



cilt
2

BALKANLARDA
İSLÂM
MİADI DOLMAYAN UMUT

İSLAM IN THE BALKANS
UNEXPIRED HOPE

TÜRKİSTAN'DAN BALKANLARA
FROM TURKESTAN TO THE BALKANS

EDİTÖR
MUHAMMET SAVAŞ KAFKASYALI



ANKARA - BELGRADE - BUCHAREST - BUDAPEST - CHISINAU - KIEV
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MİADI DOLMAYAN UMUT

Cilt 2: Türkistan'dan Balkanlara
From Turkestan to the Balkans

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Hearts to the Representation of Mentality*
c.4: Vakti Azizden Vakti Zelalete / *From Times of Glory to Times of Humility*
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Muslims in the Republic of Poland – the History and the Present

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Summary

The feature “Muslims in the Republic of Poland – history and present” presents in a synthetic form the history of the settlement and the presence of Tatars on the Polish soil, taking into account all social and political transformations. The presence of Tatars, who are so different in their religion and traditions from the Christian majority, is a remarkable event. Diversity, however, did not hinder them from growing deeply into the local landscape, they have long been recognized as “ours”, all the more that during national-liberation fights they demonstrated their dedication and commitment to the State that had adopted them and taken care of. They proved it from the battlefields of Grunwald in 1410, through the fields of the battle of Maciejowice, until 1939, when it was the last time in the history when the Tatar cavalry fought for their homeland. The fate of the Tatars is inextricably linked with the history of Poland – with times of glory, collapse, partition, further insurrections, and the two world wars. The feature recalls the most important and significant events over the centuries.

The author pays attention to years 1918-1939, to the period of the newly regained independence, rebuilding the Polish state, which was a unique period in the history of the Tatars, too. On December 28, 1925, the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland was founded that gathered all existing religious communes (parishes) scattered across the country. At the same time, the first Mufti, who is the religious head of all Muslims in Poland, was chosen. In 1936 the act on the relation of the State to the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland was adopted. This document is extremely important as it was the second act of this type in Europe and, at the same time, it was the statement of recognition of Islam as one of the official religions of the state. Ambitious plans and actions taken were brutally cut short by World War II. The situation of the Tatars after the war was totally different. During the war the Muslim intelligence died or emigrated overseas. This was the cause why the cultural and religious life of the followers of Islam after the war did not reach such a big momentum as before. In addition, political changes and new frontiers divided the Tatars, as most of them found themselves outside of Poland, in Lithuania and Belarus. Many Tatars who felt Polish and refusing to be obedient to the Soviet power, came back to Poland, onto the Recovered Territories in Pomerania and west of the country. Luckily, the period of communism was not the time of repressions for the followers of Islam. But only the period of political transformation and the last 25 years has been the time of significant changes. First and foremost, Tatars living in their own circle so far, apart from Muslim states, as a small island of the Orient in a Christian environment had to deal with Muslim groups of different nationalities and cultures.

Speaking out about Muslims in Poland, you should mention the large group of people from Arab countries, Turks, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, as well as converts. Today this diversity has led to divisions and separation of new religious communities bringing together followers of Islam. There are natural alliances and cooperation between certain groups (Tatars and Turks), while other groups are willing to lead a selfdetermined existence, as their ethnic and national origin is more important to them than a common religion.

The challenges faced by the entire Ummah concern not only internal relations, but mainly measures serving the social dialogue, decent representation of Islam and breaking the stereotypes on the Islam followers. All the more that the current political and social situation in the Middle East and Western Europe, the problem of refugees, and anti-Islamic moods are reflected more powerfully in the Polish society.

Polonya Cumhuriyeti'nde Müslümanlar - Tarih ve Bugün

Özet

Polonya Cumhuriyeti'nde Müslümanlar - tarihi ve günümüz" adlı makale, tüm sosyo-politik değişimleri dikkate alarak, kısa olarak Polonya topraklarında Tatarlarının yerleşme ve yaşam tarihini göstermektedir. Hıristiyan çoğunluğundan farklı din ve gelenekler açısından Tatarların varlığı olağandışı bir olaydır. Tatarların farklılığı, yerel gerçekliğe kök salmalarına engel olamadı. Tatarlar, ulusal-kurtuluş mücadelelerinde onları kabul eden ve kollayan devlete bağlılık ve fedakârlık göstererek uzun zamandır yerli olarak görülmüştür. 1410 yılında Grunwald alanlarından başlayıp, ardından Maciejowice kuşatmasında ve en son olarak 1939 yılında, son kez atlı Tatarlar kendi ülkesi için mücadele etmiştir. Tatarlar tarihi Polonya tarihiyle ayrılmaz bir şekilde altın çağ, çöküş, ilhak, ayaklanmalar ve iki dünya savaşı ile bağlantılıdır. Makale, yüzyıllar boyunca en önemli olayları hatırlatır.

Yazarın özellikle ilgisini çeken dönem 1918-1939 yılları arasında bağımsızlık kazanması ve Polonya devletinin yeniden kurulması dö-

nemi, aynı zamanda Tatarların tarihinde eşsiz bir dönemiydi. 28 Aralık 1925 tarihinde, şimdiye kadar ülke genelinde dağıntık dil toplulukları (parişleri) bir araya getirerek Polonya Cumhuriyetinde Müslüman Birliği kurulmuştur. Aynı zamanda Polonya'da tüm Müslümanların ilk müftüsü yani dini otoritesi seçilmiştir. 1936 yılında ise Polonya Cumhuriyeti Müslüman Birliği, Devlet ile İlişkisini tanımlayan kanun yürürlüğe girdi. Bu belge Avrupa'da ikinci böyle bir kanun olup, son derece önemlidir ve aynı zaman İslam'ın ülkede resmi dinlerden biri olarak kabul edildiğini gösteren bir kanıttı. İddialı planların ve faaliyetlerin yapılması acımasız bir şekilde İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nın başlamasıyla kesilmiştir. Savaş bitince Tatarların durumu bambaşka oldu. Savaş sırasında Polonyalı Müslüman topluluğun entelektüel kesimi ya öldürülmüş ya da yurt dışına göç etmişti. Savaştan sonra İslam dini mensuplarının kültürel ve dini hayatı öncesinde olduğu gibi zirveye ulaşamamıştır. Ayrıca, siyasi değişimler ve yeni oluşturulan sınırlar Tatarları böldü ve çoğu Polonya toprakları dışında Litvanya ve Beyaz Rusya'da bulunuyordu. Birçok Tatar Polonyalı olarak hissedip ve Sovyet iktidarına katılmayarak Polonya'ya geri kazanılan olarak adlandırılan Pomeranya ve ülke batısındaki topraklarına taşındı. Komünizm dönemi Müslümanlara karşı baskı zamanı değildi. Siyasi dönüşüm dönemi ve son 25 yıl önemli değişimlerin zamanıdır. Tatarlar şimdiye kadar Hıristiyan ortamda Orient adası olarak başka Müslüman ülkelerden uzak, kendi toplumunda yaşardı fakat son zamanlarda farklı ülkelerden, kültür açısından da farklı gelen Müslüman gruplarıyla yüzleşmek zorunda kaldılar.

Polonya'da Müslümanlardan bahsederek, Arap ülkelerinden gelen büyük grubu, Türkleri, Çeçenleri, Kırım Tatarlarının yanı sıra İslam'ı kabul edenleri belirtmek gerekir. Bugünlerde çeşitlilik bölünmelere yol açtı ve İslam dini mensuplarını bir araya getiren birçok yeni dini toplulukların oluşmasına sebep oldu. Bazı gruplar arasında (Tatarlar ve Türkler) ittifaklar kurulur ve işbirliği yapılır, diğer gruplar kendi kendini yönetmek ister ve ortak dinden milli-etnik köken daha önemlidir.

Tüm ümmet önüne koyulan zorluklar özellikle sosyal diyaloga ilişkin faaliyetler göstermek, İslam'ın saygın bir şekilde temsili ve Müslümanlar hakkında kalıplaşmış stereotipleri kırmaktır. Hele şimdiki Orta Doğu ve Batı Avrupa'daki sosyo-politik durum, mülteci sorunu ve İslam karşıtı ruh Polonya toplumunda da yansıtılabilir.

Introduction

History of Islam in Poland is closely connected with Tatars, who were almost the only Muslims on Polish soil until the mid-'80s. Settlement and presence of Tatars in the Commonwealth [pol. Rzeczpospolita] has been described in a number of dissertations, most of them written in the 20th century¹. Describing more than a six-hundred-year presence of Tatars in the Central and Eastern Europe with a variety of threads could take a separate volume, and the aim of this article is not a comprehensive depiction of the history of Tatars, but only showing the key moments in the group history, a kind of its presentation.

Roots of the group

To understand who the Tatars are, it is useful to mention the Mongols. This name was assigned to one of the nomadic tribes living on the steppes of the north-eastern Mongolia, between the rivers of Onon, Kherlen and Argun. Initially, this people was named Meng-ku in Chinese chronicles and Meng-wa in later sources, while a significant change occurred in the 13th century. The name of the Mongols covered not just one tribe, but all tribes of the Great Steppe conquered by the Mongols. One of the conquered peoples were Tatars, south-eastern neighbours of the Mongols. In everyday language, the name of the Tatars meant all Turkish peoples who became a part of the empire of Temujin, (Genghis Khan) and mixed with the Mongols, and so the original Mongolian Tatars². The name 'Tatars' appeared in a Turkish inscription in the year 732³. Chinese sources describe the Tatars as the people named Ta-ta or Ta-tan. In the 12th century Tatars began to play a major role among the tribes of the Great Steppe, and with time the names of the Tatars and Mongols were used interchangeably to describe peoples of this territory. In Europe, the name 'Tatars' became popular to describe the Mongolian invaders, however, it was changed slightly to Tartars. This was a reference to the mythological name of Tartar, which meant hell, therefore the invaders were associated with devils. Nomadic peoples, so different from the Christian Europe, embodied the biblical peoples of Gog and Magog executing punishment upon the sinners. Yet in a Renaissance woodcut of Albrecht Durer *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, picturing the major catastrophes of the mankind, which is plague, war, famine and death – two warriors wear the costume and weapons of Tatars or other nomads from the Eastern Europe⁴.

1 Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warsaw, Iskry, 1986; Stanisław Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej, Rocznik Tatarski* Vol. 3, Warszawa, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1938; Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990; Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce. Studia z dziejów XIII-XVIII w.*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989; Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy w Polsce i Europie. Fragmenty dziejów*, Pułtusk, Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztor, 2008; Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Z historii Tatarów polskich 1794 – 1944. Zbiór szkiców z anekсами źródłowymi*, Pułtusk, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, 1998.

2 Leszek Podhorecki, *Tatarzy*, Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1971, p. 18.

3 Tomasz Jasiński, *Przerwany hejnał*, Kraków, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1988, p. 9.

4 Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy w Polsce i Europie. Fragmenty dziejów*, Pułtusk, Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztor, 2008, pp. 12-13.

Islamisation

The Mongols and nomads united by Genghis Khan conquered numerous peoples and their expansion was impressive. The Empire, established as a result of the conquests of Genghis Khan and his successors in the first half of the 13th century, covered more than half of Asia, and almost all of the Eastern Europe. One of the areas managed by the Batu-Khan, who was Genghis Khan's grandson, evolved into a sovereign state called the Golden Horde. Histories of individual khans are complicated, as well as their system of inheritance, territorial range or conquests. The most interesting aspect from the point of view of this paper is the moment of accepting Islam. Several key events that started islamisation of nomads, former shamanism followers, should be pointed out⁵.

1. On the territory of the Golden Horde there were strong centres of Islam, such as: Bolghar, Bukhara, Urgench or Samarkand. Mongolian conquerors got influenced gradually by more superior Muslim civilization and accepted the new faith. One of the proponents of Islam was Khan Berke, who became a Muslim even before taking power (years 1257-1266). During his reign the Golden Horde became a Muslim state. Berke was aware that Islam would connect the Mongolian conquerors with the residents of Bolghar and the Kipchak, who were largely Muslims, and contribute to the consolidation of the society of the Golden Horde. He built mosques and used the knowledge of Muslim scholars⁶.

2. Despite rapid progress, the new religion still fought with the followers of shamanism. Successors of Berke – Mongke Temur (Möngke) and Tokhta – were shamanists, while Uzbek Khan, who followed them, was already a Muslim and converted the inhabitants of the Golden Horde to Islam making it the state religion⁷.

3. Part of the Mongols converted to Islam at the time of the reign of Hulagu, who was a grandson of Genghis Khan and the creator of Ilkhanate, after the invasion on Iraq and the fall of Baghdad in 1258. Tekuder, the son of Hulagu, converted to Islam shortly after he ascended the throne in the year 1282, but his Mongolian supporters were not ready for such a decision and the conversion caused a civil war. Only when Ghazan became the ruler of the Ilkhanate dynasty and publicly announced his Muslim faith, Islam became the official religion of the state⁸.

5 Leszek Podhorecki, *Tatarzy*, Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1971, pp. 30-32.

6 Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, p. 15; Leszek Podhorecki, *Tatarzy*, Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1971, p. 168.

7 See: Norbert Boratyn, "Recenzja książki autorstwa Katarzyny Warمیńskiej pt. Tatarzy polscy. Tożsamość religijna i etniczna", *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich*, Vol. 9, Gdańsk, Rada Centralna Związku Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej, 2006, p. 364; Leszek Podhorecki, *Tatarzy*, Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1971, p. 168; Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Z historii Tatarów polskich 1794 – 1944. Zbiór szkiców z aneksami źródłowymi*, Pułtusk, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, 1998, p. 11.

8 David Nicolle, *Islam. Historia – kultura – nauka. Dzieje islamu od powstania do końca XV wieku*, trans. Marcin Jakoby and Antoni Winiarski, Poznań, Publicat, 2007, pp. 138-139.

4. Another moment of islamisation was accepting the religion of the Turkic-speaking Kipchaks by their invaders. Generally, they were called Tatars. In the first half of the 15th century the Golden Horde disintegrated into several independent khanates fighting fiercely with one another.

Tatars in the Commonwealth [Rzeczpospolita]

The beginning of the Muslim presence in the Commonwealth relates to the invasion of the horde of Batu-Khan to Hungary and Poland in 1241. The warriors conquered Cracow then⁹, destroyed the Lesser Poland, Land of Łęczyca and Silesia, where the famous battle of Legnica took place which ended with the defeat of the Poles and the death of the Duke of Silesia Henry the Pious. News of the death of Ögedei Khan stopped further expansion. Tatars were forced to return to Rus', where on the steppes of the Black Sea Batu-Khan created a new state called later the Golden Horde. In the year 1259 Lesser Poland experienced another Turkish invasion. The third and last of the great invasions occurred at the turn of the years 1287 and 1288.

It is important to identify several waves of settlement of the Tatars:

1. Captives of Tatars who settled in Poland at the time of feudal fragmentation and then in the Kingdom of Poland, especially in Lesser Poland, since the 13th century invasions. This settlement did not leave any lasting trace behind. The Tatars were often baptised in captivity and very quickly, only in the second or third generation, totally lost their sense of distinctiveness.

2. Tatar refugees, who settled in Lithuania between 1312 and 1342. They were shamanists who had taken refuge in Lithuania from persecution of Uzbek Khan.

3. The Tatars came from the Golden Horde to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1399. This group converted to Islam the former settlers.

4. Between 1437-1502 the next group of Tatars arrived to Lithuania, and they were expatriates from the Crimean and Kazakh khanats.

5. A group of Tatars that came from the khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan (formed after the break-up of the Golden Horde), settled there in the second half of the 16th century¹⁰.

9 Relics of the settlement burnt by Tatars can be seen on the tourist route of the dungeons of the Main Market Square in Cracow "Tracing the European identity of Cracow", www.podziemiarynku.com.

10 Norbert Boratyn, "Recenzja książki autorstwa Katarzyny Warmińskiej pt. Tatarzy polscy. Tożsamość religijna i etniczna", *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich*, Vol. 9, Gdańsk, Rada Centralna Związku Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej, 2006, p. 364; Katarzyna Warmińska, *Tatarzy polscy. Tożsamość religijna i etniczna*, Kraków, TAIWPN Universitas, 1999, p. 57.

The largest wave of settlement took place in the years 1392-1430, during the rule of the Grand Duke Vytautas. Larger masses of these people came in this period, and this was mainly the result of internal fights within the Golden Horde and of lost wars. Among the arriving people were voluntary migrants, fleeing successors to the throne, members of reigning family, mercenaries, as well as prisoners of war (incarcerated in Lithuania after the victorious expedition of Vytautas behind the Don River in 1397)¹¹. Vytautas received them willingly. He gave them land in exchange for their military service. In their colonies they could build mosques, marry local women, and the offspring of these marriages could be educated in their Muslim faith. Their traditional, nomadic and pastoral lifestyle transformed into a sedentary and agricultural one. They were settled mainly by towns and along the Teutonic border, which they were supposed to guard. The oldest historical aggregations of the Tatars in Lithuania come from the times of Vytautas, among others in the following areas: at the Voke River in Trakai, in the villages of Kołnołary, Kozakłary, Merszlany, Prudziany and Sorok Tatarly. The account of Gilbert de Lennoya is worth mentioning here:

In this city of Trakai and beyond in several villages there is a very great number of Tatars who live there in whole clans. These are ordinary Saracens... and they have a separate language, called Tatar. In this town live also Germans, Lithuanians, Ruthenians and a great number of Jews¹².

In the battle of Grunwald of July 15, 1410, the Polish-Lithuanian side had both Tatars who had settled for some time in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the warriors who had come in 1409 led by the eldest son of the murdered Tokhtamysh Khan – Tsarevich Jalal al-Din, who was the pretender to the khan throne¹³. He had 300 warriors in his unit, while the Tatar settlers from Lithuania had about 600-800 of them. The first phase of the battle of Grunwald was played according to Tatar tactics, set already by the Polish King Władysław Jagiełło, Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas and Tsarevich Dżelal ed-Din. The army of the Teutonic Knights were unable to cope with the sudden retreat and stretched moving fight, and as a result, suffered great losses. This famous fight tactic is described by Julian Talko-Hryniewicz who appoints to the chronicler Jan Długosz while mentioning the Tatar invasion of the year 1287:

They are fighting from afar, tracing a semicircle and throwing arrows at the enemies, either attacking with horses, or stepping back in retreat. They often pretend to

11 Stanisław Dumin et al., *Tatarskie biografie. Tatarzy polsko-litewscy w historii i kulturze*, trans. Musa Czachorowski, Białystok, Muzułmański Związek Religijny w RP Najwyższe Kolegium, 2012, p. 11.

12 In: Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Z historii Tatarów polskich 1794 – 1944. Zbiór szkiców z aneksami źródłowymi*, Pułtusk, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, 1998, p. 14.

13 The Museum of the Battle of Grunwald in Stębark commemorated a Tatar warrior revealing a silicon rubber sculpture of Jalal al-Din at a ceremonial meeting on January 21, 2012. More on the history: Selim Chazbijewicz, "Chan Dżelaleddin i Tatarzy w bitwie pod Grunwaldem", *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 2, 2010, pp. 6-9.

*retreat to later greet the racing opponent with even more ferocious blows or to flank him suddenly*¹⁴.

After the battle of Grunwald some of Jalal al-Din warriors voluntarily settled in the territory of Lithuania. Tatar settlements initiated by the dukes of Lithuania in the 14th century and followed by the King Casimir Jagiellon, lasted until the end of the 16th century. They gathered around the important political and economic centres and fortified castles: Vilnius, Hrodno, Kaunas, Trakai, Slonim, Minsk and Navahrudak. Loose Tatar enclaves were also formed in Podlachia, at Tykocin and Knyszyn.

Recollection of Vytautas, a ruler favourable to Tatars, survived among them which was expressed in a supplication addressed to King Sigismund I in 1519:

*He did not make us forget the Prophet and we repeated his name as our Caliphs' while directing our eyes to holy places (Mecca and Medina)*¹⁵.

Tatars grew quickly into a new homeland, and they wrote in the above-mentioned letter to the King Sigismund I, too:

*We swore by our sabres that we loved the Lithuanian, when in a wartime they had us for captives, and said to those entering this soil that this sand, this water, and these trees are common to us... In Crimea and Kipchak they all know that we are not foreigners in your country*¹⁶.

Visitors from the vast steppes of Kipchak did not speak one language. Coming from different parts of the vast Golden Horde and khanates that arose after its breakup, they brought their local customs, dialects, and accents with them. Already in the 16th century most of them lost their language and replaced it with Polish or Russian, as stated by the author of a treaty "Risale-i-Tatar-i-Lech" in 1558:

*(...) Unfortunately, they abandoned their speech and use the Polish language, but with the care of him who is the refuge of the mission (i.e. Prophet Muhammad), they preserved their faith so far... Today a small part of Muslims uses the Ottomanii speech there, and only those who... moved here themselves in the age closer to us... In our journey we came across Muslims who knew few things more than we did, even in countries subordinate to the great padishah, and if our people cannot speak Arabic or Turkish, they know other languages: as everyone in our country has got two languages, commonly used there (the Polish and Belarus)*¹⁷.

14 Julian Talko-Hryniewicz, *Muslimowie czyli Tatarzy litewscy*, Kraków, Księgarnia Geograficzna "Orbis", 1924, pp. 30-31.

15 Stanisław Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej*, *Rocznik Tatarski*, Vol. 3, Warszawa, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1938, p. 15.

16 Leszek Podhorecki, *Tatarzy*, Warszawa, Książka i Wiedza, 1971, p. 362.

17 Lucjan Krawiec and Jan Jerzy Tochtermann, *Tatarzy w Polsce*, Wilno, Nakładem Dziennika Urzędowego Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wileńskiego, 1936, p. 13.

Language loss was caused by several factors. Namely, Lithuanian Tatars lived separated from their brothers from the Crimea or behind the Volga River and lived in local Polish- or Belarus-speaking communities, they married Christians (Orthodox, Catholics), which the Quran allowed and dukes and the authorities gave encouragement to. Slavic wives began speaking to them in their own language, teaching children only local languages. Also their denomination was not supporting in terms of maintaining the Tatar language, as the liturgical language of Islam is Arabic. From the 18th century, you can talk about almost total language assimilation¹⁸. Talking about the linguistic assimilation, it should be noted that to a large extent Tatars owe assimilation of the Polish culture to their Christian wives. They introduced a different language, but also distinct religious beliefs, habits, rituals, songs, customs, or costumes to Tatar mansions and cottages. They took names after their wives too. In this way, Tatar names ending with *-icz* or *-ski* evolved from the names of estates; Muslim names often took the form of Christian names, for example: Iskander – Aleksander, Jussuf – Józef, Mustafa – Stefan.

The social structure of the Tatars is worth mentioning here, which was characterised by significant stratification. The highest place in the hierarchy was taken by the descendants of khans, tsareviches of the Puński's and Ostryński's families. Then, there were the hospodar Tatars who were endowed with the biggest investitures and mostly the descendants of the aristocrats that had come from the Golden Horde. They were distinguished by their noble Tartar titles such as ulhan, bey, or mirza. Subsequent to Tatars were Cossacks, who were endowed with land, too. They had to be fully available for fight in the event of call, and during the period of peace their duties were to serve as the postal service, police, escorting royal and magnate rides¹⁹. The lowest in the hierarchy were simple Tatars, often of the captive settlement, and as subjects to hospodars they lived in towns, at castles and manor houses²⁰. This lowest layer has been engaged in traditional crafts, especially tanning²¹ cart driving, agricultural cultivation in gardens and horse trade²².

At the end of the sixteenth and at the beginning of the 17th century Tartar troops appeared in the crown army and were paid by the king. For Muslims settlers, the military duty for investiture was related with costs, continuous absence of the owners, as well as the fragmentation of estates as a result of the large birth rate, all of which brought adverse changes. They tried so sell off their lands and

18 See: Hadży Seraja Szapszak: "O zatraceniu języka ojczystego przez Tatarów w Polsce", *Rocznik Tatarski*, Vol. 1, Wilno, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1932, pp. 34-48.

19 See: Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy w Polsce i Europie. Fragmenty dziejów*, Pułtusk, Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieyszтора, 2008, pp. 163-177.

20 See: *Ibid.* pp. 15-16.

21 Tatars worked in the tanning industry even at the beginning of the 21st century.

22 See: Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce. Studia z dziejów XIII-XVIII w.*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1989, pp. 222-254.

sign up to the army for pay, which resulted in protests of the noblemen. The Moscow raid on Lithuania in the year 1655 proved to be very adverse for the Tatars, as it changed radically the Tatar settlement map in that area. The oldest villages at Vilnius and Kaunas became deserted, and their residents relocated to Volhynia, Podolia, Ukraine and to the Crown and the Courland. The war against Moscow and the Livonian War reduced the number of Tatars who were obliged to serve in the army. Another fights against Turkey and a growing aversion to Islam intensified anti-Tatar events on the part of the Christian nobles. They were forbidden to build mosques and keep Muslim subjects and households.

The Polish state, which was weakened with the onslaught of Swedes, did not pay the employed troops. So they refused to be obedient and eventually disbanded. Tatar troops serving under the banner of the Commonwealth did not get paid either. The Seim of 1667 passed a resolution to pay the Tatar troops only one-quarter of their money back. In winter 1671 riots among the Tatar banners began, and in the spring of 1672 – just before the Turkish offensive – they rose to open revolt and several commanders with their divisions went over to the side of the Turks. This event is called in the history “the Lipka Rebellion”²³. The fidelity to the Commonwealth retained the Tatar cavalry of the Lithuanian army, who had had an important contribution to the battle of Chocim in 1673. The destruction made by the Lipka Tatars fighting as the front raid units of the Turkish army were huge. They used cunning tactics, as they did not differ from local residents due to the same speech and clothing. Therefore, they attacked villages and towns, acting like the Crown Army until the sheer attack. The situation was so serious that in 1673 negotiations with the Lipka Tatars concerning their return began²⁴. The Tatar rebels themselves, attached to the aristocratic privileges, could not get used to the Turkish despotism. In 1674, King John III Sobieski accepted oaths of fidelity from the Lipka Tatars and turned them back into his army. In 1676, on the basis of the Act entitled “Amnistia Tatarum Lipkum”, the seim passed the amnesty for Muslims who decided to serve Poland. Another important event was the Constitution passed by the seim in 1677, which emphasized the merits of the Tatars. On its basis it became possible to restore mosques, and the judicial and fiscal law regarded Tatars as equivalent with the Christian noblemen. To make amends to Tatars, King John III Sobieski in exchange for the outstanding payment of the year 1679 endowed troops with land in Kruszyniany, Nietupy, Łuzany, Drahle, Malawicze, and Bohoniki²⁵. Tatars built mosques in Bohoniki,

23 Lipka Tatars was the name given to the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by Crimean Tatars and Ottoman Turks. Lipka is the garbled name of Lithuania. Lipka Tatarlar meant: Lithuanian Tatars. In the 17th century the name came into use in Poland to determine the Polish-Lithuanian Tatars. In: Selim Chazbijewicz, “Tatarzy w Polsce i w Gdańsku”, *Rocznik Tatarów polskich*, Vol. 9, Gdańsk, Związek Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Rada Centralna, 2006, p. 311.

24 Stanisław Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej*, *Rocznik Tatarski*, Vol. 3, Warszawa, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1938, p. 33.

25 Documents issued in Grodno on March 12, 1679 specified the land granted and the rights and obligations

Kruszyniany, Malewicze and Studzianka as well as established Muslim cemeteries called "mizars." In carrying out their obligations, the Tatar units of Mustafa Sulkiewicz, Samuel Krzeczowski, Kalumbek Bosacki, Jucha Krobicki participated in the battle of Vienna at the side of King John III Sobieski at a total force of 381 horses. On September 12, 1683 Tatars fought against the Turkish cavalry. In this battle they were forced to fight against their brothers in faith, but their loyalty to the Commonwealth turned out to be stronger than religious identity.

The second half of the 18th century brought the fall of the Commonwealth and the misfortunes to Tatars who had been so faithful to it. During the reign of Stanisław August Poniatowski a Lithuanian Treasurer Antoni Tyzehauz tried to deprive them of their estates and only the Bar Confederation and the threat of another exile to Turkey saved the Tatars against the loss of previously granted goods²⁶. In 1786, the Seim recognised former seats of the Tatars, where they had their temples and cemeteries, as heritable. The war of the end of the 18th century²⁷ shook a good material situation of the Tatars in addition to splitting once adjacent Muslim villages by new borders outlined by partition. The southern part of Podlachia together with Studzianki entered the Austrian partition. Kruszyniany, Białogórcze and Łużany were under Russian rule, and the Tatar villages of Sokółki-Malewicze, Drahle and Bohoniki were annexed by the Prussian. After a few years they entered the Prussian partition²⁸. During the partition the Tatars served in the Russian and Prussian armies. In the years 1792-1807, so called Tarentepulk led by Janusz Tarak Murza Baranowski and created by the Minister von Schroter existed in the Prussian army. Napoleon Bonaparte was interested in the Tatar uhlans, too. During the Russo-French war in 1812, the Emperor appointed a Tatar Squadron, which entered the 1st Polish Light Cavalry Regiment of the Imperial Guard. This unit existed until the year 1815²⁹.

Partitions, participation in the Kościuszko Uprising and Napoleonic wars greatly weakened the Tatar ranks. During national uprisings of 1831 and 1863

of the Tatar soldiers towards the Commonwealth. The exact locations of individual commanders in the granted villages are described by Stanisław Kryczyński.

See: Stanisław Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej, Rocznik Tatarski*, Vol. 3, Warszawa, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1938, p. 34.

26 Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, p. 15.

27 Since 1717, when the seim approved the maintenance of a standing army, Tatars ended up as advance guard of the Lithuanian army. They served in regiments established on the basis of already existing Tatar banners of royal and aristocratic armies. These regiments participated in the Bar Confederation, defended the Constitution of May 3, 1791 and fought in the Kościuszko Uprising (with the participation of the Col. Gen. Józef Bielak and Col. Jakub Azulewicz).

See: Arkadiusz Kołodziejczyk, "Pułkownik Jakub Azulewicz- dowódca 6. pułku Przedniej Straży Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego", *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 2, 2009, pp. 4-8.

28 See: Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, pp. 125-126.

29 See: Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy w Polsce i Europie. Fragmenty dziejów*, Pułtusk, Akademia Humanistyczna im. Aleksandra Gieysztor, 2008, pp. 209-226.

Tatars did not form their own divisions. After the January Insurrection many of them experienced repressions, including expropriation. Following the land reform of the year 1864 a lot of Tatar estates collapsed, as their owners were unable to adapt to new ways of management. They fell into debt, sold estates and moved to towns. Forced Russification affected the Tatars too. Tsarist authorities aimed at breaking down any associations of Muslims with Polishness. The strategy was as follows, on the one hand, they were forbidden to use the Polish language in religious life, imams could not deliver sermons in Polish or use liturgical books in that language in mosques³⁰; on the other hand, they were encouraged to work in the state administration and police, where Poles were not let in for employment. The plan was to create a loyal ethnic group out of Muslim Tatars and use it against the Christian Polish population. Tatars used the job opportunities and advancement in the tsarist army and administration, but did not rise up against their Polish neighbours³¹. At the same time, in the years 1831-1863 Russian authorities conducted a verification of noblemen in the Polish-Lithuanian lands, whose aim was the degradation of minor aristocracy, who expressed their anti-Russian moods particularly strong. It also covered Tatar landowners, whose privileges granted to them by the Polish kings were sustained by the Tsarist edicts called "ukases" from previous years. Most of the Tatars of noble heritage were verified positively and they were regranted nobility. During partition some of the Tatar settlers emigrated seeking a living in the Russian Empire, and some left to the United States at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries³².

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries several Tatars played a significant role in a fight for independence. Some of them were the closest aides of Józef Piłsudski himself: Stefan Bielak and a co-creator of the Polish Socialist Party, Aleksander Sulkiewicz aka. Czarny Michał [Black Michael]³³. Sulkiewicz organized Piłsudski's escape from the tsarist prison in St. Petersburg, fought in the 5th Legions' Infantry Regiment and was killed on the battlefield in 1916 rescuing a wounded colleague³⁴.

30 An administrative order also banned to place Polish inscriptions on Tatar graves. Today mizars in Bohoniki and Kruszyniany have got Cyrillic inscriptions.

See: Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, p. 135. Also see: Leon Kryczyński, "Jak carat zwalczał polskość w życiu religijnym Tatarów litewskich", *Przegląd Islamski*, No. 4, 1936, p. 5-7.

31 See: Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, pp. 133-141.

32 More about the Tatars settlement and activity in the United States can be found in: Antoni Przemysław Kosowski, *Nowojorski meczet Rzeczypospolitej. Historia gminy tatarskiej w Stanach Zjednoczonych*, Wrocław-Bydgoszcz, Inicjatywa Wydawnicza Çaxarxan Xucaliq, 2011; Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 22-23.

And also in: Leon Kryczyński, "Emigracja tatarska w Ameryce", *Przegląd Islamski*, No. 4, 1936, pp. 11-13.

33 See: Sławomir Hordejuk, "Wierny towarzysz Piłsudskiego", *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 2, 2010, pp. 14-15.

34 He was buried in Piaseczno. It was only in 1935, at the initiative of the Propaganda Committee of the Polish Act [Polish: Komitet Propagandy Czynu Polskiego], that it was decided to conduct exhumation and transport his remains to Powązki Military Cemetery. On November 8, 1935 a solemn funeral was held with the participation of the Government and the marshals of the Seim and the Senate. Marshal Rydz-Śmigły decorated his coffin with the War Order Virtuti Militari. A mihrab-shaped mausoleum was erected

During the first world war Tatars drawn to the Russian army fought on all fronts. The first year of the war was gracious to lands inhabited by the Tatar community. However, in August 1915, Grodno Governorate was in the heat of battle of the Russian army against the German troops coming from the West. Many Tatars were evacuated together with civilians into the depths of Russia. Polish Muslims of the Russian partition did not remain indifferent to other Muslim communities in Russia. After the revolution in 1917 the Association of Tatars of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine was established in St. Petersburg, which was open for all Muslims of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth³⁵. This association contributed to the political activity of over-thirty-million-count Muslim community in Russia³⁶. A small group of Polish Muslims educated in Russian universities played a significant role in this activity³⁷, which was driven by the idea of transnational association of all Islam followers. In the All-Russian Muslim Council the Polish Tatars were represented by Aleksander Achmatowicz. Over time he became one of the more prominent fighters for political and cultural rights of the Muslim population in Russia. In 1918, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Chief Commander of the army of the Crimean Republic, which declared its independence, was a Polish Tatar Maciej Sulkiewicz. In the Republic the Polish Tatars were assigned to other key posts in the Government, the judiciary, the administration, the army or the police³⁸. When the Red Army occupied the Crimea many of these activists moved to Azerbaijan where they participated in the creation of the new republic. When the Red Army decommissioned the independent Republic of Azerbaijan in the years 1920-1921, some of the Tatars returned to Poland where they organized and guided cultural activities of Polish Muslims until the World War II³⁹.

The interwar period (after Poland regained independence in 1918 until the outbreak of World War II in 1939), was a period of incredible flowering of the

over the grave made of light sandstone, which is preserved to the present day.

See: Anonymous article, "Pogrzeb Aleksandra Sulkiewicza", *Przegląd Islamski*, No. 3-4, 1935, pp. 19-20.

Also see: Leon Kryczyński, "Aleksander Sulkiewicz (Czarny Michał) (1867-1916)", *Rocznik tatarski* vol. I, Wilno, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1932, pp. 228-240.

35 See: Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Z historii Tatarów polskich 1794 – 1944. Zbiór szkiców z aneksami źródłowymi*, Pułtusk, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, 1998, pp. 83-95.

36 This data is not an official Russian Empire data, as the official one indicated only the number of Russian Muslims which was 16 million people.

37 In the years 1907-1910 a semi-legal Academic Circle of the Polish Muslims was founded in St. Petersburg. Its members were learning the history of their community, were interested in religious tradition and habits. These activities were handled by two brothers, Olgierd and Leon Kryczyński, who were law students. For more on this topic see: Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczne – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, p. 23.

38 Leon Nejman Mirza Kryczyński, "Tatarzy polscy a Wschód muzułmański", *Rocznik tatarski*, Vol. 2, Zamość, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1935, pp. 82-92.

39 See: *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

Also see: Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Z historii Tatarów polskich 1794 – 1944. Zbiór szkiców z aneksami źródłowymi*, Pułtusk, Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, 1998, pp. 97-110.

indigenous peoples of the Muslim community in all fields of the socio-political and cultural activity⁴⁰. A population of about 5500 Tartars lived within the Polish borders, most in the Navahrudak, Vilnius and Białystok voivodeships, and a small Muslim community lived in Warsaw. Muslims were one of the smallest denominations in the Second Polish Republic.

In the new reality Tartars wished to sustain the profession they took up for centuries, therefore, they made efforts to create their own division. In 1919 the Mustafa Achmatowicz Regiment of Tatar Uhlans was formed⁴¹. It remained a separate entity until 1922. It was only in 1936, after several years of making effort, when Muslim soldiers could serve in their own squadron named the 13th Regiment of Wilno Uhlans, with their separate uniform and banner in the form of a bunchuk (a Turkish horse-tail military standard)⁴². In 1937, Ali Ismail Woronowicz became the Imam at the 13. Regiment, and by order of the Ministry of Military Affairs, on May 1, 1938, he was appointed an assistant cleric for pastoral and religious duty for all Muslims serving in the Polish Army⁴³.

To regulate its legal status proved to be the major challenge. Before, religious affairs of the Polish Muslims had been formally subject to the muftiate in the Crimea, which was abolished after the victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia. Acting accordingly with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of March 17, 1921, which guaranteed the freedom to religious and national minorities and allowed creation of their own non-Roman Catholic religious communities, Tatar activists of the Vilnius and Warsaw municipalities began their respective efforts to appoint a new union. The union was to merge 19 active religious communes⁴⁴. In May 1923, Tartars launched a memorial to the President of the Republic of Poland, which included their claims concerning the relations between the State and the Muslim denomination. The most important of these were: creation of the Muslim supreme authorities – Muftiate in Vilnius, as well as the passing the law on the relations between the State and the Polish Muslim union.

40 This period was described comprehensively in a separate book by a historian Ali Miśkiewicz. See: Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990.

Also see: Krzysztof Bassara, “Tatarska służba odrodzonej Rzeczypospolitej”, *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 4, 2011, pp. 6-9.

41 The regiment took part in the Kiev Operation, and in August 1920, in the defence of Płock, among others. See: V.J., “Pułk Tatarski Ułanów im. Mustafy Achmatowicza (1919-1921)”, *Rocznik tatarski*, Vol. 1, Wilno, Rada Centralna Związku Kulturalno-Oświatowego Tatarów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 1932, pp. 152-164.

42 Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 155-159.

43 Ibid., p. 157.

After the war the function of the Muslim chaplain in the Polish Army failed to be restored.

44 9 communes in the Navahrudak voivodeship (Kleck, Lachavičy, Łowczyce, Mir, Irwe-Murawszczyzna, Niekraszuńce, Osmołów, Slonim), 7 communes in the Vilnius voivodeship (Dokshytsy, Dowbuciszki, Myadzyel, Nemėžis, Sorok-Tartary, Widze, Vilnius), 2 communes in the Białystok voivodeship (Bohoniki and Kruszyniany) and in Warsaw. See: Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 81-88.

On December 28, 1925 the All-Polish Convention of Delegates from Muslim Communities began in Vilnius, and lasted for two days. 58 delegates arrived who represented 18 religious communes. Justification for the action in Vilnius was presented by Olgierd Malinowski, who claimed:

It is natural that the Congress takes place in Vilnius – as it has always been and remains the focal point of the distribution of the Muslim population in the Republic of Poland. When, at the turn of the 14th and 15th century, larger communities of Tatars settled within the area between Kaunas and Minsk, Vilnius become a natural capital⁴⁵.

The result of the deliberations was primarily announcement of the Muslim autocephaly in the Republic and electing Jakub Szynekiewicz, a doctor of oriental studies, as the⁴⁶ Mufti, who was the supervisor of all Muslims in Poland. Muftiate, which was the governing body of the religious union, was seated in Vilnius. It handled religious affairs and become its representative to the national authorities and representatives of Muslim countries. Further efforts also resulted in the adoption of the law on the relations of the State to the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland of April 21, 1936⁴⁷. An additional regulator of actions was a statute⁴⁸.

In addition to religious organisations a secular organisation called Cultural and Educational Association of the Tatars of the Republic of Poland⁴⁹ was created in 1926, seeking to improve the financial situation and the development of the cultural life of the Polish Tatars. Olgierd Kryczyński was elected as the President of the Central Council of the Association. The Organization planned to establish schools, libraries and club-rooms, issue their own publications and to help the poorest through the creation of nursing homes and cheap eateries⁵⁰. In 1936, 28 branches were active and they were situated in accordance with the distribution

45 Lucjan Krawiec and Jan Jerzy Tochtermann, *Tatarzy w Polsce*, Wilno, Nakładem Dziennika Urzędowego Kuratorium Okręgu Szkolnego Wileńskiego, 1936, p. 29.

46 He graduated in 1925 in Berlin where he obtained his doctorate. He was fluent in the following languages: Arabic, Turkish, German and Russian, which gave him free access to Muslim religious literature and facilitated contacts abroad. Detailed biography of the first Mufti: Selim Chazbijewicz, "Jakuba Szynekiewicza postać tragiczna", *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 2, 2011, pp. 8-11; Stanisław Dumin et al., *Tatarskie biografie. Tatarzy polsko-litewscy w historii i kulturze*, trans. Musa Czachorowski, Białystok, Muzeum Mański Związek Religijny w RP Najwyższe Kolegium, 2012, p. 160.

47 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs helped in these efforts, as they regarded regulating the situation of Polish Muslims as a significant advantage for the foreign policy of the state. More: Miśkiewicz 1990, pp. 48-55. The Act (Journal of Laws, Dz. U. of 1936 No. 30 item 240, as amended) is valid since April 24, 1936.

48 On September, 24 1936 an ordinance of the Council of Ministers of August 26, 1936 came into force on the Statute of the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland (Journal of Laws, Dz. U. of 1936 No 72 item. 517, the Act status – in force). However, today the Union uses the text of the Statute adopted on March 15, 2014 in Białystok at an Extraordinary All-Polish Congress of the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland.

49 The union was active until 1939.

50 More about the Union (ZKOTRP): Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 105-137.

of religious communities and in larger Tatar aggregations. In 1929, Tatar National Museum was founded in Vilnius⁵¹. The most valuable among the Museum collection were the manuscripts of Quran, kitabs, tedźwid, tafsir, chamaiły (prayer books), documents, old prints on Tatars (including *Alfurkan* of 1616 and *Apology* of 1630 by Azulewicz)⁵². The Curator of the Museum was Leon Kryczyński, a lawyer, an activist for the revival of the splendour of the Tatar community⁵³.

Three titles were issued: a quarterly magazine “Islamic Review” (“Przegląd Islamski”; in Warsaw in the years 1930-1937), a monthly magazine “Tatar Life” (“Życie Tatarskie”; in Vilnius in 1934-1939) and “Tatar Yearbook” (“Rocznik Tatarski”) which was a social and literature scientific journal⁵⁴.

In the interwar period, several students were sent to religious schools in Yugoslavia (Sarajevo) and Egypt (Cairo)⁵⁵. Other people, particularly the Mufti Szynkiewicz, travelled to numerous places in Muslim countries, like Egypt, Syria, Persia, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey⁵⁶. They met with their brothers in faith, talked about the situation of the followers of Islam in Poland, helped to establish diplomatic contacts. Intelligence – lawyers, doctors, scientists, military commanders, humanists, mostly of the noble origin – they were all involved in activities relating to minorities.

An important action taken by the Tatar community was a project to build a mosque in Warsaw, the capital of the state. For the relatively few Muslims composed of Tatars, employees of the diplomatic corps and expatriates, the construction of the mosque became an extremely prestigious matter. In 1928, the Mosque-Building Committee was established in Warsaw. After long considerations with the authorities, in 1934 the City Magistrate, in agreement with the Ministry of Public Works, admitted a square to the Committee, that spread between the following streets: Dantyszek, Krzywicki, Rej and Wielkopolska street. By way of a competition a design was selected and it was made by the Warsaw architects: Stanisław Kolendo and Tadeusz Miazka. The design was totally different from existing temples (small and wooden), and it was inspired by the Middle

51 See: Leon Kryczyński, “Zabytki orientalne w Wilnie”, *Przegląd Islamski*, No. 4, 1930, pp. 4-7.

52 Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 110-111.

53 More: Stanisław Dumin et al., *Tatarskie biografie. Tatarzy polsko-litewscy w historii i kulturze*, trans. Musa Czachorowski, Białystok, Muzułmański Związek Religijny w RP Najwyższe Kolegium, 2012, p. 100-102 and Selim Chazbijewicz (eds.), *Leon Najman Mirza Kryczyński lider ruchu społecznego i kulturalnego Tatarów Polskich*, Gdańsk-Gdynia, Związek Tatarów Polskich, 1998.

54 Three volumes of the “Tatar Yearbook” were issued: Vol. 1 in 1932 in Vilnius, Vol. 2 in 1935 in Zamość, Vol. 3 in 1938 in Warsaw.

Detailed information on the “Tatar Yearbook” can be found in: Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, pp. 162-163

55 See: Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 84-85.

56 See: Piotr Borawski and Aleksander Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, legendy, tradycje*, Warszawa, Iskry, 1986, pp. 155-158.

East. A variety of efforts to raise funds for the construction, like issuing donation certificates with an appeal to Muslims in Poland, agitation in press, contacts with decision-makers from the Arab countries, India, and Egypt did not produce the expected results. The Committee struggled with internal problems and lack of funds⁵⁷. The outbreak of World War II thwarted the construction plans, the accumulated funds were transferred to the defence of the state⁵⁸. The war killed their hopes for the emergence of a representative temple, but also compromised the effort put in the revival of the Tatar community, its education, and cultural revival⁵⁹. The minority suffered as much as the rest of the Polish population, but intelligence and the military suffered particularly severe losses – they were slaughtered by the NKVD in Katyn, Ostashkov or Kozielsk⁶⁰, or resettled into the depths of Russia. Some of them were put in concentration camps⁶¹. Probably the most active people, Leon and Olgierd Kryczyński brothers, were killed, the imam of the Polish Army, Ali Woronowicz, was murdered by Russians, Mufti Jakub Szynekiewicz emigrated in 1944 and never returned to Poland after the war⁶².

57 The fund-raising for the construction was announced in the monthly magazine “Tatar Life”. Regularly between 1935 and 1937 there were proclamations, summons, lists of donors with an indication of the amount transferred, as well as specific slogans like: *The construction of a mosque in Warsaw is awaiting your donation.*

58 The plan to build a mosque in the capital was not implemented. After the war, on the basis of the Decree on ownership and use of land within the area of the capital city Warsaw, called the Bierut Decree, issued on October 26, 1945, all property within the borders of what was then called Warsaw was passed to the municipality. After 1989, they failed to recover the plot. The efforts made by the Mufti of the Republic of Poland, Tomasz Miśkiewicz, and the Muslim Supreme College in Poland met with negative response on the part of the President of the capital city of Warsaw for several times.

Aleksander Miśkiewicz, Dr. has challenged the information about the transfer of the gathered money to the National Defense Fund. He argues that the last President of the Mosque-Building Committee Osman Achmatowicz said that it appears that the collected funds were spent prior to 1939 on promotional activities, foreign trips and meetings with potential donors. These activities do not result in money transfers they had hoped for.

More: Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918 – 1939. Życie społeczno – kulturalne i religijne*, Warszawa, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 92-96; Arkadiusz Piotrowski, “Na meczet była już Ochota”, *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 3, 2010, pp. 25-26.

59 The collections of the Tatar National Museum and the Tatar National Archive in Vilnius were destroyed; the materials collected to the fourth volume of the “Tatar Yearbook”, documentation of the Muftiate and Cultural and Educational Association of the Tatars of the Republic of Poland, many private memorabilia, documents, monuments of religious literature were lost. The attempts to create a new and independent Museum in the 1970s of the 20th century failed. Maciej Konopacki, a journalist and popularizer of knowledge about the history of the Tatars passed it in 1979 to the Podlachia Museum in Białystok.

60 In Katyn there is a monument composed of plates with symbols of the four religions whose followers were the Polish officers murdered by the NKVD, and one of them bears the Crescent with a star. The war experience, shared probably by many Tatars, were put down by Zula Janowicz-Czaińska Drotlew in a diary entitled *Przez lasy Syberii do Wielkiej Brytanii* (Through the Siberian Forests to Great Britain; published in 2001 in Gdansk).

61 Germans, who did not know the national and ethnic division of the Polish population, often considered the Tatars as the Jews as they were circumcised too.

62 After the World War II many Tatars settled down in the UK, and increased their colony in New York (it was founded at the beginning of the 20th century), or went far down to Australia. Some families settled in Turkey.

The 1st Tatar Squadron of the the 13th Regiment of Wilno Uhlans took part in the September campaign of 1939 (during the first few weeks of World War II), and in the following years many Tatars fought on the western front as soldiers of the 2nd Corps of the 1st Armoured Division of Gen. Maczek and on the eastern front in the First and Second Polish Army⁶³.

Under the Yalta Conference the Tatar community was allocated over the borders, and most found themselves outside of Poland in Lithuania and Belarus. A small group remained in the region of Białystok. Tatars, who never accepted the Soviet power, felt Polish, and since 1945 they moved as returnees to the Recovered Territories – Pomerania and West of Poland⁶⁴. They settled down in Gdańsk, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Szczecinek, Szczecin, Trzcianka, Wrocław, Oleśnica, Elbląg, Olsztyn⁶⁵. The Soviet authorities did not understand why the Tatars wished to go to Poland. Tatars themselves said that till September 1939 they were the citizens of the Republic of Poland and want to become ones again. The proposal to move to the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the Volga Region was rejected by them as they did not feel close to the Tatars living there, as they did not accept them as Tatars, because of the fact that the Polish Tatars did not know the Tatar language⁶⁶.

In 1947 the Muslim Religious Union in Poland was reactivated. Jakub Romanowicz was elected the President of the Supreme College. Mufti remained in exile, and, in accordance with the law, he held his function for life.⁶⁷ In larger Muslim aggregations new religious communes appeared – in Białystok, Gdańsk and Gorzów Wielkopolski – and three pre-war communes in Bohoniki, Kruszyńsk and Warsaw remained. During the war many of the mosques were destroyed⁶⁸ and after the war Poland found only two historic mosques in Bo-

63 See: Aleksander Miśkiewicz, "Tatarzy-żołnierze polscy podczas II wojny światowej", *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 3, 2010, pp. 10-12.

64 The repatriation operation lasted from 1945 to 1957. The Soviet authorities often did not allow for moving to Poland, questioning Tatars' Polishness. The case of repatriation of the Aleksandrowicz's family: Barbara Pawlic-Miśkiewicz, "Daugieliszki-Oleśnica. Mikrohistoria z półkiszycem w tle, *Przegląd Tatarski*, No. 4, 2010, pp. 19-20.

65 More about the settlement of the Recovered Territories and the history of the Tatars after 1945: Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarska legenda. Tatarzy polscy 1945-1990*, Białystok, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1993; Ali Miśkiewicz and Janusz Kamocki, *Tatarzy Słowiańszczyzną obłaskawieni*, Kraków, TAIWPN Universitas, 2004, pp. 80-89; Aleksander Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Ziemiach Zachodnich Polski w latach 1945-2005*, Gorzów Wielkopolski, Wojewódzka i Miejska Biblioteka Publiczna im. Zbigniewa Herberta, 2005. Already in the 1950s of the 20th century the process of moving of Tatar families from Western lands to Podlachia started and it lasts till today. The exodus was caused by a feeling of alienation in new areas, and the desire to come into contact with the loved ones, the Tatar community and maintain religious practices. In many cases migration saved the Tatars from total assimilation and the breaking the contact with their own ethnic group.

66 Barbara Igielska (eds.), *Tatarzy polscy. Historia i kultura Tatarów w Polsce*, Szczecin, Zamek Książąt Pomorskich w Szczecinie, 2009, p. 7.

67 The act on the relation of the State to the Muslim Religious Units in the Republic of Poland of April 21, 1936, Art. 4 point 2.

68 Some have been converted to granaries or cultural centres.

honiki and Kruszyniany within its borders. After the war, only one temple was built and it was in Gdansk⁶⁹. Bohoniki and Kruszyniany, the villages situated on the territory of the present Podlaskie Voivodeship, gained particular importance and became “the Polish Mecca and Medina”. During feasts Tatars from across the country gather in the mosques situated in these villages, and corps of the deceased are brought to the mizars from the whole of Podlachia, but also from remote parts of Poland and even from abroad.

During the war the Polish Muslim intelligence died or emigrated overseas. This was the cause why the cultural and religious life of the followers of Islam after the war did not reach such a big momentum as before. In addition, cultural activities and contacts with their fellow-believers from abroad were restricted by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic.

The Muslim community in Poland after the second World War changed. Muslims moved from villages to cities on a greater scale than they did before the war. The traditional professions like tanning and agriculture were slowly dying out, Polish Muslims stopped to differ professionally from the Polish population of other denominations, some habits were lost.

Since the mid-seventies of the 20th century the Tatars revived noticeably. In June 1976, the first event under the name “Orient of Sokółka – truth and legend” took place in Sokółka to popularise the knowledge of the minority and the founder of this event was an activist Maciej Konopacki⁷⁰. Contacts with visitors from Muslim states gained importance. They were mainly Arabs who had taken study at Polish universities. With their assistance a system for teaching religion was developed or contacts with Muslim organisations from Saudi Arabia, Lebanon or Libya, among others were taken. Finally, political transformation in 1989 enabled the Tatars more casual contacts with the Muslim world, as well as their families and the community in the East. Contact with the Muslim world became possible even before, actually. From the beginning of the eighties of the 20th century students from Muslim states were coming to Poland, to receive education on medical and technical universities thanks to the grants of the the communist authorities. Since then, the Tatars have no longer been the only Muslims in Poland. Now this term includes the Tatars, the Arab community from the countries such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, the Turkish community and converts – the Poles, who accepted Islam. The initial collaboration of Tatars with the Arabic community is now of an ad hoc nature. The break was caused by too large cultural differences, in spite of the existing religious ties.

In 1992, in reference to the pre-war traditions, Tatars designated the Association of the Polish Tatars in the Republic of Poland⁷¹. Its main objectives is to

69 The construction of the mosque began in 1984, and the official opening was on June 1, 1990.

70 Ali Miśkiewicz, *Tatarska legenda. Tatarzy polscy 1945-1990*, Białystok, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1993, pp. 69-77.

71 Since 2005 this organization has been called the Association of Tatars of the Republic of Poland.

promote culture and traditions, teach the Tatar language, and organise meetings and lectures.

The Muslim Religious Union of the Republic of Poland is very active too, particularly since the replant of the position of Mufti. This became possible when Tomasz Miśkiewicz returned from his theological studies in Saudi Arabia. After a period of preparation and under the arrangements of the Congress, in 2004 Miśkiewicz took the office of the Mufti of the Republic of Poland and, at the same time, the President of the Supreme College of MZR in the Republic of Poland⁷². The most important tasks of the Mufti and the College is to supervise the activities of the communes, take any religious decision, take care of the welfare of the community, represent the Union before state and local government authorities, contact the diplomatic corps of Muslim states and support the Polish diplomacy. The Supreme College took up activity on the social and cultural field, initiating a series of meetings⁷³; they take care of the property, trying to raise subsidies targeted to cultural projects, but also investments, or repairs; they support refugees – the Crimean Tatars, Chechens, and people in need.

The community, which currently is estimated at less than five thousand people, try to take a series of actions aimed at their own group, to fight the speeding process of assimilation, as well as the inclusion of the group to one collection under the name “Muslims”. Tatars are the followers of Islam, but they emphasize their uniqueness in relation to other nations (especially people of the Arab origin), which manifests itself in a different culture, ethnic differences of specific religiosity. There are no close links between the two groups, probably due to the fact that Tatars belong to a wide range of Turkish peoples and to the consequences that accompanied the adoption of Islam through the Kipchaks. The ethnic revival is noticeable. In their religious and cultural practices they emphasise their traditional rite, so different from the patterns compliant with the principles of Islam.

Problems and challenges

1. The entire Muslim community in Poland is estimated at thirty-five to -forty thousand, and the group of Tatars constitutes a minority here (approximately 4000 people). For decades the Tatar community was the only Muslim group, while the last thirty years was the time of a big change within the entire Ummah.

72 In accordance with the act on the relation of the State to the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland, Art. 4 point 2: The position of Mufti is for life.

73 Publishing activity taken by the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland, the Polish Tatars Association or individual communes is as well important. In addition to magazines and yearbooks such as: the “Tatar Review” (“Przegląd Tatarski”), the “Muslims of the Republic of Poland” (“Muzułmanie Rzeczypospolitej”), the “Memory and Duration” (“Pamięć i trwanie”), the “Yearbook of the Polish Tatars” (“Rocznik Tatarów Polskich”) and the “Tatar Life” (“Życie Tatarskie”) there are books: an album entitled *Muzułmanie na ziemiach Rzeczypospolitej*, a factfinder *Podlaski Szlak Tatarski*, commemorative books, publications dedicated to tradition and culture and books and brochures devoted to religious matters.

The modern mosaic of people of various ethnic or national origin has led to divisions and separation of some new religious communities bringing together the followers of Islam.

Ever increasing group of people of the Arab origin did not feel cultural ties with the Tatars, and did not want to comply with the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland (MZR). As a result of the efforts undertaken in 2004, the Muslim League in the Republic of Poland was officially entered in the register of religious communities. At the same time the League brings together the following organisations: Muslim Student Association and the Muslim Association for Cultural Education. In addition, registered Shi'ite organizations carry out their activities: The Association of Muslim Unity, Islamic Assembly of Ahl-ul-Bayt, as well as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association that rises up so much controversy.

The Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland faces one very important challenge to maintain the leading position. If it still will be the main partner for the state and local government? The Union itself is working closely and supports the Turkish, Chechen and Crimean-Tatar communities living in Poland, primarily providing them with legal and formal support. It is worth noting that the Turkish community living in Poland is very active, and they set up their own independent foundations. The religious and cultural proximity between the Turks and the Tatars promotes positive contacts. One of the communes belonging to the Union – the Warsaw Fatih – is managed by the Turks. In 2014 the Union started cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of TİKA, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency and the Ministry of DIYANET.

What will be the contacts like with other national groups is difficult to assess. A trend of the independence, distinctiveness and self-determination is noticeable. Consolidation is not enhanced by the fact that the Tatar community lived for centuries apart from the Muslim world and developed a number of protective strategies to separate, with the principle of inbreeding in the first place.

2. On March 20, 2004, the function of Mufti of the Republic was restored – it was a ground-breaking event which allowed the Union to regain the title of the main representative of the Muslim community in Poland to public authorities, municipalities, as well as the church authorities. Unfortunately, in recent years, there were actions aimed at weakening the position of the Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland as a representative of Ummah to Polish authorities. The process of internal divisions, including the inside of the Tatar minority, is getting stronger. There is no support of Arab and Muslim states diplomacy to build religious and cultural identity of the growing group of the followers of Islam. In addition, fragmentation, lack of a centre that would designate the community development can consequently lead to radicalisation of some groups on the one hand, and to a growing assimilation and losing religious identity of others on the other hand.

The most important task now is to rebuild and centralize policies that would enhance the representation of the Ummah in Poland by the Union, relocate the muftiate seat to the capital city of Poland – Warsaw. It involves the purchase or construction of a suitable property, construction of the main mosque in Warsaw, the amendment of the law on the relation of the State to the Muslim Religious Unions of 1936, and the activities for the benefit of religious and cultural identity.

It should be noted that the Muslim League in Poland, whose majority of members are persons of Arab origin, created strong centres in several voivodeship cities, with the support of individual Arab states in 2004.

3. The Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland does not have sufficient resources to for the related activities. Thus it is even more valuable that since 2015 Turkey have offered their support through the Ministry of the Diyanet and TIKA, for reconstruction of the places of worship, cemeteries (the next stage of this cooperation includes further renovations and support for educational and publication activities). For its part, Diyanet delegated Imam who now serves in Gdansk.

In the local mosque the Tatar community has recently felt the clash between the traditions of Tatar and Arabic cultures, when the former imam (from Palestine), together with a group of people of Arab origin tried to remove and marginalize the Tatars by completely taking over the mosque. The Mosque in Gdansk, which is owned by the Muslim Religious Community of MZR in the Republic of Poland remained intact, the imam was recalled, and the Tatar minority welcomed an imam from Turkey who is neutral and mentally and culturally similar to the Polish Tatars.

4. The Muslim Religious Union in the Republic of Poland was sidelined, though unofficially, by Arab and Muslim states diplomacy. They were left on their own with their problems and needs for a small Tatar community. In particular, this includes the renovation of objects of worship, cemeteries, as well as for religious, cultural and publishing activity. Currently, the Union feels the loss strongly. Improvement of the situation and meeting the needs will be a long-term process, but still possible (if the support is continued). The Tatar community itself will be completely marginalized without subsidies and aid. The Union is preparing conclusions and participates in ministerial or local government competitions, however, the grants cover only low-budget publishing house meetings. In addition, it is important to invest in the development of leaders who will be able to adequately inspire and stimulate the group to work together.

5. As in other organization, in the Union there are people who work to the detriment of it, aiming at weakening its position in the name of the purpose known only to them. Like in November 2012, when during the deliberations of the 18th All-Polish Congress of the Muslim Religious Union in Poland there were attempts to abolish the function of the Mufti and to pass it to the Muslim League.

6. The internal situation of the Union has been stabilized. State and local governments appreciate cooperation with representatives of the Union, not only because of the memory of Tatars' merit and their patriotic attitude, but also because of the commitment of the authorities of the MZR in diplomatic mission – they promote Poland abroad, support the activities of Polish entrepreneurs in the Halal System and participation in interreligious dialogue. Thanks to the favourable relations, the celebration of the 80th jubilee of the Union in 2006 were under the patronage of President Lech Kaczyński and the Sejm building held an exhibition on Tatars. In February 2011, the inauguration of celebrations of the 85th jubilee of the Union took place at the Presidential Palace hosting the President Bronisław Komorowski with his wife; and he also took the entire celebration under his patronage. President Komorowski⁷⁴ was very open and engaged in contacts with the Muslim and Tatar community. In 2010, he took part in the unveiling of the monument of the Polish Tatar in Gdansk, and in 2013 he hosted a dozen or so delegates in the Belveder Palace,⁷⁵ on the occasion of the Miewlud (commemoration of the birth of the Prophet). The current President Andrzej Duda⁷⁶ visited the mosque in Bohniki in September 2015.

7. It should be mentioned that recent time was a period of struggle with the Polish legislation and misunderstanding in the interpretation of acts of the European Union, which has led to a ban on ritual slaughter, which was in force from January 1, 2013, until the end of 2014 (in the period when the coalition of Platforma Obywatelska and PSL had majority in the Parliament). Thanks to the judgement of the Constitutional Court of December 10, 2014 ritual slaughter in Poland may only be executed in accordance with the relevant religious tradition (the Islamic or Jewish).

The decisions of the last Minister of Administration and Digitalisation proved to be disadvantageous too (2014-2015), as he intervened in the Union structures and did not allow to take legislative steps to amend the Act on the relation of the State to the MZR.

8. In a wider perspective, the current international situation, including terrorist acts, the media reports on the so-called Islamic State (ISIS), the conflict in the Middle East or radicalisation of Muslim circles in Western Europe do not foster good reception of Islam in Poland, and arouse fear and anxiety. Fear of Islam and nationalism is also intensified, which has been noticeable in recent years particularly. Demonstrations, anti-Islamic marches, debates, articles in the press have become a regular feature of the Polish reality, since the increased influx of refugees from Africa and the Middle East. And though they have not arrived to Poland yet, the situation revealed how intolerant and closed the society is.

74 He held the Office for the period 2010-2015.

75 The Residence of the President of the Republic of Poland.

76 He was sworn on August 6, 2015.

The Muslim Religious Union in Poland, in cooperation with the Government and local government, and more recently with the support of the Republic of Turkey, favoured attitude of Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states allow to look to the future positively, taking care of the religious identity, culture, nurturing patriotism, dialogue and respect for the rights of every human being. Other religious organizations operating in Poland are performing very well too. Regardless of the discontent or resentment towards the refugees, whether the religion itself.

The most important challenge that the Muslim community in Poland face now is the protection, care and maintenance of their religious identity and cultivating both national and ethnic traditions. The group does not live in an isolated environment, so it must take care to break down religious stereotypes, to build a positive image, it must strive for inter-religious dialogue and social development. Balanced action will allow the Muslims to live peacefully in this part of Europe for next decades.

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