsk and the Three-City area, or in Gorzów Wielkopolski, or Szczecin. The Tatar villages in the post-war Poland were situated in the vicinity of the Soviet border, in the area that was placed under severe surveillance. That caused difficulties in travelling, resulted in isolation of the area and also contributed to the fact that quite a number of inhabitants gradually moved to Białystok, the biggest city of the region. In addition

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<sup>16</sup> KONOPACKI, M., 'Ludzka *communio* w doświadczeniu międzyreligijnym: muzułmanie w otoczeniu chrześcijan w Polsce', in ZABORSKI, A., (ed.), *Islam i chrześcijaństwo*, Kraków 1995, p. 144; BARTOSZEWICZ, J. 'Pogląd na stosunki Polski z Turcją i Tatarami, na dzieje Tatarów w Polsce osiadłych, na przywileje i wspomnienia o znakomitych Tatarach polskich', in *Koran, z arabskiego przekład polski Jana Murzy-Tarak Buczackiego, vol. 1*, Warszawa 1858 [reprint 1985], p. 300.

the contact with the relatives that found themselves over the border was either completely cut or severely restricted. The institutional dimension of the Tatar life was also affected as most of the communities were concentrated in the area that became the Lithuanian and Belarussian Soviet Republics. The Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland (MZR – *Muzulmański Związek Religijny*) had its official seat in Vilnius (in the new situation that city was in the USSR). Also the 1936 Act of Polish Parliament recognizing Islam (along 14 other religions and churches recognized earlier) and the MZR as the only official representation of Muslims in Poland (with the ensuing duties and privileges) became irrelevant in the new situation.<sup>17</sup>

The new Soviet-backed government introduced a new policy unfavourable towards religious institutions and religion in general. Soon after the war the communists tried to suppress the Roman Catholic Church – the biggest religious organization in the country. As they encountered strong resistance, they tried to use the other smaller religious groups to diminish its influence. In the new social and political circumstances the Tatar communities gradually realized that the less attraction (especially from the new political authorities) they attracted to themselves the better it was for them. They could live quietly trying to save and cultivate the remnants of the cultural heritage that were left after the turmoil of the war and immediate post-war situation. Emphasis on the cultural aspect of being Muslims seemed to be the best option and the Tatar families implemented that in their everyday life.<sup>18</sup> The neighbours or people in the workplace might have known that such and such a person is a Tatar (and Muslim) but that was treated

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<sup>17</sup> NALBORCZYK, A.S., 'Islam in Poland: The Past and the Present', in *Islamochristiana*, 32 (2006), p. 229-30; NALBORCZYK, A.S. - BORECKI, P., 'Relations between Islam and the state in Poland: the legal position of Polish Muslims', in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 22 (2011), p. 343-59.

<sup>18</sup> See also the summary of a research on the matter in the Vilnius region by WRÓBLEWSKA, U., 'Pokoleniowy przekaz wartości kulturowych w społeczności tatarskiej zamieszkującej ziemię wileńską', in ZEMŁO, M., (ed.) *Małe miasta. Religie*, Lublin-Supraśl 2006, pp. 509-520.

as a kind of ethnographic curiosity or a reminder of a proud but gone heritage of the Commonwealth.

The situation began to take a new turn with the arrival of the foreign students from the countries of Muslim majority. They came mainly from the countries that maintained contacts with the Soviet bloc and were on the Polish-communist government scholarship programmes. It is difficult to establish how many of them were practicing Muslims, and while in Poland they were not entirely free in contacts with the indigenous population. In general contacts between the local population and foreigners were not encouraged by the authorities. However, it needs to be remembered that in the popular perception these students were called 'Arabs' (not 'Muslims') and their social behaviour was not among those highly esteemed by the local population. With the time passing more practicing Muslims appeared within that body of foreign students and some of them committed themselves to remaining in Poland. They began to organize themselves starting from the late 1980s.

There seemed to be a deep reserve in the relationships between these Muslim newcomers and the Tatar Muslim communities long established in Poland.<sup>19</sup> Apart from problems coming from the political dimension, i.e. that closer contacts with Muslim foreigners would draw (unwanted?) attention of the authorities to the Tatar communities, there were also differences of cultural and religious practice origin. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Tatar-Muslim emphasis on 'cultural' elements of their Tatar-Muslim identity was seen by the newcomers as outdated and strangely 'tainted' (if not 'heterodox'). The newcomers attempted to introduce a 'true/pristine' version of Islam that, however, came in

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<sup>19</sup> For quite some time the MZR expected that its members should be of Tatar ethnic origin. In the situation of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that could have been seen as a way of 'discouraging' the new-comers from joining the organization. Similar in effect requirements (like the condition of being a Polish citizen) had been favoured earlier – also in the context of excluding (or 'controlling') 'foreigners', i.e. especially in terms of disentangling the MZR from the old Tatar-Muslim institutions that had been left over the Soviet border.

a Middle-Eastern garb not much appreciated by the Tatars. Though there was a strong need for acquiring religious knowledge on the part of the Tatar communities, the form of religious instruction brought by the Arab Muslims was often resented and seen as unwanted imposition.

However, some of the Muslim youngsters were attracted by the new ideas brought by the new-comers. Interpreting this only as a form of ‘radicalisation’ of the young Muslims may be a step too far since this shift can also be explained as a generation conflict between parents and children. Besides the numbers that are at stake are so tiny that we mention this only to indicate the processes that take place within the Muslim community and not as a significant problem.

In the same vein another trend could also be noted. On the wave of growing public discussion on the character of Islam in Europe with possible indications of a necessity to create a model of ‘European Islam’, a few voices were raised underlining that such a version of Islam had already been in existence among the Tatars (and the Bosnians), for instance, and should be taken as exemplary.<sup>20</sup>

With the changing of the political and social situation in the 1990s and especially after 2001 the public attention started to focus on Muslims and Islam. Though the local Polish situation did not change much, the Polish mass-media were rather too quick to adopt the generally negative (if not even hostile) attitude towards Islam and Muslims presented by the Western mass-media.<sup>21</sup>

The tensions between the autochthonous Muslims and the new-comers, mentioned earlier, were not resolved. The MZR resisted acceptance of the new Muslim settlers as their members. It was seen as an element of a power struggle and the anxiety on the part of old members that the new members with the upward drive could rise to positions of influence and take over the control of the long estab-

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<sup>20</sup> See an overview in WIKTOR-MACH, D., (ed.) ‘European Islam. The Case of Polish Tatars’, in *Hemispheres*, 23 (2008), p. 135-46 (esp. 142-46).

<sup>21</sup> NALBORCZYK, A.S., ‘The image of Islam and Muslims in the Polish mass media before and after 11 September 2001’, in *Int. Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 15, 2004, [http://www.inst.at/trans/15Nr/01\\_4/nalborczyk15.htm](http://www.inst.at/trans/15Nr/01_4/nalborczyk15.htm) (accessed 5 February, 2015).

lished organization.<sup>22</sup> In effect, the new-comers of the Sunni Muslim persuasion established their own religious organization and applied to the appropriate ministerial department for registration, which was granted to them in 2004. Thus, the organization by the name of *Liga Muzułmańska* (LM, Muslim League) officially appeared on the Polish scene. The goals of this organization are not that different from the ones expressed by the MZR. It needs to be stressed though, that the LM was not registered on equal basis with the MZR. The ministerial registry consists of two separate groups. The first one contains the religious organizations that have a special status, i.e. coming from the pre-World War 2 and later agreements.<sup>23</sup> The second one contains all other religious bodies that wanted to be registered with the state. The LM was included into the second group. Still, critical voices arose accusing the ministry of making a serious mistake by not only recognizing the second Sunni organization (thus, creating another official Muslim interlocutor in the situation where Muslim groups elsewhere were encouraged to unite and create a single representation) but also breaking the – still valid – Act of Parliament of 1936 that recognized and approved one single organization as the representative of all Muslims in Poland. It was strange, though, that up till 2004 hardly anybody pointed out that, in fact, the 1936 Act had never been officially repealed. The Soviet-backed governments simply disregarded it, making it ineffective but not officially invalid.

The relationship between the LM and the MZR remains quite ambiguous. Officially they declare close friendly collaboration but it is hardly observable to the outsiders. Both organizations require a proof of Polish citizenship or a permanent-stay permit before they accept anyone as their members, yet in a clear way the MZR still consists of members with mainly Tatar ethnic origins with a long local ancestry,

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<sup>22</sup> At present about 10% of the MZR members are of not Tatar origin.

<sup>23</sup> NALBORCZYK, A.S. - BORECKI, P., 'Relations between Islam and the state in Poland: the legal position of Polish Muslims', in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 22 (2011), p. 350.

with a minority of Muslims of other ethnic origins, including a handful of the first-generation converts. It must be added, though, that in the recent years it opened itself more to others, incorporating e.g. the Turkish religious community ‘Fatih’ in Warsaw. Meanwhile the LM groups mainly the new-comers, i.e. those who settled in Poland from the 1980s and also the first-generation Muslim converts. The list of prayer houses given by both organizations overlaps, i.e. apart from some places that definitely belong to one organization, there are others that feature on both.

The LM officials challenged the right of the MZR Mufti to be the only instance of issuing the halal certificates. In effect the Chief Veterinary Officer had to withdraw from an agreement with the MZR Mufti and a new agreement gave rights to issuing the halal certificates to all the appropriate officials of all Muslim organisations in the country.<sup>24</sup>

The LM has been accused of being a disguised branch of the Muslim Brothers (*Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*). Its construction project of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Warsaw was targeted by a strange alliance of small radical groups that tried to instigate public opinion to stop the construction of the centre in 2010. However, the results of that campaign were rather meagre.<sup>25</sup>

Actually, the creation of the office of Mufti within the LM is a peculiar event. The Muftiates are the heritage of the Ottoman and later tsarist Russian administrative systems and are rather absent from the horizons of the Arab-inspired Muslim communities (the LM is considered as such). Yet, the new-comers from the LM thought it right to create such an office in their organization. It can be interpreted as an element of rivalry with the MZR but we should not overlook the fact

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<sup>24</sup> For a summary of the problems concerning the halal food see e.g. A.S. Nalborczyk, S. Grodz, ‘Poland’, in J.S. Nielsen et al. (eds), *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 6, Leiden, 2014, pp. 480-82.

<sup>25</sup> NALBORCZYK, A.S., ‘Budowa meczetów w Polsce – historia, liczba i rozmieszczenie, obecny stan prawny oraz protest przeciw budowie meczetu w Warszawie’, in WIDY-BEHIESSE, M., (ed.) *Islam w Europie. Bogactwo różnorodności czy źródło konfliktów?*, Warszawa, 2012, pp. 53-55.

that that action also shows readiness of the LM members to follow (imitate?) their predecessors' example and adapt to the local conditions.<sup>26</sup>

Similar attitude applies to the relationship with the dominant religious body on the Polish socio-political scene, i.e. the Roman Catholic Church. It looks as if the LM follows the path taken by the MZR. Various local MZR activists had cooperated – or at least maintained amicable contacts – with the members of the local parishes and the higher Church hierarchs. These contacts were of a rather social, cultural and political character than a religious one. Yet, out of one such a meeting forum in Warsaw an idea sprung up to create a joint, common body that could maintain, promote and further develop mutual understanding and cooperation between Christian and Muslims. *Rada Wspólna Katolików i Muzułmanów* (Common Council of Catholics and Muslims) was created in 1997. The founders on both sides – Muslims and Christians – wanted the new organization to be recognized by the Roman Catholic Bishops Conference. Thus, the scope of the participants on the Christian side was narrowed to 'Catholics', while the Muslim side was left unrestricted. Both terms though, have their problems and need explanations. The term 'Catholics' was not chosen to exclude other Christians but not to lay claims of jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic bishops over other Christians.<sup>27</sup> The term 'Muslims', though left in its broad sense, in practice meant the restriction of the participants to the old autochthonous Muslim population. The initial delineation has been retained so far and the Council has not invited the new Muslim settlers to join it. Though the first-generation converts are

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<sup>26</sup> NALBORCZYK, A.S. - RYSZEWSKA, M., 'Islamic organizations in Poland: from monopoly to pluralism', in ROSENOW-WILLIAMS, K. – KORTMANN, M., (ed.), *Islamic organizations in Europe and the USA. A multidisciplinary perspective*, Basingstoke-New York 2013, pp. 13-36.

<sup>27</sup> It also needs to be stressed that the other Christian Churches, especially the Protestant ones, are rather small in numbers and so far mainly located in areas where Muslim presence was not significant. There has not been any ecumenical platform that would include taking into account a joint stand on interreligious contacts. For the smaller Churches the interreligious matters hardly ever come into the area of matters of immediate concerns.

among the Council members. That does not mean, however, that there are no contacts or cooperation with those belonging to the LM. The latter showed interest in entering into formal contacts with the Roman Catholic Church on several occasions. They readily participated in the celebrations of the Islam Day in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland in various locations. The LM Mufti, along with the MZR Mufti and the senior among the Muslim ambassadors in Poland, was a speaker at the central celebration in Warsaw. Following the practice of the MZR members in their contacts with the Roman Catholic Church the LM organized events like the ‘Wrocław Convention for Interreligious Dialogue’ of 2008 extending the participation to other Christians and the Jewish community. The LM authorities decided to start a parallel initiative to the Islam Day in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and launched ‘A Day of Christianity’, in a way, taking a step ahead of the MZR. Announced in 2010 it was to be held in the new Islamic Centre in Warsaw but due to delays in construction works the Katowice section of the LM put that initiative into practice in 2013 in their newly opened centre in that city. It was repeated the following year.

### **3. Characteristic features**

There are several features that make Muslims in Poland worthy of a bit of attention. As it has been stated at the beginning of the paper, I do not consider these features to be ‘exemplary’ in the sense that they should be ‘followed’ or copied. They are ‘exemplary’ in the sense of being an example of what may happen if people are allowed a ‘breathing space’, a space to live. One may say that it has no relevance for the current situation, as the old experience of the Muslims in the Commonwealth cannot be repeated. Acknowledging that, I think that it may still be worthy to be reminded about it, as it can serve as a reference point in looking for solutions to the current problems. The differences and conflicts do not inevitably lead to the full scale confrontation that has to end with dire consequences for any party engaged in the encounter.

This is not an exhaustive list but I would like to highlight the following features: 1/ loyalty (initially to the individual patrons, later to the country that became homeland), 2/ adaptability (integration without assimilation) and skilfulness in balancing on the border of 'the cultural' and 'the religious', including the acceptance of the change of social roles, 3/ openness to contacts with Christians (not only in the recent frame of interreligious relations but also much prior to that).

The Muslim Tatar settlers proved loyal to their patrons who in turn recognized necessity and validity of the Tatar commitment to rendering the services they had been requested to provide. That loyalty, initially directed to particular individual patrons or their families, developed into the loyalty to the new homeland and its diverse cultural heritage. This feature deserves to be underlined especially in the perspective of the clash with the Ottoman empire and constant skirmishes with the Crimean Khanate – both ruled by Muslims. That conflict had often been presented as a Christian-Muslim struggle and the battle of Vienna (1683) treated as the epitome of the 'Christian victory' over the 'Muslim threat'. However, using the religious terms here is justified only because the separation between 'religious' and 'political' was perceived differently in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (if at all!). Had it been a religious war, i.e. the clash between Christianity and Islam, we would have to explain why King Jan Sobieski took Muslim Tatar cavalry units with him on several occasions to fight against the Ottomans.

It had already been mentioned that the Tatar Muslim families were fully absorbed in the task of retaining and transmitting the cultural heritage of the Commonwealth during the times when the country did not exist as a political entity during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They were also active in armed struggle for the restoration of the state. These efforts were recognised by the state authorities and appreciation for the Tatar Muslim community was expressed on many occasions.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> NALBORCZYK, A.S., 'The political participation of Polish Muslim Tatars – the result of or the reason for integration? From Teutonic wars to the Danish cartoons affair', in NIELSEN, J. S., (ed.) *Muslim Political Participation in Europe*, Edinburgh, 2013, pp. 239-254.

Generally, the Tatar settlers proved to be very flexible as far as adaptation to the local conditions was concerned. They have retained their distinctiveness (which was not a big problem as their host country was culturally very diverse), yet they allowed themselves for a series of changes that helped them (not completely without problems) to become fully accepted inhabitants of the country and citizens.<sup>29</sup> Very early on (most probably already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) they abandoned their mother tongue and adopted the local ones (Ruthenian at home, Polish in public), yet they retained Islam as their religion. As it has been indicated, they were not targeted by Christian missionaries but conversion issues did, at times, pose serious problems for the Tatar families.<sup>30</sup> Some families developed two branches – a Muslim and a Christian one. It is not uncommon that the Tatars would use two names – one indicating the link to the Islamic milieu, the other to their local context (e.g. Mustafa – Stefan, Musa – Maciej, Musa – Machmet, Halima – Halina) or use names recognizable in both contexts (e.g. Adam, Jakub). They also adopted some of the customs linked to the celebration of the Christian feasts, though without religious underpinning, so they would decorate a Christmas tree or paint Easter eggs.<sup>31</sup>

Even those Tatars who originally came in their capacity as warriors/soldiers were not always able to uphold it. With the time passing some lost interest or ability to do the military service and became artisans and ‘town dwellers’ rendering their services also to their non-Tatar neighbours.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Citizenship rights were not conferred on them without difficulties. The Tatars obtained the full citizenship rights only at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Constitution of 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1791).

<sup>30</sup> At times various restrictions were to be imposed on the Tatars, though they were not always implemented.

<sup>31</sup> WIKTOR-MACH, D., (ed.) ‘European Islam. The Case of Polish Tatars’, in *Hemispheres*, 23 (2008), pp. 141-42.

<sup>32</sup> See e.g. J TYSZKIEWICZ, J., (ed.) *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce. Studia z dziejów XIII-XVIII w.*, Warszawa, 1989, pp. 201-79; KONOPACKI, A., *Życie religijne Tatarów na ziemiach Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w XVI-XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 21-58, esp. from p. 37.

It has also been indicated that their post-World War 2 dispersion posed a serious challenge to them in terms of cultural and religious survival. In the new situation women stepped in and taking up public and leadership roles in the communities contributed greatly to the preservation of Tatar cultural traditions. Women also began to play role as community religious leaders not so much in the capacity of 'the learned ones' (*ulama*) but as organizers of religious life and presidents of religious communities (that has been the case of the communities in Gdańsk, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Białystok, Bohoniki). At times they led prayers during burial ceremonies when no suitable man was present. It should also be indicated that in this respect – like in other previously mentioned areas – the LM at some point followed the practice of the MZR and elected a woman as its first president.<sup>33</sup>

The Muslims of Tatar origin have remained in contacts with their Christian neighbours from the beginning of their presence in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The 'interreligious' contacts are not a reaction to the Christian 'gestures' that have become the order of the day for some Christians in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (after the second Vatican Council) but they have a long history. Already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century there were instances where anonymous Muslim writers referred to the Christian religious or literary sources available locally to them to either explain some elements of Muslim beliefs or to argue their case against the Christians.<sup>34</sup> Some other examples of neighbourly

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<sup>33</sup> A NALBORCZYK, A.S., 'Muslim Women in Poland and Lithuania. Tatar Tradition, Religious Practice, *hijab* and Marriage', in ADAMIAK E., (ed.) *Gender and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*, Poznań 2009, pp. 53-69 (esp. pp. 60-63).

<sup>34</sup> See e.g. DROZD, A., 'Wpływy chrześcijańskie na literaturę Tatarów w dawnej Rzeczypospolitej. Między antagonizmem a symbiozą', in *Pamiętnik literacki*, 88/3 (1997), p. 3-34; DROZD, A., 'Staropolski apokryf w muzułmańskich księgach. (Tatarska adaptacja Historji barzo cudnej o stworzeniu nieba i ziemie Krzysztofa Pussmana)', in *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne*, Seria Literacka, 3 (1996), p. 95-134; TARELKA, M., "Калі Езуса катавалі ..." (рэлігійна-палемічны тэкст з рукапіснай спадчыны беларускіх татараў, in LEWICKA, M., - ŁAPICZ, Cz., (ed.) *Dialog chrześcijańsko-muzułmański. Klucz do wspólnej przyszłości*, Toruń 2012, pp. 235-48.

Muslim-Christian contacts in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century have already been mentioned.

These interreligious contacts have been reciprocal. As providing a sound religious education for the Muslim communities in the former Commonwealth territories posed a constant serious challenge, the Christian Romantic intellectuals of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century grouped in the Philomath Society<sup>35</sup> put their effort in helping their Muslim neighbours by making the Qur'an accessible to them in the vernacular. Ignacy Domeyko and Fr. Dionizy Chlewiński, being aware of the earlier translations that had been written using Arabic script (thus not accessible to all), translated the Qur'an into Polish.<sup>36</sup>

It has to be remembered that the coexistence was not trouble-free. At least one, already mentioned, highly polemical and defamatory pamphlet called *Alfurkan tatarski* from the early 17<sup>th</sup> century gives hard evidence to that. Some researchers think that its author – a certain Piotr Czyżewski – is a pseudonym used by someone possibly coming from ecclesial circles of the Counter-Reformation.<sup>37</sup>

In the contemporary times the members of the Tatar Muslim community has been continuously susceptible to interreligious contacts. Establishing the Common Council of Catholics and Muslims has already been mentioned. The initiative of the founding members to introduce Islam Day in the Catholic Church in Poland, accepted by the bishops and included into the church liturgical calendar from 2001

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<sup>35</sup> It was a secret student organization that existed at the Imperial University of Vilnius between 1817-23.

<sup>36</sup> However, its publication was blocked by the tsarist censors. WÓJCIK, Z., 'Filomacki przekład Alkoranu dla Tatarów nowogródzkich', in *Literatura ludowa*, 39/3 (1995), p. 15-28; ŁAPICZ, Cz., 'Językowe aspekty chrześcijańsko-muzułmańskiego dyskursu: dysputy teologiczne a międzyreligijny dialog', in LEWICKA, M. – ŁAPICZ, Cz., (ed) *Dialog chrześcijańsko-muzułmański. Klucz do wspólnej przyszłości*, Toruń 2012, pp. 227-228.

<sup>37</sup> See the commentary of A. Konopacki in his edition of Czyżewski's *Alfrukan tatarski*, CZYŻEWSKI, P., *Alfurkan tatarski prawdziwy na czterdzieści części rozdzielony*, Wilno, 1617, reprint KONOPACKI, A., (ed.) Białystok, 2013, pp. 5-14.

has now been well established.<sup>38</sup> It may be also pertinent to mention that when the Common Council decided to honour with public recognition people who were distinguished in building bridges between Christians and Muslims in Poland two people from the Tatar Muslim community were named as the first obvious choice and both were publicly honoured.

Much prior to that, however, the Muslim community accepted an invitation from the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) to organize an exhibition of kitabs and a symposium in the Mission House in Pieniężno in October 1985. The event was to draw attention of the public 'to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the Muslim minority' in Poland. The occasion also gathered the representative of other Muslim communities, so – as someone observed – the event turned out to be also an intra-Muslim meeting.<sup>39</sup>

## Conclusion

Muslim presence in Poland has been a marginal issue in the current world affairs. However, looking at it in the social and historical perspective one is reminded that the contacts with Muslim settlers do not need to be a burning problem and do not need to end with a head-on collision.

Perhaps the Tatar immigrants of long ago were not stern Muslims, some might say. Not imputing them lack of faith, however, one might say that maybe their successful integration is due – among other factors – also to the fact that they came to a country that, though diverse as it was, offered a living space to many, had a rather clearly defined

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<sup>38</sup> See e.g. the reflection of bishop Grzegorz Ryś in his weekly column Ryś, G., 'Czy Dzień Islamu coś zmieni?', in *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 6, 8 lutego 2015, p. 19) in which the author treats the event as something very obvious.

<sup>39</sup> GRODŹ, S. 'Christian-Muslim Experiences in Poland', *Exchange*, 39 (2010), p. 280; for the Pieniężno meeting see ŚLIWKA, E., (ed.), *Dzień muzułmański*, Pieniężno, 1985.

framework of political and cultural (including religious) reference points and in addition presented a constantly updated attractive political project which various groups (of different ethnic origin, social status, or religious persuasion) laid access to. Half of the kingdom to anyone who will be able to distinguish a Muslim Tatar from a group of Polish citizens!

Maybe in the current European/Western we are too impatient. The current situation is constantly whipped up by concentrating on the negative stereotypes of Muslims and migrants. Perhaps more light should be shed on the examples of successful integration? For the success of the whole endeavour a basically non-confrontational situation is definitely preferred.

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## Abstract

The number of Muslims living in Poland is small and for that reason Muslim presence there may seem insignificant. Still, it offers a reminder on the variety of ways of Muslim presence in a non-Muslim society. In the contemporary debate with its general tone saturated with strongly expressed opinions that Muslims cause only disruption and pose a threat to stability it is important to remember that there have been cases of fruitful integration. I want to highlight three features that make the Muslim presence in Poland, marginal as it is, worthy of a bit of attention – loyalty, adaptability and openness to contacts with Christians. They do not form a complete list and have been picked up rather arbitrarily on the sole strength of being evident. In order to place these features in a wider context I will present a brief historical outline of the Muslim presence in Poland and add a short description of the contemporary situation.

# Muslimische Präsenz in Deutschland und Antwort der katholischen Kirche – eine Zusammenstellung

Timo Güzelmansur

Der Islam ist heute zahlenmäßig die zweitgrößte Religion nach dem Christentum und ist mehrheitlich sunnitisch geprägt. Die muslimische Präsenz in Deutschland ist keine vorübergehende zeitliche Erscheinung, sondern von dauerhafter Präsenz. Denn längst sind die Angehörigen des Islam nicht einfach Einwanderer, sondern eben in Deutschland geborene, sozialisierte und dem Land ebenso verbundene Bürger, wie die einheimischen Einwohner. Doch wie kam es, dass eine fremde Religion in diesem mitteleuropäischen Land heimisch wurde? Es hilft dabei (A) zunächst (1) einen geschichtlichen Rückblick zu halten und die ersten Kontakte zwischen Deutschland und der muslimischen Welt zu rekapitulieren. Durch die Industrialisierung wurden Arbeitskräfte benötigt, die nicht nur als „Gastarbeiter“ in Deutschland Leistung brachten, sondern (2) mit ihnen fand eine neue Religion neben den anderen Religionen seinen Platz. Rasch wuchs die Zahl der Muslime in Deutschland an und damit ist heute der Islam neben dem Christentum die zweitgrößte Religion, wie (3) die aktuellen Statistiken belegen. In zehn Schritten werden die verschiedenen Lebensbereiche des muslimischen Lebens in Deutschland veranschaulicht, die sich auf die im Auftrag des deutschen Innenministeriums erstellte Studie aus dem Jahr 2009 stützen. (4) Welche Konsequenzen sich für die Integrationspolitik in Deutschland ergibt, wird im Weiteren erläutert.

Hat sich durch die dauerhafte Präsenz von muslimischem Leben, das sich sowohl im öffentlichen Leben als auch in den gesellschaftlichen Strukturen bemerkbar macht, eine religiöse Pluralität in Deutschland ergeben, versuchte die katholische Kirche (B) schon von Anfang an diesen Veränderungen Rechnung zu tragen. Neben der weltkirch-

lich (1) bedeutenden Erklärungen beispielsweise *Nostra Aetate*, hat die katholische Kirche auch strukturell sowohl international als auch national Gremien und Arbeitskreise geschaffen, damit auch ein friedliches und innovatives Zusammenleben von verschiedenen Religionen möglich sein kann. Im Folgenden werden die Unterkommission für den Interreligiösen Dialog der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (2), dessen Arbeitsstelle, die Christlich-Islamische Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle (3) und die diözesanen Dialogbeauftragten der einzelnen Bistümer (4) besonders hervorgehoben und dargestellt. Ein zusammenfassendes Schlusswort wird formuliert.

## A. Muslimische Präsenz in Deutschland

### 1. Rückblick

Es gibt bereits eine Vielzahl an Publikationen, die sich mit der Geschichte des Islam in Deutschland beschäftigen, daher wird hier auf die schon vorhandenen Publikationen zurückgegriffen.<sup>1</sup>

Der Islam kam nicht erst durch die Anwerbung muslimischer Arbeitsnehmer aus der Türkei, Tunesien und Albanien in den 60er Jahren des 20. Jahrhunderts nach Deutschland, sondern es gab schon seit Karl dem Großen Kontakte durch Kaufleute und Gesandte zwischen Deutschen und der islamischen Welt. Die Geschichte der Deutschen mit dem Islam bzw. den Muslimen bis ins 20. Jahrhundert war keine Geschichte des alltäglichen Zusammenlebens, sondern vor allem eine Kriegsgeschichte, wie die Marburger Islamwissenschaftlerin Ursula Spuler-Stegemann zu Recht hervorhebt.<sup>2</sup> Die ersten Muslime, die sich in Deutschland aufgehalten haben, waren Kriegsgefangene<sup>3</sup> aus den

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<sup>1</sup> KESSLER, I., *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland. Ein Beitrag zu einer interkulturellen Hermeneutik*, Gütersloh 2004.

<sup>2</sup> SPULER-STEGEMANN, U. *Islam in Deutschland. Nebeneinander oder Miteinander?* Freiburg im Breisgau 1988, s. 33 und 36.

<sup>3</sup> LEMMEN, T., *Muslime in Deutschland. Eine Herausforderung für Kirche und Gesellschaft*, Baden-Baden 2001, s. 17.

Türkenkriegen des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts. Die Osmanen hatten 1529 und 1683 zwei Mal Wien vergeblich belagert und nicht einnehmen können. Daher wurde der Islam, die Religion der Belagerer, als eine Existenzbedrohung für das Abendland empfunden.<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Salim Abdullah geht davon aus, dass bei diesen Kriegen Tausende von muslimischen Soldaten gefangen genommen wurden.<sup>5</sup> Was aber mit den Kriegsgefangenen geschehen ist und wie ihr weiteres Leben in Deutschland aussah, darüber ist wenig bekannt. Wahrscheinlich haben einige, um sich das Leben in der Gefangenschaft und Fremde zu erleichtern, die Taufe empfangen. Der Orientalist Otto Spieß bemerkt in einem Aufsatz aus dem Jahr 1968 über *die Schicksale türkischer Kriegsgefangener in Deutschland nach den Türkenkriegen*: „Nachdem solche Türken den christlichen Glauben angenommen hatten, sind sie in Deutschland sesshaft geworden; sie haben sich mit der deutschen Bevölkerung vermischt und geheiratet und sind im deutschen Volkstum aufgegangen. Bei vielen ist das nicht mehr festzustellen, da sie meist bei der Taufe einen anderen Namen angenommen haben“.<sup>6</sup> Dass sich durch die Übernahme eines „christlichen“ Namens die Spur verliert, falls der ursprüngliche Name nicht jemandem anvertraut wurde, verdeutlicht folgende biographische Notiz. „Mein Großvater mütterlicherseits war ein türkischer Pascha aus Konstantinopel, hieß Hassan Pascha. Er wurde im 17. Jahrhundert vor Belgrad von einem lippischen General und Grafen gefangen und mit nach Detmold genommen. Meine Großmutter, Khadyra, war aus Neuhäusel. Ihr Vater, Schiffskapitän, fuhr früher nach Jerusalem. Bei der Eroberung von Neuhäusel, im Jahre 1685, hat sie einen Schuss durch die Knie bekommen und es sind ihr die Ohrringe ausgerissen worden, wie noch zu sehen war. Nach ihrer Aussage damals 15 Jahre alt, ist sie ebenfalls nach Detmold gebracht worden, wo beide auf dem Schlosse in der christlichen Religion

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<sup>4</sup> HEINE, P. *Halbmond über deutschen Dächern. Muslimisches Leben in unserem Land*, München 1997.

<sup>5</sup> ABDULLAH, M. S. *Geschichte des Islam in Deutschland*, Graz 1981, S. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Zitiert nach ebd., S. 18.

erzogen und verheiratet wurden. Mein Großvater bekam den Nachnamen Sternberg, die Großmutter wurde Johanna Amalie genannt. Jener war Kapitänleutnant, ist früh gestorben. Erst auf dem Totenbett hat er den Herrschern seine Herkunft gemeldet.“<sup>7</sup>

Eine andere Spur muslimischer Präsenz auf deutschem Boden kann aus dem diplomatischen Bereich gesehen werden. Als im Jahr 1798 Ali Efendi, der osmanische Gesandte und Botschafter am Berliner Hof verstarb, wurde von König Wilhelm Friedrich III (1797–1840) ein Grundstück als Friedhof zur Verfügung gestellt. Die Bestattung erfolgte nach islamischer Tradition. „Diese Handlung wird als erste islamische Kulturhandlung in der Berliner Öffentlichkeit und die Grabstätte zugleich als erster islamischer Grundbesitz in Deutschland angesehen. Später baute man diese Grabstätte zu einem türkischen Friedhof aus, der bis heute im Columbiadamm in Berlin existiert.“<sup>8</sup> Auf dem Friedhof befindet sich ein Grabmonument für die in Berlin verstorbenen Botschafter, den osmanischen Gesandten Ali Aziz Efendi (gestorben 1798) und Mehmed Esad Efendi (gestorben 1804) sowie für den osmanischen Gesandtschaftssekretär Rahmi Efendi (gestorben 1839), einen Kadetten (gestorben 1853) und einen Studenten (gestorben 1853). Heute wird die „Şehitlik Camii“ (deutsch: „Märtyrer Moschee“) von der Türkisch-Islamischen Union, der Anstalt für Religion (DİTİB) betreut.<sup>9</sup>

Zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen wird die Zahl der Muslimen in Berlin mit ca. 1800 Personen angegeben.<sup>10</sup> Der nach eigenen Angaben in Nürnberg ansässige „Ansar-Verein“ berichtet auf seiner Homepage ([www.enfal.de](http://www.enfal.de)) durch eine Rubrik mit dem Titel „Zwischen Preussennadler und Hakenkreuz. Islam in Deutschland von 1739–1945“: „Im

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<sup>7</sup> Zitiert nach ebd., S. 20.

<sup>8</sup> KESSLER, I., *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland. Ein Beitrag zu einer interkulturellen Hermeneutik*, Gütersloh 2004, s. 21.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.sehitlik-camii.de/> (abgerufen am 21.21.2015).

<sup>10</sup> HÖPP, G. Zwischen Moschee und Demonstration. Muslime in Berlin, 1922–1930, in *Muslimische Revue* 10 (1990), s. 135–146 und 230–238.

Deutschen Reich lebten seinerzeit rund 3000 Muslime<sup>11</sup>. Nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg bis in die 1950er Jahre gab es wenige Aktivitäten einer wirklichen islamischen Präsenz in Deutschland. Wir können hier festhalten, dass die Anwesenheit von Muslimen bis 1945 lediglich Folge der besonderen Umstände und Erfordernisse im Kontext der militärischen, der diplomatischen, der Handels- und allenfalls noch der kulturellen und wissenschaftlichen Beziehungen zwischen der islamischen und der nichtislamischen Welt war.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Vom Gastarbeiterislam zum Islam in Deutschland

Mit den von der Industrie mehr und mehr angeworbenen „Gastarbeitern“ wurde ein neues Kapitel des „Islam in Deutschland“ aufgeschlagen. Anfang der sechziger Jahre wurden 1961 Arbeitsverträge mit der Türkei und später mit Marokko, Tunesien und schließlich 1968 mit Jugoslawien abgeschlossen. Da sich Anfang der 70er Jahre die Nachfrage nach Arbeitskräften erheblich verringerte und eine Wirtschaftsrezession eintraf, wurde im November 1973 von der Bundesregierung der Anwerbestopp für ausländische Arbeitnehmer erlassen. Bis dahin waren allein aus der Türkei ca. 910.000 Arbeitskräfte angeworben. Der Anwerbestopp stellte viele vor die Frage, ob sie weiterhin auch in Deutschland bleiben oder in die Heimat zurückgehen möchten. Eine Studie aus dem Jahre 2002 bemerkt Folgendes über die Situation der Gastarbeiter:

„Zu Beginn der Arbeitsmigration Anfang der 60er Jahre beabsichtigten die türkischen Vertragsarbeiter in der Regel, drei bis fünf Jahre in Deutschland zu bleiben und so viel Geld wie möglich zu sparen, um sich anschließend eine Existenz in ihren Herkunftsland aufzubauen.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://enfal.de/grund12.htm> (abgerufen am 21.01.201). Klickt man sich durch die einschlägigen Rubriken und Texte auf dieser Homepage durch, stellt man schnell fest, dass der Hauptautor der meisten Texte Prof. Dr. Osman Eskicioğlu, für ein auf islamische Prinzipien basiertes Staatsmodell plädiert und eine üble antisemitische Propaganda betreibt.

<sup>12</sup> SEKRETARIAT DER DEUTSCHEN BISCHOFSKONFERENZ, *Christen und Muslime in Deutschland* (Arbeitshilfe 172 vom 23. September 2003), Bonn 2003, S. 10.

Sie waren meist im Alter zwischen 20 und 30 Jahren, stammten aus den ländlichen, noch semi-feudalistisch geprägten Regionen und kamen in die Industrieländer Westeuropas. Ihre ethisch-kulturelle Identität wurde aufgrund der mittelfristigen Rückkehrabsicht nicht mit Blick auf eine mögliche nachhaltige Eingliederung in die deutsche Gesellschaft thematisiert – weder unter den Migranten selbst, noch durch die Deutschen. Dieser Umstand resultierte in einer Großzahl sehr konkreter Manifestationen von Fremdheit zwischen Mehrheits- und Minderheitengesellschaft. Am weitreichendsten darunter war sicherlich, dass weder der Wille zum Erlernen der deutschen Sprache bestand, noch die Aneignung von Kenntnissen des Deutschen von der Aufnahmegesellschaft eingefordert und durch entsprechende Angebote abgesichert wurde.<sup>13</sup>

Bald zeichnete sich ab, dass die Gastarbeiter sich auf einen längeren, gar dauerhaften Aufenthalt in Deutschland einrichteten und ihre Familien aus den Heimatländern nach Deutschland holten. Durch den Familiennachzug wurde die deutsche Gesellschaft in den nun folgenden Jahren neben dem Phänomen der kulturellen, ethnischen und religiösen Vielfalt jetzt zusätzlich mit einem neuen Phänomen konfrontiert. Rückblickend wird offen eingestanden, dass in all den Jahren die sozialen Folgen der Migration bisher nicht bzw. zu wenig berücksichtigt worden sind. „Wir müssen uns die Tatsache, dass wir eine Einwanderungsgesellschaft sind, deren Bevölkerung in den letzten Jahren ethnisch, kulturell und religiös immer vielfältiger geworden ist, und damit auch diesen Fragen viel grundsätzlicher stellen als wir dies bisher getan haben. [...] Jede fünfte in Deutschland geschlossene Ehe ist heute binational, jedes vierte Neugeborene hat mindestens einen Elternteil mit Wanderungshintergrund, rund ein Drittel der Kinder und Jugendlichen in den deutschen Schulen kommt inzwischen aus Migrationsfamilien. [...] Angesichts dieser Pluralisierung reicht es nicht aus, Integration

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<sup>13</sup> ŞEN, F. – SAUER, M. – HALM, D., „Intergeneratives Verhalten und (Selbst-) Ethnisierung von türkischen Zuwanderern. Gutachten des ZfT für die Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung“, in ŞEN, F. – SAUER, M. – HALM, D., (Hgg.), Migrationsbericht des Zentrums für Türkeistudien 2002, Münster 2002, s. 11-20, s. 14.

nur zu fordern – man muss sie auch fördern und Angebote machen, die Identifikation und das Gefühl von Zugehörigkeit ermöglichen.“<sup>14</sup>

Durch den Familiennachzug wurde der Islam im öffentlichen Raum sichtbar, da beispielsweise Frauen mit muslimischer Tradition die entsprechenden Kleidervorschriften (z.B. Kopftuch etc.) beachteten. Gleichzeitig wurden Kindergärten, Schulen, Krankenhäuser, Behörden etc. mit neuen Fragestellungen und Bedürfnissen konfrontiert, die sich bis dahin nicht gestellt haben. Allmählich begann aber auch eine strukturelle Entwicklung für religiöse Dienste in Form von Kulturvereinen oder aber Moscheegemeinden.

In den 80er und 90er Jahren kamen weitere Muslime, die in ihrer Heimat politisch verfolgt wurden, verstärkt als Asylbewerber, nach Deutschland. Durch diese Entwicklungen wurde der Islam so, neben dem Christentum in der Gestalt der beiden großen Konfessionen, zur zweitgrößten Religionsgemeinschaft in Deutschland.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. Aktuelle statistische Präsenz der Muslime in Deutschland

Die Studie „Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland“ bietet zum ersten Mal belastbare Daten über die aktuelle muslimische Präsenz in Deutschland.<sup>16</sup> Folglich leben heute in Deutschland Muslime, die aus über 40

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<sup>14</sup> BEAUFTRAGTE DER BUNDESREGIERUNG FÜR MIGRATION, FLÜCHTLINGE UND INTEGRATION (Hrsg.), *Bericht der Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration über die Lage der Ausländerinnen und Ausländer in Deutschland*, Berlin 2005, s. 30.

<sup>15</sup> Vollständigkeitshalber sei hier die Zahl der Christen ca. 45 Millionen angegeben.

<sup>16</sup> Diesem Teil wird die Studie „Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland“ zugrunde gelegt. Es handelt sich dabei um eine erste bundesweite repräsentative Studie, die mit ca. 6.000 befragten Personen aus 49 muslimisch geprägten Herkunftsländern einen umfassenden Überblick über das muslimische Leben in Deutschland gibt, insbesondere zur Anzahl der Muslime in Deutschland, Glaubensrichtungen, religiöser Praxis und verschiedenen Aspekten der Integration. BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE (Hgg.), *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland im Auftrag der Deutschen Islam Konferenz [von Sonja Haug, Stephanie Müssig, Anja Stichs]*, Nürnberg 2009.

Auch online abrufbar unter: <http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Forschungsberichte/fb06-muslimisches-leben.html> (22.01.2015). Diese Studie

verschiedenen Nationen stammen. Sie unterscheiden sich daher in ethnischer Hinsicht (Türken, Araber, Pakistaner, Indonesier usw.), in konfessioneller Hinsicht (Sunniten, Schiiten, Aleviten), in ihrer gelebten und / oder nichtgelebten Religiosität und sie unterscheiden sich in ihrer politischen Gesinnung (konservativ, islamistisch, säkularistisch usw.).

Diese religionssoziologische Bestandsaufnahme zeigt aufgrund des umfangreichen Datenmaterials der Studie, wie vielfältig und unterschiedlich der Islam und die Muslime in Deutschland sind.

Bis Juni 2009 wurde die Zahl der Muslime in Deutschland auf Rund 3,2 bis 3,5 Millionen geschätzt. Genauere Daten existierten nicht, da die Religionszugehörigkeit von Muslimen von Meldebehörden<sup>17</sup> nicht erfasst wird.

Die Studie des Bundesamtes für Migration und Flüchtlinge gibt an, dass zwischen 3,8 und 4,3 Millionen Muslime in Deutschland wohnen. Berücksichtigt man, dass in Deutschland insgesamt rund 82 Millionen Menschen leben, beträgt der Anteil der Muslime an der Gesamtbevölkerung zwischen 4,6 und 5,2 Prozent. Rund 45 Prozent der in Deutschland lebenden Muslime mit Migrationshintergrund aus den berücksichtigten Herkunftsländern sind deutsche Staatsangehörige, rund 55 Prozent verfügen über eine ausländische Nationalität.<sup>18</sup>

Die Bevölkerungsgruppe der Muslime ist somit größer als nach bisherigen Schätzungen angenommen, die sich zwischen 3,2 und 3,5 Millionen bewegten. Diese Schätzungen basierten auf einer indirekten Methode, nach der nur die in Deutschland lebenden Staatsangehörigen aus 20 muslimisch geprägten Herkunftsländern und die Einbürgerungen von Staatsangehörigen aus diesen Ländern von 1988 bis 2005

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wird im Folgenden mit „BAMF, Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland“ abgekürzt und zitiert.

<sup>17</sup> Da der Islam in Deutschland nicht den Status der Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts besitzt, wird die muslimische Religionszugehörigkeit bei den Meldeämtern offiziell nicht registriert.

<sup>18</sup> BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 11.

addiert wurden. Die Studie des Bundesamtes berücksichtigt dagegen auch die Zuwanderer aus einer Vielzahl von weiteren Ländern und die Nachkommen von Eingebürgerten.

Die neuen Ergebnisse belegen aber auch, dass zum Teil erhebliche Anteile der Personen mit Migrationshintergrund aus den entsprechenden Herkunftsländern keine Muslime sind. Beispielsweise geben fast 40 Prozent der Migranten aus dem Iran an, keiner Religionsgemeinschaft anzugehören. Aus anderen überwiegend muslimisch geprägten Herkunftsländern, wie etwa dem Irak, sind verstärkt religiöse Minderheiten zugewandert, die nicht dem Islam zuzurechnen sind. Aus der religiösen Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung des Herkunftslandes kann daher nicht automatisch auf die Religion der in Deutschland lebenden Migranten geschlossen werden.

Die Studie kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass es sich hinsichtlich der regionalen Herkunft bei den Muslimen in Deutschland um eine sehr heterogene Bevölkerung handelt. Erwartungsgemäß dominiert die große Gruppe der Türkischstämmigen. So haben knapp 2,5 bis 2,7 Millionen der in Deutschland lebenden Muslime (rund 63 Prozent) türkische Wurzeln. Aus den südosteuropäischen Ländern Bosnien, Bulgarien und Albanien stammen zwischen 496.000 und 606.000 Personen (rund 14 Prozent). Die drittgrößte muslimische Bevölkerungsgruppe in Deutschland sind mit 292.000 bis 370.000 (rund 8 Prozent) Migranten aus dem Nahen Osten. Aus Nordafrika kommen zwischen 259.000 und 302.000 der in Deutschland lebenden Muslime (ca. 7 Prozent), die Mehrzahl davon aus Marokko. Der Rest stammt aus Zentralasien/GUS, Iran, Süd-/Südostasien und dem sonstigen Afrika (insgesamt rund 8 Prozent).

98 Prozent der Muslime in Deutschland leben in den alten Bundesländern einschließlich Ostberlin. Über die alten Bundesländer hinweg sind die Muslime räumlich stark verteilt. Der höchste Anteil ist in dem bevölkerungsreichen Bundesland Nordrhein-Westfalen zu finden. Jeder dritte Muslim in Deutschland ist dort ansässig. Es folgen Baden-Württemberg, Bayern und Hessen mit Anteilswerten von über

10 Prozent. In den verbleibenden zumeist kleineren sieben alten Bundesländern leben rund 25 Prozent der Muslime.

### *3.1 Unterschiedliche Glaubensrichtungen*

Weltweit bildet der sunnitische Islam die größte Konfession. Dem entsprechend bilden auch die Sunniten mit 74 Prozent die größte konfessionelle Gruppe unter den Muslimen in Deutschland. Die mehrheitlich aus der Türkei stammenden Aleviten stellen mit einem Anteil von 13 Prozent die zweitgrößte muslimische<sup>19</sup> Glaubensgruppe dar. Es folgen die Schiiten mit einem Anteil von 7 Prozent. Von den Muslimen in Deutschland gehören weiterhin kleine Gruppen der Glaubensgemeinschaft der Ahmadiyya, den Sufi/Mystikern oder Ibaditen und anderen nicht näher spezifizierten Konfessionen an.<sup>20</sup>

### *3.2 Starke Religiosität, große Unterschiede bei religiöser Alltagspraxis*

In Deutschland lebende Muslime geben Mehrheitlich an, dass sie gläubig sind. Davon schätzen sich selbst insgesamt 36 Prozent als stark gläubig ein.<sup>21</sup>

Weitere 50 Prozent geben an, eher gläubig zu sein. Die Religiosität ist insbesondere bei türkischstämmigen Muslimen und Muslimen afrikanischer Herkunft ausgeprägt. Dagegen ist sie bei iranischstämmigen Muslimen, fast ausschließlich Schiiten, eher gering: Nur 10 Prozent

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<sup>19</sup> Obwohl es unter den Aleviten in den letzten Jahrzehnten einen lebendigen Diskurs darüber gibt, wie das Verhältnis des anatolischen Alevitentums zum Islam steht, bekennt sich noch der größte alevitische Verband AABF (Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu e. V.) in Deutschland zum Islam. Die alevitische Gemeinde nimmt an der Islamkonferenz der Bundesregierung Deutschlands von Anfang an teil.

<sup>20</sup> BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 134-135.

<sup>21</sup> Auch für folgende Angaben siehe BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 137.

sehen sich als sehr stark gläubig, aber etwa ein Drittel als gar nicht gläubig. Muslimische Frauen sind in fast allen Herkunftsgruppen tendenziell gläubiger als Männer.

Vergleiche zwischen den Muslimen und den Angehörigen einer anderen Religion zeigen außerdem, dass starke Religiosität keine Besonderheit der Muslime ist. Bei den meisten Herkunftsgruppen bestehen in Bezug auf die Gläubigkeit nur geringfügige Unterschiede zwischen den Muslimen und den Angehörigen einer anderen Religion. Bei der religiösen Alltagspraxis, wie dem Beten, dem Begehen religiöser Feste, der Einhaltung religiöser Speisevorschriften und Fastengebote, bestehen jedoch große Unterschiede je nach Herkunftsregion und – bei den Muslimen – je nach Konfession. Obwohl die Religiosität und die religiöse Praxis bei Muslimen stark ausgeprägt sind, ist die Mitgliedschaft in einem religiösen Verein oder einer Gemeinde niedriger als bei Angehörigen anderer Religionen.

Personen aus Südosteuropa *praktizieren das Gebet* nur vergleichsweise selten, obgleich Menschen aus dieser Region zumeist Sunniten sind, deren *Gebetshäufigkeit* höher als bei den anderen Glaubensgruppen ist.

Bei fast allen Herkunftsgruppen entscheidet sich die Mehrheit, entweder täglich oder nie zu beten. Es besteht ein deutlicher Unterschied zwischen Muslimen aus Afrika und türkischen Muslimen. Letztere geben um rund 20 Prozentpunkte seltener an, täglich zu beten als ihre afrikanischen Glaubensgenossen.

Bei der *Besuchshäufigkeit von religiösen Veranstaltungen* bestehen deutliche Geschlechtsunterschiede. Nur 26 Prozent der muslimischen Frauen besuchen ein paar Mal im Monat oder häufiger religiöse Veranstaltungen. Bei den muslimischen Männern sind es 43 Prozent. Die Unterschiede zwischen den Geschlechtern bestehen in allen Herkunftsgruppen. Besonders ausgeprägt sind sie bei Muslimen aus dem sonstigen Afrika, von denen 52 Prozent der Männer aber nur 29 Prozent der Frauen häufig religiöse Veranstaltungen besuchen.

### *3.3 Religiöse Speisevorschriften und Fasten*

Mit Ausnahme der beiden Regionen Iran und Zentralasien/GUS verzichtet die überwiegende Mehrheit der befragten Muslime aus religiösen Gründen auf bestimmte Speisen und Getränke. Bei einem Vergleich der islamischen Konfessionen untereinander erscheinen die Speisevorschriften für Sunniten am wichtigsten. Fast alle Befragten aus dieser Gruppe (91 Prozent) halten sich an islamische Speisevorschriften. Für Schiiten (60 Prozent) und Aleviten (49 Prozent) ist die Befolgung dieser Vorschriften weitaus weniger wichtig.<sup>22</sup>

Differenziert man nach Herkunftsregionen zeigt sich, dass Muslime aus Nordafrika mit einem Anteil von 78 Prozent am häufigsten bejahen, die islamischen *Fastengebote* einzuhalten. Muslime aus Zentralasien/ GUS fasten hingegen deutlich seltener als Muslime aus den anderen Herkunftsgruppen. Unter den Muslimen aus Südosteuropa geben etwa gleich viele an nie, gelegentlich oder immer zu fasten. Obgleich sich 30 Prozent der iranischen Muslime als „gar nicht gläubig“ bezeichnen, geben dennoch knapp 90 Prozent an, ganz oder teilweise die Fastengebote zu beachten.

### *3.4 Tragen des Kopftuchs ist in der zweiten Generation weniger häufig*

Bei den in der Integrationsdebatte diskutierten Themenbereichen wie dem Tragen des Kopftuchs oder der Teilnahme an schulischen Unterrichtsangeboten zeigt sich hinsichtlich der Bedeutung der Religion ein vielschichtiges Bild.<sup>23</sup> Zwischen dem Alter und dem Anteil der Frauen, die ein Kopftuch tragen, besteht ein deutlicher Zusammenhang. Zudem nimmt in der zweiten Generation die Häufigkeit

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<sup>22</sup> BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 145.

<sup>23</sup> BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 145.

des Kopftuchtragens signifikant ab. Der Anteil der Angehörigen der zweiten Generation, die immer ein Kopftuch tragen, ist um 7 Prozentpunkte niedriger als bei den Frauen der ersten Generation. Jedoch steigt der Anteil derjenigen, die manchmal ein Kopftuch tragen, auf 12 Prozent. In beiden Gruppen tragen ca. 70 Prozent nie ein Kopftuch.

Die Analysen belegen, dass ein deutlich *positiver Zusammenhang zwischen Gläubigkeit und dem Tragen des Kopftuchs* besteht. Keine der befragten Musliminnen, die sich als nicht gläubig bezeichnet, trägt ein Kopftuch. Von den stark gläubigen Musliminnen trägt indessen jede Zweite immer, meistens oder manchmal ein Kopftuch. Gleichzeitig wird auch deutlich, dass starke Gläubigkeit nicht zwangsläufig mit dem Tragen eines Kopftuchs einhergeht. Immerhin jede zweite stark religiöse Muslimin trägt kein Kopftuch.

### *3.5 Teilnahme an schulischen Unterrichtsangeboten*

Häufig wird auch der Schwimmunterricht und die Klassenfahrt bei muslimischen Schülerinnen thematisiert.<sup>24</sup> Hier zeigen die Ergebnisse, dass 7 bzw. 10 Prozent der muslimischen Schülerinnen, für die ein entsprechendes Angebot besteht, diesem fern bleiben. Insgesamt zeigen die Analysen über die Teilnahme am gemischtgeschlechtlichen Sport- und Schwimmunterricht sowie an Klassenfahrten jedoch, dass die große Mehrzahl der in den Haushalten lebenden Schülerinnen und Schüler aus muslimisch geprägten Ländern diese Unterrichtsangebote wahrnehmen.

### *3.6 Teilnahme am Religionsunterricht*

Der Bedarf an einem islamischen Religionsunterricht ist unbestritten. Obwohl diese Notwendigkeit von allen Seiten gesehen und benannt wird, wird aus unterschiedlichen Gründen in den verschiedenen Bundesländern nur regional islamischer Religionsunterricht angeboten. Die Projektergebnisse sind für Politik und Verwaltung als Grund-

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<sup>24</sup> Ebd. 181f.

lage für präzise Planungen relevant — etwa für Aussagen über den möglichen Bedarf an islamischem Religionsunterricht. So zeigt sich, dass 25 Prozent der muslimischen Schüler am Ethikunterricht teilnehmen, 5 Prozent am katholischen und 3 Prozent am evangelischen Religionsunterricht und 11 Prozent an bestehenden Angeboten islamischer Unterweisung. Mehr als die Hälfte der muslimischen Schüler nimmt an keinem Religions- bzw. Ethikunterricht teil. Der Grund hierfür liegt wahrscheinlich auch an einem mangelnden schulischen Angebot. Diese Annahme wird insofern unterstützt, als die Mehrheit der Muslime (76 Prozent) die Einführung von islamischem bzw. alevitischem<sup>25</sup> Religionsunterricht befürwortet. Besonders hoch ist der Anteil der Befürworter unter den Sunniten<sup>26</sup> (84 Prozent), etwas niedriger unter den Schiiten<sup>27</sup> (71 Prozent), den Ahmadis<sup>28</sup> (79 Prozent) und den sonstigen

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<sup>25</sup> Gegenwärtig werden etwa 1000 Schülerinnen und Schüler der Klassen 1-4 von 40 alevitischen Lehrkräften an 60 Schulen in alevitischer Religion unterrichtet. Das Fach ist versetzungsrelevant und wird auf Deutsch unterrichtet. In neun Bundesländern können alevitische Schüler dieses Unterrichtsfach besuchen. Für mehr Informationen siehe <http://alevi.com/de/religionsunterricht/allgemeines/#> (abgerufen 29.01.2015).

<sup>26</sup> Da es in Deutschland keine zentrale Instanz gibt, die für alle sunnitischen Muslime sprechen kann, haben die Bundesländer unterschiedliche Lösungen für die inhaltliche Trägerschaft des sunnitisch-islamischen Religionsunterrichts. Hat man in Nordrhein Westfalen einen Beirat aus unterschiedlichen muslimischen Akteuren bestehend, eine „islamische Religionsgemeinschaft“ als Kooperationspartner für das Bundesland konstruiert, so wurde in Hessen ein anderer Weg eingeschlagen und die DITIB als Träger für den Religionsunterricht anerkannt. Für die Organisations- und Vertretungsgrad der sunnitischen Muslime siehe nächste Absatz.

<sup>27</sup> Meines Wissens gibt es in Deutschland keinen expliziten schiitisch-islamischen Religionsunterricht, sondern es besteht die Möglichkeit, insofern die Eltern es wollen, die Kinder in den sunnitischen Religionsunterricht anzumelden. In der Sekundarstufe werden wohl die divergierenden Glaubensauffassungen zwischen den beiden Konfessionen nicht gravierend angesehen.

<sup>28</sup> In Hessen gibt es m. W. an weniger als zehn Schulen ein Angebot für den ahmadi-islamischen Religionsunterricht. Die Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Deutschland ist in Hessen als Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts anerkannt. Wo keine genügende Schülerzahl für eine Unterrichtsklasse zusammenkommt, möchte die Ahmadiyya Gemeinde die Kinder an den von DITIB angebotenen islamischen Religionsunterricht teilnehmen lassen. Siehe <http://www.ahmadiyya.de/news/medien-ueber-uns/art/erstmals-islamischer-religionsunterricht/> (abgerufen 29.01.2015).

islamischen Glaubensrichtungen (69 Prozent). Aleviten befürworten nur zu 54 Prozent die Einrichtung eines islamischen Religionsunterrichts als Schulfach. Aleviten wurden auch zusätzlich befragt, ob sie für die Einführung eines getrennten alevitischen Religionsunterrichts in öffentlichen Schulen sind. 64 Prozent der Aleviten bejahen diese Frage.

### *3.7 Organisationsgrad der Muslime in Deutschland*

Insgesamt sind 20 Prozent der Muslime in religiösen Vereinen oder Gemeinden organisiert.<sup>29</sup> Unter den Aleviten und Schiiten ist der Anteil der Personen, die eingetragenes Mitglied in einem religiösen Verein sind, mit jeweils 10 Prozent geringer als unter den Sunniten (22 Prozent). Unter den Angehörigen anderer kleinerer islamischer Konfessionen wie den Ibaditen oder der Glaubensgemeinschaft der Ahmadiyya sind 29 Prozent Mitglied eines Vereins.

### *3.8 Vertretungsgrad der islamischen Organisationen in Deutschland*

In der *Deutschen Islam Konferenz* (DIK)<sup>30</sup> sind unterschiedliche islamische Verbände vertreten. Der bekannteste islamische Verband davon ist die Türkisch Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion (DİTİB)<sup>31</sup>, die von 44 Prozent aller Muslime genannt wurde. DİTİB ist

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<sup>29</sup> BAME, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, S. 177ff. auch für folgende Angaben.

<sup>30</sup> Diese Initiative geht auf den damaligen Innenminister Wolfgang Schäuble im Jahre 2006 zurück, der einen langfristigen Dialogprozess zwischen den Muslimen in Deutschland und dem Staat ins Leben gerufen hat. Siehe die Selbstdarstellung auf der eigenen Homepage: <http://www.deutsche-islam-konferenz.de>.

<sup>31</sup> Die Türkisch Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e. V. (DİTİB) ist die Auslandsorganisation der türkischen Religionsbehörde (kurz: Diyanet) und die größte muslimische Vertretung mit über 900 Moscheegemeinden in Deutschland. Der Vorsitzende des Vereins ist gleichzeitig ein türkischer Diplomat. Die Türkei entsendet ca. 500 Imame im Auftrag von Diyanet für ca. 4 Jahre nach Deutschland, damit sie in den DİTİB-Moscheen und in jüngster Zeit auch in Moscheen von der Islamischen Gemeinschaft Milli Görüş (IGMG) und der Union der Türkisch-Islamischen Kulturvereine e.V. (ATİB) ihre Dienste anbieten.

die Auslandsvertretung der türkischen Religionsbehörde auch *Diyanet* genannt. Unter den Personen mit türkischem Migrationshintergrund kennen 59 Prozent die DİTİB, unter den türkischstämmigen Sunniten liegt der Anteil leicht höher bei 65 Prozent. Rund ein Viertel der Muslime gibt an, jeweils einen der folgenden Verbände zu kennen: Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (ZMD), Verein islamischer Kulturzentren (VIKZ), Alevitische Gemeinde Deutschland (AABF). Lediglich 16 Prozent aller Personen sind mit dem Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (IRD) vertraut. Den erst 2007 gegründeten Koordinationsrat der Muslime in Deutschland (KRM) kennen bislang 10 Prozent der muslimischen Befragten.

Die in der DIK vertretenen islamischen Verbände repräsentieren nicht die Mehrheit der Muslime in Deutschland, stellte die Studie fest. Weniger als 25 Prozent der Muslime fühlen sich ohne Einschränkung von den in der DIK vertretenen islamischen Dach- und Spitzenverbänden vertreten. Den höchsten Vertretungsgrad unter den Verbänden, die an der Deutschen Islam Konferenz teilnehmen, erzielt die DİTİB, von der sich 16 Prozent aller Muslime in Deutschland vertreten fühlen. Berücksichtigt man nur Muslime mit türkischem Migrationshintergrund sind es 23 Prozent. Unter allen türkischstämmigen Sunniten sind es 28 Prozent, die bejahen, dass sie sich von der DİTİB vertreten fühlen. Auch die Alevitische Gemeinde erreicht einen vergleichsweise hohen Vertretungsgrad, sofern man die eigentliche Zielgruppe berücksichtigt. 19 Prozent der Aleviten bejahen, dass sie sich von der Alevitischen Gemeinde vertreten fühlen. Vom VIKZ fühlt sich jeder zehnte Muslim aus der Türkei vertreten. Lediglich 2 Prozent der insgesamt befragten Muslime fühlen sich vom KRM in religiösen Fragen vertreten.

### *3.9 Unterschiede zwischen Muslimen und Nicht-Muslimen – auch bei der Integration*

Auch mit Blick auf die Integration deuten die Befunde darauf hin, dass Unterschiede sowohl zwischen den Muslimen aus verschiedenen Herkunftskontexten als auch zwischen Muslimen und Nicht-Musli-

men des jeweils gleichen Herkunftslandes bestehen. Schwierigkeiten zeigen sich bei den befragten Muslimen eher im Bereich der sprachlichen und strukturellen Integration, wohingegen sich die soziale Integration besser darstellt als vielfach angenommen. Insgesamt weisen Muslime bei verschiedenen Indikatoren niedrigere Integrationswerte auf als Angehörige anderer Religionen aus denselben Herkunftsländern.

Ein direkter Zusammenhang zwischen der Zugehörigkeit zum Islam und der Integration lässt sich dabei angesichts der großen Unterschiede zwischen den Muslimen aus verschiedenen Herkunftsländern nicht feststellen.<sup>32</sup> Die Unterschiede im Bildungsniveau zwischen den Religionen und Konfessionen hängen vor allem mit der historischen Gegebenheit der Anwerbung von Arbeitsmigranten aus der Türkei, dem ehemaligen Jugoslawien sowie Marokko und Tunesien zusammen. Diese Arbeitsmigranten und ihre Familienangehörigen stammten überwiegend aus bildungsfernen sozialen Schichten. Niedrige Schulbildung und Erwerbstätigenquoten sind hier besonders bei den Migrantinnen der ersten Zuwanderergeneration auffällig.

### *3.10 Bei der Schulbildung zeigen sich Herausforderungen der strukturellen Integration*

Für die Gruppe der türkischen Migranten wurde in verschiedenen Studien festgestellt, dass sie im Hinblick auf die strukturelle Integration Defizite aufweist.<sup>33</sup> Die Ergebnisse der Studie des Bundesamtes zeigen ergänzend, dass das Bildungsniveau der Migranten aus muslimischen Herkunftsländern insgesamt relativ niedrig ist. Hierbei zeigt sich, dass türkische Migranten nicht nur im Vergleich zu Migranten aus südeuropäischen Anwerbeländern und zu Aussiedlern, sondern

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<sup>32</sup> BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 220.

<sup>33</sup> Für detailliertere Darstellung siehe BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, s. 232.

auch im Vergleich zu Migranten aus anderen muslimischen Herkunftsländern beim Indikator Schulbildung relativ schlecht abschneiden. Dies erklärt sich vor allem durch extrem niedrige Werte bei türkischen Frauen der ersten Zuwanderergeneration.

Differenziert man nach erster und zweiter Zuwanderergeneration zeigt sich bei allen Herkunftsgruppen, dass die Angehörigen der zweiten Generation deutlich häufiger als ihre Elterngeneration das deutsche Schulsystem mit einem Schulabschluss verlassen. Dies gilt insbesondere für die weiblichen Muslime. Hier lässt sich ein Bildungsaufstieg erkennen. Trotz dieses generell feststellbaren Bildungsaufstiegs weist die relativ hohe Quote an Schulabgängern ohne Abschluss und der vergleichsweise niedrige Anteil an Abiturienten auf weiter bestehende Bildungsdefizite hin.

Aus der Türkei stammende Migrantinnen verlassen seltener als männliche Migranten aus der Türkei die Schule ohne Abschluss und sie erlangen häufig einen mittleren Bildungsabschluss. Damit kann belegt werden, dass beim Schulbesuch von Migranten in Deutschland verglichen mit den Schulabschlüssen der Zuwanderer in den Herkunftsländern in höherem Maße Geschlechteregalität erreicht wird.

### *3.11 Keine Abgrenzung bei den sozialen Alltagskontakten feststellbar*

Soziale Kontakte stellen eine Basis für den gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt dar, z.B. die Mitgliedschaft in Vereinen ist eine Ressource für die Integration in die Aufnahmegesellschaft. Mehr als die Hälfte der Muslime ist Mitglied in einem deutschen Verein, nur 4 Prozent sind ausschließlich Mitglied in einem herkunftslandbezogenen Verein, darunter auch in Deutschland gegründete Vereine. 18 Prozent sind sowohl in auf Deutschland als auch auf das Herkunftsland bezogenen Vereinen Mitglied.

Die Häufigkeit der sozialen Alltagskontakte der Befragten zu Personen deutscher Abstammung ist relativ hoch und Muslime aus allen

Herkunftsregionen zeigen eine hohe Bereitschaft zu häufigeren Kontakten mit Deutschen. Bei allen muslimischen Herkunftsgruppen ist der Anteil derjenigen, die keine Alltagskontakte zu Deutschen haben und auch keinen Kontaktwunsch äußern, nicht größer als 1 Prozent.

#### 4. Konsequenzen für die Integrationspolitik

Die Ergebnisse führen zu einer verbesserten Einschätzung der gesellschaftlichen Relevanz religiöser Fragestellungen.<sup>34</sup> So zeigt sich zum Beispiel, dass die in der Integrationsdebatte häufig erwähnten Themen, wie das Fernbleiben vom gemischtgeschlechtlichen Schwimmunterricht keine Massenphänomene sind, sondern eine Minderheit betreffen. Sie sollten daher nicht dramatisiert werden. Gleichwohl weisen die Zahlen darauf hin, dass Prozesse der Selbstausgrenzung stattfinden und in der Integrationsförderung berücksichtigt werden müssen.

Die strukturellen Integrationsdefizite müssen Anlass für verstärkte Integrationsbemühungen sein. Die Integration von Muslimen und anderen Migranten aus muslimischen Herkunftsländern darf sich dabei nicht nur auf die religiöse Zielgruppe beschränken, sondern muss weiterhin breit angelegt sein. Ein wichtiger Ansatzpunkt ist hierbei neben der Sprachförderung durch die bundesweiten Integrationskurse die Integration durch Bildung. Trotz eines generell im Generationenverlauf feststellbaren Bildungsaufstiegs weist die relativ hohe Quote an Schulabgängern ohne Abschluss und der vergleichsweise niedrige Anteil an Abiturienten auf weiter bestehende Bildungsdefizite hin. Hier müssen die bereits öffentlich intensiv diskutierten Ansätze zur Förderung der vorschulischen, schulischen und außerschulischen Bildung von Migranten konsequent umgesetzt werden.

Der unter Muslimen sehr weit verbreitete Wunsch nach Einführung islamischen Religionsunterrichts gemäß den bereits bestehenden

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<sup>34</sup> Ich beschränke mich hier auf die von der Studie hervorgehobenen Themen, die BUNDESAMT FÜR MIGRATION UND FLÜCHTLINGE, *Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland*, S. 340-348 angeführt werden.

Angeboten christlichen Religionsunterrichts entspricht der intensiven Beschäftigung der Deutschen Islam Konferenz mit diesem Thema. Die Zahlen sind insbesondere Appell an die Selbstorganisationen der Muslime, zugleich aber auch an Politik und Verwaltung, bei der Einführung eines dem Grundgesetz entsprechenden islamischen Religionsunterrichts an öffentlichen Schulen und damit verbunden auch bei der Etablierung islamischer Theologie und Religionspädagogik an deutschen Universitäten zügig Fortschritte zu erzielen.

Die obige Darstellung zeigt, welche gesellschaftlichen Veränderungsprozesse innerhalb kurzer Zeit in Deutschland angelaufen sind. Die kulturellen und religiösen Veränderungen in Deutschland wurden auch von kirchlicher Seite rechtzeitig erkannt und dem wurde versucht Rechnung zu tragen. Der im Zuge des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils eingeschlagene Dialogweg hat die Dialogprozesse auch in den nationalen Kirchen beeinflusst und vorangetrieben. Wie die katholische Kirche auf die oben beschriebenen Veränderungen reagiert hat, wird im Folgenden skizziert.

## **B. Antwort der katholischen Kirche**

### **1. Die grundsätzliche Haltung zum Dialog**

Die katholische Kirche hat während des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils (1962-1965) am 28. Oktober 1965 zwei Dokumente verabschiedet, in denen sie ihre Beziehung zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen – hier im Besonderen zu den Muslimen – auf eine neue Grundlage gestellt hat. Es handelt sich hierbei um die Texte der Dogmatischen Konstitution über die Kirche *Lumen Gentium* und der Erklärung über die Haltung der Kirche zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen *Nostra Aetate*. Die ersten Zeilen des letztgenannten lauten folgendermaßen: „In unserer Zeit, da sich das Menschengeschlecht von Tag zu Tag enger zusammenschließt und die Beziehungen unter den verschiedenen Völkern sich mehren, erwägt die Kirche mit umso größerer Aufmerk-

samkeit, in welchem Verhältnis sie zu den nichtchristlichen Religionen steht. Gemäß ihrer Aufgabe, Einheit und Liebe unter den Menschen und damit auch unter den Völkern zu fördern, faßt sie vor allem das ins Auge, was den Menschen gemeinsam ist und sie zur Gemeinschaft untereinander führt.“ Wenn man die geschichtlichen und wechselseitigen Beziehungsdimensionen von Muslimen und Christen Revue passieren lässt, wird die neue Sichtweise der katholischen Kirche auf den „Muslim“ deutlicher. Dabei geht es aber nicht nur um eine praktische Haltung der Katholiken gegenüber Muslimen, sondern hier werden auch Elemente einer neuen katholischen theologischen Sicht auf den Islam deutlich.<sup>35</sup> Hierfür ist der Textabschnitt Nr. 16 von *Lumen Gentium* von besonderer Relevanz, es heißt dort: „Der Heilswille [Gottes] umfasst aber auch die, welche den Schöpfer anerkennen, unter ihnen besonders die Muslim[e], die sich zum Glauben Abrahams bekennen und mit uns den einen Gott anbeten, den barmherzigen, der die Menschen am Jüngsten Tag richten wird.“ In der Vorstellung von den konzentrischen Kreisen stellt das Konzil unmissverständlich für die katholische Lehre fest, dass die Muslime mit den Christen den einen Gott anbeten, das entscheidende Wort im lateinischen Text ist *nobiscum* (mit uns) und weiter werden Gottes Barmherzigkeit und seine richterliche Funktion beim Jüngsten Gericht hervorgehoben. Somit zielen die vom Konzil gesetzten Impulse nicht nur auf eine friedliche Konvivenz von Christen und Muslimen, sondern der Dialogauftrag gehört zur Suche nach dem Heilswirken Gottes in dieser Welt. Gottes Geist, der weht wo er will, ist auch außerhalb der soziologisch gefassten Kirche tätig. Daher wird in *Nostra Aetate* festgestellt: „Die katholische Kirche lehnt nichts von alledem ab, was in diesen Religionen wahr und heilig ist“ (Nr. 2). Die Kirche identifiziert aber auch „diesen Strahl der Wahrheit“ mit jener Wahrheit, die allen Menschen leuchtet

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<sup>35</sup> TROLL, Ch. W. SJ, Einleitung: Katholisches Lehramt und Islam seit dem Konzil, in: CIBEDO e. V. (Hrsg.), *Die offiziellen Dokumente der katholischen Kirche zum Dialog mit dem Islam. Zusammengestellt von Timo Güzelmansur*, Regensburg 2009, s. 19-33, hier s. 19.

und sie unablässig verkündet, nämlich Jesus Christus. Hier handelt es sich in erster Linie nicht um eine Vereinnahmung anderer religiöser Traditionen, sondern es wird versucht, eine angemessene Antwort auf den religiösen Pluralismus zu liefern. Daher sollen die Katholiken „mit Klugheit und Liebe, durch Gespräch und Zusammenarbeit mit den Bekennern anderer Religionen sowie durch Zeugnis des christlichen Glaubens und Lebens jene geistlichen und sittlichen Güter und auch die sozio-kulturellen Werte, die sich bei ihnen finden, anerkennen, wahren und fördern“ (Nostra Aetate 2). Hier geht es nicht um eine Relativierung oder gar Gleichsetzung von Religionen und Kulturen, sondern die Christen werden aufgefordert und ermutigt, durch den Dialog mit anderen Religionen und religiösen Traditionen zu einer „gegenseitigen Überprüfung, der Verbesserung des Einen durch den Anderen, der geschwisterliche Austausch der jeweiligen Gaben“ (*Dialog und Mission*, zitiert nach: CIBEDO e. V, S. 286) zu treten, damit dadurch eine Gemeinschaft zu immer größerer Reife aus den zwischenpersönlichen Beziehungen erwächst. Es ist mit Nachdruck zu konstatieren, dass das Konzil alles Gute und Wahre, das in den anderen Religionen enthalten ist, als von Gott kommend zu akzeptieren ruft, ohne jedoch in Synkretismus zu verfallen. Bei allen ähnlichen, gemeinsamen und gar verwandten Vorstellungen im Christentum und Islam wird auch das entschieden Unterscheidende nicht verschweigen, sondern das christliche Bekenntnis zur Gottheit Jesu hervorgehoben: „Jesus, den sie [die Muslime] allerdings nicht als Gott anerkennen“ (Nostra Aetate 3).

Wie der Dialog zwischen den Mitgliedern verschiedener Religionen geführt werden soll, wird in dem Dekret über das Laienapostolat folgendermaßen umschrieben: „Um dieses Zeugnis Christi mit Frucht geben zu können, müssen sie [die Christen] diesen Menschen in Achtung und Liebe verbunden sein. Sie müssen sie als Glieder der Menschengruppe, in der sie leben, betrachten; durch die verschiedenen Beziehungen und Geschäfte des menschlichen Lebens müssen sie an den kulturellen und sozialen Angelegenheiten teilnehmen. Sie müssen auch mit ihren nationalen und religiösen Traditionen vertraut sein; mit

Freude und Ehrfurcht sollen sie die Saatkörner des Wortes aufspüren, die in ihnen verborgen sind. [...] Wie Christus selbst [...] so sollen auch seine Jünger, ganz von Christi Geist erfüllt, die Menschen, unter denen sie leben und mit denen sie umgehen, kennen; in aufrichtigem und geduldigem Zwiegespräch sollen sie lernen, was für Reichtümer der freigebige Gott unter den Völkern verteilt hat; zugleich aber sollen sie sich bemühen, diese Reichtümer durch das Licht des Evangeliums zu erhellen, zu befreien und unter die Herrschaft Gottes, des Erlösers, zu bringen“ (*Ad Gentes*, zitiert nach CIBEDO e.V., S. 51).

In der katholischen Kirche begann schon vor dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil vor allem im 20. Jahrhundert die sachliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem Islam. Die visionäre Pionierarbeit von katholischen Theologen und Islamwissenschaftlern wie Louis Massignon (1905-1980), Georg Anawati (1905-1994) und einigen anderen, fand in den Erklärungen des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils eine Bestätigung, und läutete eine neue Phase der Beziehungen zwischen Christen und Muslimen ein. Damit markierte die katholische Kirche ihren wohl nicht revidierbaren Standort und die Absicht, den Dialog mit allen Menschen guten Willens zu suchen und mit „Klugheit und Liebe“ (*Nostra Aetate* 2) zu führen. Aus dieser positiven Haltung heraus entwickelten sich in der nachkonziliaren Kirche zahlreiche Initiativen und Institutionen in katholischer Trägerschaft, die sich dem Dialog mit dem Islam widmen.

Die katholische Kirche in Deutschland setzt sich für den interreligiösen Dialog bzw. den Dialog mit den Muslimen in Deutschland ein und hat feste Gremien innerhalb der Bischofskonferenz und den einzelnen Diözesen geschaffen, die sich dieser Aufgabe widmen.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Neben den unten aufgezählten Akteuren, gibt es weitere zahlreiche katholische Einrichtungen, wie Stiftungen und Hilfswerke, die sich auch dem interreligiösen Dialog, aber speziell dem Dialog zwischen Christen und Muslimen, widmen. Siehe GÜZELMAN-SUR, T. Katholische Akteure, in VOLKER MEISSNER/MARTIN AFFOLDERBACH/HAMIDEH MOHAGHEGHI/ANDREAS RENZ (Hgg.), *Handbuch christlich-islamischer Dialog. Grundlagen – Themen – Praxis – Akteure*, Regensburg 2014, s. 355-372.

## 2. Unterkommission für den Interreligiösen Dialog (UKID)

Als erstes ist die *Unterkommission für den Interreligiösen Dialog* (UKID) der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz zu nennen, die der Hauptakteur für die Beziehungen zwischen Christen bzw. Katholiken und Muslimen auf nationaler und internationaler Ebene ist. So wurde sie 1998 im Rahmen der Kommission X für weltkirchliche Aufgaben ins Leben gerufen und ihre erste Sitzung fand im Jahre 1999 statt. Die UKID ist auch im *Ausschuss CCEE-KEK<sup>37</sup> für die Beziehungen zu den Muslimen in Europa* (CRME) vertreten. Die katholische Kirche in Deutschland misst dem interreligiösen Dialog und im Besonderen dem Dialog mit den Muslimen eine wachsende Bedeutung zu. Daher gehört es zu den Aufgaben der UKID die Dialogkompetenz der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und der katholischen Kirche in Deutschland als Ganzes zu stärken. Im Rahmen der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz befassen sich verschiedene Kommissionen und Dienststellen mit der Bearbeitung wichtiger Aspekte des interreligiösen Zusammenlebens (z. B. Kommission für Migrationsfragen, Kommission für Bildung und Wissenschaft). Die UKID gewährleistet, dass die Vorgänge und Arbeiten, die das Verhältnis von Christen und Muslimen tangieren, angemessen behandelt werden. Dazu gehört auch, dass in wichtigen Fragen Schritt für Schritt die erforderlichen Meinungsbildungsprozesse innerhalb der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz und innerhalb des deutschen Katholizismus angestoßen werden. Eine weitere Aufgabe besteht darin, die bestehenden Dialoginitiativen zwischen Christen und Muslimen zu fördern und neue Initiativen zu stärken und zu begleiten. Die Deutsche Bischofskonferenz veröffentlichte 1982 ein erstes Dokument mit dem Titel „Muslime in Deutschland“. Darin werden den kirchlichen Mitarbeitern in Form einer Arbeitshilfe wichtige Informationen für die pastorale Arbeit bereitgestellt. 1993 wurde diese Arbeitshilfe neu erstellt und unter dem Titel „Christen und Muslime in Deutschland“

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<sup>37</sup> Die Abkürzungen bedeuten: *Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae* (CCEE) und *Konferenz Europäischer Kirchen* (KEK).

herausgegeben. In der letzten Fassung von 2003 hat die Arbeitshilfe „Christen und Muslime in Deutschland“ mit ca. 275 Seiten deutlich an Umfang gewonnen und bietet Sachinformationen zu theologischen und gesellschaftlichen Themen sowie praktische Hinweise zu allen für den Dialog zwischen Christen und Muslimen relevanten Bereichen. Als in der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Öffentlichkeit über den Bau von Moscheen heftige Debatten ausbrachen, meldeten sich die deutschen Bischöfe 2008 mit einer Orientierungshilfe zum „Moscheebau in Deutschland“ zu Wort. Die Bischöfe bekräftigten darin die Lehre des II. Vatikanums zur Religionsfreiheit wie sie in *Dignitatis Humanae* formuliert wird, und betonen: „Unzweifelhaft gehört zu dieser Sicht der Religionsfreiheit auch das Recht der Muslime auf den Bau würdiger Moscheen“ (S. 9). In einer weiteren Arbeitshilfe aus dem Jahr 2008 werden „Leitlinien für das Gebet bei Treffen von Christen, Juden und Muslimen“ formuliert. Die UKID trägt innerhalb der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz dazu bei, dass die notwendigen Entscheidungen in Zusammenarbeit mit den Islamreferenten und Islambeauftragten vorbereitet und vorangetrieben werden. Schließlich gilt es aber auch zu betonen, dass die UKID nicht nur als Förderer, sondern auch selbst als Akteur im interreligiösen Dialog auftritt. Heute gehören der *Unterkommission für den Interreligiösen Dialog* unter der Leitung von Weihbischof Dr. Hans-Jochen Jaschke zwei weitere Weihbischöfe sowie vier Berater an.

### **3. Christlich-Islamische Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle e. V. (CIBEDO)**

Die *Christlich-Islamische Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle* (CIBEDO) wurde 1978 in Köln als Initiative der *Afrikamissionare Weiße Väter* gegründet und arbeitete bis 1997 im Auftrag der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz als eingetragener gemeinnütziger Verein für den christlich-islamischen Dialog. 1998 wurde die Fachstelle nach Frankfurt transferiert und ist heute auf dem Campus der Philosophisch-Theologischen Hochschule Sankt Georgen in Frankfurt am

Main beheimatet. In der Satzung werden die Aufgaben von CIBEDO wie folgt beschrieben: Der Verein hat die Aufgabe, den Dialog zwischen Christentum und Islam sowie das Zusammenleben von Christen und Muslimen zu fördern. Er nimmt diese Aufgabe insbesondere durch folgende Maßnahmen wahr:

Sammlung, Auswertung und Bereitstellung von Informationsmaterial über den Islam in Allgemeinen, insbesondere in Deutschland, sowie über das Zusammenleben von Christen und Muslimen;

Wissenschaftliche und pastorale Beratung sowie Erstellung von Gutachten;

Durchführung von Fachtagungen und Informationsveranstaltungen, auch in Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Trägern, zu islamwissenschaftlichen und theologischen Fragen im Verhältnis zwischen Christentum und Islam;

Veröffentlichung von Arbeitshilfen, Studien und Zeitschriften.

CIBEDO verfügt über eine umfangreiche Spezialbibliothek, in welcher neben einer wachsenden Zahl von Büchern zum Islam und zum christlich-islamischen Dialog auch eine große Anzahl von Texten und Medien, insbesondere offizielle Dokumente von katholischer Seite, zu diesen Themenbereichen dokumentiert und archiviert werden. Der Bestand umfasst heute über 9000 Bücher, ca. 300 Zeitschriften, von denen ca. 200 laufend ausgewertet werden, und ca. 11000 digital archivierte Medien. Die Dokumentation wird von Studierenden sowie Dozenten und den wissenschaftlichen Mitarbeitern der Einrichtung benutzt, die als Referenten und beratende Mitglieder in verschiedenen Arbeitsgruppen zum christlich-islamischen Dialog ständig auf aktuelles Datenmaterial zugreifen müssen. Die Bestände der Bibliothek sind im eigenen OPAC-System über die Homepage ([www.cibedo.de](http://www.cibedo.de)) jedem zugänglich. Zu den Aufgaben von CIBEDO gehört es auch, den Dialog zwischen Christen und Muslimen zu fördern und aktuelle Themen zu beleuchten. Dies geschieht beispielsweise durch Vorträge, die Teilnahme an Konferenzen oder die Mitarbeit in kirchlichen und interreligiösen Gremien. In Zusammenarbeit mit Hochschulen bietet

CIBEDO Studierenden oder Gasthörern an, die Thematik des Islam als Religions- und Lebensordnung kennenzulernen. Ein Beispiel ist das Studienprogramm „Islam und christlich-muslimische Begegnung“ an der Philosophisch-Theologischen Hochschule Sankt Georgen. Des Weiteren führt CIBEDO Fortbildungen für Pädagogen und Erzieher zu verschiedenen Themen, die das Zusammenleben von Christen und Muslimen betreffen, in Kindergarten, Schule oder Arbeitsplatz durch. Der steigende Anteil an Muslimen in der Gesellschaft beeinflusst das tägliche Miteinander und bedingt ein steigendes Interesse an wissenschaftlichen korrekten Informationen zum Islam und interreligiösem Dialog. Neben Praxishilfen, zum Beispiel Kirchenführern für Muslime, werden mit der einmal im Quartal erscheinenden Zeitschrift *CIBEDO-Beiträge* und der *CIBEDO-Schriftenreihe* in Buchform zwei wissenschaftliche Reihen publiziert. Als überdiözesan agierende Arbeitsstelle der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz führt CIBEDO den christlich-islamischen Dialog in enger Zusammenarbeit mit den Islamreferenten und Islambeauftragten der einzelnen Diözesen und vernetzt verschiedene in diesem Bereich tätigen Personen und Institutionen miteinander. Durch die jährliche Tagung „CIBEDO-Werkstatt: Theologie im Angesicht des Islam“, die in Kooperation mit der Phil.-Theol. Hochschule Sankt Georgen organisiert wird, werden katholische Theologen und Islamwissenschaftler zu einer die Reflexion über Fragen angeregt, die aus dem christlich-islamischen Gespräch für die katholische Theologie erwachsen, und zwar sowohl in Bezug auf die Traktate der systematischen Theologie und Exegese als auch in Bezug auf die Methodologie in der Begegnung mit dem Islam.

#### **4. Islamreferenten und Islambeauftragte der katholischen Diözesen in Deutschland**

In Deutschland gibt es 27 katholische (Erz)Diözesen, von denen etliche Abteilungen oder spezielle Referentenstellen für den interreligiösen bzw. christlich-islamischen Dialog eingerichtet haben. Daneben gibt es aber auch Diözesen, in denen keine speziellen Stellen für diesen

Bereich existieren, jedoch der Themenkomplex im Rahmen anderer Aufgaben mit abgedeckt wird. Generell kann man feststellen, dass in Regionen und Ballungszentren mit hohem Anteil an muslimischer Bevölkerung deutlich mehr Dialogstellen vorhanden sind, als in den ländlich geprägten Bistümern oder in den neuen Bundesländern. Als Beispiel für diözesane Dialogstrukturen kann das Erzbistum Köln angeführt werden: Das *Referat für Dialog und Verkündigung* im Erzbistum Köln hat sechs Referenten für Fragen des interreligiösen Dialogs. Diese hohe Zahl erklärt sich durch die Tatsache, dass Köln einen hohen Anteil muslimischer Bevölkerung aufweist und die größten islamischen Verbände ihren Hauptsitz dort haben. In diesem Zusammenhang muss betont werden, dass die christlich-muslimische Dialogarbeit der einzelnen (Erz)Bistümer durch die Islamreferenten und -beauftragten vorort initiiert, entwickelt, koordiniert und vorangetrieben wird. Sie sind die ersten Ansprechpartner für katholische Gemeinden, Priester und pastorale Mitarbeiter, aber auch für muslimische Gemeinden und Organisationen. Damit sind sie der treibende Motor für den Dialog und unterstützen diesen durch Fortbildungen, Seminare, haupt- und ehrenamtliche Mitarbeiter, besonders aber auch als Multiplikatoren der katholischen Sicht auf andere Religionen bzw. den Islam und die Muslime.

## Schlusswort

Das muslimische Leben in Deutschland ist sehr heterogen und vielschichtig. Auch wenn manchmal die konfessionellen aber auch ethnischen Differenzen unter den Muslimen das Gesprächsklima mit den anderen Religionsgemeinschaften und dem Staat erschweren, gilt es am Willen für den Dialog festzuhalten. Denn wie Papst Benedikt XVI. in Köln formuliert hat: *„Gemeinsam müssen wir – Christen und Muslime – uns den zahlreichen Herausforderungen stellen, die unsere Zeit uns aufgibt. Für Apathie und Untätigkeit ist kein Platz, und noch weniger für Parteilichkeit und Sektentum. Wir dürfen der Angst und dem Pessimismus*

*keinen Raum geben. Wir müssen vielmehr Optimismus und Hoffnung pflegen. Der interreligiöse und interkulturelle Dialog zwischen Christen und Muslimen darf nicht auf eine Saisonentscheidung reduziert werden. Tatsächlich ist er eine vitale Notwendigkeit, von der zum großen Teil unsere Zukunft abhängt.*<sup>38</sup> Das energische Eintreten der katholischen Kirche für die Begegnung zwischen den Religionen und insbesondere zwischen Christen und Muslimen wird sowohl in den zahlreichen amtlichen Dokumenten und verbindlichen Aussagen der Amtskirche als auch in den geschaffenen systemimmanenten Strukturen sichtbar. Somit hat die Kirche in Lehre und Organisation einen erheblichen Schritt nach vorne gemacht, der eine Vorbildfunktion auch für andere Religionsgemeinschaften bildet, dem es nachzuzuhmen gilt.

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<sup>38</sup> BENEDIKT XVI., Ansprache bei der Begegnung mit Vertretern muslimischer Gemeinden in Deutschland, Köln, 20. August 2005, in CIBEDO e. V. (Hrsg.), *Die offiziellen Dokumente der katholischen Kirche zum Dialog mit dem Islam*, s. 519-522, hier s. 521.

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## **Abstrakt**

Die Geschichte des Islam und der Muslime als Begegnung mit Deutschen geht weit in die Geschichte zurück. Aber von einer wirklichen Präsenz des islamischen Lebens in Deutschland kann man erst mit der Ankunft der sogenannten "Gastarbeiter" in den 1960er Jahren und danach sprechen. Denn erst durch den Anwerbestopp von Arbeitskräften 1973 haben sich die Gastarbeiter entschieden, auch ihre Familien nach Deutschland zu holen. Durch den Nachzug der Familienmitglieder wurde auch der Islam, beispielsweise durch äußere Symbole wie das Kopftuch der Frauen, in der Öffentlichkeit sichtbar. Auch die Frage nach einer angemessenen religiösen Erziehung für die Kinder stellte sich erst nach dem Nachzug der Kinder. Dadurch wurde langsam mit der Gründung von religiösen Zentren begonnen, die sowohl die kulturelle Verbundenheit mit dem Ursprungsland, aber auch religiöses Wissen vermittelten. Mein Referat wird nach einem kurzen geschichtlichen Rückblick vor allem die gegenwärtige Präsenz der Muslime in Deutschland in den Blick nehmen und die wichtigsten Eckdaten erläutern.

Ein weiterer Schritt ist, zu sehen wie die katholische Kirche diese Veränderung in Deutschland aufnimmt. Die katholische Kirche hat nicht zuletzt durch das II. Vatikanische Konzil und im Besonderen mit der Erklärung *Nostra Aetate* den Dialog mit den Muslimen bekräftigt und die einzelnen Lokalkirchen aufgefordert, den Dialog zu intensivieren. Die Gründung der Unterkommission Interreligiöser Dialog der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, der Christlich-Islamischen Begegnungs- und Dokumentationsstelle (CIBEDO) und die Berufung von einzelnen Referenten in den Diözesen als Islam- bzw. Dialogbeauftragten zeugen vom Willen zum Dialog.

# Islam in England: a survey of communities, issues and engagement with Christians<sup>1</sup>

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Damian Howard SJ

## A. The Muslim Communities of England and their Contextual Situation

### 1. The British Muslim Communities

Out of the total UK population, 2.7 million people (4.8%) described themselves as Muslim, just over half of whom were born outside the UK. This compares with a nominal Christian population of 59.3%, a religious identity said to be in rapid decline. Not too far behind Muslims come Hindus (1.5%), Sikhs (0.8%) and Jews (0.5%).<sup>2</sup>

London's Muslim population, at just over 1 million, is by far the largest of any British city; Muslims represent 12.4% of the population of Greater London as against 48% who describe themselves as Christians. In the borough of Tower Hamlets they comprise some 35%, the vast majority being Bangladeshi, mostly from the Sylhet region. After the capital, the largest Muslim population resides in Birmingham where Muslims amount to 21.9% (234,400). The overwhelming majority of Birmingham's Muslims are of Pakistani origin, mainly from the Mirpur district of Azad Kashmir and the surrounding areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the material in this paper is taken from my "Kontextänderungen der christlich-muslimischen Beziehungen im heutige Grossbritannien", published in HÜNSELER, P. & DI NOIA, S., (eds) *Kirche und Islam im Dialog. Europäische Länder im Vergleich*, Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2010, pp. 126-72. The author is indebted to Dr Chris Hewer and Professor Michael Barnes SJ for valuable criticism, information and advice in the writing of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> All information on the 2011 Census are available at the Office of National Statistics website, [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html?utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter) [consulted 2 November 2014]

Following the Asian immigration of the 1950s onwards, more recent arrivals to British shores have been asylum seekers: Somalis, Bosnians, Kurds, Iraqis, Iranians and Afghans. The Muslim population is rising fast. While some increase is a matter of sustained immigration, more important is a high birth rate and a much higher proportion of young adults compared to the rest of the population, notably Christians.

Britain's Muslims are richly diverse in origins, more so than in other European countries. The 2011 census figures for England and Wales reveal that 68% are of Asian origin, mainly Pakistani, 10% black, 7.7% white (2.9% are British White, 4.8% "other white") and 6.6% Arab.

The majority British Muslim community comes from the three major successor states of British paramountcy in India, the so-called *Raj* which came to an end in August 1947: India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. There are significant differences between the three national identities and consequently between the sensibilities of their Muslims who come from them. Indian Muslims come from a secular country in which Muslims are a minority and not infrequently, they share in their compatriots' dislike of Pakistan. Indian Muslims are therefore more at ease with the British secular settlement than their Pakistani co-religionists for whom the relationship between religion and politics is a rather more difficult topic. The Muslims of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin also come from rural areas (respectively Mirpur in Kashmir and Sylhet) and are not always spontaneously sympathetic to the urban life they experience in their adopted home. Although Pakistan and Bangladesh were bitter enemies in the war of Bangladeshi independence, this tension is not a strong dynamic in relations between the two communities in the UK.

More important than national origins is the diversity of movements and groupings, most of which can be traced back to Indian Muslim responses to the colonial predicament in general and to the failure of the 1857 "Indian Mutiny" (British terminology) or "First War of Independence" (Indian terminology) in particular. The widespread Deobandi movement stems from a group of Hanafi rite scholars determined to perpetuate a traditional and rigorous Muslim identity

shielded from the encroachment of European rule. The Deobandi ethos perpetuates an anti-occidental agenda; the Taliban movement can trace its origins back to a particularly harsh version. The Bareilvi movement was founded as Hanafi competition for the Deobandis, promoting an Islam based on more popular devotions. It tends towards political quietism although it can be highly defensive when it comes to vilification of the Prophet Muhammad. It represents the majority of sub-continental Muslim in the UK. The presence of Islamism in Britain has also been significant thanks to the activity of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, created in pre-independence India with the avowed intent of establishing an Islamic state in the country. In spite of its ideological intent, the movement founded by Maulana Maududi often features among the influences on those British Muslims and Muslim institutions who are now somewhat pro-active in their positive engagement with British institutions and public life.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of British Muslims have British citizenship and their families are now in the third or even fourth generation. Of the UK's approximately 1700 mosques, some 50 are purpose built; this architectural contribution has changed (and usually enhanced) the landscape of many cities and proclaims that British Islam is here to stay. The communities are estimated to operate in excess of 170 community-funded (i.e. independent) schools. In 2010 there were some 11 voluntary aided (i.e. state-funded) Muslim schools.<sup>4</sup> The greater part of children's Islamic education takes place after school in local madrasahs. The communities also have the capacity to train imams; about ten centres in the country, some with as many as 450 students, train both male and

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<sup>3</sup> For fuller treatment of these groups and others, see Innes Bowen, *Medina in Birmingham, Najaf in Brent: Inside British Islam*, London: C. Hurst & Co., 2014; Sophie Gilliat-Ray, *Muslims in Britain: an introduction*, Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, London: Continuum, 2008 and *Islamic Britain. Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims*, London & New York: I.B Tauris, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Figures from the UK Government website, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/maintained-faith-schools> consulted 2 November 2014.

female students and six of these are linked to public universities which validate their qualifications.

A particularly problematic feature of the lives of many British Muslims is their concentration in small areas in various inner cities. When the first generation of immigrants was arriving in the 1960s, the State was emptying war-damaged Victorian residential areas in the major conurbations and re-settling their poor inhabitants in new developments outside the city. The new Asian and Afro-Caribbean populations were sucked into the vacuum with the result that today there are still dense, mono-cultural pockets in inner city areas. As women brought their families, these centres started requiring mosques, madrasahs and shops to meet cultural and religious needs. Today in some areas, a whole road will be inhabited by families from a single village in Pakistan or Bangladesh, all inter-related by marriage. Such populations resist efforts to disperse them.

In the person of Baroness Warsi, the British Cabinet formed in 2010 had its first ever Muslim member. Muslims sit in both Houses of Parliament. If they were represented in proportion to their presence in the population there would be 32 Muslim members of the House of Commons (MPs); in fact there are only eight. These public figures give a visibility to Muslims in the political establishment.

## 2. The English Context

### *a) Political*

Unlike their French neighbours, the English were robustly indifferent to the presence of Muslims as a distinct group among the country's many Asian inhabitants, at least until the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001. Such indifference has its advantages; many British Muslims in the 1980s and 90s were quite content to lead their lives free of the intrusion of the public eye. Disinterest even survived the Rushdie Affair, that definitive moment in the formation of modern British perceptions of Islam and the beginning of a steep learning curve

for many of those Muslims who today find themselves in positions of leadership and influence.

The events first of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and then of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005, in which latter case a small group of British-born and -bred Muslims caused carnage in terrorist explosions in London, brought that era of studied disinterest to an end. In one shape or another, Islam dominated the British media for the first decade of the new century, even up until the advent of the financial crisis of 2008. The subsequent period of sustained focus has led to a much greater British awareness of Islam.

Three factors conspire to make Tony Blair's decade in power (1997–2007) a period in which Muslim-Christian relations became tense and complicated. The first has to do with the visibility of Blair's own religious affiliation. During his time in office he was known to be a practicing Anglican whose faith inspired his politics. It was also strongly rumoured that he had every intention of embracing Catholicism on stepping down from office; this has now transpired. Yet he refused to discuss this in public. Faith in the arena of public life, became a neuralgic point, never addressed overtly, but a constant irritant in the background. The second was his relationship with George W. Bush. The foreign policy options which Blair pursued with regard to the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, in the face of overwhelming opposition from the military and the country at large, placed an unbearable burden on many Muslims genuinely trying to integrate into mainstream British society. The third was his "modernising agenda", a stream of initiatives which left no area of public life untouched: constitutional reform, welfare reform, the establishment of same-sex civil unions, permissive laws on embryo research, even town-planning regulations which led to vastly increased alcohol consumption in city centres. Blair's premiership, in spite of his personal piety, was one of the greatest secularising periods of recent British history.

Blair was supportive of the expansion of "faith schools". These state-funded schools run by faith groups must, like all state schools, teach the full national curriculum, but retain some control over religious education, school worship and ethos. Administered for the most part

by the Church of England and the Catholic Church, they are perceived by many parents as having a better ethos than secular schools and so are in great demand, though critics warn of the divisive consequences of segregated education.

Under the Labour government, “faith communities” were wooed as potential partners in delivering the State’s social services to ethnic and other often marginalised minorities. And in its attempts to promote social cohesion, government even found itself sponsoring interreligious dialogue, having discovered the patchwork of groups and networks which post-War British civil society has fostered. A consultation paper, “Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side”<sup>5</sup> used a thoroughly secular, bureaucratizing approach to faith, the over-arching aim being to overcome social fragmentation by facilitating encounter between people of different faith groups. A particular concern was expressed to involve women and young people.

The established Church discussed at length the advisability of taking part in shaping the State’s agenda. The attraction of government funding was strong and the Church of England had the capacity to take a lead. Yet the Government often side-lined it in its eagerness to forge better relations with Muslims and other ethnic groups.<sup>6</sup> On the one hand, the Government sought to co-opt religion into the bureaucratic superstructure for the management of an intrinsically delicate social fabric. On the other, there was much in its counter-terrorism strategy which caricatured and even demonised religion, especially Islam, a tendency which has continued under the Cameron coalition government (2010-15). Barely hidden beneath the contradictions of

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<sup>5</sup> DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, “Face-to-Face and Side-by-Side: A Framework for inter faith dialogue and social action”. *Consultation document*, December 2007. Available on-line at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/613367.pdf> [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>6</sup> Cf. DAVIS, F. – PAULHUS, E. – BRADSTOCK, A., *Moral, But No Compass – Government, Church, and the Future of Welfare*, Centre for the Study of Faith in Society, Cambridge, Matthew James Publishing Ltd., 2008.

Labour's approach was a radical split on the Left over the question of Islam's compatibility with "Enlightenment values". The British Left has historically been a coalition of Christian and secular socialists. The attack on the Twin Towers was the occasion, if not the deep cause, of its breakdown, with a gap opening up between a secular Left which sees faith as divisive and reactionary, and a faith-friendly constituency, comprising secular liberals, the hard Left, progressive Christians and a variety of Muslims, an unlikely alliance who first found themselves "side by side" in anti-war marches.

The Coalition Government led by David Cameron, in power since 2010, has put less store by the cultivation of links with religious groups, particular when accusations of collusion with extremism have been made against some groups. This greater distance is unlikely to prove to have been a good thing in the long term; Muslims have complained that they have not had access to the highest levels of government and disengagement can feed mistrust and suspicion. There has been some recovery in the leading role played by the Church of England, notably through a project to increase social cohesion known as "Near Neighbours". Administered by the Church through its network of parishes, this has promoted and funded projects aimed at facilitating the meeting of different groups in diverse areas. Equally, at the start of its term, the Coalition spoke of new social vision, given the label "The Big Society". Faith groups were persuaded to share in the construction of an expanded voluntary provision of social welfare and some evidence emerged of a generous desire to meet the need in the face of cuts to public spending in the wake of the financial crisis. It must be said that the initiative never made much progress as Government attention quickly waned, many commentators suggesting that it had not been sincere in the first place.

Overall, one can confidently say that the situation of Muslims in the political context has matured over the last twenty years. The generation of Muslim activists who publicly burned books at the end of the 1980s are some of whom were radicalised in the 1990s are now more at ease in dealing with the sometimes brusque treatment religion receives in secular public life. Some former radicals have even set up de-radi-

calisation organisations. And the fact that there is now a widespread and overwhelming consensus in the public sphere that the invasion of Iraq was a mistake has meant that Muslims do not feel as profoundly isolated as they once did.

### *b) Religious*

Religion is still an important part of public life for many British citizens, whatever might be said about the unremitting privatisation of faith. The BBC, for instance, is legally obliged to provide religious programming. The daily *Thought for the Day* slot on BBC Radio 4 creates a space in which individuals from religious communities, including Muslims, offer reflections on current affairs from a religious perspective. City councils provide festive lighting during various religious celebrations. Throughout Advent Anglican vicars are deluged with demands for “carol services” for avowedly agnostic institutions. Secular schools put on nativity plays, and Christian prayers are read daily before each sitting of Parliament. Every local authority is now obliged by law to have a Faith Forum with which it consults on policy matters. This surprisingly religious culture is also reflected in education: the Education Act of 1944 made Religious Education the only obligatory subject for schools and still today the State regards it as essential to help young people to learn *about* and *from* the great religious traditions of the world.

A significant achievement of the Church of England has been the creation of a tolerant and open disposition towards non-Christian religions. Theologically, many Anglicans tend in practice towards a normative pluralism (the belief that all religions are equally valid), though this is far from being universal. There is also a more exclusive strand of opinion, typically though not exclusively conservative evangelical in colour, which can ally itself to political nostalgia for a lost Protestant English identity.

The English Catholic Church necessarily and by temperament operates somewhat idiosyncratically. Until recently, Catholicism was

perceived as a foreign intrusion, associated with (Irish Republican) terrorism and mocked for its obscurantism. In 2005, marking the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Gunpowder Plot” (a Catholic attempt to blow up Parliament and murder King James I) some Catholics drew parallels between their historical experience and the predicament faced by contemporary Muslims. The English (and Welsh) Catholic Church, largely comprising immigrants and their descendants, tends to see itself as one denomination among others. It does not come naturally to Catholic pastors to think in terms of a universal ministry, that space being occupied by another Church. Although active in interreligious work, with impressive outreach work performed by many Catholics, especially women religious, the Catholic Church would not be seen as the natural gathering point it is elsewhere. Nor does a Catholic theology of religions sit easily either with the liberal pluralism or conservative exclusivism of much Anglican thinking. The Bishops still have a task to accomplish in articulating the Church’s theological vision, not least to Catholics themselves. Without this, many of the faithful fall back into one of the two ideologies most readily to hand: pluralism or exclusivism.

A final factor which makes the British religious landscape distinctive is the pluralism of British society: it is not just Christian and Muslim but also Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Jewish. Interreligious bodies have to be multilateral. Suspicion that Christians (or the State) might be seeking a special relationship with Muslims can be counter-productive.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Issues of Particular Concern to Muslims

#### *a) Social deprivation*

It must be stressed at the outset that poverty in the UK is not a particularly Muslim issue, nor indeed exclusively the preserve of eth-

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<sup>7</sup> A controversy in 2007 over the killing by Government vets of Shambo, a bull in a Hindu Temple in Camarthenshire, Wales, highlights Hindu suspicion that their sensibilities are not taken as seriously as “other groups”.

nic minorities or of non-Christian faiths.<sup>8</sup> Yet, because of the British Government's commitment to fighting discrimination, the State has to address the way in which ethnicity and faith impact on social exclusion and recently this has led to controversy. When Trevor Philips, the head of the then Commission for Racial Equality, predicted in 2005 that Britain would become ghettoised along American lines<sup>9</sup> there was widespread consternation. Yet the reality is that parts of the inner cities are homogenous, mono-cultural areas where communities are isolated and turned in on themselves.

Some Muslim communities can be particularly prone to this syndrome. Many become entrapped in a cycle of unemployment, poor education, dilapidated housing and disadvantaged families. 33% of Pakistani and 42% of Bangladeshi households in Birmingham were classified as over-crowded.<sup>10</sup> The increased economic prosperity of the first decade of this century, by and large, passed Birmingham's Muslims by. A total of 69% of all British Muslim children are living "in poverty".<sup>11</sup>

Ghettoisation also affects educational attainment. Muslim Londoners aged 16-24 have below average educational success, with 17% of them having no qualifications at all, compared to 13% in the population in general. When one compares the educational attainment of Indians (mostly Hindus, Sikhs and Chinese) to Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, the results are truly striking; non-Muslim Asians come out as the best performers in schools, leaving Muslims way behind.<sup>12</sup> 36% of British Muslim children leave school with no qualifications at all and unemployment among Muslims aged 16-24 is 20%. Evidence indicates on-going discrimination against them in the job market but the Government's anti-poverty strategies are usually articulated in terms

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<sup>8</sup> Some of the worst deprivation is experienced by the white working classes.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/4257992.stm> [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>10</sup> See ABBAS, T., "Muslims in Birmingham" [MIB] by, *Background Paper for COM-PAS (Centre on Migration Policy and Society)*, University of Oxford, 2005, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> MIB, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> MIB, p. 13.

of ethnicity, not faith. In addition to all this, Muslims manifest low levels of trust and faith in the police system, an attitude which typically leads to a mistrust of Government initiatives and a resolve to be self-sufficient.

### *b) Representation to the State and the Nation*

The Union of Muslim Organisations was founded in 1970 to co-ordinate Muslim organisations as a whole. It was followed by the Council of Mosques of the UK in the 1980s, the Council of Imams and Mosques and eventually the Muslim Parliament in 1992. For one reason or another none of these organisations proved satisfactory. For a time, the highest profile representative body for Muslims in Britain was the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), inaugurated in 1997 and gathering over 380 grass-roots community organisations, mosques, professional bodies and cultural associations. The Blair Government relied heavily on the organisation as an interlocutor in its efforts to discuss its security and social cohesion policies with Muslims. When this approach seemed not to yield results, criticism began to emerge from within the communities that the MCB was undemocratic and unduly influenced by Islamist ideology.

The MCB was mired in two controversies indicative of the difficult environment in which any such body must work. In 2001, on the introduction of the new Holocaust Memorial Day the MCB refused to take part because in singling out Nazi persecution of the Jews the event said nothing of other genocides and massacres which Muslims felt deserved attention.<sup>13</sup> The MCB also objected when two other genocides *were* eventually included (of Armenians and of homosexuals in Nazi Germany), refusing to acknowledge either. This position drew trenchant criticism from many quarters and it was not until 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2007 that it changed its policy. The second controversy followed

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<sup>13</sup> The plight of Muslims in Palestine and Kashmir forms the background to their complaint, though the MCB cited the example of Rwanda to counter this.

remarks made on BBC Radio in 2006 by the then Secretary General, Sir Iqbal Sacranie, to the effect that homosexuality was not acceptable to Islam and that same-sex marriage would be harmful. Following criticism from gay rights activists and a protracted “dialogue”, the MCB finally gave way, even voicing its approval of the new Equality Act in 2007. When “equal marriage” was legalised by Parliament in 2013, Muslims were largely silent on the matter.

When Government dissatisfaction with the MCB became critical, the State sought another partner in dialogue and this they found in the Sufi Muslim Council. As the title suggests, it represents traditional, devotional forms of Islam and, explicitly seeks to provide a platform for Muslim groups who oppose Salafi, Wahhabi and Islamist tendencies. The organisation presents itself as apolitical and representative of many thousands of ordinary traditional Muslims who are alienated from the more “confrontational” approach of the MCB.<sup>14</sup> Behind this rhetoric is an ever more common analysis of contemporary Islam which presents a dichotomy between classical Sufi traditionalism and the modern Islamic “aberration” variously styled extremism, fundamentalism or Islamism.

The representation of Muslims in the UK also involves other types of leadership. Four examples can be given. Dr Zaki Badawi, an Egyptian scholar who founded Muslim College in London and who, until his death in 2006, exercised considerable authority among British Muslims, had a high standing among non-Muslims and was a scholarly and wise source of legal judgments. Salma Yaqoob, born in Bradford in 1971, was a co-founder (with radical socialist MP, George Galloway) of the Respect Party, whose aim is to forge an alliance between politically active Muslims and British socialism. She came close to winning a seat in the House of Commons in the 2005 General Election. Her collaboration with non-Muslims and the fact that she is a woman have

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://sufimuslimcouncil.org.uk/> [accessed 26 January 2015]

given her an important leadership role. Lord Nazir Ahmed, a Mirpuri Muslim, started working for the Muslim community in Rotherham; now he is a national campaigner on behalf of Britain's Muslims to aid relations with other sectors of the population. Finally, recognition should be made of the host of Muslim experts, such as Tim Winter (also known as Shaykh Abdal Hakim Murad) and the Swiss Oxford-based intellectual, Tariq Ramadan, both of whom were invited by the Government to advise it on social cohesion and counter-terrorism measures.

### *c) Integration*

It is well known that post-war Britain opted for a multicultural approach to social integration. The contrast with the citizen-focused French model is unavoidable and comparisons, sometimes exaggerated, have regularly been drawn between the two. In Britain, ethnic groups are seen as units which can contribute to the good of integration, understood here not as assimilation to an existing cultural *modus operandi* but as a way of guaranteeing equal access to the rights afforded by the British State. Such a "communitarian" approach necessarily adopts as its principle tool the on-going battle against racial (and, subsequently, other forms of) discrimination. This is why anti-discrimination legislation and the adoption of methods for measuring actual (in)equality have been systematically applied for the greater part of the last half century.

Riots in 2001 gave rise to a public perception that this community-based model was not working and the Government's response was dominated by a new agenda aimed at achieving "social cohesion". Trevor Philips, then head of the new statutory body responsible for fighting discrimination, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, appealed to ideas of a single British identity or of core British values to which everyone must adhere, notions which, not long ago, would have seemed the preserve of the Right. David Cameron, on becoming Prime Minister also expressed profound misgivings about

multiculturalism.<sup>15</sup> Further riots throughout the country in August 2011 gave further credence to that position.

During the two decades immediately prior to this recent shift, ethnic dress had been a minor issue. The Metropolitan Police in London have allowed Sikh officers to use a special turban instead of the standard helmet since the 1970s. In 1982, the Sikhs were forced to use racial discrimination laws to sue a school which refused to allow pupils to wear a turban, arguing that, like the Jews, they were a racial, not just religious, group. Lord Denning, the judge, was not convinced, observing that discrimination against religious groups was perfectly lawful. A subsequent appeal to the House of Lords overturned this judgment and changed the interpretation of “race” so as to include Sikhs.

This decision did not help Muslims. The veiling of Muslim women had no comparable history in Britain until after 2001. Since 2002, the Metropolitan Police have made the concession of allowing female Muslim officers to wear a headscarf. A string of low-level controversies about individuals asserting a “right” to wear the veil has followed. The best known incident in this saga took place in 2006 when the then Leader of the House of Commons, Jack Straw, former Home and Foreign Secretary, revealed that not only did he find it awkward talking to a Muslim client wearing the *niqab* (face veil) but that he would often ask her to remove it, adding that many were relieved when requested to do so. This provoked much discussion about the meaning of veiling in general and the difficulties it presented for *non-Muslims*.

The question of whether to deal with discrimination against Muslims on the basis of religion rather than solely on race was raised in 1999. The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 made it illegal to discriminate in employment on the grounds of religion or belief. The Equality Act 2006 broadened the field to take

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<sup>15</sup> At a speech given in Munich, Germany, in February 2011. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/cameron-my-war-on-multiculturalism-2205074.html> [accessed 16 November 2014].

in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, the use and disposal of premises, and the exercise of public functions. Finally, the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 introduces a new (outside of Northern Ireland) offence into UK law to extend the offences on incitement to racial hatred contained in the 1986 Public Order Act:

“A person who uses threatening words or behaviour, or displays any written material which is threatening, is guilty of an offence if he intends thereby to stir up religious hatred.”

The first draft of this legislation made no mention of the idea of intention to stir up hatred; some pointed out that on this basis, both the Bible and the Qur'an would have infringed the terms of the Act. Some fear that the addition of the condition of intent will make it all but impossible to convict offenders of inciting hatred against Muslims.

The last few years have seen the rise of explicitly anti-Muslim far-right groups, notably the English Defence League. Whereas in the past, English nationalism, which has never achieved more than a few percentage points of the popular vote, was inclusive in its racism, the EDL now welcomes Jews, blacks and gays but vilifies Muslims. The highly publicised departure of its founder, Tommy Robinson in 2013, thanks to various encounters with Muslim groups, notably the Quilliam Foundation, dealt something of a blow to the organisation.

#### *d) Schooling*

In England, a substantial proportion of state-funded schools are run by faith groups. There are about 6,850 (out of a total of 21,000) such schools. Overwhelmingly they are run by the Church of England (4,700) or the Catholic Church (2,100), though there are some 40 Jewish schools and a handful of Muslim, Sikh and Greek Orthodox institutions. The role of religion extends well beyond the domain of Religious Education, affecting common worship, festivals, retreats, relations with the faith community in the area and guaranteeing a strong ethos. For such a school to succeed, much hangs, too, on the piety of

the staff who are expected to live according to a code of ethics reflecting the faith of the institution.

The issue of provision for Muslim pupils is often passed over in silence. Currently most Muslim pupils will attend either a secular or Christian/Jewish<sup>16</sup> State school. Muslim parents often harbour a suspicion of secularism and prefer the education provided in a religious environment. I know of Catholic schools with only a handful of Catholic pupils among a student body that is over 90% Muslim. This situation raises difficult questions for both communities. The larger question, still unresolved, is how to make just provision for Muslims to be educated appropriately in their own tradition.

### *e) Foreign policy*

Since the London bombings of July 2005, it has been a politically neuralgic point as to whether “foreign policy”, a euphemism for Tony Blair’s unpopular decision to take Britain to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, was a contributing factor to the alienation which apparently led four British-born Muslims to kill themselves and 52 commuters and injure some 700 others. Tony Blair professed a dogmatic opposition to entertaining any such diagnosis. As far as he was concerned, the problem was the ideological perversion of “true Islam” which had come to be known as “Islamism” and measures were to be adopted to ensure that this cancer was expurgated.

In more recent times, it has been the Government’s failure to join forces with Syrian opposition against the regime of Bashar al-Assad which has drawn albeit muted Muslim criticism. The involvement of several hundred British Muslims in the various armed factions in the Middle East has raised serious questions again about the nature of radicalisation and the remedies to be applied.

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/the-jewish-school-where-half-the-pupils-are-muslim-434481.html> [accessed 26 January 2015]

### *f) Dealing with Radicalisation*

For obvious reasons, British Muslims have had to face up to the challenge of radicalisation within their communities. It has been a tortuous and painful process but has borne fruit in a number of important initiatives.

#### *i) The Radical Middle Way*

One Government response to the crisis of the alienation among Muslim youth in Britain was to support a “road show” of classical Islamic scholars touring the country with a message condemning terrorism and jihadi organisations. The Radical Middle Way<sup>17</sup> [RMW] brings together figures such as the American Sheikh Hamza Yusuf Hanson, the English Tim Winter of Cambridge University<sup>18</sup> and Habib Ali al-Jifri from Abu Dhabi. The group is funded by the British Foreign Office.

The idea of the British Government espousing its own (albeit quietist) version of Islam has led to a certain amount of cynicism, both from Muslims suspicious of State interference and from non-Muslims surprised to find the State subscribing to any particular theological line. The group is committed to four core principles: a rejection of all forms of terrorism; a commitment to the revival of mercy, public service and a concern for social justice as emblematic Islamic duties; a commitment to the emergence of a distinct British Muslim identity that encourages the active involvement of British Muslims in social, public and economic life of Britain; and inspiring young people to become active agents for peace and positive change in their local communities.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See its website at <http://www.radicalmiddleway.co.uk> [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>18</sup> Also known as Shaykh Abdul Hakim Murad.

<sup>19</sup> See [http://www.radicalmiddleway.co.uk/about\\_us.php](http://www.radicalmiddleway.co.uk/about_us.php)

*ii) The Quilliam Foundation*

In 2007 a revealing book was published. Written by a British-born Muslim of Bangladeshi parents, *The Islamist*<sup>20</sup> told the story of how a young, Asian Londoner became involved in and then left the radical Islamist group *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, disillusioned with its political ideology but determined to maintain a strong Muslim identity. The book was widely read, lauded by an array of political pundits and publicly acclaimed by Prime Minister Gordon Brown.<sup>21</sup> This was the first time that Muslim voices had been heard openly discussing the attraction of militant Islamism along with its concomitant hazards, religious, moral and psychological. The author, Ed Husain, embraced the distinction, mentioned above, between classical Islam and *Islamism*, and Left wing commentators, Muslims and non-Muslims, criticised this, arguing that “Islamism” was a highly variegated category and that moderate Islamists should not be smeared with the charge of extremism. A series of high-level members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* have since left the organisation, speaking openly against its ideology and forming a new “think-tank” taking its name from a 19<sup>th</sup> Century English convert to Islam, Shaykh William Henry Abdullah Quilliam (1856-1932).<sup>22</sup> The Quilliam Foundation offers a platform to these Muslims and provides literature and other resources which expose and critique Islamist ideology.

*iii) Islamic Youth Work*

A huge amount of serious professional youth work takes place up and down the country, helping young Muslims to acquire a mature faith and sense of identity. Some foundations work in tandem with universities to provide the best level of academic training for youth workers. This practical and quite traditional approach is more straightforward

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<sup>20</sup> HUSAIN, E., *The Islamist. Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left*, London, Penguin Books 2007.

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/jan/06/uk.terrorism1> [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>22</sup> See <http://www.quilliamfoundation.org/> [accessed 26 January 2015]

than ambitious attempts to transform the national scene. It works on a well-trying model, using strategies like help-lines which have a proven record of success in secular society and are easily adapted for Islamic use.

### *g) Mosque Construction*

The construction of mosques has not been a particularly difficult issue for Muslims in the UK, barring certain pockets of resistance. Like any other building project, plans for mosques have to adhere to local planning regulations and receive permission from the local authority. Mosques nowadays are of three sorts: converted shops or other establishments; purpose-built mosques whose function is limited to prayer and education; and mosques with large-scale social welfare programmes attached to them. The issue of the call to prayer sometimes arises and is treated as an issue of public noise regulation in which certain criteria are used to discern whether permission should be given in any given case.

One notable exception, however, has provoked controversy. Tablighi Jamaat, a quietist organisation which works to revitalise the faith among Muslims whose practice is on the wane, has been intending to build an Islamic complex close to the 2012 Olympic stadium site. The complex would include a mosque with a capacity for 12,000 people, easily the largest place of worship anywhere in the UK, to provide a venue for its periodic mass training sessions. A quarter of a million signatures were collected on a petition against the West Ham mosque with local opposition led by a member of Newham council affiliated to the “Christian Peoples Alliance” which alleges that Tablighi Jamaat have a separatist and supremacist ideology. The future of the project is not clear.

### *h) Training of Chaplains*

Britain has a long tradition of faith groups providing chaplains for universities, prisons, hospitals and the military. The concept of chaplaincy is comparatively new to Islam but the need of Muslims for prayer and washing facilities *etc.* has led the Markfield Institute of

Higher Education near Leicester to embark on the training of “Muslim chaplains”. Cardiff University has undertaken research into exactly what “Muslim chaplaincy” might involve. One can see emerging here a new place for young, articulate Muslims to encounter the complex reality of contemporary Britain. Interest and participation are particularly high among Deobandi Muslims. Assuming that funding can be found for the employment of trained Muslim chaplains and that career paths can be developed which prove attractive to talented individuals, this promises to be a healthy development for Muslim self-esteem and for the many institutions involved.

## **B. Engagement and Exchanges with Christians**

The most striking feature of the way in which English Catholics engage with their Muslim neighbours is that it is, for the most part, ecumenical, English Christianity being highly fragmented. The established Church of England takes a leading role in this scenario. The Church of England works out of an ecclesiology quite different from a Catholic approach. The territory of England is divided up into parishes and everyone within the territory of the parish, regardless of their faith affiliation or lack thereof, is deemed a parishioner and therefore can call on the pastoral support of the Vicar or Rector. The Church of England has, therefore, to engage, in a way that the Catholic Church does not, with the question of what it means to have a “Muslim parishioner”. In this section we shall examine examples of theological engagement on the part of Christians. There is much material at which we could look. We choose to focus on instances of positive engagement, even it must be admitted that there are examples of polemical or oppositional discourse.<sup>23</sup> We then look at examples of more practical relationships between Christians and Muslims.

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<sup>23</sup> An example would be the work of Anglican cleric and former Muslim, Rev. Patrick Sookhdeo and the Barnabas Fund. Sookhdeo campaigns on behalf of persecuted Christians but consistently portrays Muslims as necessarily violent and intolerant.

## 1. Examples of Theological Engagement

### *a) Meeting God in Friend and Stranger: the teaching document of the English and Welsh Bishops*

Within the Church, Archbishop Kevin McDonald, Archbishop Emeritus of Southwark, deals with interreligious matters on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. He has in the past presided over a national commission of specialists and other advisors, though this has not functioned for several years. In its stead, the Bishops' Conference has employed a lay-woman to co-ordinate its interreligious efforts from a London office. Dioceses make their own arrangements, usually appointing an interreligious co-ordinator and sometimes a diocesan commission.

The Catholic Bishops took the bold step in 2010 of publishing a teaching document in interreligious dialogue, such was the importance of this aspect of the Church's mission in contemporary society.<sup>24</sup> *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger* was long in preparation and offers in accessible language guidance to the faithful in the significance of other religions and practical advice on how best to approach it. It does not deal with Islam in any detail but signals the importance of interreligious encounter.

### *b) Former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams*

Dr Rowan Williams, even before he became Archbishop of Canterbury (2003-12), was regarded as one of the most distinguished of contemporary Christian theologians, always looking for ways in which to apply his intellectual acumen to current concerns. He belongs to the Anglican Church's Catholic wing and his theological style appeals to many in the Catholic Church. As Primate of All England, he went

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<sup>24</sup> The document can be downloaded from <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/Catholic-News-Media-Library/Archive-Media-Assets/Files/CBCEW-Publications/Meeting-God-in-Friend-and-Stranger> [accessed 16 November 2014].

out of his way to engage publicly with Muslims and Islam on a range of issues. His interventions represent the single most important theological engagements with Islam in England in the last fifteen years.

*i) Shari'ah law controversy*

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008, the Archbishop gave the foundation lecture, "Civil and Religious Law in England", in the Temple Festival, a series of high-level talks delivered to the assembled elite of the legal profession. A complex theme was addressed with erudition and subtlety, at a time when the place of religious conscience in public life was hotly contested. His thesis was that some provision should be made for Muslims to opt for voluntary arbitration in *shari'ah* courts in certain well-defined circumstances. Within hours, his complex lecture was being aggressively lampooned and a frightening public show of Islamophobia ensued, some alleging that he had advocated the adoption of *shari'ah* into British law.

Fundamental to his case is his understanding of the complexity of the kind of State that modern Britain is, and which, he is persuaded, Islamic jurisprudence is able to acknowledge:

"There is a recognition that *our social identities are not constituted by one exclusive set of relations or mode of belonging* – even if one of those sets is regarded as relating to the most fundamental and non-negotiable level of reality, as established by a 'covenant' between the divine and the human (as in Jewish and Christian thinking; once again, we are not talking about an exclusively Muslim problem). The danger arises not only when there is an assumption on the religious side that membership of the community (belonging to the *umma* or the Church or whatever) is the only significant category, so that participation in other kinds of socio-political arrangement is a kind of betrayal. It also occurs when secular government assumes a monopoly in terms of defining public and political identity."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Civil and Religious Law in England," the foundation lecture in the Temple Festival series, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Text available on-line at <http://rowanwilliams.arch->

This is not special pleading for Muslims but the raising of a broader question scarcely addressed in a secular polity. What are the deep consequences for believers of living in a pluralist, secular democracy? What is the unarticulated condition of their adherence to the law? And so, why should not voluntary arbitration be an option for Muslims, assuming a certain minimum public accountability for *shari'ah* courts? And why should they not be accommodated in certain defined aspects of personal (not criminal or civil) law, such as inheritance?

Williams, it has to be said, made no concessions in his delivery to those in his audience unused to highly technical vocabulary; the result was that few journalists understood the questions he was asking, let alone his positive proposal. Muslims were, by and large, grateful for his sympathy, though some were embarrassed to have such a sensitive proposal addressed quite so publicly, especially given that none were calling for such legal provision.

*ii) The al-Azhar Address on the Trinity*

On the symbolic date of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2004, Williams in al-Azhar, Cairo, publicly took up the doctrine of the Trinity to explain to Islamic scholars there that the Alexandrian Fathers of the Church had already shared what would become Muslim pre-occupations about the uniqueness of God and had already dealt with them in their Trinitarian theology:

“they said that the name ‘God’ is not the name of a person like a human person, a limited being with a father and mother and a place that they inhabit within the world. ‘God’ is the name of a kind of life – eternal and self-sufficient life, always active, needing nothing. And that life is lived eternally in three ways which are made known to us in the history of God’s revelation to the Hebrew people and in the life of Jesus. There is a source of life, an expression of life and a sharing of life. In human language we say, ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit’, but we do not

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[bishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1137/archbishops-lecture-civil-and-religious-law-in-england-a-religious-perspective](http://bishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1137/archbishops-lecture-civil-and-religious-law-in-england-a-religious-perspective) [accessed 26 January 2015]

mean one God with two beings alongside him, or three gods of limited power. Just as we say, 'Here is my hand, and these are the actions my one hand performs', but it is not different from the actions of my five fingers, so with God: this is God, the One, the Living and Self-subsistent, but what God does is not different from the life which is eternally at the same time a source and an expression and a sharing of life."<sup>26</sup>

But Williams does not want to be understood as espousing an easy irenicism. If he wants to make it clear to his Muslim interlocutors that Christian trinitarianism is not tritheism, he still recognises that nor is it tantamount to Islamic monotheism. He clarifies later in his speech: "There is, as you will have seen, a great difference between what I as a Christian must say and what the Muslim will say; but we agree absolutely that God has no need of any other being, and that God is not a mixture or a society of different beings."<sup>27</sup>

The German Jesuit and Islamicist, Felix Körner, has written critically about this address. His principal theological objection to Williams' attempt to find common ethical ground which Muslims and Christians can occupy is that he seriously distorts the Christian message by expressing it in terms too close to an Islamic style of thought.<sup>28</sup> Körner wants to ask *who* it is that *lives* the life which Williams analyses as sourced, expressed and shared. He also pinpoints a question which Williams, for the time being, leaves open: are there stories *other* than that of Jesus Christ in which God's life makes itself known?

Körner is clearly working from a theological perspective quite different from Williams'. By talking of God in conceptual terms rather than drawing on the revealed figure of Christ, it is true that Williams

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<sup>26</sup> WILLIAMS, R. "Address at al-Azhar al-Sharif, Cairo," 11<sup>th</sup> September 2004. Text available on-line at <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1299/archbishops-address-at-al-azhar-al-sharif-cairo> [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> KÖRNER, F., *Kirche im Angesicht des Islam: Theologie des interreligiösen Zeugnisses*, Stuttgart, W. Kohlhammer Verlag 2008, pp. 273-88. See also Michael Igrave's paper, "Trinitarian Theology at al-Azhar: Reflections on a Lecture by Archbishop Rowan Williams," in *Mission*, vol. XI (2004), p. 313-328.

is offering a presentation of Christianity which comes closer to an Islamic method and, perhaps, fundamental doctrine of God. It is not surprising that Körner finds Williams' talk of a "source, expression and sharing of life" lacking in the historical drama of Christian *Heilsgeschichte*. But Williams' chosen approach is hardly a radical departure from Christian tradition itself. The key theological debate sketched here centres on the urgent question of which theological garb Christians should adopt in communicating the core of the Christian message to Muslims. Körner's thesis sets out to answer this question; he opts for a clear policy of *witness* rather than *dialogue*, drawing on Pannenberg's historically-rooted framework as an apt schema. Williams, in contrast, seeks to meet the Muslim "other" on whatever common ground can be established and there to articulate as best he can the Christian "difference". Körner's fundamental difficulty is that such a presentation of the Gospel can only leave a Muslim wondering why the Christian is so resistant to converting to Islam. The answer to this question must hang on the content of the Christian "difference" which Williams has not emphasised in this particular text.

iii) *The A Common Word Address*

In a later intervention, "A Common Word and Future Christian-Muslim Engagement," Williams offers a rather different emphasis. Here he is reacting to the well-known letter sent by 138 Muslim scholars to the leaders of world Christianity in 2007, *A Common Word*.<sup>29</sup> Gone is the supposition that Christians and Muslims can easily understand each other and the attempt to delineate a clear common ground. Indeed, Williams goes out of his way to say that he does not accept *A Common Word* if it is proposing love of God and of neighbour as a some kind of lowest common denominator between the two faiths, "the 'neutral' basis on which other doctrines are subsequently built". Instead, he says that the two religions can recognise each other as *con-*

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<sup>29</sup> See <http://www.acommonword.com/> [accessed 16 November 2014].

*vergent*, a key term for Williams. But *difference* triumphs in his thinking this time and his concentration is now on a logical consequence of our agreeing that God is “person”:

“if we speak of a God who is active, generative of loving relationship between human beings and worthy of loving reverence himself, we are committing ourselves to a language about God as personal to the extent that he takes initiatives, engages freely with us and so on. But if we know God in and through the initiatives he takes – and not, for example, simply through our contemplation of the structures of the universe – we are bound to associate him with historical events, and, of course, with the texts that communicate those events. [...] The different histories we tell when we identify the origins of our faiths inevitably create different theologies.”<sup>30</sup>

Williams has gone beyond the idea that one might see in Islam and Christianity a comparable doctrine of God and is highlighting instead the problems of mutual intelligibility. But does this reliance on *narrative* rather than concept not make such a task impossible? Williams sees the difficulty:

“How exactly can we have ‘dialogue’ between stories? We *tell* them, we cannot exactly *argue* them. Yet, since we know that the forms of human life and human holiness that come from our two allegiances are not completely alien, it is clear that those stories cannot be read or heard or understood as if they belonged in different universes. Each party needs therefore to find a way of making sense of the other.”

Part of Körner’s complaint has been partially addressed: “there is no constructive way in which dialogue can bypass history.” But one question which Körner saw as being left open seems to have closed somewhat: Islam *is* another experience of the God of history, albeit expressed in a very different narrative, one which stresses “trial and tri-

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<sup>30</sup> WILLIAMS, R., “A Common Word and Future Christian-Muslim Engagement,” opening address, in *Emmanuel College, Cambridge, of a conference he had convened entitled “A Common Word and Future Christian-Muslim Engagement”*, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2008. Text available on-line at <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1040/a-common-word-and-future-christian-muslim-engagement> [accessed 26 January 2015]

umph, a rejection followed by a sharp struggle and ultimate historical victory.” The ground for this pluralism is that each religion recognises in the other “lives that reflect the impact of God” and its end is, just as at al-Azhar, in common work for a justice which we construe convergently. Williams would, one imagines nevertheless, studiously avoid any easy talk of pluralism here precisely because the ground to which he is appealing, a matter of picking up on the hints of another’s holiness, is necessarily so fragile.

*iv) Reflections on Faith Communities in a Civil Society*

In September 2007, Williams addressed a conference of the Christian Muslim Forum (more of which below). He looked to Mohandas K. Gandhi, a Hindu, for his principle inspiration, struck by another “convergence” that took place in 1906 in South Africa, which saw Muslim and Hindu Indians united around non-violent resistance in the name of God to British power. Williams sees two relevant points here. First of all, pacific, non-violent engagement is paradigmatic of the way a faith community should relate to State power, because it speaks of a metaphysical truth which grounds all faith experience:

“the religious witness is at its most clearly distinctive in society when it most plainly declares itself answerable to an order quite beyond the balances and negotiations of social conflict and its containments; and when it thus renounces the claim to have a place among others in the social complex.”<sup>31</sup>

The Archbishop reiterates his conviction about the *rhetorical* power of non-violence:

“it is when we are free from the *passion* to be taken seriously, to be protected or indeed to be obeyed that we are most likely to be heard. The convincing witness to faith is one for whom safety and success are

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<sup>31</sup> WILLIAMS, R., “Faith Communities in a Civil Society – Christian Perspectives,” 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007. Text available on-line at <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1151/faith-communities-in-a-civil-society-christian-perspectives> [accessed 26 January 2015]

immaterial, and one for whom therefore the exercise of violent force against another of different conviction is ruled out.”

Williams wants to make the case that non-violence helps people of faith to be more *persuasive* to those of none. He realises that some will see this as uniquely Christian, even inimical to an Islamic perspective:

“Muslims are often puzzled by the Christian insistence on separation between the religious and the political, and it might well be thought that the vision outlined here is so antithetical to the Islamic frame of reference that there is no possible convergence.”

Hence his second thesis, more audacious, is that Islam, too, can and does aspire to non-coercive engagement with the political sphere. Williams gives three reasons: i) “Islam, like Christianity, refuses to make faith either subservient to the social order or simply an aspect among others of social life;” ii) “Islam itself recognizes the reality of potential conflict between political power and faithful obedience to revealed law [...] and the legitimacy of passive resistance to unjust authority is acknowledged;” iii) “the Qur’anic dictum that there is no compulsion in religion is the foundation for any Muslim account of the imperative of non-violence.”

Obviously it is for Muslims to evaluate this representation of their tradition. Williams, true to his own thesis, can only try to persuade. One wonders if Körner would find such discourse a convincing instance of “witness” applied to the central question (in the UK) of how faith relates to politics. Williams’ ground is now Christian theology, but he is adamant that Muslims can recognise this convergent insight as present in their own way of proceeding:

“They [Christianity and Islam] cannot be committed to violent struggle to prevail at all costs, because that would suggest a lack of faith in the God who has called them; they cannot be committed to a policy of coercion and oppression because that would again seek to put the power of the human believer or the religious institution in the sovereign place that only God’s reality can occupy.”

Williams is consistent in his quest to establish the nature of the common ground on which Muslims and Christians can meet, become

mutually intelligible and co-operate in their work for justice. What is equally important to note is that his thinking is decisively framed by the demands of current political questions; our efforts to explain the unique British religio-political context will, we trust, have made some sense of this.

*v) Building Bridges Seminar*

One more contribution of the former Archbishop was his sponsoring a series of “Building Bridges” Seminars. Lasting three days each time, the seminars still bring together some thirty international scholars from both traditions to discuss in depth some topic of shared interest.<sup>32</sup> These meetings have involved Catholic as well as Anglican scholars of international reputation. Exchange programmes take place offering Anglican ordinands the opportunity of spending time in Islamic universities, such as al-Azhar in Cairo.

*c) Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue*

Of more specifically Catholic interest has been a series of meetings between Catholic and Shi'a figures at Ampleforth Abbey in collaboration with the Jesuit-run Heythrop College, London. Three books have resulted from these events: *Catholics and Shi'a in Dialogue: Studies in Theology and Spirituality* (2004), *A Catholic-Shi'a Engagement: Faith and Reason in Theory and Practice* (2007) and *A Catholic-Shi'a Dialogue: Ethics in Today's Society* (2008). Heythrop College was able to employ a Shi'a scholar from Qom in Iran for a time on its staff as a result of its involvement.

The approach to the first conference reveals some interesting specificities to this Catholic-Shi'a initiative. The conference dealt with a wide range of issues: Mary and Jesus in both traditions, prayer and spiritual-

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<sup>32</sup> The seminars continue with Williams and are now organised by Georgetown University. See <http://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/the-building-bridges-seminar> [accessed 16 November 2014].

ity, the place of Abraham, globalisation and work, family life and peace. The concentration on spirituality, on the place of *dhikr* and monastic prayer in Christianity, is significant. Although the conference ended up discussing social and ethical issues, it is telling that it sought first to undergird that discussion with a thorough spiritual exchange. The quest for commonality is clear, but the loci in which it is sought are quite different from those of the usual Christian-Sunni discussion. Here, a privileged role is accorded, for example, to the mediation of Mary and Fatima and to the importance of intercession and redemptive suffering.

There seems to be a consensus among the Catholic group about the desirability of a religious identity which adopts a middle path between the opposite extremes of quietism and sectarian extremism. Perhaps it is significant that British Catholics, a minority, should find dialogue with the most important Muslim minority more conducive to their own situation than that with Sunnism. The approach finds a sympathetic response in a paper by Saied Reza Ameli<sup>33</sup> who argues for his own Muslim vision of a religious universalism capable of withstanding the threat of atheism and secularism. He sees Christians and Muslims as being able, under the conditions of globalisation, to accord one another recognition in their differences, whilst maintaining a strong sense of the universality of the essence of religious belief. Both sides, thus, make gestures towards accommodating the difference of the other by inclusion within their own paradigm. This way of proceeding, it is worth noting, is convergent with Williams' approach at the *A Common Word* conference.

#### *d) Scriptural Reasoning*

A growing practice found in parts of the US and UK is “scriptural reasoning” (SR).<sup>34</sup> One of its founders, Peter Ochs and a group of North American Jewish scholars wanted to find a way of reading

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<sup>33</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 321 – 353.

<sup>34</sup> See <http://www.scripturalreasoning.org.uk> [accessed 26 January 2015]

their scriptures which drew on both modern philosophy *and* Talmudic tradition. This meant being attentive to contemporary issues, “while actively seeking deeper levels of meaning that might be disclosed in scriptural texts.”<sup>35</sup> Christian theologians joined the venture and in 1996 the Society of Scriptural Reasoning was founded, with Muslim scholars joining as well. Although there is a broad ambition to expand membership, for now SR is an Abrahamic affair.

SR aims to promote understanding of the different methods and procedures used by each tradition to appropriate the word. The stress is on difference rather than on arriving at a contrived consensus and topics addressed can be as disparate as slavery, tradition, law, prayer, land, creation and covenant. Part of the ethic of the practice is its avowed commitment to egalitarianism: discrimination is prohibited between members for reason of “non-academic versus academic standing, lay versus clerical status, social-educational background or other personal characteristics.” Nevertheless, the code of ethics also acknowledges that “authority in scriptural reasoning lies at all times primarily with the religious laws, churches and religious communities of the participant faiths alone.”

SR works best as a co-hosted event; sessions typically do not take place in any one place of worship but in a neutral meeting-space like the tent at St Ethelburga’s in London (see below). SR relies on the assumption that there *is* such a thing as scriptural, as opposed to non-religious or secular, reasoning, and at this level it resonates with some strands of Anglican theology which deconstruct the secular. Bailey points out:

“A primary concern of SR, therefore, is practical: to create space in which the “deep reasonings” of a community can be made more public than they are at present. “Deep reasonings,” notes Adams<sup>36</sup>, “are not just the grammar or vocabulary of a tradition, but the way their use

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<sup>35</sup> Bailey, J. W. “New Models for Religion in Public: Inter-Faith Friendship and the Politics of Scriptural Reasoning”. Text available online at <http://www.interfaith.cam.ac.uk/resources/scripturalreasoningresources/newmodels> [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Adams, a lecturer at the University of Edinburgh (Scotland).

gets handed down from generation to generation.” And while deep reasonings of the three Abrahamic traditions are hardly a secret (most mosques, synagogues and churches willingly admit guests, and most religion scholars publish their work in journals), Adams notes that “the quality of public debate between members of different traditions is dangerously low.”<sup>37</sup>

## 2. Examples of Practical Encounter

### *a) The Inter Faith Network*

The UK has a long history of formal and informal dialogue promoted through local groups. Founded in 1987, the Inter Faith Network<sup>38</sup> is an umbrella organisation through which the many interfaith groups and faith communities of the UK can relate to one another. Membership includes Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian communities, national and local inter faith bodies, and academic institutions and educational bodies concerned with interfaith issues. It has produced an impressive array of publications and reports on the state of interfaith relations in the UK and has become an interface between Government and the faith communities. Its directory of local groups includes some 250 active organisations gathering faith communities at grass roots level. Although exclusively bilateral Muslim-Christian relations are not directly fostered here, a very large part of the interaction that takes place between the two communities is located in these groups.

### *b) Christian-Muslim Forum*

In 1997 the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, reflected that for the good of the nation, Christians and Muslim needed

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<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> See <http://www.interfaith.org.uk> [accessed 26 January 2015]

to find a way of meeting in a structured and sustained way. A process of consultation was then initiated which resulted in the publishing of a report in July 2004.<sup>39</sup> This paper advocated the establishment of a body, a “Forum of Muslims and Christians” which could deliver a vision of harmonious relations between the two communities. Part of this requires, the document suggests, a theological agenda, though not necessarily to be pursued within the forum itself:

“Christianity and Islam both seek to witness to God’s purposes of justice and peace for the world and the humanity which he has made as this is disclosed to us in our respective scriptures and traditions, and through the continuing tasks of interpretation which we both face. Underpinning and accompanying all the practical work in Christian-Muslim relations with which the Forum is concerned there needs to be a continuing theological exploration together of these core elements in both our faiths which inform our involvement. Such an exploration would take account of both the resonances and the dissonances in our understanding of how divine guidance is given. *This foundational theological work could find a particular practical expression in the building of bridges between the various training institutions in which our clergy and imams receive their formation.*”<sup>40</sup>

The report suggests that many of those involved in the consultation exercises were wary of creating another “talking shop” and wanted the new body “to create foci for practical co-operation, and to pioneer ground-breaking initiatives.”<sup>41</sup> The vision of the report involves several emphases: the fostering of good networks of personal relationships, opportunities for exploration of each other’s faith, and the creation of effective channels of communication. The ambit of the organisation rests firmly in the domain of community cohesion and any ventures

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<sup>39</sup> See [http://www.christianmuslimforum.com/downloads/35E\\_04-06-18\\_Archbishops\\_Initiative\\_Report.pdf](http://www.christianmuslimforum.com/downloads/35E_04-06-18_Archbishops_Initiative_Report.pdf) [accessed 26 January 2015]

<sup>40</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 28. Emphasis added.

<sup>41</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 25.

into a more theological dialogue are to be seen as being at the service of this, *pace* the report quoted above.

The Christian Muslim Forum was launched in January 2006 and has since made strides in delivering a variety of different practical initiatives. It has identified six areas of special concern and experts on these topics are part of the organisation structure: Community and Public Affairs, Youth, Education, Media, Family and International Affairs. In recent months it has put on an event to bring non-specialist Muslims and Christians together to study and compare styles of preaching. Inevitably, this involved a discussion of how each tradition understands its scripture. Another meeting focussed on issues in “spiritual leadership”.

### *c) Citizens’ Organisations*

A significant development in the political life of London and, to a lesser extent, other English cities in the last nineteen years has been the establishment of broad-based citizens’ organisations based on the ideas of American radical activist Saul Alinsky. Groups like TELCO (East London Communities Organisation) bring together community groups, religious and secular alike, to campaign on local issues and engage actively with local power bases. In London it is fair to say that the organisation’s two most active groupings are Catholics and Muslims. The movement, which has its critics as well as its fervent supporters, provides a space in the city in which Christians, Muslims and others can collaborate on projects to transform society, working out their shared interests and goals without having to focus on issues of religious belief and difference.

### *d) St Philip’s Centre, Leicester*

St. Philip’s Centre in Leicester, a Midland city with a very significant multi-faith population has two objectives:

“to deliver training to Christians, lay and ordained, to enable them to live confidently in a multi-faith society and engage, within their

various contexts, in dialogue and mission; and to deliver training and consultancy to public and private sector organisations, and to those of other faiths, to enable them to develop faith awareness and to understand the role of faiths in society.”<sup>42</sup>

It offers training all the way to a Master’s degree programme to Christians seeking to reflect on the challenge for discipleship of living in a multi-faith society. It works in partnership with the Islamic Foundation, channelling Christian and Muslims experience to train ministers in specialist work in multi-faith areas.

### *e) Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme (CIP)*

The Cambridge Inter-faith Programme played a key role in the evolution of the *A Common Word* letter which has had an impact globally and at the launch of which two Cambridge figures, Dr Aref Ali Nayed and Professor David F. Ford were present. The CIP’s stated aim is to offer world-class of teaching and research across all three monotheistic faiths, to bring fresh perspectives and new understanding to the study of these religions, and to reach out via public education to influence understanding of the three traditions and their interrelations.

Concomitant with this ambitious project is a desire for a fundamental critique of the hegemonic ambitions of the “secular”. The paper notes that the academy is a propitious place in which to work through the implications of the huge tectonic shifts currently taking place in the relationship of State and civil society so as, in the long term, to help forge a polity respectful of its religious adherents. To serve as a ground for its bold theoretical ambitions, this academy-led approach will depend to a great extent, one must assume, on a robust account of what unites the Abrahamic religions. That several of those involved in the CIP are practitioners of SR is notable in this context. The contrast with the more tentative approach of Rowan Williams should not be ignored.

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<sup>42</sup> See <http://www.stphilipscentre.co.uk> [accessed 26 January 2015]

Funded by the Coexist Foundation, the CIP plans to establish Abraham House, a centre which will be able to connect Cambridge's high powered academic research to the world of public community action and education with training to be given both in publications and in seminars and talks.

*f) Heythrop College, University of London*

Heythrop College, the specialist theology and philosophy school of the University of London, runs a Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue. It holds regular seminars and conferences on a variety of issues. A recent conference focussed on "A Common Word" and included interventions from Tim Winter and Tariq Ramadan.

Heythrop has recently established a ground-breaking undergraduate programme in Abrahamic Religions and has employed Muslim and Jewish staff to teach the course. Heythrop also benefits from the work of leading Jesuit theologian, Professor Michael Barnes. The author of *Theology and the Dialogue of Religions*, a major contribution to the theology of dialogue and an exploration of themes of welcome and hospitality, he combines teaching in an academic context with daily witness of the reality of a complex multi-faith milieu. Mention should be made of his work (with others) in the increasingly important area of intermarriage, an issue for believers of all the major religious traditions. A Muslim/Christian Marriage Support Group meets regularly, runs a website<sup>43</sup> and has established a support network making this a useful contribution to a sensitive field. Heythrop held a conference on this topic in November 2014.

*g) Dr Chris Hewer's Understanding Islam*

Much adult education takes place. A fine example is that of Dr. Chris Hewer who has an impressive track record of working to

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<sup>43</sup> <https://mcmarrriage.wordpress.com/> [accessed 26 January 2015]

educate clergy and laity about Islam and Christian-Muslim relations through lecturing and giving courses. A former adviser to the Anglican Bishop of Birmingham on interfaith matters, Hewer has over many years gives ten week courses on “understanding the basics of Islam” and has offered a variety of other courses as a follow up for those who want to go further. His is another example of an innovative style of work in the area; Hewer is rooted in local life but feeds back insights and experience into “higher level” reflection. His book, *Understanding Islam*, is also an extremely useful teaching resource.

### **Conclusion: looking to the future**

Many faithful Muslims have made a discrete but vital contribution to the spiritual life of the nation. Simply by talking about their faith in a prayerful, unembarrassed way, they succeed where the Churches often fail in helping lapsed or nominal Christians re-discover the freshness of their own faith. I often listen to Christians recounting how friendship with Muslims had enabled them to take up once again the practice of fasting after they had lapsed. This is undoubtedly a great grace, even a lifeline for the Churches.

The Catholic Church in the UK faces challenges in developing truly healthy relations with Muslims and people of other faiths, as all the above makes clear. The most important single change would involve the Church finding the confidence to see itself as a crucial player in the promotion of the common good. There are no obvious grounds for optimism, however. Interreligious dialogue still strikes many fervent Catholics as a threat to the integrity of the faith. Seminarians are taught almost nothing about Islam during their training. To my knowledge there is only one Catholic diocesan priest in England with doctoral work in this area.

On the other hand, post-ordination training is becoming more and more important a feature of clergy life, at least in some dioceses; again, this is an opportunity to help clergy, and through them the parishes, to

grow in their familiarity of Islam. Lay-people also need encouragement to allow their faith to shed light on relationships many of them already have with Muslims. It would be helpful to offer theological resources to the lay-faithful which go beyond the catechism's teaching on other religions, fostering local theological engagement; handbooks and other written materials should not be impossible to produce and could perhaps be translated across cultures and languages within our continent. European links and co-operation would be most useful resource.

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## Abstract

The Muslim communities of England are described in terms of their demographics and ethnicity before detailed attention is given to various political and religious contextual issues which constitute their experience of English society. The paper goes on to examine examples of positive theological and practical engagement between the two religious groups.

# Muslims in Czechia : A Small, Widely Heterogeneous Minority

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Luboš Kropáček

The Czechs like to call their country a heart of Europe. Viewed from the specific angle of the spread of Islam in our continent, it can be also likened to a white spot left nearly untouched by streams approaching it in history from three sides. Tatars from the East passed through Moravia on a plundering raid in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, still before being themselves Islamized, but, in contrast to the neighbouring Poland, did not reach it later again. Ottoman Turks at the height of power occupied Southern parts of Slovakia and twice besieged Vienna, but as regards Moravia historians recorded only occasional limited incursions. Later, the Czechs came into wider contacts with Muslims when the Austrian army occupied Bosnia (1878) and declared its annexation (1908). By promulgation of the historic Act 159 from July 1912, known as *Islamgesetz*<sup>1</sup>, Muslim followers of the Hanafi school of Law were given official recognition as a religious society. This applied for the Austrian part of the monarchy, thus also for Czech lands i.e. Bohemia and Moravia. Expectations of larger migrations and social intercourse with the new Bosniak Muslim co-citizens were, however, stopped by the outbreak of the Great War. Thereafter, in the interwar period, Czechoslovak authorities faced a problem how to handle the double legislative heritage of the Austrian *Islamgesetz* and the Hungarian Law on Islam from 1916, which, in its turn, had not specified the

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<sup>1</sup> The Act was an event of high importance in the history of adoption of Islam in Europe. For the full text in German and comments see e.g. *Islam en Europe. Législation relatives aux Communautés Musulmanes*, COMECE, Bruxelles 2001, p. 72-99.

recognition of the Hanafi school. This and other details of the history of the Czech Islam were duly researched and made known.<sup>2</sup>

After the 2nd World War, in particular since the communist coup and take-over in 1948, Czechoslovakia was separated from Western Europe by the “iron curtain”. Its effects were reflected in a different history of migration. During forty years of the communist régime, Czechoslovakia did not employ workforce from Muslim countries. Some short-lived attempts in this direction had been made in early 1970s with Egypt, but Sadat’s political turn towards the West thwarted them at the start. The labour needed for manual works in the extensively developed economy were recruited outside of the Muslim world, mainly from Vietnam, Mongolia and Cuba. Nevertheless, the ideology of the régime designated Asian and African peoples as constitutive parts of the “revolutionary anti-imperialist forces” and, in this logic, as potential cold war allies. Accordingly, ties of cooperation at various levels were established with a number of Muslim, in particular Arab countries. This policy included admission of growing numbers of Arab students to Czechoslovak schools and universities. Many were getting grants and scholarships on the basis of inter-governmental agreements, others enjoyed invitations and grants from official paracomunist versions of NGOs, such as trade unions, youth and women organizations. Nobody asked questions regarding the religious background of incoming students. The communists took it for granted that the religion was an obsolete issue doomed to disappear, whereas the future, including that of their new disciples, would go to the pro-Soviet worldwide triumph.

So it happened that by the time of the democratic change in Czechoslovakia in 1989 the main body of the Muslim presence, unlike in

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<sup>2</sup> For the most detailed survey of the history of Islam in Czechia see MENDEL, M. - OSTRÁNSKÝ, B. - RATAJ, T., *Islám v srdci Evropy*. Academia, Praha 2007. A concise account in English KROPÁČEK, L., Muslims in the Czech Republic, *Islamochristiana*, 34 (2008), p. 149-162. A good analysis also in SCHNEIDER, J., Muslim Minorities and Czech Society, in KILPADI, P., (ed.) *Islam and Tolerance in Wider Europe*, Open Society Institute, Budapest - New York 2006, p. 131-5.

Western Europe, had not been made up of contract immigrant workers - in Czech we keep labeling them with the German term *Gastarbeiter* - but rather of university youth, students and graduates. Many Arab and other Muslim students decided to stay in the country after the graduation. They found good jobs corresponding to their education and skills, many married Czech girls and founded families in their new adopted homeland. Besides them, the rising Muslim community embraced exiles and asylum seekers, usually from the left-wing groupings, mostly Iraqis, Palestinians, Kurds, Sudanese or Iranians. Like in the case of university graduates, their Muslim identity was neither shown nor discussed in public and came to the fore as an important part of their own self only with the deep social and cultural changes in the society after the fall of communism.

The new era of the national history has widely opened gates to freedom in all domains of culture, including the religion and all imaginable trends of spiritual quest. Shortly after 1989, preachers of all kinds of spiritual currents appeared in a partisan spirit in the country to fill the presumed cultural void with their message. The Muslims, at their turn, also emerged and entered the public life as a self-confident community. Their numerical strength was increasing due to immigration, which at the same time further enhanced the heterogeneity. Growing integration of Czechia into the enlarged Europe made itself felt even in the thought and behaviour of the country's Muslims as well as in prevailing views of its deeply secularized post-Christian and Christian population. The Czech Muslims still remain a tiny minority, little known and mostly left unmentioned in general surveys of Islam in Europe.<sup>3</sup> We have noted the circumstances which prevented the spread of Islam in Czechia by Tatars or Ottoman conquest, or via post-war labour migrants. In this paper our concern is to show the contemporary situation of Islam in the country integrated within Europe.

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<sup>3</sup> The entry Popović, A., "Muslimún" in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam-2*, vol. VII, Leiden, Brill 1993, pp. 695, in spite of detailed information on Muslims in Europe does not mention Czechoslovakia at all.

## 1. Muslim aspirations in the secular society

As explained above, under the communist regime most Muslims in Czechoslovakia tacitly accepted the place assigned to them as close or potential allies of the Soviet bloc. In most of their numerous countries of origin the ideology of Marxist socialism was, of course, either rejected or carefully restricted to the economic doctrine cleansed from philosophical atheism. The public life was run on the lines of principles of Islam. Thus communist representatives at political conferences or at meetings with Arab delegates often felt surprised when their partners opened their political speech with a *basmala*. Forced by the context, they, however, swallowed mentions of *Allah* with a sense of their own superiority. A difficult partner was in particular Libya's Qadhdhafi who made the Czechoslovak leaders promise a consent to building a mosque in Prague. The promise was given and even a convenient site was chosen, all that at times when the Christian citizens were not allowed to build churches. In fact, however, the bosses did everything to put off the realization of the controversial project, abominable in their eyes. Indeed Muslims in Prague did not see a mosque before 1999, i.e. ten years after the essential political change. Their religious life under communism had to take recourse to strict privacy. Islam was not registered among the approved religious societies, including just the traditional Christian Churches and the Jewish community. Hence the Muslims had no right to public worship or manifestation of their faith. They tried to get registered during the brief respite of the Prague Spring 1968, but under the Soviet invasion had to give up again. Adopting the pattern of Christian dissidents, they got used to meet for common prayers and discussions in private homes. As to foreign students, their specific situation offered them an easier chance to come together in hostels and at tolerated meetings with their countrymen.

The liberal climate in ČR since the Velvet Revolution has basically changed the situation but not yet brought a final solution to the demand for official recognition of Islam as a religious society. Once in the

history, a handful of Czech Muslims living in the country had enjoyed it briefly under the Austrian *Islamgesetz*. But in new times, in spite of the restored freedom of religion after the gloomy days of socialism, their successors found themselves in the face of a legal obstacle they proved unable to surmount. The point was the legislation from 1991 and 1992 which required a submission of a list of ten thousand adult applicants with addresses of their permanent residence in Czechia. These conditions were later amended by Legal Acts on Churches and Religious Societies from 2002 and 2005.<sup>4</sup> Their provisos imposed rather narrow limits to ambitions of the Centre of the Muslim Communities in ČR (*El-Itihad el-Islami*, Czech abbreviation UMO), a focus and umbrella organization Czech Muslims were able to found in 1991 after previous unsuccessful attempts. In virtue of the last Legal Act, the UMO obtained only the second-class status of a religious corporation without special rights, such as access to public schools, administration of weddings, moral counselling in the army or getting financial subsidies. These rights could be acquired after ten years of waiting time, if the corporation submits an application signed by at least by 1 per mille of the country's population (i.e. c. 10 thousand). The UMO having got the first level registration welcomed the progress in comparison with the past, but still feels injured by the remaining disadvantages. As a matter of fact, the amendments which have allowed for the first level legal status upon the submission of just 300 signatures, have in mind a probation of emerging minor sects of various inclinations. So far Islam in ČR has remained included in this category.

Apart from the lack of special rights, in their everyday life Czech Muslims do enjoy a religious freedom comparable with European standards. Their legal status has allowed them to develop rich activities on the basis of Laws on social and cultural associations. In conformity with this position, they carry on their sustained efforts for building

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<sup>4</sup> The Acts mentioned in this paragraph are Czechoslovak Federal Law No. 308/1991, Law of the Czech National Council No. 161/1992 and esp. the Legal Act No. 3/2002 on freedom of religious confession and the position of churches and religious societies. It was amended by Legal Act No. 495/2005.

mosques under the heading of corporations called Foundations for establishment of Islamic Centres. Two respectable foundations of this kind were constituted in Prague and in Brno.

A need to have a dignified place for common prayer was felt for a long time. In the first years after the revolution, a provisional arrangement was a lease of a convenient space, e.g. in Southern suburbs of Prague. Finally, the Foundations managed to build and open mosques in Brno in 1998 and in Prague in 1999. The authorization comprised the proviso that the buildings should not include a minaret. In a couple of other towns, local Muslim groups had to face long-time stubborn opposition before their projects of a mosque or simple prayer rooms could materialize. A great rumour in media was aroused by a proposal of a rich investor from the Gulf to build a large Oriental Cultural Centre in Teplice, a spa town in Northern Bohemia receiving every year as many as ten thousand visitors from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Emirates. The Arab patients come for treatment for a couple of weeks with their large families. The proposed Centre, built in the classical Islamic style, should have comprised a large hotel, restaurant, conference rooms and a mosque. The idea was expounded as a way towards a better reciprocal understanding between Czechs and Arabs. Still after a stereotypist campaign by local media against a presumed danger of the “Arab terrorism”, the project was twice rejected by the local Authority (in 1995 and 2004)<sup>5</sup>. Finally a modest version of a prayer facility was made to function. Great protests against a mosque project were also recorded in Hradec Králové, a university town hosting students from Arab and Asian Muslim countries. On the whole, it appears that the Czech experience in this field since the past twenty years has been copying that of Western Europe albeit on a smaller scale.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The virulent campaign aroused once even international attention, cf. *Time* 2 Oct. 2004.

<sup>6</sup> A great similarity of the “struggle for mosques” as well as other features can be found in comparison with detailed accounts presented in CESARI, J., *European Muslims and the Secular State*, Ashgate, Burlington 2005, or in her other numerous books on Muslims in the West.

In discussions on this issue legalist purists point out that in view of the lack of full registration the Muslim religious facilities should not be styled “mosques” but rather “community or Foundation’s quarters” or perhaps “Islamic centres”. Indeed, the Muslim leaders in the country do use such terms in the public discourse, whereas in the co-religionist milieu speak of mosques. In Prague a difference is made between the main mosque erected in the Eastern part of the city and smaller but fully functional prayer rooms (in Arabic *musalla* pl. *musallayat*) in the downtown centre. The Prague-based Turks, in their turn, do not see a problem in calling their prayer space *cami*, although it consists of an adapted cinema hall in a ground floor of an ordinary tenement house.

In contrast to the issue of mosques, the Czech social milieu seems fairly tolerant towards Muslim periodicals, brochures and books. In the great part, their distribution is administered via Muslim own channels towards those who show a real interest. Only some titles, such as Aliya Izetbegović’s *Islam between East and West*<sup>7</sup>, have been put on sale in common bookshops. In publishing books introducing Islam in a favourable light the UMO was sponsored and assisted by TWRA<sup>8</sup>, later it took up the business on its own. So far the production has attained over 30 publications. The periodicals are just sent to believers or subscribers. The time-honoured mouthpiece of the Czech Islam, the journal *Hlas (al-Sawt, Voice)*, started in 1937-45 and revived in 1991, has been recently overshadowed by *Al-Islám*, issued by the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia in Bratislava since 2012. One half is printed in Czech, another in Slovak. Illustrated with coloured photos and ready to react on current issues, it seemed better suited to the present times than the *Hlas*. But, apparently, financial constraints will push both magazines to a restriction into on-line editions alone.

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<sup>7</sup> In Czech translation IZETBEGOVIČ, a., *Islám mezi východem a západem*. TWRA, Praha 1997, and other editions.

<sup>8</sup> Third World Relief Agency, founded in 1987 with headquarters in Vienna, financed by governments of rich Muslim countries, i.p. Saudi Arabia. Some Western media accused it of illegal weapons deliveries to Izetbegović’s Bosnian Muslims, with whom the Agency was closely linked.

For contact with those interested in Islam within the Czech population, the existing Muslim structures show much goodwill. Their representatives readily accept invitations to any type of lectures or debates. A genuine interest is shown especially among high school or university students seeking some checks and balances vis-a-vis the prevailing anti-Muslim tone of most media and slander stereotypes dominant in the Czech Facebook and internet. Muslims meet persons interested in Islam both in schools and in organized discussions in their own centres. In doing so, they may be guided by the idea of serving the *da'wa*, but in general most do not aspire to subdue the highly secular and agnostic Czech milieu by proselytizing. Somewhat fervent tones can be sometimes found in the rhetoric of the Federation of Muslim Students or, more frequently, of the devoutly committed grouping called Muslim Union, which publishes on-line *Muslimské listy* (*Muslim News*)<sup>9</sup>. It is, of course, doubtful to expect that intense fundamentalism and arguments of the conservative Islamic discourse might prove convincing for the free-thinking and materialist minds of the Czechs. Rather than a promising field for the *da'wa* (as a chance suggested in the general reflection by an-Naim<sup>10</sup>) the secular milieu of Czechia expects a sustained policy along the lines of Tariq Ramadan's three "Cs": *confidence, communication and critical mind*.<sup>11</sup> At any rate, success or loss for the integration of Islam in the Western country depends on conjunction of internal and external factors. In the Czech case this was proved in the rising tension of 2014.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.islamweb.cz](http://www.islamweb.cz), [www.al-islam.cz](http://www.al-islam.cz), [www.islamonline.net](http://www.islamonline.net) and <http://muslimske-listy.cz>. The editor is a Sudanese activist Muhammad Abbas al-Mu'tasim.

<sup>10</sup> AN-NAIM, A. A., *Islam and the Secular State: Negotiating the Future of Shari'a*, Harvard University Press, Harvard 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Tariq RAMADAN is probably the most quoted Muslim thinker in Europe. His activities have included discussions in Prague (2004) and interviews to Czech media. His wider formula of Cs by which Muslims should go, presented to ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) in 2010, requires 7 items: confidence, consistency, communication, contribution, creativity, contestation and compassion.

## 2. Estimates of numbers and heterogeneity

There are no official statistics of religions in the country. Under the communist rule the question was not asked, after the democratic change to fill in this answer in census papers was made optional. Surveying the provided data from 1991, 2001 and 2011 one gets an impression of a marked decline in loyalty to established Christian Churches in favour of either new communities or no reply. The Churches interpret the unfavourable difference as a contrast between the enthusiasm of the early years of freedom and the restraint typical of the further everyday life preferring “no reply”. As regards Islam, a similar decline can be noted in comparing the figure 3,699 of 2001 with 1,943 of 2011. Moreover, however, 1,442 other Muslim respondents filled in their adherence to the UMO. This is not a surprise, since a number of previous and later indices have made obvious that the awareness of one’s Muslim identity needn’t automatically mean loyalty to its established representation. However, an interesting feature is the dispersion of the declared small Muslim presence across all regions of the Republic.

On the whole, the Czech situation appears as a strongly articulated version of the European Islam generated through progressive immigrations. It is legitimate to ask to what extent, in spite of its small size, it represents a real, not just imagined community.<sup>12</sup> In media interviews the representatives of the UMO, e.g. convert Vladimír Sánka, heading the Prague foundation, or Muneeb Hassan Alrawi, university graduate of Iraqi background acting as UMO’s present-day chairman; usually estimate the total number of Muslim residents in Czechia around 15 or more thousand. Out of them, the practicing believers sharing prayers and fasting, paying *zakat* and sometimes even spending Ramadan night sessions (*i’tikaf*) with the core community, are, however, less than 4,000. Most co-believers do not uphold the basic pillars (*arkan ad-din*) or do so apart or selectively in private. The

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. ALLIEVI, S. - NIELSEN, J. (eds.), *Muslim Networks and National Communities in and across Europe*, Brill, Leiden - Boston 2003, chapter I by S. Allievi.

share of ethnic Czech converts is estimated at about 400 persons, most of them women married to Arabs.

The lack of certainty regarding numbers and behaviour is closely related to the extreme diversity of ethnic-national origin and social situation, which has been rising since the democratic opening of the country. The newcomers comprised new waves of students from previously unimaginable provenance (e.g. students of medicine from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or Malaysia), but also young adventurers testing fortune in illegal traffic (foreign currency, later drugs). Some arrivals were occasioned by events abroad. So in 1992-95, Czechia provided a temporary shelter to numerous refugees from Bosnia. A number of asylum or job seekers came from Afghanistan, post-Soviet republics and Kosovo. Today, a topic of embarrassed discussions is a European solicitude to help tens of thousands of suffering refugees from war-torn Syria. On the other hand, Czechia's admission into the enlarged European Union (in 2004) was accompanied with expectations of mass immigration of Turkish businessmen from Germany. Some Turkish fast food and cafés really appeared, less than expected. In any case, over past 25 years Islam has become somewhat visible in all great Czech towns, mainly with *halal* inscriptions and now and then women wearing *hijab* or even black *abayas*.

A detailed picture of the great ethnic-national diversity within the imagined Muslim community in ČR in 2006-7 is given in the Research report presented to the Ministry of Interior by the sociological team headed by Daniel Topinka.<sup>13</sup> The research produced a survey of Muslim citizens, long-term residents and asylum seekers on the Czech territory. They were identified as people coming from 78 countries. The report enumerates Czech Muslims in a detailed breakdown specifying the countries within 5 larger “subdivisions” with the following estimated results: Sunni Arabs and Africa - 3,212 (i.e. 28,5% of the whole “community”), Turkic Sunni - 7,036 (62,6%), Persian Shi'a -

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<sup>13</sup> TOPINKA, D, (ed.) *Integrační proces muslimů v České republice - Pilotní projekt* (unpublished report 2006/7 ordered by the Ministry).

200 (1,8%), Indoarian Sunni - 710 (6,3%) and Indomalayan Sunni - 75 (0,7%).<sup>14</sup> No individual ethnic-national group appears dominantly superior in its numerical strength, as it would be the case in West European countries. Many Arabs make a part of the original, pre-Revolution core, while most Turkic immigrants came after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The ethnic diversity is reflected even in the religious life. All practicing Muslims, as a matter of course, recite prayers in Arabic, but the language of sermon shows variations. In the mosques and prayer rooms in Prague and Brno, the Friday *khutba* is pronounced in both Arabic and Czech, in the Turkish *cami* in Turkish, in Hradec Králové (hosting students from Asia) the language used is English, in Karlovy Vary - Kolová (with large participation of Kazakhs) Russian.

Besides the diversity of the countries of origin, the community, even its practicing part, seems divided in the understanding, orientation and intensity of the desired shape of Islam. Diverse heritage and education and in particular current developments play their role. The UMO was for years facing difficulties in the search for a respectable, highly erudite Imam from abroad. Some chosen candidates did not get the needed visa. Finally, after an Imam from Egypt, not speaking Czech, the office was conferred upon a Bosniak, graduate in Islamic theology from Amman (in 2006). Emir Omič holds moderate views and is fluent in Czech. In 2011, however, he was replaced by Samir Shehadeh, Prague-born son of Palestinian father and Czech mother, who got his Islamic high education in Saudi Arabia. A marked difference in opinions and practical injunctions between the two is visible even in occasional advice concerning minor issues.<sup>15</sup> A trend towards stricter

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<sup>14</sup> The concept of subdivisions, used by ethnologists at the University of Ostrava where the project was based, can prove a useful tool for analyses on the global scale of the Muslim *umma*, but seems somewhat hypercharged if applied to a tiny community in Czechia (LK).

<sup>15</sup> Concrete examples are related in accounts of her interviews with both Imams given by MALECKÁ, J., *Narození, svatba a pohřeb v sunnitském islámu*. Brno, Masarykova univerzita 2014.

directions has been probably helped also by Saudi Imams being sent to Czechia for Ramadan last years.

Compared with Western Europe, Czech Islam has not yet encountered a problem of the second generation of immigrants. In general, the sons of Arabs and Czech mothers do not seem uneasy with their bicultural heritage. More often than not, they pursue university studies as once their fathers, or find good jobs in business, capitalizing their knowledge of Arabic. They are not exposed to any social marginalization. The incomers of the post-November period in most cases have not yet generated adolescents looking for a convenient place in the society.

### 3. Facing cultural otherness

For centuries, the historical memory in the country has been preserving and transmitting a picture of Muslims as stubborn enemies of our Christian (and later secular) values and safety. In the Czech literature, the resolute refusal of Islam at the time of Turkish incursions reached its highlight in a vigorously critical paraphrase of a Qur'an translation by a protestant nobleman Václav Budovec in 1614. The title is *Antialkoran*. To commemorate its 400 years, Czech historians held a conference on interdisciplinary study of encounters between Christianity and Islam as reflected especially in literature and visual arts.<sup>16</sup> Not surprisingly, historical conflicts aroused by the Ottoman expansion stood in the focus.

After the battle at Vienna in 1683 and the following military victories over the Turks, the once feared enemy was losing strength and becoming rather a funny figure. So he appears with his typical turban in wall paintings in Bohemian castles as well as in popular puppet the-

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<sup>16</sup> The conference called *Cross vs. Crescent* was held in Prague in April 24-25, 2014. Main contributions will be published in the academic journal *Historie - Otázky – Problémy*, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague 2015.

atre. Yet the prejudice has remained alive, enriched with the persuasion of our own superiority. After the Austrian military occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech soldiers serving in the imperial army brought home a new folk song mocking “Mohammedans”. It continues to be sung in Czech pubs till the present day. These early contacts, however, had as well another face. A number of Czech professionals came to help develop Bosnia. The most prominent was the architect Karel Pařík, remembered there as author of numerous buildings, including mosques and structures for Muslim institutions.

In the period about and after the First World War, the picture of the Arabs and Islam in the Czech cultural milieu was getting positive impulses due to numerous academic and popular books and articles of Alois Musil (1868-1944). His name struck deep roots in the history of exploration in the Near East and Northern Arabia as well as in Czech Arabic and Biblical studies. He was Catholic priest, erudite scholar and at the same time sincere friend of Arab Bedouins, imparting his sympathy and appreciation of their moral attitudes to the Czech young readers in a number of books of adventure he wrote for them. Encouraged by his friendly approach, Czech pre-war Muslims even considered him convert to their faith.<sup>17</sup> In fact he had paved a way to good relations and friendly communication between Christians and Muslims still before the word “dialogue” came into use.

Indeed, conversions to Islam were rare then. In 1930s, they hardly counted ten, but included intellectuals of some importance. Journalist and adventurer Brikcius was leader of the Czech *al-Ittibad al-Islami* under the Nazi occupation and afterwards arrested on charge of collaboration. Mohammed Šilhavý, teacher by profession, assumed the

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<sup>17</sup> As proved by reliable evidence, Musil remained a faithful Catholic priest in all circumstances, cf. KROPÁČEK, L., “Alois Musil on Islam”, in *Archiv Orientální*, No. 63, Praha 1995, pp. 401-409. For the most detailed account of his life, works and religious views see FRANC, Jaroslav: *Alois Musil a hledání pramenů monoteismu* (unpublished ThD thesis, submitted and successfully defended at Palacký University in Olomouc, 2010).

leadership at the time of the revival of al-Ittihad *alias* UMO after 1989. Two converts were young Orientalists: Arabist Ivan Hrbek and Iranist Jiří Bečka. Under the communist regime, both concentrated their efforts on intensive research and dissemination of unbiased knowledge of Islamic history and all aspects of culture. Hrbek is well known for his Czech translation of the Qur'an used until now. The Muslims, however, felt need to reset the arrangement of *suras* into canonical order, because Hrbek had considered it necessary to seek for the historical order of progressive revelation (*tanzil*). He did so in order to present the translation as a result of a cultural research publishable under the antireligious regime (in 1972). In general, it is fair to highlight manifold merits of Czech Orientalists in diffusing translations and reliable information concerning the world of Islam. There remained, of course, some limits regarding the facts of modern politics.

The democratic change has widely opened doors to all kinds of information as well as to travels and personal contacts. An access is open to works of contemporary analysts both in original versions and often in Czech translation. The Islamic studies in the country advance in a new international context. An unfortunate aspect, however, has emerged in rising Islamophobic trends nourished by the inherited prejudice, as well as new apprehensions of a “clash of civilizations” and the legitimate fears aroused by terrorist acts perpetrated by Muslims and motivated by ideology of Islamism. Most famous works hostile to Islam (such as Ibn Warraq, Oriana Fallaci or R. Spencer, or Walter Laqueur on the menace of the Islamization of Europe) are available in translation to Czech readers. Whoever prefers to blame religion in general, i.e. including the Christianity, finds a good supply of offensive books of local or foreign atheists (R. Dawkins and others).

The Muslims of Czechia, for their part, have not yet produced any monograph worthy of particular note. Their publications include articles of argumentative defense and enthusiastic support of traditional values of Islam and translated works of modern Muslim thinkers, capable to address the Western world (e.g. Hammudah Abdalati, Yusuf Qaradawi or the Quranic exegesis of Abdallah Yosuf Ali). This restraint

can be compared to that of the first generation of migrants to the West, commented by F. Dassetto.<sup>18</sup> In the Czech case, it can be also argued that the first, i.e. the pre-November Muslim generation, has been to a great extent firmly integrated, even assimilated.

Nevertheless, Islam is visible in the country not only in *halal* advertising inscriptions and occasional *hijabs*, but as well in self-confident performance of Muslim representatives invited to media, press conferences or inter-religious dialogue. In general, Islam arouses fears of the majority population. To some extent, the aversion stems from basic ignorance and the prevailing negative nature of topical events. Czech youth seeking exotic spiritual adventure choose Indian or Far Eastern, Buddhist or Hare Krishna inspiration rather than Islam. The influence of Sufism on the Czech milieu, tested for instance by the Naqshbandiya brotherhood from Germany, has turned out to have only weak effects.

As a counterpoise to the prevailing ignorance and fear, Islam excites much interest in the academic world. Muslim residents in the country have been made a topic of a number of BA, MA and even PhD theses. A special appreciation is due to the research done by Jana Virágová on the acculturation of Syrian and Palestinian residents in Czechia, as attested in their observances of birth, wedding and funeral. The research based on well prepared interviews with a number of respondents has shown significant patterns of acculturation regarding a choice of names, getting acquainted, wedding celebrations, burial rituals and post-mortem piety.<sup>19</sup> The established facts document a fair level of integration.

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<sup>18</sup> DASSETTO, F., L'Islam transplanté: bilan des recherches européennes, in RE-NAERTS, M., (ed.) *Islam en Europa*, The Millenium Conferences, Bruxelles 1994, pp. 232-237.

<sup>19</sup> The authoress having got married changed her name for Malecká, see footnote No. 15.

#### 4. Rising tensions in 2014-2015

The rising tide of Islamophobia has made Czechia, despite its probably smallest proportion of Muslim population, a country with perhaps the most vigorous anti-Muslimism in Europe. The anti-Islamic activists have rallied around several websites, in particular the Facebook community called *IVCRN* (Islám v České republice nechceme - We don't want Islam in the Czech Republic). Their growing number has exceeded that of Muslims in the country several times. Until recently, the uproar was taking place mainly on internet, rarely demonstrations occurred in streets. Once it was staged by the extremist "Workers Party of Social Justice", notorious for racist attacks on the Roma. In September 2014, they chose a new target "a struggle against Islamization". Their operating field in Northern Bohemia may have been influenced by PEGIDA anti-Muslim movement from near German Dresden. However, clashes in streets of Czech towns are hard to imagine, Muslims as adversary are not physically available and their "multi-culturalist" and "politically correct" sympathizers are, by definition, peace-loving people.

A disturbing feature is the use of anti-Islamic rhetoric by several politicians as a populist vehicle for their ambitions. In some cases it can work, so far probably not so much in the pre-election campaign as later in some politicians' effort to strengthen their position. A climax was reached in January 2015 by recommendations made by the *Úsvit* (The Dawn) Party, notorious for its xenophobia, to launch anti-Muslim measures. They summoned their supporters to boycott sellers of *kebab* and to molest Muslims by walking dogs and pigs (*sic!*) towards their mosques or prayer rooms. Shortly afterwards, the anti-Islamic activity forcefully increased in reaction to the terrorist assassinations in Paris (*Charlie Hebdo* and kosher shop). Along with discussions in all media, spiced with hot ingredients of anti-Muslim rhetoric, the anti-Muslim mood got a word in a public rally organized by the *IVCRN* in front of the Prague Castle (Jan. 16). The doctrinal guru of the Czech Islamophobia amongst other things proposed to make Muslims starve, until they abandon the *halal* food (*sic*).

In 2014, the most discussed topical event concerning Czech Muslims was a vigorous raid of police upon the mosque and community centre in Prague at the time of the Friday prayer on April 25. The declared reason was a search for the Czech translation of the ultrafundamentalist doctrinal manual *Fundamentals of Tawheed* by the well-known Jamaican Salafi Islamist Bilal Philips. Until then, the book, translated and published by the Czech UMO, had been on sale for two years. Thus the sudden action of the police came as a surprise, for which the Ministry of Interior has not yet managed to provide a convincing explanation so as to dispel the dismay created by the unprecedented intervention. According to the official claim the book incites xenophobia and violence.

The anti-Muslim trend initiated by this confusing measure was forcibly spurred on by terrifying news deluging the media since the upsurge of the so-called IS in Syria and North Iraq few weeks later. Expressing their indignation, Czech Muslims condemned the conduct of the IS as “barbarism”. Yet the indiscriminating hostile anti-Muslim mood in the country has recorded a further growth. As yet, however, there is no evidence of any Czech resident to have taken part in jihadism or attempted to join the ISIS.

## 5. Christian-Muslim relations<sup>20</sup>

Hopefully, the described trends and events will not produce negative effect on the general policy of Christian Churches aimed at good relations with the country’s Muslims. The good intention to promote dialogue has been present on the Christian side all the time since the democratic change had made it possible. All Faculties of Christian Theology (3 Catholic, 1 Evangelical and 1 Hussite) have been giving some space to lectures, seminars and research on Islam and general approaches to the interfaith dialogue. Among the Christian institutions

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<sup>20</sup> A concise survey is given in the paper in *Islamochristiana*, see above, footnote 2.

involved in the dissemination of knowledge on cultural issues a special mention can be made of the Czech Christian Academy (and her sister Moravian-Silesian Christian Academy) whose activities sometimes include public lectures on Islam. Responding to the general interest, occasional lectures are offered also by parishes. Now and then, scattered expressions of dislike for Islam can be heard, e.g. in the case of mosque projects in Teplice or Hradec Králové, but the prevailing state of mind of the clergy as well as of the believers is the respect. The Catholics are aware of the teachings of the Second Vaticanum and of initiatives of the Holy See. Some communities, such as Franciscans or the Focolarini, have also in view positive relations with Muslims maintained by their co-believers in Western Europe, e.g. in Italy.

Like in Europe in general, Christian-Muslim encounters and debates are usually organized on the initiative of the Christians. For a number of years a most active convening partner for inter-religious meetings was the Czech Christian Academy. Muslims, for their part, have been always ready to accept invitations as well as to welcome guests coming to see their mosques. While common visitors often comprise students, for official ceremonies, such as the opening of the mosque in Brno (1998) or “open door days” invitations are extended also to official representatives of the Churches and the Jewish community. A systematic effort to develop inter-cultural encounters has been made by the association “Mozaiky Platform Dialogue” in Prague since 2005. This Turkish organization, belonging to the network of Fethullah Gülen<sup>21</sup>, has established good contacts with the Prague cultural milieu, but seems rather isolated from both the predominantly Arab Muslim community and the Turkish *cami*.

An important branch of the inter-religious dialogue is focused on trilateral meetings of representatives of Christians, Jews and Muslims. As a practical outcome, the representatives of the three monotheist religions in Czechia signed a common document disapproving of at-

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<sup>21</sup> Some Gülen's books and a title on his Dialogue of Civilizations (B. Jill Carroll), published in USA and printed in Istanbul, are circulated by the Association.

tempts by some politicians to legalize euthanasia. In recent years, high representatives of the Catholic and Protestant Churches, Jewish Rabbinate and the Muslim UMO have been meeting to discuss ethical issues of common concern. This partly institutionalized form of the trilateral dialogue has chosen to be called *Common Voice*. Their annual meetings, held on the premises of the Hussite Theological Faculty in Prague, are open to the interested public. Topics of discussions are agreed and announced in advance. They covered “marriage” in 2013 and “freedom” in 2014.

In the days of enhanced emotions in January 2015, the Churches preserved cold blood. The Christian press did not omit to mention strong condemnations raised worldwide by Muslim leaders and common believers, including Czechia, on the account of the terrorist assassinations in Paris. A document jointly issued by the leaders of the Czech Bishops Conference, the Ecumenical Council of Churches in ČR and Federation of Jewish Communities calls the atrocious terrorist acts “a desperate outcome of deeper trends and pains of the current events in the world”. In conclusion, the document lays emphasis on the freedom of expression and human rights as well as on mutual respect of religions and cultures and seeking ways how to live together.<sup>22</sup>

A specific line of polemics started in those hectic days with the article “Why I am not Charlie” published by Tomáš Halík.<sup>23</sup> The author is Catholic priest and University Professor, committed to efforts for a dialogue and mutual understanding among religions, as well as with the modern agnostic and atheist world. Halík’s humanism and wide ecumenical approach have by right acquired high appreciation on the world scale, as attested by the Templeton Prize he has been awarded for 2014. Alas, his article on *Charlie* aroused a storm of critical attacks. While condemning the terrorism, Halík expressed a disgust for offence

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<sup>22</sup> The document was signed by Cardinal Dominik Duka, Chairman of the Ecumenical Council Daniel Fajfr and the Jewish leader Petr Papoušek. For the full text see *Katolický týdeník* 2015/3, p. 13.

<sup>23</sup> HALÍK, T., “Proč nejsem Charlie?”, in *Lidové noviny* 12.1.2015, p. 10.

of religious symbols and a preference for kind humour and respect for others. His opponents insist on the absolute superiority of the freedom of speech and a legitimacy of whatever mockery in the European culture. Halík's position, however, got also supporters.

Another current issue in polemics on the Czech scene concerns the question whether or not the country should receive Syrian refugees. The Government has offered medical and material assistance on the spot, perhaps in Syria and Jordan. Later, in the face of Europe's insistency, it offered to receive 15 families, about 70 persons. Participants in the Czech vivacious discussions, however, have brought in a full range of imaginable opinions: refusal to receive anybody, to provide asylum only to Christians, to receive refugees for a strictly limited time, or to prove generous in a measure of our own capacities, of course with precaution. The question has remained open until the time of writing this paper.

A general question regarding the future of the Muslim minority in Czechia remains open too. On the one hand, a good deal of Muslims are, as individual citizens, well integrated in the society. On the other hand, those who insist on manifesting their Islamic religion and culture, have to face increasing social disgrace despite their loyal law-abiding conduct. Certainly, Christians as well as a large part of secular humanists take up eirenic positions, but the rising inflow of hostility cannot be ignored. How can this be the case in a country with such a tiny Muslim minority? An answer to this uneasy question should be perhaps sought in connection with the plentiful occurrence of militant types of atheism and, as a seeming paradox, in the virtual absence of personal contact with Muslims in the country. It goes without saying, that general developments in Europe and in the world play an important role as well.

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# Religion and State in Contemporary Slovak Republic and Challenges of Islam<sup>1</sup>

Michaela Moravčíková

## 1. Social Facts

The Slovak Republic is a young independent state that came into existence on January 1, 1993 after a peaceful division of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. Within Slovakia there is one major church, the Roman Catholic Church. According to a census in 2011, 75.6% of the residents of Slovakia profess allegiance to a state-recognized church or religious society. 62% of the nation's approximately 5 million people have declared their affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church; 3.8% to the Byzantine Catholic Church (Greek Catholics); 5.9 percent to the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession; 1.8% to the Reformed Christian Church; and 0.9% to the Orthodox Church. In the 2011 census, 13.4% of respondents declared themselves as "without confession", while 10.6% failed even to answer the religious affiliation question. In the census 0.5% of respondents (23,340) claimed membership in churches or religious societies that are not recognized by the state.

1,934 citizens declared their affiliation to Islam, which statistically represents 0.036% of the population of the Slovak Republic. The representatives of the Islamic organizations in Slovakia estimate the num-

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ber of Muslims at 5,000, among them being about 150<sup>2</sup> converts of Slovak nationality, the rest coming from other countries.

## 2. Legal frame of state-religions relations

The 1992 Constitution of the Slovak Republic<sup>3</sup>, in its preamble acknowledges the spiritual heritage of Cyril and Methodius and the historical legacy of the Great Moravian Empire. In Chapter One of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (General Provisions) in Article 1 (1) the basic principle is to be found: “The Slovak Republic is a sovereign, democratic state governed by the rule of law. It is not bound by any ideology or religion.”<sup>4</sup> Article 24 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, religion and faith. This right includes the right to change religion or faith. Everybody has the right to refrain from a religious affiliation. Every person has the right to express freely his or her own religious conviction or faith, either alone or in association with others, privately or publicly, by worship, religious services and ceremonies, or participate in religious instruction.

*Freedom of thought, conscience, religion and faith shall be guaranteed. This right shall include the right to change religion or faith and the right to refrain from a religious affiliation. Every person shall be entitled to express his or her opinion publicly.*

*Every person shall have the right to express freely his or her own religious conviction or faith alone or in association with others, privately or publicly, by worship, religious services or ceremonies and participation in religious instruction.*

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<sup>2</sup> MORAVČÍKOVÁ, M., Law, Religion and Belief in Slovakia, Czech Republic and Poland, In CUMPER, P., LEWIS, T., (eds.) *Religion, Rights and Secular Society. European Perspectives*, Northampton, Edwar Elgar 2012, p. 215 – 232.

<sup>3</sup> No. 460/1992 Zb. as implemented in Constitutional Act no. 244/1998 Z. z., Constitutional Act no. 9/1999 Z. z., Constitutional Act no. 90/2001 Z. z., Constitutional Act no. 140/2004 Z. z., Constitutional Act no. 323/2004 Z. z.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www-8.vlada.gov.sk/index.php?ID=1378>.

*Churches and ecclesiastical communities shall administer their own affairs. All ecclesiastic authorities and appointments, religious instruction, establishment of religious orders and other religious institutions shall be separate from the State authorities.*

*The rights under sections (1) to (3) of this Article can be legally restricted only as a measure taken in a democratic society for the protection of the public order, health, morality, and rights and freedoms of other people.<sup>5</sup>*

Principal questions of status and activities of churches and religious societies in the Slovak Republic are also regulated by Act no. 308/1991 Zb.<sup>6</sup> on the freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies in wording of later regulations. The religious freedom in the SR is also guaranteed by the Constitutional Act no. 460/1992 Zb., the Constitution of the SR and the Constitutional Act no. 23/1991 introducing the Bill of Basic Rights and Freedoms. The issue of financing of churches and religious societies has been regulated by Act no. 218/1949 Zb. on the economic provision of churches and religious societies by the State in wording of Act no. 16/1991.<sup>7</sup>

Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies in wording of Act no. 394/2000 Z.z. and of Act no. 201/2007<sup>8</sup>, assumes the provisions of Article 24 of the Constitution and specifies them. It stipulates that profession of belief must not be a reason for restriction of constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms of citizens, first of all of the right to education, to work and free choice of employment and access to information. It also stipulates that the believer has the right to celebrate festivals and

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www-8.vlada.gov.sk/index.php?ID=1379>.

<sup>6</sup> „Zb.“, or since 1993 „Z.z.“ – abbreviations for „Zbierka zákonov“, i.e. Collection of Laws.

<sup>7</sup> MORAVČÍKOVÁ, M., - CIPÁR, M., *Cisárovi cisárovo. Ekonomické zabezpečenie cirkví a náboženských spoločností*, Bratislava, ÚVŠČ 2001, p. 57 – 81.

<sup>8</sup> Act no. 201 from March 29, 2007, amending and supplementing Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies in wording of Act no. 394/2000 Z. z.

services according to the requirements of his or her own religious belief, in accordance with generally binding legal rules.

Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on the freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies regards as church or religious society a voluntary association of persons of the same religious belief in an organization with own structure, bodies, internal regulations and services. Churches and religious societies are legal entities, and can associate freely. They may create communities, orders, societies and similar institutions.

Churches and religious societies are a special type of legal entity taking advantage of a special status (according to Art. 24 of Constitution) and also other rights awarded to legal entities in general. It concerns particularly the privacy inviolability, the protection of property, name and inheritance, the inviolability of letters, the freedom of movement and residence, the freedom of expression and the right to information, the right to petition, the right to assemble, to associate, the right to judicial and legal protection etc.

The State acknowledges only churches and religious societies that are registered. According to Act no. 308/1991 Zb. in wording of later amendments the registration body is the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. A preparatory body of a church or religious society may submit a proposal for registration if it can prove that at least 20,000 adult persons – citizens of the SR who are domiciled within the territory of the Slovak Republic – claim membership of the church or religious society<sup>9</sup>. The proposal for registration also must contain basic documents of the church or religious society to be founded, as well as affirmations of at least 20,000 adult members, who are domiciled

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<sup>9</sup> §11 of Act no. 201/ 2007 Z. z.: The majority of registered churches and religious societies evidently do not fulfil the relatively high membership condition. These churches and religious societies were registered under the provision of the Act stipulating that churches and religious societies, already pursuing their activities, either under the Act or on the basis of State consent on the date of the Act coming into force, are considered as registered. The majority of churches and religious societies in the Slovak Republic work on the basis of deemed registration.

within the territory of the SR and are citizens of the Slovak Republic, that they claim affiliation to the church or religious society, support the proposal for its registration, are its members, know its basic articles of faith and its doctrine and are conscious of rights and freedoms following from the church or religious society membership.<sup>10</sup>

From coming into force of Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on the freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies up to coming into force of Act no. 201/2007 Z.z., i.e. until May 1, 2007, only those religious societies became registered, which reached the stipulated membership minimum of 20,000. It was expressed by signatures on a petition which was attached to the basic documents of the church to be founded and which, according to the then valid legislation – when the details of the registration of churches and religious societies were regulated by Act no. 192/1992 Zb. on the registration of churches and religious societies – could be signed not only by members of the church to be founded, but also by supporters of its registration.<sup>11</sup> In this way, registration was achieved by: Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses (registered in 1993), Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (registered in 2006), Baha'i Community in the Slovak Republic (registered in 2007)<sup>12</sup>. Besides, in 2001 the New Apostolic Church was registered additionally, after it had submitted relevant documents about the State consent to the performance of its activities within the territory of the Slovak Republic before coming into force of Act no. 308/1991 Zb.

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<sup>10</sup> § 11d of Act no. 201/ 2007 Z.z.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Reply of the Ministry of Culture of the SR to the request for information on the basis of the Information Act no. 211/2000 Z. z. (MK – 65/2001 – IZ from June 7, 2001), according to which “laws regulating the registration of churches and religious societies do not stipulate the motivation of persons when signing the signature sheet declaring their affiliation to a church or religious society, therefore it need not mean their membership according to the internal statutes of the given church or religious society”.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.culture.gov.sk/cirkev-nabozenske-spolocnosti/neprehliadnite/spravne-konania>.

At present there are 18 churches registered in the Slovak Republic: Apostolic Church in Slovakia, Brother's Unity of Baptists in the Slovak Republic, Baha'i Community in the Slovak Republic, Church of Seventh Day Adventists, Slovak Association, Brethren Church in the Slovak Republic, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, Czechoslovak Hussite Church in Slovakia, Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia, Evangelical Methodist Church, Slovak Area, Greek Catholic Church in the Slovak Republic, Christian Congregations in Slovakia, Religious Community of Jehovah's Witnesses, New Apostolic Church in the Slovak Republic, Orthodox Church in Slovakia, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia, Roman Catholic Church in Slovakia, Old Catholic Church in Slovakia, Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in the Slovak Republic.

Terms of registration of churches and religious societies in the Slovak Republic have been an issue frequently discussed mainly due to the relatively high membership minimum. The reason for a severe polemic and criticism is usually the confrontation with several times lower membership conditions in countries of larger populations. Difference between registered and established or recognized churches represents a significant factor, which is to be found in countries with low or symbolic membership conditions. There is no such division in Slovakia and each registered church or religious society gains, immediately after registration, access to all the rights and benefits equally to other registered churches, which can be termed "historical churches".

Some Muslim activists, before the amendment<sup>13</sup> of Act on the freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies was passed, had tried to establish a roof organization, and thus, using the more simple terms of registration, to register the Islamic Religious Community; however, they did not succeed.

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<sup>13</sup> Act no. 201 from March 29, 2007, changing and amending the Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies in wording of Act no. 394/2000 Z. z.

### 3. Islam in Slovakia

Berlin Congress on July 18, 1878 granted the administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Novopazar sandjak to the Austro-Hungarian army. These territories still remained part of the Ottoman Empire, but now only formally. However, they still retained their own legislative regulation.

Austria-Hungary attempted to recruit soldiers also from the occupied territories, despite international protests and revolt in Herzegovina (1882). Hence, for the first time on the territory of the Habsburg Empire, there occur greater numbers of Muslims – recruits from the occupied territories. Ministry of War, however, needed to have loyal soldiers serving under the Imperial and Royal military forces. The same benevolent manner used toward religious belief of soldiers of Protestant, Orthodox, and Jewish denominations, who already in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had their own war chaplains, was applied now toward Muslims – despite the fact that unlike the above mentioned religions they still did not represent a religious society recognised by the State (outside Bosnia and Herzegovina). Formation of their own military units pointed to special privileges enjoyed by Muslims throughout the entire Habsburg Monarchy. In 1896, they were reorganised and concentrated into four “K. u. K.” (“Kaiserlich und Königlich”, i.e. “Imperial and Royal”) Muslim regiments. For special Muslim military units, the Ministry would create a number of regulations within its internal policies, regarding eating, taking an oath, using hygienic facilities, and funerals. List of teachers at the Military School for Cadets in Vienna from 1901 also includes the name of a military imam.

State recognition of the Islamic religious society followed shortly after Bosnia and Herzegovina had been annexed by Austria-Hungary in 1908. Due to a plenty of exceptional specifics (polygamous marriage), this society was not recognised by an administrative act pursuant to Act no. 68/1874, but directly by law. After all, law had been used in recent major regulations to legal relations of the Protestants – Lutherans and Calvinists (Imperial Patent no. 41/1861) and Jews (Act no. 57/1890).

Islamic religious society was recognised by Act no. 159/1912 for the Kingdoms and lands represented at the Reich Council (Cisleithania), and by legal article XVII/1916 recognised for Hungary. Act no. 159, approved on July 15, 1912, which “recognises adherents of Islam of the Hanafi tradition as religious society”, states in its Art. I, § 1: “Let the outside legal relations of the Islam adherents be regulated by imperative way on the basis of self-governance and self-identification, yet with preserved supervision of the State, as long as the establishment and duration of at least one religious congregation is secured.

Meanwhile, let the relation between the religious organisation of the Islam adherents living in this country and of those living in Bosnia and Herzegovina be especially remembered. Thus before founding the first religious congregation may sacred guilds for religious ends of Islam be formed.”

An important specific aspect was the possibility to appoint “religious commissaries” for congregations in Cisleithania, from territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well. The only right not granted to them was the right to marry and keep registers. The administration of matrimonial and registry affairs of Muslims remains, similarly like in the case of persons without confession, under supervision of State authorities pursuant to Act no. 51/1870. To implement the law, establishment of at least one religious congregation was needed. This had not taken place in the entire region of Cisleithania before the war was over. In the Czech territories, the first attempt in this area took place through submission to the State Office (Landesamt) on December 31, 1934. On February 2, 1935 a specific reply was received from the competent Ministry of Education and Edification, which highlights several errors committed at submission: The law effective only for the Czech territories does not allow founding of a religious congregation in entire Czechoslovakia, nor can registries be administered.

However, application was finally accepted into the process. What contributed to its delay was the difficult situation of threat and attack on Czechoslovakia in 1938 and subsequent occupation of the remaining Czech territories by the Nazi Germany in March 1939. In Decem-

ber 1941 the Government of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia acknowledged the existence of the Islamic religious congregation of 640 members in Prague and approved a detailed government order on regulation of legal aspects of religious society of adherents of the Islam Hanafi tradition, objecting that it should be additionally approved by the Reich Protector. Office of the Reich Protector replied on January 15, 1942 that it would deal with this issue in about 6 weeks. This never happened, and on May 1942, Czechoslovak soldiers from Great Britain deposed the Reich Protector. During the consequent terror, the Protectorate Government could not urge a speedy processing of its request.

The proceedings did not continue after the war; Islamic congregation in Prague was not recognised and by the end of the second year of the Communist rule, i.e. in November 1949, the act on recognition of Islamic religious society ceased being part of the legal order.

Since November 1949 until 1991, there was no law effective in Czechoslovakia under which churches could be recognised. Therefore, during the Communist era, Muslim activities were limited to personal meetings. In 1968, Muslim believers took an unsuccessful attempt to legalize their belief. In the Czech Republic, they finally succeeded to obtain registration only due to Act no. 3/2002, which reduced the number of signatures necessary for a submission of registration application. The Centre of Muslim Religious Communities was registered in the Czech Republic on September 17, 2004.<sup>14</sup>

The Muslim community in Slovakia is mainly comprised of foreign students at Slovak universities and of former students who stayed in Slovakia, found new homes and started own families here. Their native countries are various<sup>15</sup>; there are no significant larger compact communities coming from one native country here. This community

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<sup>14</sup> TRETERA, J. R., Právní postavení islámské menšiny v České republice. In MORAVČÍKOVÁ, M., LOJDA, M. (eds.) *Islam v Evropě*. Bratislava, Ústav pre vzťahy štátu a cirkví 2005, p. 109 – 115.

<sup>15</sup> For instance Afghanistan, Turkey, Yemen, Pakistan, Algeria, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Nigeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Kuwait, Iraq, Senegal, Bangladesh, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Guinea, Tanzania, etc.

is characterised by a high percentage of academically qualified people with a comparatively fair financial background (physicians, engineers, lawyers, economists). They join various Muslim organizations: Islam Literature Friends Association, Islamic Foundation, and Union of Muslim Students in Slovakia.

Up to now, none of the Muslim organisations has been registered as a religious society in the Slovak Republic. They do not fulfil the membership condition necessary for registration, as stipulated by the Slovak law. By means of informational meetings with State authorities and institutions, some members of the Muslim community have been expressing their wish to be registered as a religious society, and to receive financial support from the State like other registered churches and religious societies.

#### 4. Islam and Slovak Education System

According to the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, everyone has the right to education. School attendance is compulsory. Its period and age limit are stipulated by law.<sup>16</sup> Citizens have the right to free education at primary and secondary schools and, based on their abilities and society's resources, also at higher educational establishments.<sup>17</sup> Schools other than state schools may be established, and instruction in them provided, only under conditions defined by law. Such schools may charge a tuition fee. According to the Article 24 of the Constitution, churches and religious societies “*organise the teaching of religion*” and, according to Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on the freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies in wording of later regulations, believers have the right to be educated in a religious spirit and – on fulfilment of conditions established by internal rules of churches and religious societies as well as by generally binding legal regulations

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<sup>16</sup> Currently the compulsory education in Slovakia is 10 years, but the longest until completion of the school year in which a student turns 16.

<sup>17</sup> There are heated debates about university tuition fees at present.

– to teach religion. This issue is amended in more detail by the Basic Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See<sup>18</sup>, and the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Registered Churches and Religious Societies<sup>19</sup>; the contracting parties refer to a more detailed amendment in special agreements (so called separate agreements). The right to religious education is guaranteed also by Act no. 29/1984 Zb. on the system of primary and secondary schools (the School Act) in wording of later regulations. Persons appointed by churches and religious societies may teach religion at all schools and educational institutions, which are part of the educational system of the Slovak Republic.

The Act no. 596/2003 Z.z. on state administration in education and educational self-government determines the competence, organisation and function of administrative bodies of state administration in the educational system, towns, municipalities and self-government bodies in education, and defines their duties in the field of state administration competencies in education. It determines the network of schools and educational institutions, decides on the location of a school, school facility, or an applied-education center in the network, possible changes, and excluding a school from the network. The Act designates the bodies authorised to establish schools, educational institutions or centers of applied education. Such bodies are: towns, municipalities, regional boards, registered churches or religious societies, other corporate bodies or individuals.<sup>20</sup> Education provided at denominational or private schools is adequate to the education provided at other schools. The aim of denominational and private schools or educational institutions is to provide, in addition to quality education and training, alternative content, methods, and formats in education and training. Establishment of these schools allows parents to apply their right to choose a school or educational institution for their children according to their belief

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<sup>18</sup> Published in the Collection of Laws under no. 326/2001 Z.z.

<sup>19</sup> Published in the Collection of Laws under no. 250/2002 Z.z.

<sup>20</sup> Section 19 Act no. 596/2003 Z.z. on state administration in education and self-government of schools, and on change and amendments of certain acts

and conscience, as well as it creates competitive environment for higher motivation to improve the educational system.<sup>21</sup>

Churches and religious societies have the right, for educational purposes, to establish, administer and employ primary schools, secondary schools, universities and educational institutions in compliance with the provisions of law. These schools and educational institutions have the same position as state schools and educational institutions and they are an important and equal part of the education system of the country. The Slovak Republic gives full recognition to diplomas issued by these schools and institutions and considers them equal to diplomas issued by state schools of the same kind, field or level. Hence, they are acknowledged as equivalent to state diplomas; moreover, the same is true about academic degrees and titles.

In 2004 the National Council of the Slovak Republic gave its consent to the Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See on Catholic Education<sup>22</sup> as well as the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Registered Churches and Religious Societies on Religious Education<sup>23</sup>.

The Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Registered Churches and Religious Societies on Religious Education is the first of the series of agreements anticipated by the Basic Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Eleven Registered Churches and Religious societies.

The ratification of the Agreement took place at the same time as the ratification of the Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See on Catholic Education, on May 13, 2004. The Treaty between the Slovak Republic and the Holy See on Catholic Education was signed by the President of the Slovak Republic for the SR and the State Secretary for the Holy See. The Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Registered Churches and Religious Societies on Religious Education

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=37>.

<sup>22</sup> Published on July 9, 2004 under no. 394/2004 Z.z.

<sup>23</sup> Published on July 13, 2004 under no. 395/2004 Z.z.

was signed by three top constitutional representatives<sup>24</sup> and the leaders of the eleven churches.<sup>25</sup> The first one is an agreement with a body of international law and the second one is an intrastate agreement.

These documents introduce religious education into the Slovak educational system as an elective mandatory subject, with students having the option to attend ethics classes as an alternative.<sup>26</sup>

The curriculums of religion and religious education have to be approved by the respective church after the statement of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. Besides expert qualification, the religious education also requires canonical mission or authorisation by the church or religious society according to the legal regulations of the Slovak Republic. This condition applies for university teachers of theological disciplines, too.

The above-mentioned documents also recognise the right of churches and religious societies to establish and to operate their own schools and school institutions of any kind and type. At the same time, the state guarantees not to demand that the denominational schools

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<sup>24</sup> The President, the Chairman of the National Council, and the Prime Minister.

<sup>25</sup> Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia, Reformed Christian Church in Slovakia, Orthodox Church in Slovakia, Evangelical Methodist Church, Slovak Area, Brother's Unity of Baptists in the Slovak Republic, Brethren Church in the Slovak Republic, Church of Seventh Day Adventists, Slovak Association, Apostolic Church in Slovakia, Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities, Old Catholic Church in Slovakia, Czechoslovak Hussite Church in Slovakia.

<sup>26</sup> The lowest possible number of students in a religious education class is twelve. Maximum number of students is 24 – this is a principle that applies to all “educational” subjects (e.g. ethics education, fine art education, and physical education). Registered churches and religious societies may include also students from different classes and of different beliefs in religious education classes with their permission. If the number of students is lower than the required twelve, the principal gives consent to teaching of religious classes during religious lessons of other denominations, ethics lessons, or after school. One lesson a week is the standard quota for religious or ethics education at state or private primary schools. At primary denominational schools, students have two lessons of religious education per week. At state or private (non-denominational) high schools, there is one lesson of religious or ethics education per week in the first and second classes. In the third and fourth classes students may, if the school offers such a possibility, choose one of these subjects as non-mandatory supplementary subject. At denominational high schools students have two lessons of religious education per week in all four classes.

to carry out educational programs inconsistent with the upbringing and education principles of the respective church. Churches pledge to offer both general and special education at denominational schools consistent with the general and special education at state schools of respective degree and type. Both sides also oblige to cooperate in the process of preparation and creation of educational programs and in the sphere of education and upbringing in denominational schools. The schools of churches and religious societies will get the same funding as all the other schools in compliance with the legal order of the Slovak Republic. The Agreement also makes churches possible to establish pedagogical and catechetical centers with nation-wide field of activity in order to provide professional and methodical guidance of denominational schools, as well as expert education of pedagogical and non-pedagogical employees of denominational schools. The state pledges to financially support theological faculties as well as not to create obstacles to the founding and activities of university pastoral centers. The Article 6 of the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Registered Churches and Religious Societies on religious upbringing and education declares that the Agreement is open for accession by other churches and religious societies registered in compliance with the legal order of the Slovak Republic. Upon their accession there shall be decided by registered churches and religious societies participating in the Agreement, on the basis of a written request. All contracting parties must agree with the accession. In compliance with the legal order of the Slovak Republic, any registered church or religious society, which is not a signatory of the Agreement, can demonstrate a will to sign a similar bilateral agreement with the Slovak Republic.

In case that an Islamic religious subject were registered according to Act no. 308/1991 Zb. on the freedom of religious faith and the position of churches and religious societies, this religious society could either accede to the existing Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Registered Churches and Religious Societies on religious upbringing and education, or conclude its own bilateral agreement with the Slovak Republic on Islamic religious upbringing and education. Another

possibility would be a founding of Islamic schools and educational institutions by another juridical or private person.

Besides the network of schools and school institutions of the Slovak Republic, the Libyan African School operates here, offering education mainly to children of diplomats. The school resides in rented rooms in Bratislava<sup>27</sup>. The pupils take exams in particular subjects abroad (in Austria). The school was founded especially thanks to the initiative of the Embassy of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in Bratislava. Only in this school, the religion of Islam is taught. In other schools the pupils have the opportunity to get acquainted with the Islamic religion within the frame of civics in elementary schools, within the frame of society teaching in Gymnasiums and high schools, or during ethics lessons, however, only in the case that the teacher decides to do so<sup>28</sup>. Some teachers of these subjects incorporate a part dealing with world religions into the teaching process, and within this frame the children get to learn (from the viewpoint of religious science) some basic information on Islam. Because of above mentioned reasons, the Islamic religious education does not take place in any state or private school, which is part of the network of schools and school institutions. In connection with a gradual, though relatively slow growth of the Muslim community in Slovakia, we also can anticipate the establishment of an Islamic private school.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

As already mentioned above, after occupation of Bosnia, Islam became one of the recognized religions and integral part of social life and

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<sup>27</sup> It has three floors rented in the State Elementary School in Petržalka.

<sup>28</sup> The teacher can choose 30 % of curriculum independently, and 70 % are stipulated by the Ministry of Education.

<sup>29</sup> MORAVČÍKOVÁ, M., Religious Education and Denominational Schools in the Slovak Republic, In ASLAN, E., (Hg.) *Islamische Erziehung in Europa*, Wien, Böhlau 2009, p. 457 – 474.

education on the territory of the contemporary Slovakia, which was then part of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. With the beginning of the era of Communism in 1945, Islam, similarly as other religions, was driven out from the public life. Although in the time of Communism there occurred some encounters with the Islamic world, it was the case of cooperation between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Socialist Muslim states, on a strictly secular level. During the years 1945-1989 it was not only Islam, but also any other religion that were regarded by the ruling Communist Government as enemies of society or “opium of mankind”. Public religious manifestations and calls for religious freedom were ruthlessly sanctioned, imprisonments and punishments being thus no exceptions.

The fall of Communism and the subsequent democratisation of the Slovak society after 1989 brought about religious freedom and bloom of religious life. Church structures and religious institutions were revitalised. In connection with the growth of democracy, inevitable social reforms and integration to the European Union, the Slovak society was confronted with a new, Non-Communist type of secularization at the twist of centuries.

The traditional religion is Christianity that was brought to the territory of present-day Slovakia by Irish-Scottish monks by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and was developed thanks to the Byzantine mission in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The prevailing denomination is Catholicism, of the Latin rite at present. Integral part of the society is also created by Orthodox Christians, Protestants, Jews, and adherents of other religious societies. As for Islam, which had arrived to our territory relatively late and had been a recognized religion only for a short time on our territory within the Monarchy, it has been rather difficult to find its position in the public life.<sup>30</sup> To a certain degree it can be due Islamophobia after

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<sup>30</sup> Islamic activists did not find understanding of the municipal politicians for their intention to build a mosque or an Islamic Culture Centre in the Capital. It is to note, however, that they went in for it only in the town district Bratislava-Old Town, which is a listed buildings area. It is to assume that the prognosis could have been far more successful in another town district.

September 11, 2001, however, also due to the fact, that the era of Ottoman Empire has been carried over by its continual pursuing in Slovak literary works as a dark age of occupation of Christians by Muslims<sup>31</sup>, expressed by tragic fates of people of this region. Inhabitants of contemporary Slovakia have had relatively little historical experience with Ottomans, hence their image has been formed on the basis of solidarity and sympathy to the Southern Slavic nations and, to a certain degree<sup>32</sup> it is persistent up to present.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, also the historical awareness of solidarity with Bosnia and its inhabitants has persisted.

Activities aimed at intercultural and interreligious dialogue are carried out gradually. They take place on the level of religious representatives and social elites; however, gradually they also shift to other levels, and to the school system, too. For instance in 2007 the organisation Amnesty International in Slovakia started to carry out, within „European Year of Equal Chances“, an educational project focussed against multiple discrimination – for ethnical and religious reasons. The project called *“Divided by frontiers, divided by religions”* has been supported by the Government of the SR and the European Commission. It takes place on the ground of schools. Its main part is constituted by lectures accompanied by discussions at high schools. Lectors<sup>34</sup> are practising Muslims coming mostly from Arabic countries, assisted by Slovak moderators. Part of the project is an audiovisual document by which Muslims present some aspects of Islam, customs, traditions and information on the countries of their origin. From the existing evaluation of the project by teachers it follows that the method of authentic experience – the personal encounter with the Muslim lector – is one of the

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<sup>31</sup> For example the poem “Turčín Poničan” by Samo Chalupka, one of the bards of Slovak poetry.

<sup>32</sup> By older generations.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. SABATOS, Ch., Náboženská identita a „turecká hrozba“ v slovenskej literatúre, In MORAVČÍKOVÁ, M., VALOVÁ, E., (eds.) *Ročenka Ústavu pre vzťahy štátu a cirkvi 2005*, Bratislava, Ústav pre vzťahy štátu a cirkvi 2006, p. 207f.

<sup>34</sup> They speak Slovak and they live in the Slovak Republic at present. In 2007 the lecturers were lecturers coming from Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

most effective means of cutting down prejudices and Islamophobia.<sup>35</sup> Muslims themselves, associated in the Islamic Literature Friends' Association<sup>36</sup>, organised lectures on Islam, designed first of all for Muslims; however, they also invited non-members of the Muslim community, which contributes to mutual understanding. Islamic Foundation<sup>37</sup> representatives organised a meeting with representatives of churches and religious societies. Non-existence of an Islamic umbrella organization in Slovakia is a reason for a certain fragmentation of these endeavours. Events aimed at mutual understanding and cooperation take place<sup>38</sup> sporadically; however, some kind of orderliness, continuity and interconnection of the various social and political spheres is missing here. The given trend of activities stimulating the acquaintance on the interpersonal level can be perceived positively – it is the best way to overcome prejudices and phobias.

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.amnesty.sk/index.php?page=clanok&cid=510>.

<sup>36</sup> <http://islamonline.sk>.

<sup>37</sup> <http://islamweb.sk>.

<sup>38</sup> For example the conference “Diversity Connects – Intercultural Dialogue 2008” held by the Ministry of Culture of the SR in March 2008.

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## Abstract

The paper features following the last census, some of basic religious-demographic characteristics of the country. It states the basic constitutional and legal framework of the relationship between the State and religion. It concentrates on the history and the present state of Islam in the country. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between religion and education system that is the most sensitive for any religion. It brings closer the wide range of benefits which registered churches and religious societies can make use of in contrast to Islam religion not recognized by the State. Finally, it points out a subtle influence of Islam on the Slovak society because of the small number of Muslims in the country as well as for the absence of a body which would represent them towards the State and other entities.

# Islam in Italy: a galaxy of Muslim presence

Francesco Zannini

## 1. Introduction

At the moment, Islam, in Italy, is the second largest religion after Catholicism. With the increasing number of Muslims, Italy has witnessed over the last few years a significant growth of their religious life in a better-organized way. There are communities of Muslims who regularly meet in houses and homemade mosques and here and there in the national territories there is the appearance of Islamic cultural centres. Among them the most relevant and well known is the Italian Institute of Islamic culture in Rome,<sup>1</sup> attached to a superb mosque, probably the largest in Western Europe, and built in 1995. Others can be found in Milan, Naples, Palermo and in several other towns around the country. Most of the members of these communities and centres are Muslims of different origins and belonging to different ethnic and religious backgrounds<sup>2</sup> (including native Italians) who gather around a number of rivaling Muslim organizations, often without a public legal status, which have become, in the last few years, increasingly active in promoting self-awareness and in expressing the concerns and the demands of their communities. But, because of the fragmentation of the Muslim society in Italy, it has not been possible to respond fully to their claims.

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<sup>1</sup> The C.I.C.I. (*Islamic Cultural Center of Italy*), was awarded public legal status by D.P.R., N° 712 of 21 Dec. 1974. Its Board is largely composed of the ambassadors of Islamic States to the Holy Sea.

<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of Muslims in Italy are immigrants coming from various countries especially Morocco and Albania, Somalia, Egypt, Senegal, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

## 2. Italian Islam

The settlements of the Muslims in Italy is not a part of the recent history but goes back to the time when Arab Muslims landed in Mazara in 827 AD and established themselves in Sicily from 828 AD<sup>3</sup> to 1091 AD when they were expelled by the Normans, though they remained in the country up to 1300 AD.<sup>4</sup> Latin chronicles of the ninth, tenth and eleventh century also reported the presence of Saracens at Brindisi, Lucera, Taranto<sup>5</sup> and Bari, where historical sources refer of the an emirate that lasted between 847 and 871<sup>6</sup>. The Arabs also settled for a period in Sardinia, Corsica, Calabria and Molise and, in fact, they have been part of the Italian culture and tradition in various ways: as invaders and pirates in the coastal areas, as well as ambassadors and diplomats. Most notably they have been present as merchants in Venice and other important sea towns in Italy. However the center of the Muslim culture in Italy has always been Sicily, which, after the Muslim conquest, benefited from a long period of peace and financial and cultural prosperity. This was made possible by communication facilities, the availability of technological and cultural resources, and the use of Arabic as a “lingua franca”. From the religious point of view, western Sicily was largely Islamized, almost up to 50% of the popula-

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<sup>3</sup> First Muslim conquest of Sicily.

<sup>4</sup> Destruction of the last Islamic stronghold of Lucera in Puglia. On the Arab presence in the South of Italy, see EGIDI, P., *La colonia saracena di Lucera e la sua distruzione*, in *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, XXXIII-XXXVI, 1911-1915, Napoli 1912; AMARI, M., *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, a cura di Nallino C. A., vol. I, Catania 1933; RIZZITANO, U., “Gli Arabi in Italia”, *L'Occidente e l'islam nell'Alto Medioevo*, Settimane di studio del Centro Italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo XII, Spoleto, 1965, pp. 93-114; GABRIELI, F., - SCERRATO, U., *Gli arabi in Italia*, Milano 1979; TAYLOR, J., *Muslims in Medieval Italy: The Colony at Lucera*, Lexington Books 2005; TAYLOR, J., “Muslim-Christian Relations in Medieval Southern Italy”, *The Muslim World*, 97(2007), pp. 190-199; BERTAUX, E., *Les arts de l'Orient musulman dans l'Italie méridionale*, Roma 1896.

<sup>5</sup> AMARI, M., *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*, a cura di Nallino C. A., vol. I, Catania 1933, pp. 445; GABRIELI, G., “Taranto araba”, in *Cenacolo*, IV, Taranto 1974, pp. 3-8.

<sup>6</sup> See MUSCA, G., *L'emirato di Bari*, Bari 1964.

tion. Those who remained Christians were generally well tolerated and protected according to the rules of the *dhimma* statute.

From the cultural point of view, the Muslims of Sicily have contributed extensively to the development of theological science. Among the outstanding scholars, Ibn al-Fahhâm (d. 1122) and Ismâ'îl b. Khalaf (d. 1063) gave a valuable contribution in the field of Qur'anic studies, Asad b. al-Furât (759-828) and Yahyâ b. 'Umar (d. 903) to Muslim Law. In the field of linguistics and language are worth mentioning the studies of al-Kattânî (m.1118), Ibn al-Makkî (d. 1107), and Sa'îd b. Fatihûn (1035-1118). Finally, in terms of poetry, we must remember at least the names of Abû al-Qâsim Abd al-Rahmân, Ibn Hamadîs, 'Alî al-Ballanûbî Ja'far b. Yûsuf et Ibn al-Khayyât<sup>7</sup>.

This period of Muslim rule lasted only a short time. Disputes, riots and killings signed the decline of Muslim power. The Norman conquest led by Roger Guiscard was completed after thirty years of war that ended in 1091 with the fall of Noto. The conquest accomplished by Roger was characterized by great tolerance for Muslims. Many of them were recruited as soldiers in special units of the army and held a good position in the society. In fact, since he was crowned King of Sicily in 1130, Roger II perpetuated the great commercial and cultural movement that began there in the Islamic period. Under his rule the geographer Al-Idrîsî (1100-1165/66) wrote his famous book *Al-Kitâb al-Rujâri* (the Book of Roger), a great work of geography, completed in 1154, and the court also relied on many Arab officials.

Throughout the Arab-Muslim domination period, there was a great artistic and cultural flourishing in Sicily. Palermo thus became the capital of the art of poetry, but above all of literature. When Muslims definitively established Palermo as the capital of Sicily, in the tenth century, there were already 300,000 people in the Muslim West, and the city was the second most important this geographical-cultural area behind Cordoba. Many ports of the Tyrrhenian coast, as Amalfi, Salerno, Naples, and Gaeta, were economically in the orbit of Palermo

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<sup>7</sup> See CARRAO, M., *Poeti Arabi di Sicilia*, Milano 1987.

and Muslim Sicily. This city was indeed the center of a civilization that spread to the whole of Sicily and southern Italy. We can find countless Islamic influences in architecture, painting, ceramics, decoration, and even in the Italian language.

This phenomenon would continue at the court of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194-1250), who ruled the Holy Roman Empire from 1220 to 1250. He was able to speak Arabic and showed deep interest in Arab culture of which he recognized the greatness and refinement. He also tried to bring about peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians, and organized for this purpose an intense diplomatic exchange with the Ayyubid Sultan of Egypt al-Mâlik al-Kâmil (1180-1238), with whom he signed a treaty.<sup>8</sup>

If we look at the history of Islam it is fair to say that the south of Italy, Sicily and Spain were the most important points through which the Muslim culture penetrated and influenced the West and this seems to have encouraged thereafter the emergence of Islamic studies at the time of Italian Renaissance.

More recently, the immigration phenomenon has been the primary element that has triggered both attitudes of dialogue and intolerance in Italy, particularly since the 1970's when North African immigrants (mostly of Berber or Arab origin) came from Morocco. The number of Muslims present in the country increased steadily in the following decades with new comers from Albania who were then followed by immigrants from Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Being positioned in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy is a natural landing spot for the wave of Islamic migration into Europe. However, Italy has only recently become an immigrant country and most of the Muslims in Italy are immigrants, often poor and not highly educated. They have come to the country in search of a better life situation and only few of them are Italians.

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<sup>8</sup> On the Arab presence in Sicily, see TRAINI, R., "Sikilliya or Sikilliyya," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden 2010.

The growing Muslim presence has given to both the Catholic Church<sup>9</sup> and to Italian society new challenges of sharing life with them while looking for common values in order to have a viable social and cultural life.

### 3. Muslims in Italy: The present situation

The Muslim population is mainly represented by immigrants from several Muslim countries<sup>10</sup>. According to the *UNAR 2014 Report* their number is put at 1,628,000, which represents about 33,1% of the immigrant population in Italy.<sup>11</sup> Their presence in Italy is rather recent and a steady influx goes back only 15-20 years ago. The reason why they have migrated to Italy is generally based on the social, political or financial problems they had to face in their countries. However, some Muslims declare that they have migrated to Italy in order to enlarge their personal experiences and to know other ways of life or to get rid of the traditional models of their original society. Others have come to rejoin their families and relatives who had migrated before them. First generation Muslims prefer to speak their mother language and try to keep strict links with their original homeland, preserving as much as possible their traditional customs and way of life<sup>12</sup>. Some of their sons and particularly those who gather around a Muslim youth

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<sup>9</sup> On the subject of Muslim-Christian Dialogue in Italy, see ZANNINI, F., “Muslimisch-christlicher Dialog in Italien. Auf der Suche nach gemeinsamen Werten”, in HÜNSEL, P. – NOIA, S., (ed.) *Kirche und Islam im Dialog. Euroäische Länder im Vergleich*, Regensburg 2010, pp. 23-50.

<sup>10</sup> See LAURENCE, J., *Knocking on Europe's door : Islam in Italy*, Washington, DC 2006.

<sup>11</sup> See IDOS, E., *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione*, Rapporto UNAR, Dalle iscrizioni ai diritti, Roma 2014, p. 191.

<sup>12</sup> ALLIEVI, S., “Sociology of a Newcomer: Muslim Migration to Italy – Religious Visibility, Cultural and Political Reactions,” In AL-SHAHI, A. - LAWLESS, R., (ed.) *Middle East and North African Immigrants in Europe*, London 2005, pp. 43-56.

organization called *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia* (G.M.I.)<sup>13</sup> are trying to build a new identity where their Islamic faith and practice becomes compatible with the Italian cultural, social and spiritual environment<sup>14</sup>. Their leaders often state that they are tired of being objects of discourse and young Muslims want to enter the public sphere and ask to be recognized as citizens of Islamic faith.<sup>15</sup>

The Muslim community in Italy is not a homogenous one. There are big differences according to sex, age, race and nationality. They come from different ethnic groups and different countries, they speak different languages, and have different social backgrounds and often religion seems to be the only link among them, though, even in this case, they are following different juridical, mystical and theological schools of thought. Most of them are Sunni, but there is also a fair number of the Shiite minority, while most Muslims from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are followers of different Sufi brotherhoods. Therefore the understanding of Islam in Italy must take into account a number of factors: such as ethno-cultural and linguistic origins, nationality, their

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<sup>13</sup> Founded in 2001, G.M.I. was initially affiliated with U.C.O.I.I. (*Union of the Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy*), but began to assert its independence when it became clear that there was a wide gap between the adult supervisors from U.C.O.I.I. and the experiences and ideas of the 15-25 year-olds in G.M.I.

<sup>14</sup> On the subject, see ALUFFI, B. P. R., "Islam in the European Union: Italy," in POTZ, R. – WIESHAIDER, W., (ed.) *Islam and the European Union*. Leuven 2004. ALUFFI, B. P. R., *Identità religiosa e integrazione dei musulmani in Italia e in Europa. Omaggio alla memoria di F. Castro*, Torino 2000; ALLIEVI, S., "Italie", In DASSETTO, F. - CONRAD, Y., (ed.) *Muslims in Europe/Musulmans en Europe Occidentale. Bibliographie commentée*, Paris 1996, pp. 109-124.; ALLIEVI, S. – DASSETTO, F., *Il ritorno dell'Islam: I musulmani in Italia*, Roma, Ed. Lavoro 1993, FERRARI, S., "I musulmani in Italia", EL AYOUBI, M., (ed.) *Islam plurale*, Roma 2000, pp. 70-71; A ALLIEVI, S., "Immagini di un Islam plurale," In *L'islam oggi in Italia : in Humanitas* 55 (6/2000), Brescia 2000, ALLIEVI, S., *Islam italiano : Viaggio nella seconda religione del paese*, Torino 2003.

<sup>15</sup> See FRISINA, A., "Giovani musulmani d'Italia. Trasformazioni socio-culturali e domande di cittadinanza," in CESARI, J. – PACINI, A., (ed.) *Giovani musulmani in Europa. Tipologie di appartenenza religiosa e dinamiche socio-culturali*, Torino 2005, p. 139-159. AMBROSINI, M., - BONIZZONI, P., CANEVA, E., (ed.) *Incontrarsi e riconoscersi. Socialità, identificazione, integrazione sociale tra i giovani di origine immigrata. Rapporto 2010*, Fondazione Ismu, Regione Lombardia, Osservatorio Regionale per l'integrazione e la multietnicità, Milano 2011.

belonging to the Shiite or Sunni tradition, their belonging to different schools of law or to Sufi brotherhoods as well as their belonging to different movements and associations. All these factors intersect with each other around a common denominator, which is the Islamic faith, which however does not match a single unifying organization which constitutes a unitary system from a social perspective.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4. Muslim associations and organizations

More than in any other European country, the Islamic presence in Italy is characterized by significant structural fragmentation and a plurality of microorganisms constituting the galaxy of Italian Islam.<sup>17</sup>

The number of their associations, groups and organizations are growing. Apparently, the most relevant one seems to be the U.C.O.I.I. (*Union of the Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy*), which is perhaps the most significant (both in number of participants and in visibility), was founded in Ancona in 1990 and includes about 122 associations, within a weak federation. It is followed by the U.S.I. (*Muslim Student Union*), the C.I.C.I. (*Islamic Cultural Center of Italy*). The “*Italian Islamic Confederation*”, which was officially set up for the first time in Rome on 21 March 2012, is a union of regional federations that groups together numerous centers and places of worship, mostly of North Africans, scattered throughout the country and has links with to the above mentioned C.I.C.I. in Rome. The “*Islamic Cultural Asso-*

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<sup>16</sup> See CUCINIELLO, A., “Islam in the Italian multicultural society”, in *Encounter*, P.I.S.A.I., Roma, 334-335(2008). ROGGERO, M. A., “Muslims in Italy,” in YAZBECK, H. Y., (ed.) *Muslims in the West. From Sojourners to Citizens*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002, p. 131-143.

<sup>17</sup> For a list and details of these groups and associations, see ZANNINI, F., *Ahmed il mio vicino di casa, guida alla conoscenza dell'Islam*, Ancona 2002, pp. 13-22 and more recently INTROVIGNE, M., - ZOCATELLI, P. L., “I movimenti di matrice islamica in Italia”, in INTROVIGNE, M., -ZOCATELLI, P. L., (ed.) *Le religioni in Italia*, Torino - Gorle 2006, ([http://www.cesnur.org/religioni\\_italia/islam.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/religioni_italia/islam.htm)); ZANNINI, F., “L'Islam in Italia: mappe, percorsi, processi”, *Religioni, dialogo, integrazione*, Roma 2013, pp.57-70.

*ciation in Italy*” was founded in 1994 at the al-Huda Mosque of Rome, Centocelle. The Association brings together immigrants of different nationalities. The “*Union of Muslims in Italy*” was born in 2007 around Abdulaziz Khounati, *imâm* of the “Mosque of Peace” Corso Giulio Cesare in Turin. The C.I.M.L. (*Islamic Cultural Center of Milan and Lombardia*) which is situated in Milan, split into two parts when a group of its members separated and founded *The Islamic Cultural Institute*, in 1988. The CO.RE.IS (*Islamic Italian Religious Community*), which gathers predominantly Italian native Muslims, was founded in Milan in 1993 as the A.I.I.I. (*Italian Association for Information on Islam*), in 1997, but later took on a new status and a new name as “*Islamic Italian Religious Community*”. “*The Islamic Union in the West (UIO) - World Islamic Call Society (WICS)*”, was probably the first Islamic organization to have been formed in Italy, in 1947. The AMI (*Association of Italian Muslims*), established in Naples in 1982, gathers Muslims around the figure of Ali Mo‘allim Hussen Italian citizen of Somali origin. U.M.I. (*Union of Italian Muslims*), collects some Muslims around the figure of Adel Smith, famous for his campaign against the display of crucifixes in schools. The “*Islamic Cultural Association*”, founded informally in the early 1990s by a small group of immigrants from Egypt, was established as an autonomous body by a public act of 1998.

Groups of Shiite Muslims are also present in Italy. They are often supported by the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Holy See, as Ahl al Bayt, while the “*Khoja*” group, which refers to the Aga Khan Ismaili Shiism is an independent body and has autonomous financial resources.

There is also a large presence of Sufi brotherhoods such as the one of the heirs of Hazrat Inayat Khan, the *Sufi International Order and the International Sufi Movement*, which has been present in Italy since 1995. The *Tariqa Tijaniyya*, which has been present in Italy since 1984, is connected to the main masters Tijani Egypt and the Maghreb. The *Muridiyya* is a highly developed system of Sufi brotherhoods in Senegal. This brotherhood is organized in small units called *dâ’ira* (circle) present in several parts of the country, as the centers of Pontevico (Cre-

mona), Bovezzo (Brescia), Zingonia (Bergamo). However the Italian *dā'iras* are not federated. The *Jama'at al-al-Fayda Tijaniyya*, founded in 1931 in Senegal, is less relevant, in Italy, among the Senegalese, than the Muridiyya. The *Tariqats Naqshbandiyya Haqqāniyya-to-'Aliyya*, is led by 'Abd al-Wahid Pallavicini, who, in 1980, received the permission to conduct, as a teacher, sheikh, an independent branch of the Ahmadiyya Idrīsiya in Europe. The *Zahuri Gudri Shahi Sufi Khanqah*, is linked with Gudri Shahi of Ajmer in India. The *Tariqats Burhaniya*, appeared in Italy in the early 80s in Rome, where it now has about thirty members. A second organized community is located in Naples, while other members are also present in Veneto, in Bologna and in the Milan area. The Order of *Jerrabi-Halveti*, was founded in Italy thanks to the work of Gabriele Mandel (1924-2010) and brings together in Milan men and women whose vision of Islam is characterized by a strong interest in the mystical world of the Sufis, while the *Layennes* collects Muslim mystics in a brotherhood of Cape Verdeans and Senegalese immigrants who meet in private homes.

There are also several other nationwide associations as well as modern Muslim movements, such as *Jama'at al-Tabligh* founded by Muhammad Ilyas (1885-1944) in India that brings together groups of Muslim immigrants who organize the *da'wa* moving in small communities from one region to another and it is present in some major cities of northern Italy. There are also other major fundamentalist movements, such as the *Milli Görüs*, *Jamaat-i-Islami* and the *Muslim Brothers*, which are represented in Italy with a good number of followers<sup>18</sup>. On the moderate side is the *Hizmet* Movement of Fetuhullah Gülen which pays special attention to interreligious dialogue, mostly practised at the "Istituto Tevere" in Rome. One of the main Muslim women's organizations is the ACMID-WOMAN (*Association of the Community of Moroccan Women in Italy*).

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<sup>18</sup> For more details see ZANNINI, F., *Ahmed il mio vicino di casa, guida alla conoscenza dell'Islam*, Ancona 2002, pp. 13-22

There are also other groups who claim to be Muslims and which are not always accepted as such especially by the Sunni community. Among these are the *Alevi* and *Bekhtashi*, present in small groups or individuals scattered throughout the country.

The Islamic presence in Italy is also characterized by a plurality of micro-organizations of which can not be given an accurate and complete figure.

In this context, many Muslims and Muslim organizations from Italy realize the current need for a united and cohesive structure at the national level, that would be broadly representative. However, this goal has not been accomplished because of national fragmentation of Muslim communities and their atomistic trend<sup>19</sup>. In addition, no serious attempt to launch such a process of unification has ever been made consistently. Some attempts in this direction have taken place, both at local and at institutional level, but local groups and associations that handle mosques and cultural centers are still managed autonomously without necessarily adhering to any national Muslim organization.

## 5. Religious rights and places of worship

The percentage of persons of Muslim origin in Italy has raised a number of practical questions that require policy responses: from the issue of religious schools to the creation of Muslim cemeteries. In fact, since the Italian Constitution guarantees religious freedom,<sup>20</sup> local permission to open mosques, to have *halâl*<sup>21</sup> shops and butchers,

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<sup>19</sup> See GUOLO, R., "Le tensioni latenti nell'Islam italiano", in SAINT-BLANCAT, C., (ed.) *L'Islam in Italia. Una presenza plurale*, Roma 1999, pp. 159-176.

<sup>20</sup> Art. 19 of the Italian Constitution, and the Art. 8 states that all religions are equal before the law and may organize themselves freely as long as their practices do not violate Italian law.

<sup>21</sup> The Arabic word, which means "permissible", is adopted by the *shari'a* with the meaning of "lawful" (the contrary is *harâm*: "unlawful") and most frequently refers to food that is permissible according to Islamic law. On the matter see: Q. 2:172, 2:173, 5:1, 5:3, 5:4 5:5, 6:121.

special places in the cemetery and other faculties have been given, not without debates and opposition on the part of some Italians. However the fragmentation of the Muslim society in Italy, the question of the leadership (*imâms*) of the Muslim communities, the possibility of having Islamic education in public schools, the creation of Islamic private schools<sup>22</sup>, are problems yet to be solved.

Excluding the three main mosques located in Rome, Catania and Milan, most of the places of worship, which often qualify as cultural centers, are located in confined spaces, mostly warehouses and basements used for prayer. They are sometimes controlled and financed by private individuals or small groups, which determine the structure and preaching. These places of worship, which often are not even qualified as such, are very diverse. Places of gathering of some Sufi brotherhoods, which are sometimes even private house where they perform their specific rites, such as *dhikr* or *samâ'*, there is no real official figure for the number of Muslim places of worship spread throughout country. However, various studies promoted in Italy, indicate approximate figures that are around the 700 units. In reality there are myriads of these premises scattered here and there in large cities and on the whole Italian territory.

The increasing number of Muslim prayer rooms or homemade mosques has recently captured the attention of government officials because of their being out of control as far as financial support and leadership is concerned. Their religious leadership in several cases is represented by fundamentalist elements, which are often legalistic, moralistic and anti-Western. They are afraid that contact with western people will produce a decadence of moral values and religious rules. Most of these are often members of movements and follow ideologies and traditions, which are not accepted even in their own countries<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> See: FERRARI, A., "Brevi note in tema di Islam, scuola privata e Costituzione", in *Annali del Dipartimento di Scienze Giuridico-Sociali e dell'Amministrazione dell'Università degli Studi del Molise*, Campobasso, 4(2002), vol. I., pp. 19-34.

<sup>23</sup> See GUOLO, R., "Sociologia degli attori musulmani: *leadership* islamiste in Italia", *Saggi: Minoranze tra identità e sincretismo Religioni e Società*, 50, Firenze 2004, pp. 8-12.

They try to spread their anti-Western attitude in a society which is often much more open to dialogue and understanding.

## 6. Muslim Youth

After the first wave of immigration a new generations of Muslims is now growing up in Italy. It comprises between 100.000 and 250.000 thousand young people with an age ranging from early teens up to twenty or twenty-five, mostly the children of the first generation of Muslim immigrants, born in Italy and who have completed a large part of their schooling in our country.

The emergence of this new generation of Muslims who have lived between the two worlds and is in search of a clear new identity is one of the main issues the Muslim community as well as the Italian society at large has to face. This generation of Muslims, born in Italy or arrived here at a young age, is in a unique situation compared that of their parents. Their language and culture are essentially those of the place where they were born, where they grew up, and where they were at school<sup>24</sup>. While at home with the family they use the language of the parents, Italian is the language they know best and they deepen and develop in their training program<sup>25</sup>. However the problems come rather in terms of religion, especially in its external, visible and recognizable manifestations to others. In Italy in fact, young Muslim people have to make their personal choice, while in their country of origin, where being Muslim is indeed the normal situation of the majority of the population such a choice would not have being taken. This issue is not

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<sup>24</sup> See FRISINA, A., "Giovani musulmani d'Italia. Trasformazioni socio-culturali e domande di cittadinanza," in CESARI, J. – PACINI, A., (ed.) *Giovani musulmani in Europa. Tipologie di appartenenza religiosa e dinamiche socio-culturali*, Torino 2005, pp. 139-160.

<sup>25</sup> See FRISINA, A., "Musulmani italiani, tra le altre cose. Tattiche e strategie identitarie di giovani figli di immigrati musulmani," in CESARI, J. – PACINI, A., (ed.) *Giovani musulmani in Europa. Tipologie di appartenenza religiosa e dinamiche socio-culturali*, Torino 2005, pp. 161-189.

a minor one: here young people have to face the dominant secularism and religious pluralism that are typical of Italian society.

In order to live their religious experience in this new context they created associations such as the “*Young Muslims of Italy*”, which is often open to a public which was not originally a target of the association, such as young Christian Arabs or secular youth. This opening will result in the monthly publication of a few pages written by them and included in the weekly “*Vita*”. The supplement is called “*Yalla Italia*” (which in Arabic means “Let’s go, Italy”) and aims to give voice to this new generation who have a lot to say but who do not know the way they might be listened to by the surrounding society.

They do not want to be the “representatives of an ethnic group or a particular religion as parts manufactured in series, produced by any kind of evil or sophisticated assembly line.” They want to be “normal people, and at the same time extraordinary creatures, filled with sensitivity and intelligence, who bear the past and yet are constantly open to the future.”<sup>26</sup> These sons of second or third generation immigrants, including some who speak better Italian than Arabic or other original languages, are currently developing a silent but crucial confrontation with their parents and with their origins, accepting the fact that every day they have to make new choices and share the difficult but extraordinary adventure that brings a young person to become a mature woman or a mature man in Italian society, whose values, objectives, general tendencies and trends he or she shares and at the who same time wishes to keep a criticism based on the values of the religion he or she professes.

## 7. The Muslims and the state

The Italian Constitution guarantees both religious freedom and a bilateral relationship between the State and Religions or faith com-

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<sup>26</sup> BRANCA, P. “Jeunes Musulmans en Italie: identités plurielles”, from the text of a Lecture held at Tunis in 2010.

munities<sup>27</sup>. This has been historically expressed in the form of the so-called “Concordat”, established with the Catholic Church on February 11<sup>th</sup> 1929, as part of the Lateran Pacts which put an end to the issue between Italy and the Holy See after the events of 1870 with the fall of Rome and its proclamation as the capital of Italy. Fifty years later some modifications in the Treaty seemed necessary due to the passage of time and the socio-economic changes this had produced. Consequently on the February 18<sup>th</sup> 1984, the Republic of Italy and the Vatican both signed the Revised Agreement of the 1929 Lateran Pacts, which was prepared by a Bilateral Commission. This came into effect on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1985 in Italian legislation (Law No. 121) after being ratified first by both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and then by the Holy See on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1985.<sup>28</sup>

Immediately after this new agreement with the Catholic Church, the Italian State started to work on special agreements, which were to be signed between the Republic and all religious confessions in Italy<sup>29</sup>. This was already foreseen in the abovementioned Art. 8 of the Constitution: “(1) *All religious denominations shall be equally free before the law. (2) Religious denominations which are other than the Catholic Church shall have the right to organize themselves according to their own by-laws; provided that they are not in conflict with the Italian legal system. (3) Their relations with the State shall be regulated by law on the basis of agreements with their respective representatives.*”<sup>30</sup> According to this article, the institution of this agreement (*intesa*) allows for “*non-catholic*”

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<sup>27</sup> Art. 7 and 8.

<sup>28</sup> For details see CARDIA, C., *La Riforma del Concordato*, Torino 1980.

<sup>29</sup> In 1984 the first such *agreement* granted specific benefits to the Waldensian Church. Similar *agreements* extended similar benefits to the Adventists and Assembly of God, Jews, Baptists, Lutherans, to the Buddhist Union and Jehovah’s Witnesses as well as to Hindus, Orthodox Churches and other faith communities.

<sup>30</sup> Art. 8: “*Tutte le confessioni religiose sono egualmente libere davanti alla legge. Le confessioni religiose diverse dalla cattolica hanno diritto di organizzarsi secondo i propri statuti, in quanto non contrastino con l’ordinamento giuridico italiano. I loro rapporti con lo Stato sono regolati per legge sulla base di intese con le relative rappresentanze.*”

faith-communities to obtain similar rights and privileges as those of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>31</sup>

An agreement (*intesa*) with the Italian State can only be requested by those faith communities, which have been officially recognized and awarded legal status according to law N° 1159 of 24 June 1929 (the so-called *law of admitted cults*). This law, which has been reinterpreted in the light of Italy's post-war Constitution, allows for other non-Catholic religions to practice as long as their rites are not in opposition to public order or ethics. They can be awarded legal status by presidential decree on the basis of a recommendation from the Ministry of Home Affairs, which also has to approve the nomination of these non-catholic ministers of religions.<sup>32</sup> Since then, the various initiatives introduced in Parliament to modernize this law and to introduce a “*law for religious freedom*” - which would replace the so-called *law of admitted cults* - have so far failed.<sup>33</sup>

During the last twenty years, some Muslim Organizations in Italy have attempted to stipulate such agreements<sup>34</sup> with the Italian State.

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<sup>31</sup> For an official view on religious freedom in Italy, see PRESIDENZA DEL CONSIGLIO DEI MINISTRI AND MINISTERO DELL'INTERNO, *L'attuazione della libertà religiosa in Italia: Note essenziali di legislazione e dottrina*, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> For details see: PARLATO, V., (ed.) *Principio pattizio e realtà religiose minoritarie*, Torino 1995.

<sup>33</sup> See: Norme sulla libertà religiosa e abrogazione della legislazione sui culti ammessi, d.d.l. N° 2531-1576-1902-A.

<sup>34</sup> See CILARDO, A., *Il diritto islamico e il sistema giuridico italiano. Le bozze di intesa tra la Repubblica italiana e le associazioni islamiche italiane*, Napoli 2002, pp. 211-238. See also ZILIO-GRANDI, I., *Il dialogo delle leggi: Ordinamento giuridico Italiano e tradizione giuridica islamica*, Venezia 2006; CCAI, R., - SENINI, A. G., - VASINI, F. Ed., “l'Islam in Italia: bibliografia giuridica”, FERRARI, S., (ed.) *L'Islam in Europa. Lo statuto giuridico delle comunità musulmane*, Bologna 1996. VINCENZO, A. A. al-Waliyy, “L'intesa tra lo Stato e la Comunità islamica”, in VINCENZO, A. A. al-Waliyy, (ed.) *L'Islam e l'Italia*, Milano 1996, pp. 139-154; ACCIAI, R., - SENINI, A. G., - VASINI, F. Ed., “l'Islam in Italia: bibliografia giuridica”, FERRARI, S., (ed.) *L'Islam in Europa. Lo statuto giuridico delle comunità musulmane*, Bologna 1996, pp. 287-304. FERRARI, A., *Islam in Europa / Islam in Italia tra diritto e società*, il Mulino, Bologna 2008.

So far, none of them have been successful<sup>35</sup> due to the lack of hierarchical organization and institutional leadership among Muslim Communities<sup>36</sup>. This has also prevented them from obtaining official recognition as legal personalities according to the law, except for the case of the *Islamic Cultural Center of Italy* (C.I.C.I.).<sup>37</sup> Because of the competition among Muslim associations and ethnic groups for the social and political hegemony over all the Muslim Communities present in Italy, a federation of the rival Muslim organizations in Italy is still being prevented.

Nevertheless, because of the religious freedom guaranteed by the Italian Constitution,<sup>38</sup> local permission has been granted to open mosques, to have *halâl*<sup>39</sup> shops and butchers, special places in the cemetery and other facilities, not without debates and opposition on the part of some Italians.

## 8. In search of common values

The fragmentation of Muslim society in Italy as well as the necessity to giving answers to Muslim claims relating places of worship, religious education in public schools, the creation of Islamic private schools, as well as the security problem due to the possible infiltration of terrorism and illegal practices in a world which could not be always under

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<sup>35</sup> Among the reasons not to be overlooked is the lack of a hierarchical organization and institutional leadership among Muslim Communities, which prevents official recognition as legal personalities (Law N° 1159 of June the 24<sup>th</sup> 1929).

<sup>36</sup> GUOLO, R., "Attori sociali e processi di rappresentanza nell'Islam italiano", SAINT-BLANCAT, C., (ed.) *L'Islam in Italia. Una presenza plurale*, Roma 1999, pp. 67-92.

<sup>37</sup> This is the only Islamic Organization which has been awarded legal status in 1974 is the C.I.C.I. (*Islamic Cultural Center of Italy*).

<sup>38</sup> See: Art. 8 and Art. 19 of the Italian Constitution.

<sup>39</sup> The Arabic word, which means "permissible", is adopted by the *shari'a* with the meaning of "lawful" (the contrary is *harâm*: "unlawful") and most frequently refers to food that is permissible according to Islamic law. On the matter see: Q. 2:172, 2:173, 5:1, 5:3, 5:4 5:5, 6:121.

control, led the Italian Minister of Home Affairs to create, in 2005, a Council for Italian Islam,<sup>40</sup> whose main task was to express opinions and make suggestions on the issues concerned with the welfare of Muslims in Italy and their integration into the national society in full respect of the laws and the Italian Constitution.

One of the aims of this Council has always been the creation of an Italian expression of the Islamic tradition and the building up of a Muslim community which should be open to the society they live in and integrate itself into it within the frame of its laws and regulations, with full respect for the national identity and the values of the country. It was thanks to the debate within this Council that some of its members suggested that there was a need to draw a sort of chart of the main values the different Muslim communities in Italy would accept in order to open a dialogue among them. Then, under the impulse of the Minister of Home Affairs, the question of tolerance and dialogue with the other religious communities and congregations came about and it was in this context and within the Council itself that the suggestion of having a “Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration” came out.

In fact, the decision to elaborate a “Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration”, was finally taken by the Italian Minister of Home Affairs in the course of 2006 with the main purpose of summarizing and making explicit the fundamental principles that regulate the collective life in Italy with particular attention to the immigrants, and to spread light on the problems involved with their integration into

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<sup>40</sup> Decree of September the 10<sup>th</sup> 2005 (Decreto istitutivo della Consulta), published in the Gazzetta Ufficiale, 26 Oct. 2005. On the Council for Italian Islam see: PABA, P., *Council for Italian Islam : contribution to the conference of the Ministers of Interior “Dialogue of Cultures and religions”*, Vienna, May the 19<sup>th</sup> 2005. Half of the members of the Council are Italian citizens while the others come from Muslim countries such as Albania, Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Senegal, Syria, Somalia and Tunisia. In the setting up of such a Council particular attention has been given to the presence of minorities, women and youth. Among the organizations represented in the Council, the Ismaili Community, the CO.RE.IS (*Islamic Religious Community*), the World Muslim League, the U.C.O.I.I. (Union of the Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy) and the U.I.O. (Islamic Union in the West, section of World Islamic Call Society) are the most relevant.

Italian society. For this purpose the Home minister set up an *ad hoc* Scientific Committee<sup>41</sup> composed of specialists both in juridical and in Islamic Studies.<sup>42</sup>

In carrying out its mandate, the Committee started its work with some advisory meetings with components of the above-mentioned Council for Italian Islam. There then followed a series of hearings of individuals and delegations involving both Italian citizens and immigrants of different origins. The composition of the delegations has always been such as to guarantee a high level of ethnic, religious, social and professional pluralism. Large space was given to the representative of the religious communities, such as the Catholic and Protestant Churches, the so called Evangelical Churches, the Buddhist and Hindu Unions, the Sikh Associations, the Union of the Jewish Communities and a particular attention was given to the variegated and pluralistic world of Italian Islam with several Muslim institutions and organizations.

This way of proceeding has allowed the Committee to formulate a hypothesis of the text of the “Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration”, already discussed and approved by the representative of the various Religions and Associations of immigrants present in Italy in the course of the above mentioned hearings, with the result that the final text, elaborated with reference to the contributions received during the hearing by the members of the Committee, found a natural acceptance by the above mentioned Religious groups and immigrants’ associations.

Finally the document prepared by the Scientific Committee was approved with a Ministerial Decree on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007.

The Charter of Values explains and clarifies the principles of the Italian Constitution and the main European and international Charters of human rights, but it focuses especially on those problems that

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<sup>41</sup> Appointed by the Minister on October 13<sup>th</sup> 2006.

<sup>42</sup> The members of the Scientific Committee are: Prof. Carlo Cardia (Roma Tre University), Prof. Roberta Aluffi Beck Peccoz (Torino University), Prof. On. Khaled Fouad Allam (Trieste University), Prof. Adnane Mokrani (Gregorian University), Prof. Francesco Zannini (Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Study).

multiculturalism poses to western society. In this respect the principles of democracy and secularism, on which such regulations are based, constitute solid guarantees to meet the requirements of the various communities of immigrants and to respect the religious freedom of whoever plans to settle in the national territory.

Within this background, the Charter of Values tries to clarify the concept of citizenship and to find out the best way of cohabitation among different national, ethnic and religious communities, which, in the last years, have started to take root in the Italian territory.

There must be a feeling among the natives and the immigrants that: “*Living in the same territory means to be full-fledged citizens of that land and acquire, with loyalty and coherence, common values and share responsibilities.*”<sup>43</sup>

The document starts presenting Italy as a “*community of persons and values*” and by drawing a brief picture of its cultural tradition,<sup>44</sup> where the Constitution of 1947 represents for the Italians the peak of their historical path in formulating the main values on which is built their society.

The text, then, with the other European and international Charters on Human Rights, put the stress on the effort towards “*the realization of an international order based on the respect of human rights, equality and solidarity among peoples*”<sup>45</sup> which creates also a sound spirit of welcoming other populations and cultures. In this way Italy is presented as a country with an ancient history and culture, as well as with sound civil and religious traditions, and it cannot be considered by anyone “*no man’s land*” or a “*free port*”.

The ticklish issue of the integration of those who are coming to settle in Italy is faced in the light of the key principle of the absolute value of the human person, which makes this country “*committed to*

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<sup>43</sup> Art. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Introduction of the Charter: “*Italy as a Community of Persons and Values*”, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph.

*ensuring that every person, since his/her arrival in Italy, is guaranteed the respect of his/her fundamental rights, regardless of his/her gender, ethnicity, religion and social condition. At the same time, though, anyone living in Italy must respect the values on which Italian society is based, the rights of the others, and the duties of solidarity envisaged by the law*.<sup>46</sup>

The positive attitude of the Charter toward the Muslim is part of the general respect Italian people have for all religions and it is shown in particular through their rejection of “*every expression of xenophobia, which can be expressed in turn as Islamophobia or prejudices towards populations coming from other parts of the World*”.<sup>47</sup>

However there are some delicate issues with respect to the Muslim that have not been overlooked.

One of the most difficult matters the Charter deals with is the one of “family and new generations” which often creates tensions in the process of integration among cultures and traditions, particularly between the eastern and western ones. Here the Charter deals with some sensitive issues, as far as the Islamic point of view is concerned, such as the family structure: “*Marriage is based on equal rights and responsibilities of husband and wife and it is, therefore, monogamic. Monogamy unites the lives of two persons thus making them both responsible for what they realize together, starting from the bringing up of their children. Italy forbids polygamy, it being adverse to women’s rights. This is also in line with the principles affirmed by European institutions*”.<sup>48</sup> In fact, in this passage polygamy, whose permission is stated in the Qur’ân<sup>49</sup> itself in

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<sup>46</sup> Art. 1.

<sup>47</sup> Art. 28.

<sup>48</sup> Art. 17.

<sup>49</sup> “*If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, Marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.*” (Q. 4:3).

In fact in this text the conditions to be met to make polygamy legal are rather difficult to be applied, particularly in our modern society, especially when these conditions are enforced by another verse which recites: “*Ye are never able to be fair and just as between*

a context of the social solidarity with the widows and the orphans, is presented within the framework of the positive aspects of monogamy. In fact, some Muslim countries, like Turkey and Tunisia, have already forbidden polygamy and Morocco has made it very hard to be pursued.<sup>50</sup> In others is allowed only under the obligatory condition of informing the first wife and it is subordinated to her written and official approval and the majority of the Islamic organizations have never asked officially the legitimization of polygamy in the West.

Another issue that emerges in the chapter on “family and new generations” is freedom in marriage, where it states: “*The basis of marriage is the freedom to choose whom to marry, that belongs to the youth*”,<sup>51</sup> where no Muslim will object to the fact that this statement “*entails the prohibition of coercion and forced marriages, or child marriages*”.<sup>52</sup> But still it remains the fact that Muslim marriage undergoes some Qur’anic obstacles such as the disparity of religions, where it is forbidden for a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim<sup>53</sup> and this, in spite of the general acceptance of the “Charter of Values” by all the Muslim organizations, has created some sort of hesitations among some Muslims.<sup>54</sup>

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*women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practice self-restraint, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.*” (Q. 4:129). It seems then to be acceptable for a Muslim to see in monogamy the natural shape of the family organization as an expression of the equality between man and woman, as suggested in the Qur’ân: “*O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women;- reverence Allah, through whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah ever watches over you*” (Q. 4:1).

<sup>50</sup> Within the provisions of the new Moroccan Family Law (*Mudawwana*) approved in 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Art. 18.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Q. 2:22, 5:5, 60:10.

<sup>54</sup> As it appears in the press-release of the U.CO.I.I. July 14 2007: “*The Charter of Values, does not substitute the principles of the Constitution and, since it is not a sacred book, we think that in the future can be improved, adapted and modified, though so far it represents a valid and indispensable starting point, in which both native citizens and*

The matter of equality between man and woman and among human beings in general, grafted in the presentation of the family given in the charter leads also to the refusal of separation between sexes, as stated: “*The principle of equality disagrees with the requests of separating men and women, boys and girls, in public services and in the workplace because of their religious beliefs*”.<sup>55</sup> Even in this case the process of implementing this new attitude will ask a great capacity of dialogue to overcome a practice due often to cultural traditions, but also linked, in some cases, to religious precepts.

The chapter on “*secularism and religious freedom*” deals with the issue of the relationship between State and religion and is in a way in many aspects dissimilar to the way it is dealt with in some other countries. The two main element that constitute the Italian concept of “secularism” are its welcoming attitude and its positive approach to religion as it is clearly stated in the text: “*The Italian secular State recognizes the positive contribution of the different religions to the collectivity and has the intention to enhance the moral and spiritual legacy of each one of them. Italy promotes inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue in order to increase the respect for human dignity and contribute to overcoming prejudices and intolerance*”,<sup>56</sup> provided that religion and convictions are not “*a reason for discrimination in social life*”<sup>57</sup> and that they do not motivate any “*type of violence, incitement to violence*”.<sup>58</sup> However secularism implies, besides the right “*to spread it by convincing others, to create religious associations*”,<sup>59</sup> religious freedom and liberty of conscience which “*entail*

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*immigrants, believers and non-believers recognize themselves*”, which in Italian sounds as follows: “*La Carta dei valori, non sostituisce, dunque, i principi costituzionali, e non essendo testo sacro, riteniamo che in futuro la si possa migliorare, integrare e modificare; oggi costituisce un valido e imprescindibile punto di partenza in cui tutti, cittadini e immigrati, credenti e non, si riconoscono*”.

<sup>55</sup> Art.19.

<sup>56</sup> Art. 21.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Art. 23.

*the right to have or not to have a religious faith, to practice it or not, to change religion*"<sup>60</sup>

The positive and dialogical attitude of the Italian secularism also appears when it is stated that: "*on the basis of its religious and cultural tradition, Italy respects the symbols and the signs of all religions. No one can say to be offended by the signs and symbols of a religion different from his/her own*",<sup>61</sup> and when it suggests that "*it is convenient to educate the youth to respect the other's religious beliefs, without finding in them elements of division*",<sup>62</sup> a statement which is reinforced in the following article where we read: "*In Italy there are no restrictions on people's attire, as long as it is chosen freely and it is not detrimental to his/her dignity. It is not accepted to cover the face because this impedes the person's recognition and hinders establishing relations with the others*".<sup>63</sup> In this context the lengthy and at time harsh debate on the "Islamic veil" or the presence of the "Cross" in public places seems to have been completely overcome.

In its last part which deal with "*Italy's international commitment*", the Charter stresses "*Italy's policy is in favour of peace and respect of all peoples in order to promote coexistence of nations, and to defeat war and*

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, It is well known that Saudi Arabia, abstained from the final vote, because of its refusal of the article 18 that recognizes the freedom of conscience, included the change of religion. In fact, to change religion, "apostasy", is a criminal offense in Islam: "The Islamic law does not expect the possibility for the Muslim to change religion. Moreover this is forbidden and considered apostasy (*ridda*). The apostate (*murtadd*) is considered an enemy of Islam and socially dead and is generally sentenced to death unless he comes back to the original faith. Though this is not fully supported by the Qur'anic verses, which refer to the matter, the punishment is largely applied on the bases of an *hadith*, which recites: "Kill whomever changes religion". The matter was dealt in the following Declarations of Human Rights in Islam such as the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI, August 5, 1990) and the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights (UIDHR, 19 September 1981), without a clear support of the above-mentioned right.

<sup>61</sup> Art. 25.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Art. 26.

terrorism”<sup>64</sup> and, quoting the text of Italian Constitution,<sup>65</sup> its rejection of “*war as an instrument to solve international controversies, weapons of mass destruction, and any form of torture or inhumane and degrading punishment*”,<sup>66</sup> which seems to have had the approval of all the Muslim individuals and Islamic organizations so far consulted. Some problems may, however, at times arise with the issue of the death penalty,<sup>67</sup> particularly with reference to the statement: “*The abolition of the death penalty is an objective of civilization, which makes the respect for life win over the spirit of revenge*”<sup>68</sup> because of the Qur’anic provisions on the matter,<sup>69</sup> but it can be argued that the Qur’ân shows a general respect for life as in Q. 6:151.<sup>70</sup> As for the other delicate issue, that is the solution of “*the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict*”,<sup>71</sup> the Charter simply reaffirms the long-held Italian foreign policy “*in favour of a solution for the coexistence of different peoples in the region, first of all Israelis and Palestinians in the context of two States and two democracies*.”<sup>72</sup>

The Charter then concludes remembering that “*Together with the other European Countries, at the international level Italy promotes the respect of dignity and human rights everywhere, and favours the achievement of political democracy as a form of government that allows the participation of citizens in the common good and the growing respect of the person’s rights*”.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Art. 27.

<sup>65</sup> Art. 11.

<sup>66</sup> Art. 28.

<sup>67</sup> The Art. 29 recites: “*Together with the other European Countries, Italy abolished the death penalty and works in the international fora to promote the abolition of capital punishment in the countries that still have it*”.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, in the case of a murder: Q. 2:178.

<sup>70</sup> See Q. 6:151: “*Whether open or secret; take not life, which Allah hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom*” and also Q. 5:32.

<sup>71</sup> Art 30.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Art. 31.

## 9. The follow up

In order to implement the Charter, the members of the Scientific Council,<sup>74</sup> have been requested, among other tasks, to promote dialogue and understanding among the different Muslim groups and organizations in order to pave the way for their institutional dialogue with the Italian Government. Certainly the fact that the Charter is a result of sessions of long and deep dialogue with Muslim individuals and organizations, and that the Muslims have generally approved it is a good starting point that may lead to a deeper dialogue.

As a matter of fact, some Muslim members of the *Council for Italian Islam*, representing both Shiites and Sunnites, reached an agreement on a “Declaration of intent”<sup>75</sup> to set up a plan for organizing Muslims who live in Italy into a “*Federation of Italian Islam*” and it is worth noticing that this Declaration not only aims at “uniting all the existing Muslim organizations, associations and cultural centers who share the principles of the Italian Constitution and of the Charter of Values”<sup>76</sup>, but also at “promoting interreligious dialogue” which is considered as an “essential instrument for coexistence among people of every belief”<sup>77</sup>. In the last few years there has been a sort of reshaping within some Muslim associations and organizations in order to create links between them. Yet any real attempt to build up a united federation seems to have failed.

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<sup>74</sup> The Scientific Council for the implementation of the “Charter of Values of Citizenship and Integration”, created through the Decree of the Italian Ministry of Home Affairs, April the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007, is composed of the same members of the previous Scientific Committee.

<sup>75</sup> Signed by a group of Italian Muslim in front of the Minister of Home Affairs on March the 13<sup>th</sup> 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Consiglio Scientifico per l’attuazione e la diffusione della Carta dei Valori della Cittadinanza e dell’Integrazione, *Relazione sull’Islam in Italia*, Ministero dell’Interno, Roma 2008, p. 66 (original text: “*aggregare le organizzazioni musulmane esistenti, associazioni, centri culturali, che condividano i principi della Costituzione italiana e della Carta dei valori*”)

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* (original text: “*promuovere il dialogo interreligioso come strumento essenziale per la coesistenza tra uomini di ogni fede*”)

## Conclusions

Trying to sum up this reflection we must remember that the majority of Muslims are immigrants with a foreign passport, who also aspire to have their religious rights and traditions recognized and accepted by the majority of the population. At the same time, it is also important to remember that Italy has had a long history of relations with Islam and the Arab world and that Islam has been for a certain period part of Italy itself. All this has had a profound influence on its culture in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance up to the present days. So it is through a discovery of this common cultural background that we can find an healthy starting point for a cultural and religious dialogue. It is on the basis of this common heritage that Muslims will be able to find a way for an Italian expression of their Islam and will be well accepted by the Italians, particularly if they try to cooperate in the development of Italian society through their specific contribution.

Intellectuals and young people in particular will be those who can ensure good relations with Italian society, and will enable Islam to be recognized for its values and not for the ideological and political use some Muslims make of it. This is the only way to overcome negative stereotypes present in Italian society start a genuine dialogue with institutions and religions in Italy.

On the other hand it is evident from what has been stated above that the world of Islam, in Italy, is expressed through diverse and varied facets that require specific ways of approach to each one of the different communities and organizations of Muslims on the territory. The same institute of "*Intesa*"<sup>78</sup> has not yet been applied to the Muslims because of the above motioned lack of unity among them. Only a gradual cultural change in the relations between the various Islamic organizations in Italy will lead to promote the legislative process to the conclusion of a legal agreement between the Islamic community and the Italian State, which is the only way Muslims can have all the facilities they need to

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<sup>78</sup> See above.

live their religious experience, as well as to regulate the mosques and the training of imams.

There is still a long way to go; there are many divisions; but as we have seen, attempts are already being made to try to move towards these goals.

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# Interfaith relationship in Egypt misunderstood by European media and activists

Cornelis Hulsman

## 1. Introduction

The Egyptian revolution of January 25, 2011, has deeply divided Egypt between Islamists and non-Islamists. Divisions also existed in the Mubarak period but the revolution made these divisions sharper. Added to the ills of Egypt were a weakened state and attempts from outside forces to support one political faction over the other.

Cultural changes in the past four years were abrupt. Egypt went from the rule of Hosni Mubarak to a period of rule of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) during which the Muslim Brotherhood rapidly grew in strength, to the rule of Muslim Brotherhood leader Muhammad Mursi as well as his fall on June 30, 2013 when he was deposed by his Minister of Defense 'Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisis. His successor was interim president, 'Adli Mansur, who in turn was replaced by President 'Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi after elections.

Table 1:

Rulers	Political characteristics	Period
Army officers turning politicians, Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak	Authoritarian, seeking to neutralize opposing powers in society	1952-until president Mubarak forced to step down, February 11, 2011

Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) with the Muslim Brothers growing in strength	Interim period, road map with elections first and then constitution. Negotiations between SCAF and Muslim Brotherhood	February 11, 2011 until June 30, 2012, installment of newly elected president
Mursī presidency	First Muslim Brotherhood president, Islamists occupying key positions in government	June 30, 2012 – July 3, 2013, Muhammad Mursī first elected president of Egypt, deposed following massive demonstrations against him.
Interim president 'Adli Mansūr and President Al-Sisi	Anti-Islamist, mix of old guard around Mubarak and liberals	July 3, 2013 – today

I am taking the periods of the interim president and President al-Sīsī together since there is no abrupt break between the two.

Europe has had difficulties to grasp the rapid changes taking place. Former UN Secretary General Boutros Ghaly told Egyptian Ambassador to the Netherlands, Mahmūd Samī (Mahmoud Samy), that in one year more changes were made than in ten years during the years of Mubarak.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Sources for this paper

I first came to Egypt in 1978 as a student. I studied development sociology at Leiden University with a focus on the Middle East, and have been living in Egypt since 1994. I have been following media reporting in Egypt since then and frequently compared media reporting in Europe with findings in Egypt and documented this in the Religious

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting with Ambassador Mahmoud Samy, May 8, 2012.

News Service from the Arab World, which in 2003 was renamed Arab-West Report. I have also interacted with leading Egyptians, religious leaders, scholars and government officials but also frequently toured around the country. Last but not least, I have worked since 2006 with over 130 student interns and encouraged them to research contemporary developments and report about this in Arab-West Report. My paper will thus be based on personal experiences and references will be mostly made to Arab-West Report.

### **3. Western reporting about Christians in Egypt**

One can distinguish three main categories of Western reporting about Christians in Egypt:

– Non-religious media, showing relatively little interest in religious issues and if they did, it is, depending on the political color of the outlet, either neutral or used as a tool to show a negative side of Islam or the Muslim world.

– Non-religious activists, strong interest in freedom of expression, human rights and democratization. They have larger impact on non-religious media than Christian activists and media.

– Christian media and activists, showing a great interest in Christianity in Egypt, often mixed with negative sentiments about Islam as a religion, generalized speaking about a persecution of Christians and voicing the opinions of Coptic human rights activists, often taking their claims for granted. Christian activists often express the conviction that Western non-religious media do not report enough about Christians in Western media.

#### **3.1 Non-religious media**

Jenna Ferrecchia showed that from the mid-1950s, the English-language press showed an increasing interest in the Coptic population in Egypt and even began “to inflate the number of Copts in the popula-

tion, in comparison to the Egyptian census. Beginning with the presidency of Anwar Sadat in 1970 and the consecration of Coptic Pope Shenouda in 1971, the prevalence of these articles pertaining to the Coptic population increased.”<sup>2</sup>

The claim of high numbers of Christians is often related to claims of discrimination and persecution. This was well-illustrated when I presented a paper on Coptic population statistics at the European–Arab Conference, “*The Contribution of Religious Minorities to Society*,” University of Vienna, July 1-3, 2013. Berge Traboulsi, assistant professor of History, Religion and Intercultural Studies at Haigazian University, Lebanon, was not in agreement to present actual figures but argued during the conference that “im Orient gelte: wer am lautesten schreie, würde am ehesten auch Gehör in der Politik finden.” Thus, many Christians do not want to accept lower figures because it does not suit their political interests.<sup>3</sup>

Western media, activists but also scholars often go along with the wish of local Christians to present inflated figures. Other scholars do not. Several Western scholars were mentioned in my 2012 report on Christian statistics for MIDEO.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2 Non-religious activists

Non-religious political activists very often go along with the almost standard estimate of Coptic Christians making up 10 % of population,

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<sup>2</sup> FERRECCIA, J., Coptic Population Figures in English Print Media, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 37, March 11, 2012, <http://arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/AW-Rpapers/paper37.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Conference report: [http://etf.univie.ac.at/fakultaet/einzelansicht/article/nachlese-konferenz-beitrag-der-minderheiten-zur-gesellschaftthe-contribution-of-religious/?tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=34368&cHash=7ef5a8c6cbd7ebb675c57876ef895793](http://etf.univie.ac.at/fakultaet/einzelansicht/article/nachlese-konferenz-beitrag-der-minderheiten-zur-gesellschaftthe-contribution-of-religious/?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=34368&cHash=7ef5a8c6cbd7ebb675c57876ef895793).

<sup>4</sup> HULSMAN, C., Discrepancies Between Coptic Statistics in the Egyptian Census and Estimates Provided by the Coptic Orthodox Church, in *MIDEO*, 2012. Also placed in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 52, June 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/discrepancies-between-coptic-statistics-egyptian-census-and-estimates-provided-coptic-orthodox>.

which is higher than the more realistic estimate of 6% of Prof. Philippe Fargues, a demographer who has done extensive research on Coptic population statistics.<sup>5</sup>

A major influence on Western popular beliefs on the Arab World is the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). MEMRI was founded by Yigal Carmon, five years after he ended his 22 years of service in the Israeli military intelligence. It is unlikely that his end of service also was an end of his link to the Israeli military intelligence. MEMRI shows a very partisan selectivity in the information it presents to a Western audience; highlighting extremist statements at times those of their greatest opponents.<sup>6</sup> This, however, presents a caricature of the Arab world, a world full of radicals and extremists but not that the great majority of Egyptians has nothing to do with this.

It is not difficult to counter this one-sided reporting. Brian Whitaker suggested in 2002, that „a group of Arab media companies could get together and publish translations of articles that more accurately reflect the content of their newspapers. It would certainly not be beyond their means. But, as usual, they may prefer to sit back and grumble about the machinations of Israeli intelligence veterans.”<sup>7</sup> Whitaker’s words came true. Arab frustrations are frequently expressed but until now there is still no systematic response in the line of Whitaker’s suggestions.

### 3.3 Christian activists and media

An example of influential Christian activism is Open Doors, started in the Netherlands but now also with branches in the US and other

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> HULSMAN, C., MEMRI: the best defence is an attack, in *Arab-West Report*, week 35, art. 19, November 22, 2002, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2002/week-45/19-memri-best-defence-attack>.

<sup>7</sup> HULSMAN, C., Ennui in responding to malicious propaganda, in *Arab-West Report*, week 19, art. 2, July 8, 2007, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2007/week-19/2-ennui-responding-malicious-propaganda>.

countries. They publish an annual list and map with countries where Christians are persecuted which is similar to Freedom in the World, Freedom House's flagship publication, a comparative assessment of global political rights and civil liberties since 1972.<sup>8</sup> Many of these are Muslim countries. Open Doors claims this is worldwide, the most complete annual research about persecution of Christians.

They make use of researchers from PEW and Freedom House about structures in any particular country that contribute to persecution. Open Doors adds to this its own research, which for countries that score poorly, includes an extensive questionnaire that is filled in by selected experts in a particular country, scholars and experts outside that country. Research is done in five different areas, the private sphere of life, family life, community life, public space and church life. They also look at violent incidents of Christians in a particular country.

The questionnaire is, according to Open Doors, linked to a scientifically based weighting method, adding points to the answers of each question.<sup>9</sup>

Open Doors offers free maps to anyone requesting. Many churches obtain the Open Doors map and put place them on wall boards and ask church members to pray for the persecuted church.

The list and map are not beyond critique. The research is not publicly available. It is not publicly known who the selected experts are. The results are thus not verifiable.

Yet, in Christian circles Open Doors enjoys a very high credibility. Much of this, though not only, is related to founder Anne van der Bijl (born 1928), a strong believing Christian, a good speaker and author

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report-types/freedom-world#.VMt6GdIvQg> (accessed January 20, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.opendoors.nl/vervolgdechristenen/ranglijst-christenvervolging/faq/> (accessed January 30, 2015).

of many books, who did not hesitate to engage in meetings with Islamist and conservative Muslim leaders which has earned him a lot of respect. I met with Anne van der Bijl in the Helnan-Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo in 1995. He was encouraging me to “do something” to support local Christians. For him, it was living for Jesus, pray and do. I was already contemplating the foundation of the Religious News Service from the Arab World, and he encouraged this. This fit into his “doing of things.”

Open Doors is certainly not the only organization focused on the persecution of Christians worldwide. They are, however, one of the largest with around 1000 workers worldwide and receiving annually around 90 million dollar in donations for the persecuted churches<sup>10</sup>, but much of this goes in sustaining their own organization and campaigns they organize.

Open Doors and similar organizations are often not on one line with experts who have a more moderate view of Islam and Muslim-Christian relations. Marcel Poorthuis, professor of interreligious dialogue, and Heleen van den Berg, professor of the history of Christian minorities in the Middle East, are both critical of Open Doors and similar organizations. Marcel Poorthuis beliefs the eagerness in which they throw themselves on Christians seems to be related to anti-Islam sentiments. Heleen van den Berg objects to the phrase “persecution of Christians” since this is much too generalized.<sup>11</sup>

In December 2008, I met with Bernhard Reitsma in the office of Open Doors. At the time, he was head of their research center, and

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<sup>10</sup> PELGRIM, Ch., Bijbelsmokkelaars op de bres, in *NRC Handelsblad*, January 8, 2015. Pelgrim writes about “employees.” I know the organization well and I doubt they have 1000 paid employees but they certainly have this number if one adds the dedicated volunteers to the paid staff. Volunteers working for Open Doors are often willing to give many hours of free work per week, many of them are housewives, unemployed or pensioners.

<sup>11</sup> *NRC*, January 8, 2015.

is now professor by special appointment for research of the Church in the context of Islam at the Free University of Amsterdam. Reitsma then asked for an understanding of Open Doors since their focus is on Christians who are persecuted and not really the position of Christians in Muslim countries in general. That focus makes them critical of Islam and caters for a constituency that is mostly rather negative about Islam. They see their task as informing their audience about hardships of Christians and asking for prayer, and not trying to challenge the existing negative views about Islam among their followers.<sup>12</sup>

Open Doors and others, however, do not follow the more careful line of presenting Muslim-Christian relations as the aforementioned scholars do. They directly approach the churches' grass root level. Church hierarchy knows this but in an open society in the Netherlands cannot avoid other organizations directly approaching their members. Non-expert church-goers are receptive to the heartbreaking stories they hear and, since they lack further background, are neither able to verify these stories nor place them in a wider context.

Open Doors and others also appeal to Christian media reporting such as the Evangelische Omroep (Evangelical Broadcasting Company), Reformatorisch Dagblad (Reformed Daily), Nederlands Dagblad (Netherlands Daily) and the Katholiek Nieuwsblad (Catholic Weekly).<sup>13</sup> They receive the press releases of Open Doors and since there is little to no other reporting about Christians in Muslim countries from secular media, they often take the reporting of Open Doors for granted.

The experts are not in a position to counter these stories since they are not on the ground in Egypt or other countries, but because of their knowledge of the context they are generally skeptic of such reporting.

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<sup>12</sup> Meeting December 2008, confirmed in email of February 5, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Dutch Christian daily newspaper Trouw is not mentioned in this list since they are less likely to simply take over reporting by Open Doors.

The consequence is a widespread strong belief and in particular in many churches that Christians in Muslim countries, are generally persecuted. That creates fear, both for fellow Christians that European Christians feel sympathy with and for visits to Egypt.

Jonathan Vink, a student at the Christian College for Journalism in Ede, The Netherlands, was prior to his internship in Egypt influenced by media and activist reporting in the Netherlands. However, at the end of his internship with the Center for Arab-West Understanding in Cairo, wrote that what he had experienced in Egypt shows that “the discrepancy between this reality and the news-reporting reality stretches from east to west.”<sup>14</sup>

Not all is perfect in Egypt, but Muslim-Christian relations are not as black and white as is often believed in the West.

#### **4. Stark differences between reporting in the West on Egypt and findings in Egypt during Mubarak, 1994 – 2011**

On June 9, 2009, I gave a lecture about Arab-West Report at Cairo University and explained what 15 years of reporting in Egypt had done to me. I have noticed stark differences between media reporting in the Western world about Egypt and actual reality in Egypt.

When I came to Egypt in 1994 I was influenced “by the continuous negative reporting about the Arab world and Egypt in the West. I was already skeptical of some stories that were reported, such as claims that Christian girls had been kidnapped, but I was also unsure. In the first years of being in Egypt, I could not imagine that people, Muslim *and* Christian, at times would manipulate stories and at times lie and

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<sup>14</sup> VINK, J., How three months in Egypt changed my perspective on reality, *Arab-West Report*, week 50, art. 1, December 14, 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-50/01-how-three-months-egypt-changed-my-perspective-reality>.

exaggerate or deny events just to suit their own interests. This includes both Christians and Muslims.”<sup>15</sup>

In 1995, Open Doors asked me to investigate the stories of kidnapped girls. Many of those stories, in those days, originated in the office of Egyptian Christian lawyer Maurice Sadiq. I obtained copies of his files. He also organized meetings with relatives in his office. He, however, probably never imagined that I would go to families throughout the country and interview them, their priests and other people in their immediate environment. It turned out that Sadiq called each conversion of Christians to Islam below the age of 21 that was rejected by family members a kidnapping. Conversions in a religious society as Egypt are painful for the family and community of the convert. But the word ‘kidnap’ implies the use of force; however, this could not be demonstrated in any of the cases Sadiq had presented to me. This resulted in a lengthy report for Open Doors demonstrating the complexity, which was never published.<sup>16</sup>

The claims of Maurice Sadiq and the way Open Doors dealt with such claims, not publishing facts that would make one cautious in seeing things in a black and white scheme, was for me a turning point.

The International Coptic Federation placed on May 25, 1999, an advertisement in the *Washington Times* with the title “Stop the Kidnapping, Rape, and Forced-Conversion of Young Coptic Christian Girls (With the Blessings Of the Egyptian Police Forces),” mentioning ten

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<sup>15</sup> HULSMAN, C., Reporting about Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt: Some remarks following 15 years working in Egypt, *Arab-West Report*, week 17, art. 2, June 9, 2010, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2010/week-17/2-reporting-about-muslim-christian-relations-egypt-some-remarks-following-15-years>.

<sup>16</sup> Following the report of Christian Solidarity, “Tell my mother I miss her,” 2012, in which they claimed again that Christians are forced to convert to Islam, based on a very shallow short visit to Egypt, I decided to publish my report of 1996, titled Conversions of Christians to Islam; forced or free? in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 42, December 8, 2012, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/conversions-christians-islam-forced-or-free-findings-1995-1996>.

girls by name, with ages ranging between 13 and 17. The text shows deep frustration with conversions below the age 21, but does so in using highly emotional and charged language.<sup>17</sup>

Prior to the publishing of the advertisement, I had investigated the stories of seven of the ten girls mentioned. These seven were certainly not physically forced to convert to Islam. But they were indeed all very young. It was true that, at the time, nothing was done by authorities to protect girls of such young tender age.<sup>18</sup>

The discussion was about the age of maturity for girls, and thus the age they can get married. Several Salafi Sheikhs claim that age is 9 years. Azhar Sheikhs at the Dar al-Iftā' in 1995 stated they would not accept young Christians below the age of 16 for conversion. The children's law of 1996 (civil law no. 12, 1996) made a child a minor until the age of 18, and thus now prohibits conversions below that age.<sup>19</sup>

In 2003, former US Congressman Pastor Ed McNeely wrote President Bush an emotionally charged open letter with claims that Christian girls are kidnapped by Muslims, in which he followed the arguments of Christian rights activists. I responded with an open letter to McNeely in which I showed that reality is not black and white.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Text advertisement of the INTERNATIONAL COPTIC FEDERATION, *Washington Times*, week 26, art. 35, May 25, 1999, <http://arabwestreport.info/year-1999/week-26/35-text-advertisement-international-coptic-federation>.

<sup>18</sup> HULSMAN, C., Press conference New York Council of Churches on forced conversions to Islam, *Arab-West Report*, week 33, art. 37, August 16, 1999, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-1999/week-33/37-press-conference-new-york-council-churches-forced-conversions-islam>.

<sup>19</sup> HULSMAN, C., Open letter to former US Congressman Pastor Ed McNeely for writing President Bush a letter with wrong claims about Christian girls being kidnapped by Muslims, in *Arab-West Report*, week 30, art. 34, August 9, 2003, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2003/week-30/34-open-letter-former-us-congressman-pastor-ed-mcneely-writing-president-bush>.

<sup>20</sup> HULSMAN, C., Open letter to former US Congressman Pastor Ed McNeely for writing President Bush a letter with wrong claims about Christian girls being kidnapped

In 2006, Open Doors initiated a campaign to ask for the prayer for several “kidnapped” Egyptian Christian women, one of them being Injī Edward Nagī (19). Arab-West Report had prior to their campaign published an extensive report on her conversion, and had found that this was not a kidnapping.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, a group of Coptic activists in and outside Egypt and Christian rights activists in the West collaborated in promoting the view that Christians in Egypt are persecuted. They form a block and are, as we have seen with Open Doors, able to generate substantial support to advocate their cause and have difficulties to accept facts that could challenge their beliefs.

My lecture for Cairo University contained many more examples that are not related to conversions. Constantly, there were real issues Christians were facing, such as in building houses of worship and different forms of discrimination. But when people are emotional they tend to exaggerate, use big words that add spice to a story. Others deny stories or play them down as much as possible. Factors such as honor and shame play a role. Protection of the honor of one’s own group thus becomes more important than honesty in reporting about an event. In this I see not much difference between Muslims and Christians. Fifteen years in Egypt has made me a skeptic of whatever stories are being told.

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by Muslims, in *Arab-West Report*, week 30, art. 34, August 9, 2003, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2003/week-30/34-open-letter-former-us-congressman-pastor-ed-mc-neely-writing-president-bush>.

<sup>21</sup> HULSMAN, C., – AL-AHWANI, U. W. – JABRAH, S., – FAWZI, N., *Was converted girl kidnapped*, in *Arab-West Report*, week 28, art. 21, November 20, 2004, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/awr-index/developments-muslim-christian-relations-arab-world/disputed-kidnappings-and-forced-5>.

KERKREDACTIE, “Egyptische vrouw niet gekidnapt,” in *Reformatorsch Dagblad*, July 21, 2006, [http://www.refdag.nl/kerkplein/kerknieuws/egyptische\\_vrouw\\_niet\\_gekidnapt\\_1\\_176733](http://www.refdag.nl/kerkplein/kerknieuws/egyptische_vrouw_niet_gekidnapt_1_176733).

HULSMAN, C., Media distortions: Presenting a new media-watch project, in *Arab-West Report*, week 14, art. 3, April 10, 2007, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2007/week-14/3-media-distortions-presenting-new-media-watch-project>.

Today I listen to stories, question them, and if time permits seek additional information, querying people from many different backgrounds so as to understand a particular story.”<sup>22</sup>

Many reported tensions between Muslims and Christians in these years were hardly related to government policy, but much more to the government being insufficiently able to enforce the Egyptian law as became clear in the clashes around the Monastery of Abū Fānā in 2008. A desert area with the remains of the ancient monastery were under the control of the Egyptian antiquities authorities, but due to population pressure villagers from a nearby village were moving into the desert for living and farming, going over an area that should have remain protected. The governor of Minya was not able to prevent this and as consequence reduced the surface of the protected land, thus in fact giving in to the status quo that people had moving into protected land.<sup>23</sup>

The government was insufficiently able to implement the Egyptian laws in many areas, not just only where it concerned Christians.

A major issue is the fear of Christians for Islamists who believed Christians had to accept living according to the Islamic teachings these Islamists wanted to introduce. There were clashes in the 1970s when Pope Shenouda opposed the growing Islamist influences.

The political influence of the Muslim Brotherhood was growing with the efforts to democratize. In 1984, the first parliamentary elections took place since 1952. The Muslim Brotherhood, prohibited but tolerated, has been competing in these elections since 1984. For this

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<sup>22</sup> HULSMAN, C., Reporting about Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt: Some remarks following 15 years working in Egypt, in *Arab-West Report*, week 17, art. 2, June 9, 2010, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2010/week-17/2-reporting-about-muslim-christian-relations-egypt-some-remarks-following-15-years>.

<sup>23</sup> JOHANNSEN, A. J., - MAHRUS, M. N. - GRAVERSEN, M., Landownership disputes in Egypt: A Case Study of the Tensions around Abu Fana in May, 2008, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 15, August 26, 2009, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/landownership-disputes-egypt-case-study-tensions-around-abu-fana-may-2008>.

reason, they could not form a political party and were forced into alliances with other parties, first the Liberal Wafd Party, and later the Socialist Labor Party, which was suspended in 2000. Thus, in the 2005 parliamentary elections they fielded “independent” candidates and brought 88 such “independents” into parliament, 19,8 percent of the total seats. One of them was Muhammad Mursī, Egypt’s president in 2012-2013.<sup>24</sup>

The Brotherhood witnessed a power change bringing the more radical Qutbis in the Brotherhood to power in 2010.<sup>25</sup>

The Brotherhood is a big organization with different wings, some open and pragmatic and others are conservative and closed, such as the Qutbis. Some of their members turned militant. At times they clashed about perceived injustices with Coptic Christians, expressing sentiments that Christian demands were changing the status quo (i.e. in building churches) or Christians expressing demands that were, in the view of these Brothers, beyond the size of their population.

The growing strength of the Brotherhood, election rigging in 2010, widespread dissatisfaction among the poor, frustration with examples of police brutality and the dissatisfaction in the army about Gamal Mubarak making obvious efforts to succeed his father culminated in the Egyptian revolution of January 25, 2011.

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<sup>24</sup> HULSMAN, C., (ed.), Christians victims of the growing Islamist non-Islamist divide; the urgent need for peace and reconciliation, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 48, September 10, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/AWRpapers/paper48.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> RANKO, A., *Die Muslim-bruderschaft; Porträt einer mächtigen Verbindung*, Körber-Stiftung, Hamburg 2014, p. 129; HULSMAN, C., Arndt Emmerich and Judit Kuschnitzki, Interview with Ibrahim al-Hudybi (former member of the Muslim Brotherhood and political activist) about the current situation in Egypt, in *Arab-West Papers*, week 15, art. 46, April 1, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2011/week-15/46-interview-ibrahim-al-hudybi-former-member-muslim-brotherhood-and-political>.

## 5. Army and Muslim Brotherhood struggling for power, 2011-2012

The January 25, 2011, revolution is surrounded with questions. What role did foreign powers play? President George Bush had been speaking about the need for regime change in the Arab World. That implied Egypt. Several European countries had been funding the training of Egyptian internet activists in 2010, the same people who in 2011 played a role in overthrowing Mubarak.<sup>26</sup> The Egyptian police suddenly withdrew around 16.00 hrs from the streets on January 28, 2011. They were still able to counter the demonstrators but were suddenly recalled. Why did this happen? They also no longer guarded the prisons in the Wādī Al-Natrūn. Islamists were freed from prison. Who had given instructions to withdraw and who liberated these prisoners? Was Hamas involved? I have met with a Palestinian fighter in a café close to the Muhammad Mahmoud Street. Palestinians were involved but how many? After the police withdrew they were attacked. Who targeted them? Mobs incited by Islamists?<sup>27</sup>

Was January 25, 2011, indeed a revolution? Massive demonstrations forced President Mubarak, a former air force general, to step down on February 11, 2011. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took over. On April 15, 2011, I raised the question in a paper presented at a European-Arab Dialogue conference, “Did we witness a revolution or was it a revolt against the Mubarak regime?”<sup>28</sup> It was remarkable that

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<sup>26</sup> Egyptian diplomat, October 28, 2014. He wishes to remain anonymous.

<sup>27</sup> HULSMAN, C., (ed.), Christians victims of the growing Islamist non-Islamist divide; the urgent need for peace and reconciliation, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 48, September 10, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/AWRpapers/paper48.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> The full text of the lecture can be found in HULSMAN, C., Religious and Cultural developments in Arab and European Countries and their impact on politics, in *Arab-West Report*, week 15, art. 45, April 15, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2011/week-15/45-religious-and-cultural-developments-arab-and-european-countries-and-their>.

my thesis was fiercely opposed by Abū Al-‘Ilā Mādī, chairman of the Wasat Party, who also attended. I knew Abū Al-‘Ilā Mādī from various previous encounters, and never had any serious arguments about his convictions but my doubts whether this was a revolution or not was too much for him. For him this, of course, was a revolution and I, as a long time resident in Egypt, he argued, should know this was a revolution. Mādī’s arguments were highly ideological. Abū Al-‘Ilā Mādī started as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood but later broke away, and founded the Wasat Party. After the revolution of January 25, he collaborated closely with the Muslim Brotherhood. Mubarak was overthrown and now it was time to build a new Egypt according to the precepts of the “democratic opposition,” in other words that of the Islamists. Doubting that this was a revolution was equal to doubting that changes that had been initiated would result in a democratic turnover of Egypt in the line as it was advocated by Islamists in those days.

Since January 25, 2011, three main power blocs have been struggling for maximum influence in the post-Revolutionary period: the military, Islamists, and non-Islamists. The strength of the Islamists was increasing. Only five days after Mubarak had been removed, the SCAF formed a committee consisting of Islamists and non-Islamists under the chairmanship of Islamist judge Tāriq Al-Bishrī to formulate amendments to the Constitution that would ease the transfer from a military government to a civilian government over a six-month period.

Tāriq Al-Bishrī’s proposal for elections to come first and constitution to follow were welcomed by Islamists who campaigned for an approval of the amendments in the referendum of March 19, 2011. Anette Ranko notices from this point a change in the Muslim Brotherhood policy. In the previous ten years, they had increasingly cooperated with non-Islamist powers but this referendum shows a switch to cooperation with the ultra-conservative Salafists.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> RANKO, A., *Die Muslim-bruderschaft; Porträt einer mächtigen Verbindung*, Körber-Stiftung, Hamburg 2014, p. 123.

The period following the revolution was characterized by a weak state facing unrest, absence of police in the streets, robbery, several Muslim-Christian clashes, clashes between civilians and the police close places of importance for the state, people taking their right in their own hands. Media reported about negotiations taking place between the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood. Other political parties were weak and divided. Dr. Usāmah Farīd (Usama Farid), a leading member of the Freedom and Justice Party, said in June 2011 that negotiations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the army were eased because both the army and the Brotherhood have hierarchical structures through which they can instruct their bodies.<sup>30</sup> That appears only logical since negotiations were to be preferred over even more clashes, but whenever consensus could not be reached clashes took place as if this appeared to be used to put pressure on the other party.

On September 30, 2011, a church under construction in Marīnāb, Idfū, was burned by a mob of perhaps a thousand Muslim youth. Media reporting was extremely poor. Because of the remoteness of Marīnāb the first reporting was based on hearsay and phone calls. In Marīnāb, it became clear that Christians, just as elsewhere in the country, had made an effort to make use of the absence of government control to build a church instead of the previously used small prayer room for Christians.<sup>31</sup> Yet, a locally produced mobile phone video with a burning building became the icon for what happened and triggered

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<sup>30</sup> CASPER, J., Dr. Usamah Farid on the Brotherhood, Hamas and Salafis, in *Arab-West Report*, week 36, art.13, November 14, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2011/week-46/13-dr-usama-farid-brotherhood-hamas-and-salafis>. This text has been seen and approved by Farid. The comparison between the army-like hierarchy of the Brotherhood and the army was, for reasons of sensitivities at the time of reporting not included in the report.

<sup>31</sup> YAHYA, L., What Happened in Marinab Village?, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 33, October 12, 2011, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/what-happened-marinab-village>. This report is the first research on what happened in the village, based on a field visit one day after the incident.

the Christian demonstrations as Maspero that in turn on October 9, 2011, resulted in 28 deaths and hundreds of wounded.<sup>32</sup>

Parliamentary elections took place in December 2011-January 2012. It was clear the Muslim Brothers would win with a landslide. Educated Christians and liberal Muslims were talking that it was over, that they had lost.<sup>33</sup> Talks about mass emigration added to the fears.<sup>34</sup>

Elections for the Shūrā council (Senate) followed with Islamist parties taking over two-thirds of the seats.

Parliament met and adopted decisions to keep former leading members of the National Democratic Party out of politics. The first Constituent Assembly was formed and dissolved because it was widely seen as too heavily Islamist. Also, in the second Constituent Assembly Islamists were well represented but the percentage of non-Islamists had increased.<sup>35</sup>

Islamists were plagued by different scandals in the first half of 2012 with as consequence a substantial decline of support as became obvious in the first round of the presidential elections on May 23-24, 2012.

Electoral results of presidential candidates first round:

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<sup>32</sup> One of the best witnesses of the Maspero violence is Jürgen Stryjak, a German radio journalist, who witnessed the violence from a balcony with an excellent view over the location where all violence took place. HULSMAN, C., Eyewitness: Maspero, in *Arab-West Report*, week 13, art. 24, March 26, 2012, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2012/week-13/24-eyewitness-maspero>.

<sup>33</sup> HULSMAN, C., Christian leader: No fear for Islamist landslide in Egypt, in *Arab-West Report*, week 1, January 1, 2012, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2012/week-1/22-christian-leader-no-fear-islamist-landslide-egypt>.

<sup>34</sup> STOOP, J., Coptic migration figures of EUHRO disputed, in *Arab-West Report*, week 26, art. 40, June 28, 2012, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2012/week-26/40-coptic-migration-figures-euhro-disputed>.

<sup>35</sup> HULSMAN, C., (ed.) Diana Seródio and Jayson Casper, The Development of Egypt's Constitution: Analysis, Assessment, and Sorting through the Rhetoric, in *Arab-West Papers*, May 2, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/development-egypts-constitution-analysis-assessment-and-sorting-through-rhetoric>.

Name candidate	Political party and leaning	Number of votes	Percentage
Muhammad Mursī	Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party	5,764,952	24.78%
Ahmad Shafīq	Independent, President Mubarak's last Prime Minister	5,505,327	23.66%
Hamdīn Sabāhī	Dignity Party, left wing, Nasserist	4,820,273	20.72%
'Abd al-Mun'im Abū al-Futūh	Independent, broke away from the Muslim Brotherhood	4,065,239	17.47%
'Amr Mūsá	Independent, former Secretary-General of the Arab League and former Minister of Foreign Affairs during Mubarak	2,588,850	11.13%
Other candidates and invalid votes			2.24%

Ahmad Shafīq, Hamdīn Sabāhī and 'Amr Mūsá, all opponents to the Islamists, obtained together 69.16% of the votes, showing a dramatic loss for Islamists in comparison to the Parliamentary elections.

On June 14, 2012, Egypt's Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) ruled that one-third of the seats in Parliament were invalid, and thus

that Parliament had to be dissolved. This ruling came only two days before the second round of the presidential elections and must have turned people off from voting Ahmad Shafiq, a former air force general.<sup>36</sup>

The second round was deeply disputed. Unlike in the first round there were several severe irregularities. The two candidates had also ended very closely. The Presidential Election Committee took seven days to decide who was the winner of the second round of the presidential elections on June 16 and 17, 2012. They announced that Muhammad Mursī, chairman of the Freedom and Justice Party founded by the Muslim Brotherhood, had won.

The Ibn Khaldūn Center had made its own count that showed Shafiq winning by a small margin. However, the margin was so minor that these results remained unpublished as the Center did not wish to involve itself in an argument with the Presidential Election Committee.<sup>37</sup> Shafiq, however, disputed the decision of the Presidential Election Committee and went to court. Later, other prominent figures asserted that Ahmad Shafiq had won, albeit with a very narrow margin. Negotiations had taken place that made the Presidential Election Committee announce Muhammad Mursī as president possibly to avoid the risk of a civil war.<sup>38</sup>

The outcome of the presidential election shows that Islamists no longer had the sweeping majority they had in the Parliamentary elections half a year earlier. Their performance in Parliament and efforts

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<sup>36</sup> HULSMAN, C., (ed.) Christians victims of the growing Islamist non-Islamist divide; the urgent need for peace and reconciliation, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 48, September 10, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/AWRpapers/paper48.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> HULSMAN, C., Interview with Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim after Ahmad Shafiq presented his comments on the judicial process following his rejection of the Presidential Election Committee on June 24, 2012, *Facebook*, October 16, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> HULSMAN, C., Was president Mohammed Mursi legitimately elected?, in *Arab-West Report*, 2014, week 50, art. 2, December 16, 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-50/02-was-president-mohammed-Mursi-legitimately-elected>.

to sideline their opponents had disappointed many. It also shows that there are a large percentage of swing voters, or people switching from voting Islamist to voting for a former air force general.

## 6. Egypt's first Islamist president, 2012-2013

Ahmad Shafiq's likely election victory, albeit very small, was not known to the public. Those discussions emerged only after Mursi had been sworn in as president.

Days before Mursi was declared victorious in the presidential elections the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) issued a complementary constitutional declaration curbing presidential power, and keeping much of it in the hands of the military council.<sup>39</sup> This apparently was related to the negotiations between the Muslim Brotherhood and the SCAF.<sup>40</sup>

The Presidency of Muhammad Mursi started hopeful. Mursi initially had an approval rate of 87%. His first steps, incorporating non-Islamists and Christians in his team and his idea to shift powers from the president to an elected parliament, were well-received.<sup>41</sup>

But his presidency was soon characterized by a lack of interest to cooperate with left-wing and liberal opponents to the old-regime of Mubarak, who had been ready to participate in his government.<sup>42</sup> In-

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<sup>39</sup> HUSSEIN, A. R., Egypt defence chief Tantawi ousted in surprise shakeup, *The Guardian*, August 13, 2012, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/aug/12/egyptian-defence-chief-ousted-shakeup>.

<sup>40</sup> HULSMAN, C., Was president Mohammed Mursi legitimately elected?, in *Arab-West Report*, 2014, week 50, art. 2, December 16, 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-50/02-was-president-mohammed-mursi-legitimately-elected>.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with former Wafd Member of Parliament George Massihah, June 20, 2013.

<sup>42</sup> RANKO, A., *Die Muslim-bruderschaft; Porträt einer mächtigen Verbindung*, Körber-Stiftung, Hamburg, 2014, p. 131-132, 134, 143.

stead confrontations with his opponents were growing and he was displaying a lack of readiness to seek compromise. The confrontations also made Muslim Brothers seek support of their own constituency, placing Islamists in key positions in the government and administration. The opposition of Egypt's political parties turned out to be weak but massive demonstrations against Mursī, and opposition of the Supreme Constitutional Court turned out to be key factors in Mursī's deposal one year later.

After only one week in office, President Mursī picked his first fight – on July 8, he issued a decree to reinstate the dissolved parliament. The Supreme Constitutional Court, however, immediately overturned his decision on July 10, 2012.

On August 6, 2012, militants in Sinai killed 16 policemen. President Mursī used this to retire Hussein Tantawi, Minister of Defense and head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, and chief of staff, Sami Anan. Tantawi was replaced as Defense Minister by General 'Abd Al-Fātah al-Sīsī.

The main turning point, however, was the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) preparing a ruling that would have dissolved the Constituent Assembly and the Shūrā Council in November. This would have forced Mursī to restart the process of writing the Constitution and would have deprived him of his only legislative council. Muslim Brothers demonstrated before the SCC, preventing judges from entering court and issuing their expected ruling. Mursī issued a highly controversial decree on November 22, 2012, which immunized his decisions from judicial review, in his view to protect the nation from the Mubarak-era power structure. Judges went on strike, deciding that they would not return to work until Mursī would withdraw his decrees. Non-Islamists called him a new dictator who did not act according to the wishes of the people. Some 200,000 demonstrators against this decree filled Tahrir Square. On November 26, members of the Supreme Judiciary Council, which oversees the nation's court system,

met with Mursī to discuss his decrees. No agreement was reached and demonstrations continued. Christian advisor, Samīr Marcus (Samir Marcos) resigned in protest on November 29 because Mursī had neither consulted him nor most other presidential advisors and assistants. Decisions appeared to have been made surreptitiously from within a tight group.<sup>43</sup> The Constituent Assembly sped up the decision-making process and non-Islamist members of the assembly, including all church representatives, resigned in protest.

Yet, despite the widespread protests the draft Constitution was approved by the Constituent Assembly on November 29. President Mursī called for a referendum to accept the Constitution, provoking tens of thousands to demonstrate in front of the Presidential Palace, including many Christians, demanding Mursī to postpone the referendum, leave office, and accusing him of acting as a “Pharaoh.” Deadly clashes took place after, allegedly, Muslim Brotherhood supporters confronted the protesters.

Islamist preacher, Safwāt Hijāzī (Safwat Hegazy), stated in a counter demonstration in December 2012 that 60% of the demonstrators against the proposed Constitution were Christians. Many of them were not only demonstrating against the Constitution, but also publicly demanded the downfall of Mursī. Hijāzī responded in “a message to the Egyptian church from an Egyptian Muslim. I tell the church if you conspire and unite with the opposition to bring Mursī down, we will have another talk.” The crowd chanted many times, “Allahu akbar” in response, clearly approving Hijāzī’s rousing statements. The phrase, “we will have another talk” was perceived as a threat.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Meeting with Samir Marcos, January 14, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> HULSMAN, C., (ed.) Christians victims of the growing Islamist non-Islamist divide; the urgent need for peace and reconciliation, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 48, September 10, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/AWRpapers/paper48.pdf>.

The referendum took place in two rounds on the 15 and 22 of December despite all violence and was approved by 63.8% of the voters. With a high number of voting violation reports and a low turnout of just over 32.9%, the lowest turnout for any poll since the 2011 uprising, it did not speak to a resounding victory for its proponents and challenged its legitimacy.<sup>45</sup>

From this moment, clashes and political tensions increased. Ranko calls Mursī a weak president who was hardly able to control the central institutions of the state, in particular the military, police and judiciary. The security was mostly absent from the streets. Criminality increased. People were longing for security and stability.<sup>46</sup>

The Muslim Brotherhood turned more and more inwards, to the extent that reports came out that they tried to establish their own security apparatus. Minister of Defense, Al-Sīsī warned in January 2013, that the army would not accept the establishment of a separate security apparatus. He did not mention the Brotherhood but for former advisor to president Mursī, Samir Marcos, it was clear that he meant the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>47</sup> Stories about tensions between President Mursī and the army started appearing in the media.<sup>48</sup>

Pope Tawadros was deeply shocked for the attack on the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral on April 8. Also this was the outcome of previous escalations; a Christian had shot a Muslim in Khusūs for offensive graffiti. Local police felt unable to protect local Christians against the mob

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<sup>45</sup> AL-ALI, Z., "The new Egyptian Constitution: an initial assessment of its merits and flaws," in Open Democracy, December 26, 2012, accessed March 23, 2013, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/zaid-al-ali/new-egyptian-constitution-initial-assessment-of-its-merits-and-flaws>.

<sup>46</sup> RANKO, A., *Die Muslim-bruderschaft; Porträt einer mächtigen Verbindung*, Körber-Stiftung, Hamburg 2014, p. 138-139.

<sup>47</sup> Meeting with Samir Marcos, January 14, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> For example: ELEIBA, A., "Collision course? Are the military and the Muslim Brotherhood heading towards a confrontation?," in *Al Abram Weekly*, March 13, 2013, <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/Print/1865.aspx>.

that had assembled to attack the Christians who were believed to be responsible for the one Muslim dead. That in turn resulted in massive attacks on Christians in Khusūs, resulting in five dead.<sup>49</sup> This, in turn provoked a funeral with mass demonstrations in the Ramsis Street at the Coptic Cathedral. A Youtube video shows Coptic human rights lawyer, Najīb Jabrā'īl (Naguib Gibrail), and others leading demonstrators in slanting anti-Muslim slogans.<sup>50</sup> This in turn resulted in Muslim mobs attacking Christians who hid within the walls of the Cathedral compound, which now became attacked.<sup>51</sup>

Security forces positioned outside the cathedral added to this with launching volley after volley of tear gas into the Cathedral compound. "Some of the thousands of onlookers gathered in the road cheered as the canisters rocketed towards Christians perched on the walls overlooking the main street."<sup>52</sup>

The attack on the cathedral was deeply shocking to Christians. This had not happened before in modern Egyptian history.

President Mursī issued a statement in which he said he had spoken to Pope Tawadros II, the head of the Coptic Church, and had given orders for the cathedral and citizens to be guarded. Mursī said pro-

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<sup>49</sup> Meeting George Massihah, April 12, 2013. Massihah is a former Christian Member of Parliament for the Wafd Party knew both the attacked Christians and the local police officers.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMn39AHnMpg>, see also: HULSMAN, C., Muslim-Christian clashes in Alexandria and Matay; harmony in Qufada, in *Arab-West Report Newsletter*, May 20, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/muslim-christian-clashes-alexandria-and-matay-harmony-qufada>.

<sup>51</sup> CASPER, J., From Khusus to the Cathedral: New Attacks on Copts, in *Arab-West Report*, week 14, art 66, April 8, 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2013/week-14/66-Khusus-cathedral-new-attacks-copts>.

<sup>52</sup> BEACH, A., Coptic Christians under siege as mob attacks Cairo cathedral, in *The Independent*, April 8, 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/coptic-christians-under-siege-as-mob-attacks-cairo-cathedral-8563600.html>. No mention, however, was made of the anti-Muslim slogans of Christian demonstrators. This was typical for much Western media.

tecting the lives of Muslims and Christians was a state responsibility and added: "I consider any attack on the cathedral as an attack on me, personally."<sup>53</sup>

On April 19, however, Christian leader Munīr Fakhri 'Abd Al-Nūr gave a scathing speech at the Wafd Party about the attack on the Cathedral and in particular did not spare 'Isām al-Haddād (Essam al-Haddad), Mursī's Muslim Brotherhood advisor, who had tried to explain the attack away.<sup>54</sup>

Tensions continued to increase. Critique became more vocal and Mursī turned to other Islamists for support. This led to the appointment of 17 Muslim Brotherhood governors on June 17, including appointing a leading member of the Jamā'ah al-Islāmīyah as the governor of Luxor, the very city where members of the Jamā'ah al-Islāmīyah killed 58 tourists and 4 Egyptians in November 1997. This caused an outcry among the citizens of Luxor and Egypt's tourism industry. The Minister of Tourism submitted his resignation. The symbolism of the appointment was widely seen as evidence that Mursī was further withdrawing into his own Muslim Brotherhood bastion and with this further increasing polarization. The tumult continued and on June 23 the governor resigned making the Minister of Tourism return to his post.

Deeply shocking was the barbarous murder of Shī'ah Sheikh, Hassan Shihātah, and three of his followers on June 24, 2013. Sheikh Hassan Shihātah used very sharp language to criticize Sunni Islam which prompted Salafi Sheikh, Muhammad 'Abd Al-Maqsūd, to re-

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<sup>53</sup> BEACH, A., Coptic Christians under siege as mob attacks Cairo cathedral, in *The Independent*, April 8, 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/coptic-christians-under-siege-as-mob-attacks-cairo-cathedral-8563600.html>. No mention, however, was made of the anti-Muslim slogans of Christian demonstrators. This was typical for much Western media.

<sup>54</sup> I was attending this event of the Wafd Party, which was focused on stressing national unity between Muslims and Christians following the attack on the Cathedral. I was the only non-Egyptian attending and had been asked by the main speaker, Munīr Fakhri 'Abd Al-Nūr to sit beside him before he went to the podium to speak.

spond in fierce language in a June 15 conference calling for Egyptian participation in jihad in Syria that President Mursī attended.<sup>55</sup> Mursī did not say a word in response to Maqsūd's inflammatory language. The short time span between Shaykh Maqsūd's words and the murder makes many believe that Mursī had allowed this to happen. Just hours after the murder, Salafi Sheikh, Khālid 'Abd Allah, stated on the Salafi Al-Nās channel that he was satisfied with the death of Hassan Shihātah.<sup>56</sup> It heightened the fear for what some Islamists could do to anyone with adverse beliefs. Mursī added to that fear because he did not clearly denounce this violence, giving the impression of accord. Was this because he feared losing his more radical supporters if he would speak out? The murder gave another strong impetus for people to ask for his resignation.

Human Rights Watch summarized the consequences of President Mursī's Muslim Brotherhood-dominated government; disregard for rights protections, with an increase in the prosecutions of journalists, police abuse, and sectarian violence.<sup>57</sup>

On April 28, 2013, a group of young activists founded the Tamarud ("rebellion") movement that rapidly received response from left-wing, liberals and representatives of the old guard under Mubarak. They drew up a petition asking for the resignation of President Mursī and calling for massive demonstrations to that effect on June 30. Many millions adhered to their call and flooded the streets.

Several Islamist preachers, including Safwāt Hijāzī, not a member of the Muslim Brotherhood but allowed to speak at Brotherhood gath-

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<sup>55</sup> Several radicals attended this conference, including Abbud al-Zumar who was involved in the killing of President al-Sadat.

<sup>56</sup> "Khālid Abdalla yakshif kāyf qutil Hassan Shihātah al qiyādi al shi'ī alazy sabb al sayīdda Ā'ishah wa Abū Bakr wa 'Umar wa 'Uthman," YouTube, June 24, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrPXELbciKc>.

<sup>57</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *Human Rights Watch World Report 2014*, <http://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/egypt> (accessed 7.2.2015).

erings, issued warnings indicating that efforts to remove Mursī would result in violence.

Egypt was deeply polarized. On July 1, President Mursī received an ultimatum from General Al-Sīsī that he had to respond to the will of the people. A way of responding would have been to call for early presidential elections. Mursī spoke with Al-Sīsī, but on July 2 rebuffed the army. The answer came on July 3. Al-Sīsī addressed Egyptians on TV, in the company of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayīb of the Azhar and Pope Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church, and announced that Mursī was ousted. Muslim Brothers have sharply criticized Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayīb and Pope Tawadros for this, and even among Copts there was criticism of the pope publicly supporting the overthrow of Mursī.<sup>58</sup> ‘Adlī Mansūr, head of the Supreme Constitutional Court would be interim president, he explained, as is specified in the Constitution if there is no president and no successor to a president.

Was it a coup d’état or not? No, opponents to President Mursī said. This was a revolution and the army responded to the wish of millions of people. Yes, others, mostly supporters of Mursī said, seeing no need to call for new elections.

Mursī was removed from office by the army after he had refused to call for new elections. Since there was no parliament that could have sent him away, the army was the only institution left that could oust Mursī. Islamists were furious, organizing large sit-ins in several parts of the country that disrupted main roads for months and actively engaging in producing propaganda to promote their views in the media, in and outside Egypt.

Yaqīn (meaning “no doubt”) Channel broadcast on July 10 responses from demonstrators at Rāba‘a al-‘Adāwīyah. One sheikh stated

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<sup>58</sup> Majd Atiyah (Maged Atiya), a prominent American Coptic blogger, wrote in an email on July 7, 2013 “I don’t support Church involvement in politics, and I winced a bit on seeing Pope Tawadros at the news conference. I don’t know why he did that, as he must have known the risks for individual members of his flock.”

on camera that everyone at Rāba‘a al-‘Adāwīyah is ready to commit suicide. He accused General Al-Sīsī of having created a civil war:

*(Al-Sīsī) “Know that you have created a new Taliban and new Qa‘ida in Egypt. All of these crowds will be dispersed (and turned) to suicide bombers and they will destroy you and destroy Egypt and you are the one who destroyed Egypt. You made new Mujāhidīn and people giving themselves to martyrdom” (justification for suicide attacks).*<sup>59</sup>

On August 21, the same sheikh apologized for his angry language and said that his words should not be taken literally, and that he in no way wanted a civil war.<sup>60</sup>

On July 23, 24, and 25, I met with leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in Rāba‘a al-‘Adāwīyah. I found a siege mentality; leaders and ordinary people presenting themselves as the victims, blaming Christians and many others for having supported the ouster of Mursī.

Much of the rhetoric I was hearing was very uncompromising. It discarded mistakes the Brotherhood had made but focused on own rights and the wrongs of their opponents.

On Wednesday, August 14, the army and police moved in with live ammunition, resulting in killing at least 817 and likely more than 1,000 at Rāba‘a al-‘Adāwīyah and 87 deaths at the dispersal of al-Nahda square and thousands of wounded. Human Rights Watch produced an extensive report about the violence that then took place and concluded that the violent dispersal of the sit-ins at the Rāba‘a al-‘Adāwīyah and al-Nahda squares are likely “crimes against humanity.”<sup>61</sup> I know one of the authors, Joe Stork, personally well and called him to let him know that I believed the report lacked sufficient context. It hardly described

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<sup>59</sup> “Ihzar yā Sīsī. Ihnā handammarak windamar Mast,” YouTube, July 10, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> “Hām Jidān we Jadīd. Radd Sāhib Video Hanfajjar Misr wa Tahdīd Al-Sīsī,” YouTube, August 21, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joHUGBGZXS0>.

<sup>61</sup> HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, *All According to Plan*, August 12, 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2014/08/12/all-according-plan> (accessed 7.2.2015).

the background, including a year of growing tensions between Muslim Brothers and their opponents, nor did it give sufficient information on the massive violence throughout the country. Police stations, churches, Christian schools, and sometimes also shops owned by Christians were looted, destroyed, and burned. We have made calls with clergy in many different cities. In Fayoum, Beni Suef, Maghāghah, Minya, and Assiut the police had been attacked by thugs calling for “Islāmīyah” and had fully disappeared from the streets.

Islamists were immediately accused. There is much evidence of thugs using Islamist slogans. Former Mursī government minister Dr. ‘Amr Darrāj, however, explicitly denied Brotherhood involvement, “All violent events on police stations, churches, etc. were done by thugs driven by state security to blame it on the Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>62</sup>

This has been continuously the rhetoric. Violence took place; opponents of the Muslim Brotherhood blamed the Brotherhood who, in turn, practically always blamed thugs driven by state security.

Christian-Islamist relations have never been easy since the growth of the Islamist movement since the 1970s, but since Mursī’s November 22 decree, Christian opposition to Mursī’s constitution and anti-Christian preaching of radical Islamist preachers only became worse. Pope Tawadros’ support for Al-Sīsī’s overthrow of President Mursī may have been related to his anger about the April attack on the Cathedral and anti-Christian statements by several radical preachers.

Islamists and non-Islamists have shown very little readiness to make compromises. Polemical and inciting language was frequently heard as well as threats and Islamists speaking about being ready for martyrdom. There was a siege mentality amongst both non-Islamists prior to Mursī’s ousting, and as well as among Muslim Brothers after his ousting. Both present themselves as the victim of the other. I have also heard often talks about revenge. Both mistrust and fear the other.

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<sup>62</sup> E-mail correspondence with Dr. Darrāj (Darrag), August 15, 2013.

Both have been accused of whipping up sentiments and employing thugs. There is definitely much misinformation and transparency has been lacking. At times serious miscalculations were made as to how the other side could respond.<sup>63</sup>

Human Rights Watch, however, decided to zoom in on the violence of security and army in clearing the sit-ins and under focused the wider context. Joe Stork did not deny this but stated that they attempted to get Egyptian government responses to their draft text and did not get this.<sup>64</sup>

## 7. Non-Islamists take over, 2013 - today

Only five days after Mursī and his government had been deposed, and 'Adlī Mansūr, head of the Supreme Constitutional Court, had been installed as interim president, a new roadmap was presented by General Al-Sīsī on National TV that specified that first the constitution would be amended, followed by presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>65</sup>

This roadmap was the reverse of the roadmap in March 2011 when it was decided to have parliamentary elections first, followed by the formation of a Constituent Assembly to write a new permanent Constitution for Egypt and presidential elections. The Muslim Brothers then campaigned in favor of a yes vote in the 2011 referendum, believing this to be the fastest way to restore Sharī'ah rule. Non-Islamists strongly opposed that roadmap in those years but now welcomed al-Sīsī's roadmap.

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<sup>63</sup> Most information in this chapter came from HULSMAN, C., (ed.), Christians victims of the growing Islamist non-Islamist divide; the urgent need for peace and reconciliation, in *Arab-West Papers*, no. 48, September 10, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/sites/default/files/pdfs/AWRpapers/paper48.pdf>. Please check this report for more specifics.

<sup>64</sup> Phone call with Joe Stork, August 17, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> Egypt Military Unveils Transitional Roadmap, *Ahram Online*, July 3, 2013, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/75631.aspx> (accessed 2.2.2015).

Following the dispersal of the sit-ins in August 2013, most senior Muslim Brotherhood leaders were arrested. This, however, did not end the violence. Continuing attacks on security and police and demonstrations that often escalated in violence made Egyptian authorities ban the Muslim Brotherhood. On September 23, a court ordered the freezing of the Brotherhood's assets and banning its spin-off groups.<sup>66</sup>

From the dispersal of the sit-ins in August 2013 onwards, many critiquing the Muslim Brotherhood hardly made any distinction between the Brotherhood and radical Islamist groups who showed readiness to use arms. It is obvious from the reign of Mursī that the Muslim Brotherhood had contacts with more radical groups but it would be unjust to claim they are one and the same. During the reign of Mursī, some efforts were made to reign in those radical groups but with his removal and the attack on the Muslim Brotherhood not only the Islamist project, to make Egypt ruled by Islamist principles, was discredited but efforts to reign in the most radical groups were also lost.

The 2013 Constituent Assembly met while the security and military were trying to curb violence in the streets. Naturally, this influenced the articles on security and army as well on transitional justice.<sup>67</sup>

While in October and November, it was still possible to meet with leading Freedom and Justice Party leader Dr. 'Amr Darrāj<sup>68</sup> this was no more possible in December. Following a dramatic suicide attack on the security directorate in Mansūrah on December 24, killing 16 people, mostly policemen, and wounding over 100, the Egyptian Cab-

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<sup>66</sup> KINGSLEY, P., Muslim Brotherhood banned by Egyptian Court, in *The Guardian*, September 23, 2014.

<sup>67</sup> HULSMAN C., - SERODIO, D., Interview with human rights lawyer Mona Zulficar about the 2014 Constitution, in *Arab-West Report*, Week 31, art. 5, August 5, 2014.

<sup>68</sup> HULSMAN C., - SCHOOREL, E., - DEIAB, A., AWR Interviews Dr. Amr Darrag, in *Arab-West Report*, Week 43, art. 65, October 22, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2013/week-43/65-awr-interviews-dr-amr-darrag-october-22-2013>.

inet declared the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization.<sup>69</sup> The Brotherhood denied responsibility and condemned the Mansūrah attack, for which Ansār Bayt Al-Maqdis, an Al-Qa'ida inspired group based in Sinai has claimed responsibility.

Minister of Social Solidarity Ahmad Al-Bura'ī (Ahmed Al-Borai) explained the decision means „all activities of the Muslim Brotherhood group are banned, including the demonstrations.“ The decision also gave the armed forces and the police the right to enter universities and prevent protests, as „protection to the students,“ Al-Bura'ī said.<sup>70</sup>

Shadi Hamid, director of research at the Brookings Doha Center, believes that despite the clampdown the Brotherhood is steeped in an “organizational ethos of not resorting to violence,” believing that is in part to its experience of brutal repression for years under the regime of late Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. “But in a situation in which the leadership is decapitated [CH: in prison] and people aren't getting clear orders,” he says, “you might have individuals who are going their own way because you lose the superstructure of the Brotherhood as an organization.”<sup>71</sup>

Danish investigative reporter, Flemming Weiss Andersen says these are most likely more than a few individuals.<sup>72</sup> It is true that with leaders in prison and others abroad the leadership chain is broken. U.S.-based brotherhood member, Abdel Mawgud Darderi (‘Abd Al- Maūjūd

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<sup>69</sup> Egypt declares Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group, in *The Guardian*, December 25, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/25/egypt-declares-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-group>.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> MALSIN, J., Egypt's Military-Backed Rulers Brand Muslim Brotherhood ‘Terrorist’ and Extend Crackdown, in *Time*, December 26, 2013, [http://world.time.com/2013/12/26/egypts-military-backed-rulers-brand-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-and-extend-crackdown/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed:timeblogs/middle\\_east%28TIME:TheMiddleEastBlog%29](http://world.time.com/2013/12/26/egypts-military-backed-rulers-brand-muslim-brotherhood-terrorist-and-extend-crackdown/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:timeblogs/middle_east%28TIME:TheMiddleEastBlog%29).

<sup>72</sup> Email February 8, 2015. The Center for Intercultural Dialogue and Translation is currently translating his work on Islamists after Mursi's deposal on July 3, 2013 for publication in Arab-West Report.

Al-Dardīrī) said that Brotherhood leaders in the West would like to negotiate a settlement but that this is rejected by middle leadership in Egypt who see their leaders in prison and have seen relatives and friends killed.<sup>73</sup>

On January 14 and 15, 2014, Egyptians in a referendum approved the new constitution, with much weaker Islamist influences, with 98.1 percent of the votes with a turnout of 38.6 percent, which shows a larger support for the 2014 Constitution than the 2012 Constitution. Opponents to the 2014 Constitution, Muslim Brothers and their allies, had mostly boycotted the elections, thus hiding their real strength.

For several months into 2014, there have been severe clashes between students sympathizing with the Muslim Brotherhood and security. Dr. Hassan Wajih (Hassan Wagieh), Dean of the English Language Department at the Azhar University, remembers this period as an awful period at the Azhar. Students who were either members or sympathizing with the Muslim Brotherhood were disrupting classes, were also in other ways provocative and set university buildings and cars from professors they did not like on fire. Wajih is upset with Western human rights organizations and media who have been focusing on government human rights violations, Wajih does not deny these, but rarely placing this in the context of widespread violence and targeted frequent assassinations of security and officers and personnel, in particular after the dispersal of the Brotherhood sit-ins in August. Wajih believes such one-sided reporting is not only unjust, but also feeds the pro-Brotherhood sentiments in the West. Wajih does not justify human rights violations and he is opposed to the death penalty of hundreds of people, but “widespread one-sided Western reporting about these violations” makes him angry. Wajih’s sentiment is expressed by many, and this makes them rally around their own security and army.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Meeting March 25, 2014 in The Netherlands.

<sup>74</sup> HULSMAN C., ‘Abd Al-Fātah al-Sisi wins Egypt’s presidential elections; Azhar Professor Hassan Wagieh hopes al-Sisi will bring stability to Egypt, in *Arab-West*

Wajih also pointed out that there had been between 500 and 600 targeted killings of policemen since July 3, 2013.<sup>75</sup> If also the military victims would be counted that number would be much higher.

Prof. Wajih says he was in favor of dialogue with Muslim Brothers before the January 25 revolution and until July 3, 2013; nonetheless, he now believes that “this is impossible unless they refrain from mixing religion with politics in ways that are confrontational. They express their beliefs arrogantly and believe that their thoughts are superior to that of others. They are also hammering on a victimization discourse, presenting themselves as the victim of their opponents instead of looking at their own failures. They make people believe they speak for God but the way they do this shows a serious lack of knowledge in Islamic jurisprudence and other Islamic sciences. Last but not least, they should end their practice of *takfir* (declaring their opponents unbelievers).” Wajih is still committed to engage in an intellectual debate about the essence of Islam, and is therefore working on a book that he titled: “Negotiating Islam: the Azhar, Muslim Brothers and the third wave of Islamophobic discourse.” With this third wave, he refers to the discourse and acts of Muslim Brothers fueling a new upsurge of Islamophobia in non-Muslim countries.<sup>76</sup>

There is, however, not only a new upsurge of Islamophobia but also a strong upsurge of critique of the Egypt. Important in these were mass protests in March and April in which over 1000 members and

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*Report*, week 21, art. 60, June 27, 2014 <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-21/60-abdelfattah-al-sisi-wins-egypts-presidential-elections-azhar-professor-hassan>.

<sup>75</sup> HULSMAN C., One year after the removal of President Mursi, Egyptians could do a much better job of explaining Egypt's transition to a Western public, in *Arab-West Report*, week 28, art. 19, July 10, 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-28/19-one-year-after-removal-president-Mursi-egyptians-could-do-much-better-job>.

<sup>76</sup> HULSMAN C., Abdelfattah al-Sisi wins Egypt's presidential elections; Azhar Professor Hassan Wagieh hopes al-Sisi will bring stability to Egypt, in *Arab-West Report*, week 21, art. 60, June 27, 2014 <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-21/60-abdelfattah-al-sisi-wins-egypts-presidential-elections-azhar-professor-hassan>.

supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood were sentenced to death. Many received the maximum sentence because they had fled, and thus were absent in the court hearings but the mass protests drew large protests, also from the former chairman of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights Hishām Qāssim (Hisham Qasem).<sup>77</sup>

The completion of the constitution made it possible to organize presidential elections on May 26- 28 with two candidates; former Defense Minister ‘Abd Al-Fāttah Al-Sīsī and left-wing Egyptian Popular Current candidate Hamdīn Sabāhī. 25,5 million people went to the polls, a turnout of 47.5% with Al-Sīsī winning with 23,78 million or 96,91%, ten million votes more than former president Muhammad Mursī who obtained 13,2 million votes, or around 50%, in the 2012 presidential elections. Sabāhī had participated in the first round of the 2012 elections and then obtained 21% of the vote, which indicates that many from his electorate now had voted for Al-Sīsī. Al-Sīsī had indeed been riding a wave of popular sentiments since he forced Mursī out of office. He has made great efforts to bring calm to the country and obtaining massive support from in particular, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia for Egypt’s ailing economy. Al-Sīsī’s landslide victory of 96,91% was also related to the Brotherhood boycotting these elections. Thus instead of voting for his opponent Al-Sīsī’s opponents preferred to stay home.

Al-Sīsī was sworn in on June 8, and started a mega project to enlarge the Suez Canal, largely financed by Egyptian civilians who bought bonds to make this possible. Demonstrations and violence, however, albeit on a small scale, continued. On 9 August 2014, the Supreme Administrative Court ordered the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party and the liquidation of its assets.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> BELL, B., Court confirms Egypt Muslim Brotherhood death sentences, in *BBC news*, June 21, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27952321>.

<sup>78</sup> EL-DIN, EL-SAYED G., Egyptian court dissolves Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party, in *Al Ahram Online*, August 9, 2014. <http://english.ahram.org>.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is severely weakened but still active in small groups. They are, however, still active in Europe, showing no signs of compromise or reconciliation, stating this is not possible as long as their leaders are in prison,<sup>79</sup> continuously speaking about the coup d'état on June 30, 2013, trying to influence western media, and trying to bring Egyptian officials before courts in Europe such as Dutch lawyer, André Seebregts who filed on behalf of four Dutch citizens of Egyptian origin, most likely Muslim Brothers, a case on September 18, 2014, to the Dutch general prosecution against Egyptian Minister of Interior Mohamed Ibrahim [Muhammad Ibrahim], former President 'Adlī Mansūr and former Prime Minister Hazem El-Beblawi [Hāzīm Al-Biblāwī] over crimes against humanity.<sup>80</sup>

Reports in Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, February 1-2, indicate an escalation to a more open justification for more violence; killing security officials and weakening Egypt economically. This is not new but the open calls to this through Brotherhood channels is a change from their long held official position of non-violence. *Cumhuriyet* reports about Muslim Brotherhood affiliated channels calling for violence and death threats against Egyptian President 'Abd Al-Fātah Al-Sīsī and security officials. The newspaper also reports that the Muslim Brotherhood related Rabi'a channel is calling for foreigners to leave Egypt before the coming economic conference in Sharm El-Sheikh, March 13-15.<sup>81</sup>

Muslim Brothers have not called for attacks on Egypt's Christians whose leaders have strongly allied themselves with Al-Sīsī who, in turn,

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eg/NewsContent/1/64/108081/Egypt/Politics-/Egyptian-court-dissolves-Brotherhood%E2%80%99s-Freedom-and.aspx.

<sup>79</sup> Usāmah Farīd, August 7, 2014, comments during passing through Amsterdam.

<sup>80</sup> HULSMAN C., Dutch lawyer filing a case against Egyptian officials in Dutch court; a publicity stunt? in *Arab-West Report*, week 40, art. 7, October 1, 2014, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2014/week-40/07-dutch-lawyer-filing-case-against-egyptian-officials-dutch-court-publicity-stunt>.

<sup>81</sup> Muslim Brotherhood Operatives in Turkey Call For Killing Egyptian Officials, Threaten Egypt; Turkish MP: Turkey Shelters 'Many MB And Hamas Members', in *MEMRI dispatch 5959*, February 6, 2015.

demonstrated his appreciation through a surprise visit to the Coptic Orthodox Cathedral on January 6, 2015, to congratulate Christians with Christmas. Yet, other more radical Islamists have denounced Christians for their support to Al-Sīsī.

## Conclusion

Much Western reporting about Muslim-Christian relations follows an ideological agenda. MEMRI follows an Israeli agenda, cherry-picking what they want from their Arabic sources and with their selection providing a Western audience with an image that the Arab-Muslim world is largely anti-Western. Open Doors selects stories, with indications that sources are not always sufficiently checked, that show Christian hardship in the Muslim world but hardly makes an effort to show that Christian incitement and exaggerations, as so well illustrated by Prof. Berge Traboulsi, also exists and millions of other Christians live lives that are similar to that of their Muslim compatriots. Non-Religious Western media mostly shows a lack of interest in Middle Eastern Christians or is susceptible to an Islamophobic discourse in which inflated Coptic population statistics do play a role.

Crucial information such as the origin of violence in Abū Fānā in a land conflict, or Christians trying to make use of vacuum of government control to build churches such as in Marīnāb, or the young Christian killing a Muslim in al-Khusūs that triggered later violence are almost left unreported, and not only make it hard to understand the dynamics that produce violence but also results in general accusations of large groups, an entire village, Islamists in general, etc that only add to more tensions instead of seeking ways to address the causes of violence.

Also the context is often largely underreported.

The government has had difficulties to implement Egyptian laws as was seen in Abū Fānā. Egyptian security was often unprepared to deal with sudden mob violence after an incident.

Egyptian regimes and the Muslim Brotherhood have had uneasy relations with each other since the Brotherhood became politically active in the 1940s, but the January 25, 2011 revolution, the single year President Mursī was in power, and the clashes following the overthrow of Mursī have deepened the divide. Western human rights organizations in Europe primarily focus on the heavy handed responses to violence in the country by police and army, but insufficiently pay attention to the systematic targeted killings of police and army personnel.

The Muslim Brotherhood systematically denounces attacks and killings taking place but there is little to no trust in their statements since past experiences show a certain ambivalence to violence, and a number of people clearly associated to the Brotherhood have been involved in violence and the Brotherhood, as was obvious in the one year they were in power, was linked to other more radical Islamist groups.<sup>82</sup> Denunciations are thus not enough in regaining trust in Egypt.

In October 2013, 'Amr Darrāj, then spokesperson for the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, spoke of unsuccessful efforts for communication.<sup>83</sup> In August 2014, Usāmah Farīd said there were no talks between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian Government, believing that the Government should make the initiative and not the Brotherhood.<sup>84</sup> No efforts are seen from any party to make any compromise for the sake of Egypt's stability and economy.

The Muslim Brotherhood has made several statements that are critical of Christians in Egypt since they are strongly supportive of

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<sup>82</sup> RANKO, A., *Die Muslim-bruderschaft; Porträt einer mächtigen Verbindung*, Körper-Stiftung, Hamburg, 2014, p. 148-152. Emad Awny, businessman in Assiut, saw in August 2013 leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood sit-in in Assiut participating in attacks against churches, telephone call, August 20, 2013.

<sup>83</sup> HULSMAN C., - SCHOOREL, E. - DEIAB, A., AWR Interviews Dr. Amr Darrag, in Arab-West Report, Week 43, art. 65, October 22, 2013, <http://www.arabwestreport.info/year-2013/week-43/65-awr-interviews-dr-amr-darrag-october-22-2013>.

<sup>84</sup> August 7, 2014.

president Al-Sīsī. This would thus not bode well for Christians if the Brothers would ever come back.

Open Doors' texts continue to speak about difficulties with conversions from Islam and church building and repairs they call "difficult, if not impossible," which is partially untrue and shows a focus on very limited areas of interest.

The current government seems to regard basic human rights and democratic pluralism as a low priority: a law from November 2013, restricting public protests, contributes to reducing freedom of expression in the public sphere. In this context, therefore, religious freedom for Christians is not fully guaranteed, Open Doors wrote.<sup>85</sup>

The consequence of Open Doors being focused on individual examples of Christian hardship is that there was hardly attention for the wider context. This made Open Doors recently place Egypt number 23 of their list of countries where Christians are most persecuted.

The situation in Egypt is not ideal. The arguments of basic human rights, democratic pluralism and restricting public protests (mainly by sympathizers of the Brotherhood) seem to be taken from non-religious human rights groups, but fully disregard the widespread feeling of Egyptian Christians that they are now better protected than during the reign of Mursī. It also disregards that Egypt is going through a period of struggle between government and Muslim Brotherhood in which the government has the upper hand but which does have consequences for, for example, restrictions on public protests. Christians are free to worship and express their faith. Conversions from Islam to Christianity are indeed legally not possible. This is difficult for the concerning persons but it has no effect on the life of the great majority of Christians in Egypt. Life for lower social classes has indeed, for Muslims and Christians, become more difficult and in difficult social circumstances

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<sup>85</sup> OPEN DOORS, *Open Doors World Watch list 2015*, <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/trends.php> (accessed 3.2.2015).

people tend to take care of their own kin first which does not make this easy for Christians in lower social classes, but instead of blaming the government Western Christians would do well to support Egypt in ways that will benefit all Egyptians, and thus will include Christians as well. Also benefitting to all Egyptians would be an end to the current stand-off between government and Muslim Brotherhood but with their refusal to recognize the government of Al-Sīsī and calls for violence and hitting Egypt's economy this will be hard to realize.

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## Abstract

This paper provides examples of a Western discourse about Egypt, which is critical about Muslim-Christian relations and human rights in Egypt and is largely focused on incidents, but is also insufficiently aware of the wider context which is presented in this paper.

This paper describes three abrupt political changes in Egypt in the past four years; the fall of president Hosni Mubarak, Islamist president Muhammad Mursi coming to power and interim president 'Adli Mansur (Adli Mansour) and president 'Abd Al-Fattah Al-Sisi following his downfall one year later. The changes had a profound effect on the relations between people of different convictions not only Muslims and Christians, but also among Muslims of different convictions, from liberal to traditional and political Islam.

The Egyptian state in the last years of Mubarak was insufficiently capable of enforcing the law, which has had its effects on Muslim-Christian relations. The state had been greatly weakened after the overthrow of Mubarak and was further weakened due to the power struggle that took place during the Mursi presidency. Interim president 'Adli Mansur and president 'Abd Al-Fat-

Al-Sisi have worked on strengthening Egyptian institutions to stabilize the country.

Foreign powers have sought to influence developments in Egypt, but since different powers supported different factions they have only further weakened the state. President Al-Sisi has been able to make foreign influence align with the objectives of his government.

This has, of course, had consequences for Muslim-Christian relations in the country. Unity during the revolution was immediately followed by several church burnings and clashes in 2011. Muslim-Christian relations during the Mursi presidency started hopeful but deteriorated later. President Al-Sisi has made great efforts to reach out to Christians.

# International Conference Europe and Islam

Olomouc, Czech Republic 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2015

## Organiser

Institute for intercultural, interreligious  
and ecumenical research and dialog

Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology  
Palacký University in Olomouc

### Conference venue:

3<sup>rd</sup> of March – Corpus Christi Chapel, in Arts Centre of Palacký University,  
former Jesuit College, Univerzitní Street 3

4<sup>th</sup> of March – Centrum Aletti, Křížkovského Street 2

### Guarantor of the project and conference:

prof. Pavel Ambros, Th.D. (pavel.ambros@upol.cz)

### Coordination of the conference:

Jaroslav Franc, Th.D. (jaroslav.franc@upol.cz)

### Manager of the project and conference:

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### Patronage over the conference:

The Most Revered Jan Bosco Graubner, archbishop of Olomouc  
Prof. Jaroslav Miller, rector of Palacký University in Olomouc

## Conference program

### Opening the Conference

9:00, 3<sup>rd</sup> of March

*Corpus Christi Chapel, Univerzitní street 3, Olomouc*

- prof. Pavel Ambros, S.J., Director of the Institute for intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical research and dialog
- mons. Jan Bosco Graubner, Archbishop of Olomouc, Great Chancellor of Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology
- prof. Peter Tavel, O.P., Dean of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology

### Plenary session I

9:30, 3<sup>rd</sup> of March

*Corpus Christi Chapel, Univerzitní street 3, Olomouc*

- Prof. Luboš Kropáček, Charles University: *Muslims in Czechia, a heterogeneous minority in a deeply secularized society*
- Dr. Michaela Moravčíková, Institute for Legal Aspects of Religious Freedom, Slovakia: *Religiosity in Contemporary Slovakia and Challenges of Islam*

### *Café break*

- Prof. Stanisław Grodz, SVD, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin: *Muslim presence in Poland - a marginal issue in contemporary Europe?*
- Prof. Francesco Zannini, Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies: *Islam in Italy: a galaxy of Muslim presence*
- Prof. Laurent Basanese, S.J., Pontifical Gregorian University, Italy: *The Question of "True Islam": Europe faces Salafism*

### Plenary session II

14:00, 3<sup>rd</sup> of March

*Corpus Christi Chapel, Univerzitní street 3, Olomouc*

- Special guest: Cornelis Hulsman, Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Translation, Egypt: *Interfaith relationship in Egypt misunderstood by European media and activists*
- Prof. Damian Howard, S.J., Heythrop College of London University, England: *Islam in England: a survey of communities, issues and engagement with Christians*

Prof. Nico Landman, Leiden University, The Netherlands: *Islam in the Netherlands: religious communities in a changing secular environment*

*Café break*

Prof. Bert Broekaert, Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium: *European Muslims and End of Life Ethics: A Belgian Perspective*

Dr. Timo Aytaç Güzelmansur, Centre for Encounter and Documentation of Christian-Muslim relations, Germany: *Muslimische Präsenz in Deutschland und Antwort der katholischen Kirche – eine Zusammenstellung*

18:00 closing the plenary sessions

Panel discussion

Christian roots of Europe and challenges for 21<sup>st</sup> century

9:30, 4<sup>th</sup> of March

*Centrum Aletti, Křížkovského Street 2, Olomouc*

Key word speaker: mons. Michael Weninger, Pontifical council for interreligious dialogue, Vatican

11:45 closing remarks

Prof. Pavel Ambros, SJ, Director of the Institute for intercultural, interreligious and ecumenical research and dialog

## List of the participants

**Doc. Laurent Basanese, SJ**

*Pontifical Gregorian University, Italy*

Laurent Basanese, Jesuit priest, teaches Arabic Christian theology and Islamology at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome). He specialises in fundamentalist Muslim thought and collaborated with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Syria in 2011. Amongst his publications are the following, in French *Ibn Taymiyya- Réponse raisonnable aux chrétiens?*, Damas- Beirut, Institut Français du Proche Orient, 2012, and in Italian “Le correnti salafite dell’islàm”, *Civiltà Cattolica*, n.3899, 01/12/2012, p.425-438. He also teaches at the Pontifical Oriental Institute (Rome) and at the Jesuit Faculty in Paris (Centre Sèvres).

**Prof. Bert Broeckaert**

*Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium*

Bert Broeckaert is a specialist in comparative religion and ethics and teaches comparative religion at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven. He is a member of the Research Unit of Theological and Comparative Ethics and of the Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Religion and Worldview (of which he was the first director from 2001 to 2008). In recent years his research focuses on the way world religions deal with death and dying and more particularly on the way they influence treatment decisions near the end of life.

**Dr. Stanisław Grodź, SVD**

*John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland*

An assistant professor at the Chair of the Study of Religion, Department of the Study of Religion and Missiology, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland. He concentrates on issues of interreligious contacts between adherents of various religions in Africa, especially in West Africa with a focus on Ghana. He is interested in the history and contemporary situation of contacts between Christians and Muslims.

**Dr. Timo Aytaç Güzelmansur**

*Centre for Encounter and Documentation of Christian-Muslim relations, German Bishops' Conference, Germany*

Born in Antakya, in Turkey, he studied catholic theology in Germany, Augsburg, and in Rome at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He received a doctorate from the Hochschule Sankt Georgen of Frankfurt. Since 2012 he is managing director of the Working group of the German Bishops' Conference, Centre for Encounter and Documentation of Christian-Muslim relations (CIBEDO). He is married, has two children.

**Prof. Damian Howard, SJ**

*Heythrop College of London University, England*

He is an English Jesuit priest, lecturer at Heythrop College, and Vice-Director of the Bellarmine Institute. He gained his doctorate in contemporary Islamic thought from the University of Birmingham. Beside the academic work he has served in a variety of Jesuit pastoral works. He is superior of a Jesuit house of formation in Wapping and a member of the Hurtado Jesuit Centre. His main interest is in the complex and multi-disciplinary study of

relations between Christians and Muslims. And he is involved in a number of dialogue initiatives at both national and international levels, including work on behalf of the Holy See.

**Cornelis Hulsmans**

*Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Translation, Egypt*

He is a director of the Centre for Intercultural Dialogue and Translation, co-founder and editor in chief of Arab-West Report, and co-founder of the Center for Arab-West Understanding. He studied development sociology at the University of Leiden, specializing in Eastern Christianity, Islam and development. He has a permanent resident in Egypt since 1994. In his professional work it is important to him to use one standard in dealing with people of all religions and convictions. He has been reporting for Western media including Protestant, Catholic as well as Islamic.

**Prof. Luboš Kropáček**

*Charles University Prague, Czech Republic*

He is Czech orientalist and leading scholar in Arabic studies. He studied Arabic language and English language at Faculty of philosophy, Charles University in Prague. In 1968 was a member of the Lambadore expedition. Field of his research is wide and among them are culture of the Arabic countries, contemporary Islamic thought in Europe, and also the relationship between Christianity and Islam. He is professor at Hussite Theological Faculty, Charles University in Prague.

**Prof. Nico Landman**

*Leiden University, The Netherlands*

Nico Landman is an associate professor in Islamic Studies at Utrecht University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Theology. He is director of education in the school of Theology which offers BA and MA-programs in Theology, Religious Studies, Arabic Language and Culture, and Islamic Studies. He did research on the institutionalization of Islam in Europe. He participates in the European network Eurislam. A recently finished project in which he participated concerned Diyanet, the Turkish Directorate for Religious Affairs. Two current research focuses are the transnational Turkish-islamic field, and the genre of the "Stories of the prophets (Qisas al-Anbiya') in the European context.

**Dr. Michaela Moravčíková**

*Institute for Legal Aspects of Religious Freedom, Trnava University in Trnava, Slovakia*

She is director of the Institute for Legal Aspects of Religious Freedom, Slovakia. She gained her doctorate in pastoral theology from the Palacky University in Olomouc. Thesis was focused on the multicultural situation in the society and role of Christianity.

**Mons. Michael Weninger**

*Pontifical council for interreligious dialogue, Vatican*

Michael Heinrich Weninger, former Austrian diplomat and nowadays Roman Catholic priest in the Roman Curia. He studied Catholic theology and philosophy at the universities of Innsbruck and Vienna, and Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. After diplomatic carrier he was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Christoph Schönborn in 2011. Pope Benedict XVI. appointed him in 2012 a member of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. He is responsible for dialogue with Islam in Europe, Central Asia and Central and South America.

**Prof. Francesco Zannini**

*Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Italy:*

He is professor of Contemporary Islam and Islamic Law at the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome. He is Former Member of the Scientific Committee of the Italian Ministry of Home, was also Professor of Islamic Studies at National Major Seminary in Dhaka, Bangladesh, American University in Cairo and Yale University. He is author of numerous paper on the history of Islam and interfaith dialogue.

**R E F U G I U M**

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