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Multicultural societies – a barrier or a key to European integration (on the example of the Muslim in the Great Britain)

INTRODUCTION

European integration is a process that may be perceived in many different ways. To lead a successful analysis on integration issues on European level, spatial units of lower order should be considered before, namely states, regions, cities, quarters and local communities. When integration is successful on the lowest level possible (individual interactions), than aggregation of numerous individual cases lets obtain successful integration one step up (local community). Without peaceful coexistence on lowest levels, multiple cultures coexistence in Europe seems to be hardly possible. The volume of the hereby article allows to consider one selected level only and Great Britain as a whole will be an object of the analysis.

Within any space that might be called multicultural, informal boundaries in the society exist. When people significantly differ from one another, and this is obviously the case of any multicultural society, individual groups and subgroups are demarcated by lines of ethnic origin, mother tongue, colour or shade of skin, religion, cultural background and many other criteria. Therefore, intercultural encounters on such boundaries are very intense, especially in large agglomerations, where a mosaic of cultural groups exists. These encounters may be either a key or a barrier to integration of society, whatever way we understand and define integration. Nevertheless, no matter how European integration is being defined, after a sad date of September 11th, 2001 divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims inhabiting Europe intensified. More than five years have passed since that day and it seems crucial to investigate whether Muslim communities are getting more and more isolated in the society or divisions are getting less profound.

Great Britain is an attractive example to explore, as it is commonly believed the country tries to implement multicultural policy assumptions as widely as possible. Probably no other European country allows that many rituals of individual groups that are contradictory to either cultural heritage and tradition of predominantly Christianity-rooted continent or even to the law, in the name of creating a friendly space for every group willing to continue tradition "imported" from country of its origin. As one of the most important determinants of group identification is religion, in the hereby analysis inter-society boundaries following religious diversification will be discussed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSLIMS IN THE GREAT BRITAIN

According to the last census of 2001, almost 1.6 out of 58.8 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom (2.8%) are Muslims (Census... 2001). This number seems to be quite reliable when compared with rough estimates based on previous censuses. Since 1971 census researchers opted for including religion question into census questionnaire, but because of political reasons this demand had not been satisfied until 2001 (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). The census of 1991 included ethnicity question with categories mixing races, regions of the world and states of origin, which is a typically British approach. On the basis of such data number of the Muslims was estimated at 0.5-3.0 million with the most respected estimate of 1.4 million (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). However, number of respondents not stating any religion is striking: almost 4.5 million! (7.8%). It is commonly believed there is no particular reason not to declare own religion or ethnicity when a person belongs to an ethnos dominating in a human rights-abiding country. However, there is numerous evidence national or religious

declaration is often omitted by minorities, even when they are not oppressed (see Flaga *et all.* 2003, Janicki, Flaga 2006). It leads directly to a conclusion religious minorities in the Great Britain may be significantly more numerous. Thus, simple calculation enables to estimate number of British Muslims at around 3 million and that number neatly coincides with the Muslim community claims (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005).

The origin of the Muslims in the Great Britain corresponds only to some extent to the origin of most European Muslims. Unlike south-eastern Europe, where the majority of Muslims is constituted by Christians Islamised during Ottoman Empire time, and unlike some eastern Europe countries with fully assimilated early migrants, for instance Polish and Lithuanian Tatars having come as early as in the 14th century (Janicki 1999, Janicki 2000), British Muslims originate mainly from post-war time immigration wave of strictly economic background (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). Few came noticeably earlier as seamen and merchants in the 19th century, or also after World War II as political immigrants from strongly Africanised former British colonies in eastern part of Africa. According to the census of 2001, the most numerous groups of the Muslims are Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians (see Tab.1). Therefore, it is clear the vast majority of present British Muslims originate from former British India.

HERE: Tab.1.

Like most minorities worldwide, Muslims in the Great Britain are not evenly distributed all around the country, but they form clusters in bigger cities and city-ghettos. In cases of several cities the share of Muslims in total population exceeds by far their share in the country population, reaching 16.1% in Bradford. In case of city-districts, Tower Hamlets in London ranks second with 36.4% and Manningham in Bradford ranks first with almost 50% (see Fig.1).

HERE: Fig.1. Distribution of the Muslims in the Great Britain

BARRIERS

The discussion that concentration of immigrants or minorities does not help integrate them with the majority is pointless. However, multicultural policy assumes multiple cultures enrich social life of the country, thus clustering helps minorities maintain ties with countries of their (or their parents') origin and continue tradition (Islam... 2004). This goes hand-inhand with an image of new-migrant archetype, who struggles to preserve strong relationships with relatives and friends left in the country of origin and perceives himself/herself as a stranger. Such perception makes immigrants, especially first-generation immigrants to seek for own identity sometimes more definitely than usually and express it through any artefacts connected to what he believes belongs to his culture.

According to Annual Population Survey of 2004, almost 55% of people belonging to Pakistani ethnic group are UK born and as many as 82.9% of all Pakistanis in the country consider their identity to be British, English, Scottish or Welsh. For Bangladeshis the respective numbers are 46.4% and 81.7%. It clearly proves members of two largest Muslim communities more often feel they belong to the present country of residence than to country of either their origin or their parents' origin. Surprisingly, lack of self-identification with the country of origin is accompanied with strife to maintain strong ties with it. It is especially distinct in case of Bradford Pakistanis. They use to send their kids for 3-4 months back to Pakistan in the course of school year to make them stay in touch with "home" culture. They also bring wives from there – only 1% of them marry a White, compared with 3.47% for the whole country (Nagle 2000, Census... 2001). Visibly declarations and behaviours do not

match – and obviously the latest are more reliable in any analysis. When seeking for the real group identity of the British Muslims, the name of the group itself hints the answer. Muslim group identity is defined mostly through religion, not language or ethnic belonging. Hence, any outer signs of belonging to the group, the characteristic dress being the most obvious example, are a means of emphasising identity, while they are often being wrongly interpreted as fashion, folklore or simply a habit (Islam... 2004)

Both first and second generation immigrants witness significant social and economic problems. They are relatively poorly educated, they are characterised by high infant mortality rate, unemployment rate, they live in substandard housing and other measures confirming a belief they constitute a "new proletariat" an expression used by Anna Parzymies in her introduction to anthology of European Muslims (Parzymies 2005). As a result they feel isolated and excluded and seek for help in religious practices, which makes them vulnerable to indoctrination and re-islamisation (Islam... 2004). As many researchers have noticed, propaganda of fundamentalist Islamic organisations, like Muslim Brotherhood and others, is strongly supported by the most generous founder of mosques in the Great Britain - Saudi Arabia. Funds for mosques are "exported" along with Wahhabi imams, who cannot be suspected to be willing to create peacefully coexisting multicultural society in the country, but rather to follow *jihad* commandments of conducting actions heading to God's (thus, the Muslim) rule over the world (Lewicka 2003, Islam... 2004, Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). Jihad is often misunderstood as an obligation of armed fight with non-believers, while the only obligation is the goal described in the previous sentence, means of reaching it may be different (Danecki 2003) Muslims living in Europe are depicted by imams as victims of European system with its colonial past and capitalistic present, through globalisation processes trying to economically conquer and subordinate Dar-es-Islam, the world of Islam (Parzymies 2005). This manner of describing relationships between Muslims and Christianityrooted Europeans does not improve communication and mutual understanding of these groups.

Unfortunately, lack of mutual understanding finds its sources at the very beginning, within the most basic rules of Christian and Muslim cultures. No matter, whether European Constitution will be accepted in the future or not, no matter, whether an invocation to God will find its place in the preamble or not, contemporary European culture is deeply rooted in Christianity. At the same time most fractions of Muslims read and want to apply Koran exactly, without any historical context or changing language code context (Islam... 2004). Christianity treats religion as a private case of an individual. The Bible suggests to "*Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's*." (Matt. 22:21). Clear recommendation for differentiation between religion and politics, along with secularity of state organisation is visible here. At the same time according to Koran *Islam* means religion, society and state (Islam... 2004, Tokarczyk 2005). Hence, Muslims do not respect secularity of public sphere of life and fully subordinate it to religion.

In predominantly Muslim countries it may be perceived as self-understood, although European vision of human rights and women's rights, included in Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted and proclaimed by the General Assembly of United Nations in 1948, does tilt Christian-Europeans toward disregarding Islamic vision, that may be found in Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI), adopted in 1990. There is no much space for a wide analysis here, but two paragraphs of CDHRI seem to be especially worthy for the future investigation: "Article 10. Islam is the religion of unspoiled nature. It is prohibited to exercise any form of compulsion on man or to exploit his poverty or ignorance in order to convert him to another religion or to atheism. (...) "Article 25. The Islamic Shari'ah is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification to any of the articles of this Declaration." (Cairo... 1990) According to Shari'ah, apostasy is a crime

threatened with death penalty (Tokarczyk 2005). In autumn 2006 the media delivered information about a convert in Pakistan, who gave up Islam and became Christian. The only reason why he was not beheaded and finally released from prison was a belief of the authorities that he must have been insane to give up the only genuine faith. At the same time UDHR is seen by Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) countries as a written expression of unacceptable secular understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition (Islam... 2004). Article 18 of UDHR says as follows: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." (Universal... 1948)

Apparently, there is a collision of visions between these two documents. Until they are implemented in mutually exclusive countries, no particular effect of this collision should be visible. UDHR is followed by most UN member states, while more than fifty Muslimdominated countries try to implement and abide CDHRI rules - OIC countries, signatories of the document, agreed CDHRI will serve as a general guidance for OIC Member States. Hence, no collision should occur. However, many Muslims living in European countries would like Shari'ah to constitute rules of social coexistence also in secular Europe and British multicultural policy opens door for such claims. The famous burning of Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses in 1989 along with demonstrations against the Prophet's cartoons in 2006 provide striking examples of demand to restrict freedom of speech in the name of religious reasons. What's worth mentioning, such demonstrations happen not only in the Middle-East countries, but also in the heart of Europe. One of them took place on the 18th of February, 2006, in London. Trafalgar Square hosted a demonstration estimated at 5-10 thousand people and described commonly as peaceful demonstration of moderate Muslims (see for example BBC or Times, February 18th, 2006). It is quite surprising, as even organisers from Muslim Action Committee declared they "(...) held the rally so the mainstream Muslim community could express their anger" (Reuters... 2006). Both the atmosphere during the demonstration and captions on posters held by participants confirm the last thesis: Free speech - cheap insults, Secular extremists, War on terror is war on Islam and many others. The reason why this demonstration was perceived peaceful is probably the fact on February 3rd, 2006 in front of the Danish embassy in London there was another demonstration with much more aggressive Behead those, who insult Islam and Europe, take some lessons from 9/11 (Spiegel.... 2006). It is worth noticing that on the January 30th Danish newspaper Jyllands *Posten* officially apologised for publication of the cartoons, so the solicitation of an apology claimed to be the only wish of the Muslim community in Europe had been fulfilled before.

These demonstrations are sad evidence, that aggressive form of Islam is being supported by many, also in the heart of Europe. Hence, this is not a problem of few orthodox believers in Middle East countries, as it is often maintained in the name of political correctness. There is lack of information or even reliable estimates about number of European Muslims supporting fundamentalist ideology, while an answer would provide crucial information: whether European countries have a problem with few Muslim extremists or with large masses of so called moderate Muslims who do not accept secularity of life in Europe and are determined to actively oppose it.

Although there exist many other theological differences between Christians and Muslims, the one described above seems to be the most important reason for misunderstandings between Muslim and non-Muslim communities in the Great Britain. Nevertheless, many other problems arise from social systems differences. Superiority of men is commonly accepted by Muslims, while European legal system clearly defines equality of men and women (Islam... 2004). Europeans' right to bodily indefeasibleness seems to be at least partly contradictory to CDHRI article 2 (d), describing official Muslim countries'

authorities standpoint: "Safety from bodily harm is a guaranteed right. It is the duty of the state to safeguard it, and it is prohibited to breach it without a Shari'ah-prescribed reason" (Cairo... 1990). The discussion about capital punishment is a separate chapter of European history, but no European legal code would accept honour murders of women, still happening in many Muslim-dominated countries. Although it is usually emphasised such practice is very rare in the Great Britain, in such cases Muslims use to refer to Shari'ah regulations, as if it was a legal code in the country.

Muslim activists would like schoolgirls to get a dismissal from some school classes, namely music, arts, physical education and some sections of biology. They insist upon pork not being served in school canteens. Ritual Muslim cattle slaughter, without knocking an animal out, was another goal of Muslim communities in the Great Britain. Large country-wide debate took place about Muslim girls' headscarves as early as in 1989, much before similar discussion happened in France in 2004 (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). In the cases mentioned in this paragraph, British Muslims at least partly succeeded, as British authorities try to create as friendly environment for all ethnic groups living in the country as possible (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). They step down every time they believe the majority may still adjust and give up some of its rules in the name of peaceful coexistence of all groups in the society. Expectedly, politically incorrect questions come: where are the limits of these adjustments? How to respect minority rights and not to violate majority rights, when they are contradictory?

Another reasons for misunderstandings seem to be posed by recurrent clashes between worlds – Huntington's civilisation circles (Huntington 1996). Both sides of conflicts are sentenced guilty by the other side – terrorist attacks are condemned by non-Muslim Europeans and supported by many Islam followers, described as *moderate* Muslims (see captions on demonstration posters in the text above), while US-driven preventative wars in Iraq witness opposite judgements (Jeziński 2004). Of course there exist contrary utterances of officials and the public on both sides – imams criticise terrorists and Europeans demonstrate against NATO-wars or US-wars. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact, both terrorist attacks and wars have taken place and they both find strong support in mutually hostile countries – Iran and United States. It seems such clashes have far greater influence on mutual relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, than the influence of encounters of local communities' leaders or intellectuals, who declare mutual understanding and try to seek for peaceful solutions (compare Nalborczyk, Grodź 2003).

KEYS

Although there exist a lot of barriers of successful integration of the British majority and the Muslims, many keys may also be recognised. Intellectuals mentioned in the previous paragraph are important partners in a discussion concerning relationships between tangling groups. Many of them manifest their willingness to work in line with government and seek for good solutions. The only problem is they rarely follow conservative Islam and are hardly followed by demonstrating masses, who seem to look for more traditional leadership (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). Probably the only exception to this rule is Tariq Ramadan, a Switzerland-born philosopher with Egyptian roots, who seem to be one of the leaders most widely recognised and respected by Muslims in Europe. His solution is called Euro-Islam - he wants to achieve transformation of Muslims inhabiting Europe into Europeans of Muslim religion (Islam... 2004). Modernising Islam is a goal of many organisations, who want reinterpretation of Islam for the 21st century. It needs separation of religion and state, acknowledging democracy as the best form of government, recognising equality of men and women and acceptation of religion as a personal relationship between an individual and God. Unfortunately, all four of these postulates are contradictory to foundations of Islam and there is no doubt it's a long way until they will be commonly accepted, if ever.

The British Muslims in many ways try to adapt to the social and economic environment they live in. One of the examples is the Islamic Bank of Britain. It launched in 2004 and has offered loans acceptable by Islamic faith, which does not allow paying and getting interest. The bank simply buys an item the customer wants to purchase and sells it to him in several instalments at a higher price (www.islamic-bank.com). It is a successful trial of finding the way for the Muslims in "interest world".

British authorities also try to find solutions leading to successful integration. The foundation of their policy is a rule of *communautarisme* – each community is allowed to use its own rules as long as they fall within the limits of public law (Parzymies 2005). British authorities try to be really flexible - even some elements of Shari'ah are introduced into the British judicial system and applied in processes, in which parties are holders of citizenship of states applying Muslim Family Code. However, some elements of this code are rejected, like polygamy and the way of getting divorced (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). As it has been mentioned before, British law allows some Muslim rituals, like cattle slaughter or ritual burying - without a coffin, the body is covered only with a shroud. The famous problem of headscarves worn by school-girls was solved in an unexpected manner: they are allowed to wear them in school, but their colour must fit school-uniform colour (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). The solution was not an official standpoint of any court, as the British try to avoid processes every time a problem appears and arbitrate it. Local authorities have a lot of autonomy and they may shape multicultural policy as they want (Nalborczyk, Sieklucka 2005). This helps discover best solutions, as many questions find good answers without large publicity and whole-country debate.

SOLUTIONS

Univocal assessment of direction of changes of relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims in the Great Britain is not an easy task. However, no matter what is the answer, new solutions seem to be necessary to introduce so as to avoid future misunderstandings and find keys to present problems. There is always fear they will be rejected either by traditional Muslims and their religious leaders or by White British – the dominating ethnos. Real moderate Muslims do not pose problems, so they will be omitted in the forthcoming discussion. The solutions may be formulated as tasks and divided into three groups: tasks for authorities, for British Whites (who will be further called native British for convenience) and for the British Muslims.

The first and most obvious task for the authorities is to educate. Poverty, unemployment, lack of proper education are commonly perceived as main causes of integration problems – either in multicultural society or in any other formula of integration. When respect for other cultures and opinions is taught since nursery, mental changes are stimulated and new generation grows with a belief different does not mean worse. At the very general level this proposal seems to be too evident to discuss. However, as one of the main causes of clash is religious difference, I propose to give up teaching religion in schools as it has been done recently and start teaching about religions as sociological and historical phenomena. As my every day observation shows, introducing teaching religion to schools made this class just one of many school subjects with all positive and negative implications of it and for sure this had not been the goal. If students were offered information about many religious systems, not the only true religion education, they would probably perceive other religion followers not as objects to convert, but as people who pray and believe another way, which is different, but not worse.

Both Christianity and Islam are missionary religions who set a goal of conquering as many souls as possible. The long history of crusades and holy wars has proven this goal was understood word-by-word through centuries. Today Islamisation or Christianisation in the pure sphere of religion should be allowed, but not in law, social or political life (see Parzymies 2005). Religion is supposed to exist back home and in mosques or churches, not on city streets. Hence, a simple recognition that no religious dogmas may be superior over public life should be accepted. This means separation of culture, society, politics and religion. This is also a task for authorities, as no other power is able to adopt such rule.

At the same time authorities should follow Egyptian example and permanently control whether in British mosques any anti-European agitation occurs (Islam... 2004). In Muslim tradition, Friday sermon is rarely limited to religious issues, imams usually discuss political and social matters of the country and the world, which may strongly influence minds of the followers and either facilitate or disturb integration processes (Tokarczyk 2005).

Tasks for British natives are also numerous. The first is to answer a simple question, whether they would like Muslims to feel members of the British society – positive answer is required for any further considerations. So as to facilitate integration process, British natives should try not to emphasise differences and to accept Muslims' presence. A good sign of this acceptation would be more usual than recently recruitment of Muslim women. This would reinforce their emancipation and loose traditional dependence of a woman on a man. This task would be easier to accomplish when *blind recruitment* at work is introduced: job application forms should include professional history questions only, no name, address, sex and ethnic questions. This way proportional representation in companies' staff would be achieved and no racial or religious discrimination would be possible. Presently ethnic questions are welcome or even recommended so as to obtain proportional representation, but it is not hard to imagine a situation when this recommendation leads to majority members' discrimination. There are obviously cases where *blind recruitment* would not work, but they might be exceptions to the rule.

Another task for British natives touches their identity issue, as identity crisis in Europe is commonly recognised (Islam... 2004). Strong identity would resist influence of other cultures and can be enriched by these elements of other cultures that are not contradictory to it, while weak identity is always vulnerable to significant changes and may be threatened by external inflow. A task of redefining own identity and strengthening ties with what might be called original British culture is by all means an effective way of avoiding fears driven by perception of the Muslims as strangers and as an influential danger.

The first task for British Muslims is similar to the natives' assignment: to answer the question, whether they want to integrate with the British natives or not – again, positive answer is a condition of any further discussion. For sure, the first step has been done already – most of the Muslims living in Britain declare their British identity (Census... 2001). They could also try to ensure that future generations of the British Muslims grow up feeling British and do not have this dilemma – am I from here or from there? I am not calling for superficial breaking ties with home-country, but rather for enabling children to become well educated citizens of the United Kingdom, without a handicap caused by avoiding school.

It has been presented already that reading Koran exactly and trying to implement it like in the Muslim countries in the Middle East does not facilitate integration. Hence, secularity of public life should be accept ed and Europe's fundamental principles, particularly respect for human rights, gender equality, freedom of speech and democratic system of rule must be received. Unlike many Muslims claim, secularity of state in contemporary world is acceptable also for Muslims and Turkey since 1924 is a proof.

Probably all the proposals stated above are hard to implement, but easy-to-achieve solutions are highly unlikely in such a complicated case. The framework of this article does not let wider discussion of proposed actions and setting them in a deeper context, but hopefully further analysis and discussion will be possible. In some cases strong resistance of

either native or Muslim British against introducing proposed changes is more than obvious, so each case needs a separate, longer investigation.

CONCLUSION

Creation of multicultural society in the Great Britain requires wide cooperation of all parties involved: authorities, native (White) British and Muslim British. First of all the same aim: integration, should be set and agreed. Reaching this goal needs many commitments. Muslims should respect rules secular Britain wants them to respect, while British natives should accept these elements of Islam that are not contradictory to the rules of the country.

The most important of the European rules, in context of the hereby considerations, is secularity of public life. The Islamic vision of public life, described in Shari'ah, presented to wide audience within CDHRI paragraphs and expressed during demonstrations outlined above seems to be unacceptable to non-Muslim Europeans in a long run. Multiculturalism as an idea of successful and mutually respectful cohabitation of different cultures on one area, within political borders of one unit, desperately needs common foundations in a form of law being abided by all of the members of these cultural groups. The law may undergo changes, following changes of political and social situation of a country, but the primeval base of European legal systems originates from Christian tradition and culture, hence introducing new quality based on Muslim tradition and culture will probably in most cases be contradictory to previous rules. Therefore, Muslims' expectations of British society transformation to a society more Muslim-alike cannot be met. Creating separate legal systems for individual groups leads to further claims. At the same time integration process is disturbed and slowed down, as intercultural differences gradually increase every time Muslims are officially allowed to follow customs contradictory to European tradition. No doubt it strengthens their struggle towards official acceptation of next controversial practices. It seems multicultural policy has unexpectedly led to stronger separation of individual groups and this is not the goal that had been set up.

Integration of Muslims and non-Muslims in the Great Britain needs not meeting halfway. The native British are much more numerous and privileged position of Christianity-rooted culture results from historical reasons. They should create conditions for decent participation of the Muslims in social and political life of the country, but they may also expect that Muslims follow its rules. Somewhat controversial statement of David Blunkett, UK Home Secretary can cast bright light on this issue: "We will not tolerate what we would not accept ourselves under the guise of accepting a different cultural difference" (after http://news.bbc.co.uk, December 9th, 2001). Euro-Islam, so transformation of Muslims inhabiting Europe into Europeans of Muslim religion seems to be the only realistic and acceptable solution.

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Table 1. Number of Muslims in the Great Britain by ethnicity

White	182 510	11,5
White British	63 891	4,0
White Irish	906	0,1
Other white	117 713	7,4
Mixed	65 592	4,1
Asian or Asian British	1 172 886	73,8
Indian	132 566	8,3
Pakistani	686 179	43,2
Bangladeshi	261 380	16,5
Other Asian	92 761	5,8
Black or Black British	107 431	6,8
Black Caribbean	4 489	0,3
Black African	97 109	6,1
Other Black	5 833	0,4
Chinese or other ethnic group	60 471	3,8
Chinese	796	0,1
Other Ethnic Group	59 675	3,8
All ethnic groups	1 588 890	100,0

Source: Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics; Census, April 2001, General Register Office for Scotland

Fig.1. Distribution of Muslims in the Great Britain

Source: Muzułmanie w Europie 2005, red. A.Parzymies, Wydawnictwo Akademickie DIALOG, Warszawa, generalised and supplemented