

Contemporary migration of Poles to Lebanon and Egypt

Abstract

The article describes the contemporary Polish diaspora in Lebanon and Egypt. The similarities and differences between the two communities are examined in detail. The contemporary phases of the migration of Poles to Lebanon and Egypt are listed and described, the Polish diaspora is mapped and its typology in these countries is outlined. In addition, the issues faced by mixed marriages are described as are the difficulties Poles have in adapting to life in countries with different cultures.

Keywords

Polish diaspora • migration • Poland • Lebanon • Egypt

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Introduction

In 2007, the Polish diaspora was estimated to number around 20 million people (Serwis Stowarzyszenie Wspólnota Polska 2012). Some sources estimate it to range from 14-17 million people while others estimate a range of 12-24 million people (Knopek 2001), a discrepancy that arises from the different criteria used for the calculation by the institutions making the estimate. The most popular indicators of belonging to the diaspora were citizenship, country of origin, native language, the origin of the second or third generation as well as the manifestation and declaration of national identity and the cultivation of Polish traditions.

For the purpose of this article, the authors defined the Polish diaspora as “the Poles who left Poland and settled abroad permanently and who retained their national identity in their own as well as subsequent generations” (Knopek 2001). In this context it is important to emphasise that people considered to be members of Polish diaspora should have been born, or be the descendents of those who were born on Polish territory (including within the borders of pre-War Poland).

It is this definition of the Polish diaspora that formed the main subject of the study. In 2011, students from the Student Research Club of Geographers at the Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies of the University of Warsaw carried out interviews with the Polish diaspora in Lebanon during a research project called ‘Migration routes of Poles and emigrant Polish cul-

ture in the Middle East based on the example of Lebanon’. The results of this research in Lebanon were then compared to the Polish diaspora in Egypt.

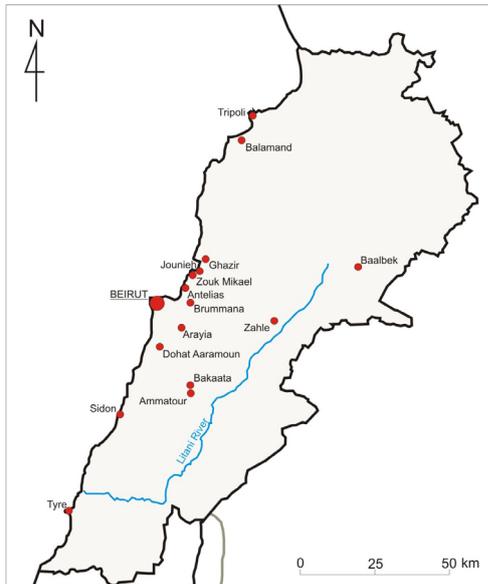
The information was obtained from an analysis of source materials available in the literature and on the internet. The authors did not consider as part of the diaspora those Poles who were living in these countries temporarily and had not yet decided whether to settle there. This meant that the clergy, embassy staff, scientists, military and contract staff were generally excluded from the area of study and they were only taken into consideration when they contributed significantly to the research.

In terms of gender balance, the Polish diaspora in Lebanon and Egypt is dominated by women. This is a group of settled migrants, meaning that they were not living in Poland at the time the research was carried out and were not members of the same Polish household to which they had belonged before they emigrated (Jaźwińska, Łukowski & Okólski 1997).

According to the authors, “social location” played a specific role in shaping the situation of the Polish diaspora in Lebanon and Egypt. Polish women born in Poland but now residing in Lebanon and Egypt had to deal with a whole range of differences in social relations as well as adapt to the roles of women in different aspects of the culture.

Location of Poles in Lebanon and Egypt

In 2011, the Polish diaspora in Lebanon was distributed across several places across the country¹ (Fig. 1). It was located mainly in the western part of the country in a 25km-wide coastal strip.



Source: Base map from "Atlas of Lebanon" (Faour G., Velut S., Verdeil E., 2007)

- Main concentration of Poles
- Small concentration of Poles
- BEIRUT Capital
- International boundary
- - - Disputed border

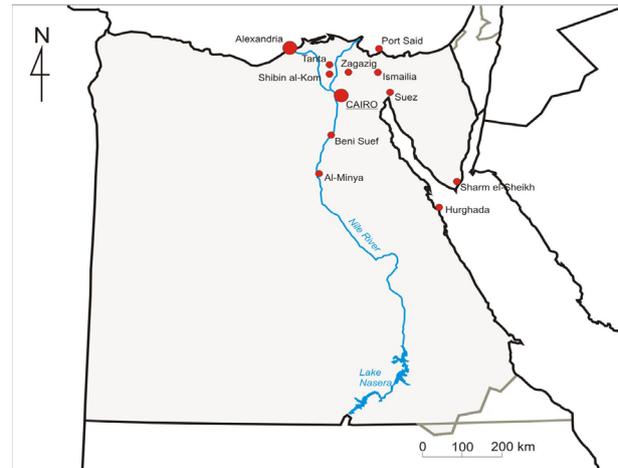
Fig 1. Location of Polish diaspora in Lebanon in the first decade of 21st century

The main concentration of the Polish diaspora is in the capital, Beirut, but there is no one location in the city within which it is concentrated. Poles live in districts that include the historically Christian district of Achrafieh, the Muslim Ras Beyrouth, the Armenian district as well as districts inhabited by Palestinians (Mazraa and Mousaitbeh). Many Polish women also live in the outskirts of Beirut, particularly the northern areas of Antelias, Zouk Mikael, Broummana, Jounieh, Ghazir as well as southern areas such as Dohat Aramoun and Arayia.

A small group of three people lived in the Chouf Mountains (in Ammatour and Baakata). Several Polish women have settled in the north, in the city of Tripoli and Balamand (a total of about 9 people) while a very small group of Poles have settled in the southern part of the country in the largest cities there, mainly in Sidon and to a lesser extent, in Tyre (probably only 1 person). From interviews it appears that Polish women also lived in the agricultural Beqaa Valley (city of Baalbek and Zahle). The small number of people in the Polish diaspora may even result in its disappearance from this location in the foreseeable future.

In the first decade of the 20th century, the Polish diaspora in Egypt was located in several areas in the north-eastern part

¹ Data on the location of the Polish diaspora in Lebanon comes from interviews with Polish women living in this country and from a conversation with the Polish Consul in Lebanon, Lech Faszczka.



Source: Base map from www.fao.org

- Main concentration of Poles
- Small concentration of Poles
- CAIRO Capital
- International boundary
- - - Disputed border

Fig 2. Location of Polish diaspora in Egypt in the first decade of 21st century

of country² (Fig. 2). Generally, the main concentration was located in the lower stretch of the Nile Valley and Delta but another important region was the area alongside the Suez Canal. The Polish diaspora in Egypt was concentrated mainly around Cairo and Alexandria. In addition, there were small groups of the Poles living in other big cities, such as Port Said, Suez, Ismailia, Tanta or Zagazig. Poles also lived in tourist resorts on the Red Sea e.g. Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada and individual Polish families have also settled in small villages in Upper and Lower Egypt (Związek Rodzin Polsko-Egipskich 2012).

In both Lebanon and Egypt, the Polish diaspora is distributed across a similar number of towns and similar areas of concentration can be identified. In both cases, the Polish diaspora in the biggest cities, particularly in the capitals, dominates. In Egypt, two "poles of Poles"(in Cairo and Alexandria) have formed, while there is only one in Lebanon (in Beirut). In Lebanon, more people lived in mountainous areas and the smaller towns than in Egypt. Comparing the distribution of the Polish diaspora In Lebanon with the distribution of citizens in this country, a close correlation can be observed although the Polish diaspora is characterised by a higher degree of concentration. Similarly in Egypt, the concentration of the Egyptian population is similar to that of the Polish diaspora. However in contrast to the population of Egypt, the Polish diaspora did not live in the quite densely populated Nile Valley in southern Egypt.

In Lebanon no clear correlations between the locations of Poles and the main clusters of religious groups in Lebanon are observed. Lebanon is characterised by a high degree of religious diversity and in 2010, its population was 54% Muslim (32% Shi'ites and 20% Sunnis), 39% Christian (23% Maronites and 11% Melkites) and 5.4% Druze (Kjeilen 2012). A significant num-

² Data on the distribution of the Polish diaspora in Egypt comes from 'Polish Migration to North Africa in the 20th century' by J. Knopek and from the website of The Union of Polish-Egyptian Families (Związek Rodzin Polsko-Egipskich 2012).

ber of Poles live in the coastal area between Beirut and Tripoli where the Maronites dominate, as well as in the areas around Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon which are dominated by Sunni Muslims. However, smaller concentrations of the Polish diaspora were also located in the Shi'ite- and Druze-dominated areas (in the south and the Beqaa Valley and the Chouf Mountains respectively).

Types and phases of Polish migration to Lebanon and Egypt

The following types and phases of migration of Poles to Lebanon can be distinguished:

1. Political migration (forced):

- In the years between 1939 and 1942 - from Romania, Palestine, the Soviet Union and Syria. A small group of Poles chose the first direction of emigration at the beginning of World War II, followed by soldiers who came to Lebanon as a result of chaos caused by war. Among them was the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade which was formed in Syria in 1940. It stayed there for a short time before moving to Palestine in 1941 and then to Egypt where it finally became a part of the 3rd Carpathian Rifle Division (Ziółkowska-Husami 2006).

- In the years between 1943 and 1946 - from Siberia through Kazakhstan, Iran (Persia) and Syria. This was a group of 6000 Polish refugees (mostly women, children and adolescents) who regained freedom after being deported from Poland and imprisoned in the Russian gulags. They came to the Middle East with the "Anders Army" and found temporary shelter in Persian cities, mainly in Isfahan, from where some of them set off in the direction of Lebanon where they found shelter. The Polish women and children were housed in Beirut and in its surroundings (in Ghazir³, Ajaltoun, Badat, Bdadoun, Beit-Chebab, Zouk-Mikael and Roumy). Between 1942-1950 Polish education at various levels was made available, but Polish students also entered Beirut's universities. These included soldiers who had been medical students in Poland before the war and went on to finish their medical studies in Lebanon after having been discharged from the army, as well as clerics who entered the seminary and high school graduates from the Polish schools in Palestine⁴. Between 1950-51, the majority of Polish refugees travelled on to Canada, Australia, Brazil and most frequently, to the United Kingdom and most never returned to either Lebanon or Poland. Of these 6000 refugees only about 607 returned to Poland and about 200 remained in Lebanon, mainly because they married Lebanese men

³ From 1943 Ghazir became a haven for a group of more than 500 Polish refugees. It was then a small village inhabited by the Maronites from whom Poles received aid. Some Maronites from Ghazir even permanently tied themselves to Poland by marrying Polish women. Schools staffed by an outstanding group of professors and a special program were founded and allowed their graduates to continue into higher education without having to take entrance exams. In 1950, the majority of Poles left Ghazir to the move to the countries of the West (Czyż-Rkein & Rębelska-Atallah 2003).

⁴ In 1947 there were 15 educational establishments in Lebanon in total, attended by a record number of 1286 Polish students. Overall, there were about 400 Polish students during those years, about half of whom obtained higher education diplomas, including the University of St. Joseph founded by Polish missionary Maksymilian Ryllo (Czyż-Rkein & Rębelska-Atallah 2003) and the American University of Beirut. The Polish Government in Exile took care of the education of the youth who were to become the future intellectual elite in Poland. Of particular importance was the decision to send the girls who had finished high school in Teheran on to university in Beirut.

who had been living in the places where the Polish refugees were based. These Poles integrated with Lebanese society and in this way, new permanent centres of the Polish diaspora were created, mainly in Ghazir and Zouk-Mikael.

2. Matrimonial, family and sentimental migration (voluntary):

- Between the 1960s and the 1990s - numerous Polish women moved from Poland to Lebanon with their Lebanese husbands, who they had met in Poland. These Lebanese men came to Poland to take advantage of the opportunity to study at Polish universities⁵. The context of this migration can be followed through the memoirs of Lebanese graduates of Polish schools. Polish women decided to move to Lebanon because they thought that the standard of living there was higher than in Poland, even during the 1975-1990 civil war. This 'migration of hearts' was the most important factor in the shaping of the contemporary Polish diaspora in Lebanon.

- Currently - migration to Lebanon from Poland and, less frequently, from other European countries. The number of people migrating to Lebanon is not as numerous as previously and consists of a small number of Polish women who came to Lebanon with their husbands, who they had previously met in Poland while studying or working. Often, after years living in Poland, these Polish women decided to move to their husband's country of origin as a result of a life change. Another sub group of the current migration are Polish women who came to Lebanon as tourists and met their future husbands through friends from the Polish-Lebanese families⁶.

The contemporary migration of Poles to Egypt has run a slightly different course than in the case of Lebanon. We can distinguish the following types and phases of the migration to Egypt:

1. Political, military migration (involuntary) between 1941 and 1945:

These were soldiers from the Polish Army in the East who arrived in Egypt mainly from Palestine. In addition, permanent centres of military life such as the Polish Mission and the headquarters of the Polish Army were also operating there. The soldiers of the Polish Independent Carpathian Rifle Brigade remained in Egypt the longest, defending the country from the forces of the Wehrmacht. Generally the Polish military personnel numbered around 1000 people. The majority of refugees in Egypt were military and civilians numbered only about 30 people (Knopek 2001). Despite this, the Cairo-based Delegation of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Polish Government in exile helped these refugees. The life of the Polish diaspora centered in Cairo and

⁵ One of them says, 'A Pole lived with me in the monastery dormitory (...) we talked about Poland and Poles (...). My parents' financial status did not allow me to think about studying in the West, so I began studying mathematics in Lebanon. In my first year I learned that the Communist Party, to which I belonged, had access to research scholarships in the socialist countries (...) In 1975 I flew with a colleague to Warsaw (...) we came (...) to the only Polish Language School in Poland at that time and it also had student digs for foreigners in Lodz (...). After my first year at the Lodz Polytechnic I was an active member of student associations and the student radio (...). I was elected head of the National Committee of Foreign Students, which meant a transfer to the Warsaw University of Technology. I joined myself with Poland forever by marrying Liliana, a graduate from the University of Warsaw who I met during our joined activities in the Almatour student tourist organisation (...)' (Abdel Samad 2006).

⁶ The information comes from interviews with Polish women living in this country.

Alexandria. The migration of Poles consisted predominantly of men and a large proportion were young people who had come from Palestine, where the Junacka Cadet School of the Polish Armed Forces in the East was created in 1942 and delivered basic education and military training.

Despite the significant migration of Poles to Egypt during World War II it did not lead to the creation of new and permanent clusters of the Polish diaspora. Political migration contributed to only a small degree in shaping the contemporary Polish diaspora in this country⁷.

2. Professional (and to a lesser extent, matrimonial) migration from Poland between the 1950s and the late 1980s.

This type of migration increased after 1956 when the Polish communist government supported Egypt in the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. In 1965 both sides signed an agreement for scientific and technical cooperation that brought many Polish specialists to Egypt. When these contracts expired, some Poles tried to stay and they signed new contracts with local employers and establishments, this time as individuals. Some people stayed for a long time or even permanently (Knopek 2001).

With the exception of scientific and technical personnel, the second most important group that came to Egypt and stayed there for a long time (or settled there permanently) were Polish researchers of Mediterranean culture, mostly archaeologists and Arabists. Some married Egyptian women.

Even in the 1980s, an average of 100 Poles arrived to Cairo each week to work in various areas of the economy, science and culture (Knopek 2001). This migration was predominantly of men but only a small number of Poles remained permanently in Egypt. According to research by the 'Polonia' society, the Polish diaspora was estimated at about 50 people in Egypt in the late 1960s (Knopek 2001). Since the late 1980s, the number of specialists moving to Egypt has been declining.

3. Matrimonial migration from Poland from the late 1960s to the late 1980s:

Polish women who had met their Egyptian husbands in Poland and moved to Egypt with them. In 1965, Poland and Egypt signed an agreement that allowed young Arabs to be educated in Poland. In 1973, 35 Egyptians were educated in Poland (from a total of 216 people from Africa) at middle and high schools as well as at universities, on postgraduate studies and apprenticeships. Following the general trend observed among Africans, they chose technical, economic and medical studies.

From the 1970s, the Polish government progressively restricted the admission of foreigners to vocational schools and from 1973 the number of apprenticeships granted was also reduced. Previously, about 100-130 benefited from Polish training and in the 1980s, Poland committed to accepting 46 scholars for

a period that ranged from 3 months to 3 years. Thanks to this, the contact between Poles and Egyptians in Poland led to the so-called Polish 'migration of hearts'. In the 1970s, the largest wave of matrimonial migration was from Poland to Egypt (Knopek 2001). This group, which consisted mainly of women, had the greatest influence on the transformation of the life of the Polish diaspora in the 1980s and 1990s⁸.

4. Economic and matrimonial (voluntary) migration from Poland from the 1990s to the present day:

The development of Polish tourism to Egypt in the late 1990s meant that economic emigration gained strength, whereby young Poles looking for work were employed in travel agencies. They settled down in the popular tourist destinations such as Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh (Związek Rodzin Polsko-Egipskich 2012). The majority of these people were women sent over by travel agencies to handle the tourist offices. Many decided to marry Egyptians and remain permanently in these tourist districts on the Red Sea and these women now enlarge the contemporary Polish diaspora.

When comparing the different types and phases of migration that shaped the character of the contemporary Polish diaspora in Lebanon and Egypt, one can observe some similarities. The matrimonial migrations of Polish women were the most influential, but two political factors were also very important: compulsory migration during World War II as well as the educational opportunities that were available to Lebanese and Egyptian citizens in Poland. The oldest members of the Polish diaspora found themselves in exile during World War II and both in Lebanon and Egypt, the main factor behind their decision to stay there was marriage.

On the other hand, we can also notice a few differences. During World War II, the main clusters of the Polish diaspora in Egypt were formed by a group of military refugees, while in Lebanon the refugees were mainly civilian. Migration of military personnel in Egypt was temporary and periodic so permanent clusters of the Polish diaspora were not able to develop. In Lebanon, the situation was different because a relatively large group of civilian refugees decided to remain there. From the 1990s, in Egypt the economic migration of Polish women who subsequently married Egyptians can also be observed. This was not the case in Lebanon, as there was no clear tourist activity from Poland. Moreover, another difference could be that there was no significant economic migration to Lebanon by scientific and technical personnel, as was the case in Egypt.

Features of contemporary Polish diaspora in Lebanon and Egypt

The basic feature that is common to both the Polish diaspora in Lebanon and Egypt that in terms of gender, it is dominated by women. In the case of Lebanon, the Polish diaspora consists only of women, not counting the Embassy staff, the clergy and a few

⁷ Between 1947-1950 a group of about 1000 military and civilian refugees as well as young people were repatriated. A significant movement of Polish refugees was registered, higher than from other North African countries. Most of them, about 638 people, left Egypt during 1947 and of this group, 27-28% returned to Poland. Those who did not want to be repatriated were given the option of moving to another country. In the early 1950s about 7.5% of the 1200-1300 Poles living in North Africa were located in Egypt (Knopek 2001).

⁸ At the end of the 20th Century, the Polish diaspora in Egypt numbered some 700-800 people. Among them were representatives of the migrations from the interwar period and their descendants, refugees from the time of World War II and their descendants, Polish women who as a result of marriage with Arabs lived in Egypt and specialists previously employed by the state for a period of over 10 years who then started to run their own businesses. (Knopek 2001).

regular academics at universities. The Polish diaspora in Egypt was more diverse in this regard, but still the vast majority were women. Approximately 70-80% of the Polish diaspora in Egypt were Polish women and their husbands and children (Knopek 2001). There are associations or non-governmental organisations affiliating the Polish diaspora exist both in Lebanon and Egypt. In Lebanon, this is the 'Polish Community in Lebanon' while in Egypt it is 'The Union of Polish-Egyptian Families'. Both were created at roughly the same time as a result of emotional needs, a desire to feel part of a community and to cultivate Polish traditions. In Lebanon, this was in the spring of 1993 while in Egypt, 1995.

For many years, Poles living in Lebanon were unable to contact each other due to the Lebanese civil war (1976-1990). In Egypt there were no such problems associated with war but for many years Poles unsuccessfully tried to establish such an organisation. It was not easy because there was a lack of acceptance by the Egyptian authorities of any independent activity by women, particularly foreigners. For this reason, the word 'family' was included in the name of organisation (Knopek 2001). The activities of both associations are based mainly on the organisation of social and thematic events, tours, picnics, and also events related to the cultivation of Polish national and religious holidays.

In 2010, the Polish organisation in Egypt consisted of 70 families (about 200 people) (Związek Rodzin Polsko-Egipskich 2012) an increase from the late 1990s when only 32 families were affiliated (Knopek 2001). The Polish diaspora in Egypt meets at the Polish Embassy in Cairo, but there is a long term plan to create a Polish Centre which would not only be the meeting place for the diaspora but would also have the role of promoting Polish culture and traditions (Związek Rodzin Polsko-Egipskich 2012).

In Lebanon, only 48 Polish women belonged to the Association which suggests that unfortunately, not all of them feel the need for contact with compatriots or that they live in isolated parts of the country, away from the main centres of the Polish diaspora and large cities. The Polish women meet primarily in homes or in cafes and most of them did not feel the need to create a Polish Centre due to the high cost and low interest. In addition, the Polish Embassy did not play as important a role as in Egypt, mainly due to its inconvenient location in the town of Baabda, southeast of Beirut where it has been located since 2004. The distance to the Embassy means that it is on the sidelines of the life of the Polish diaspora in Lebanon.

A distinguishing feature of the activity of both Polish communities is the publication of Polish newspapers. A Polish newspaper, "Polonez", was first published in Egypt in March 1996. Until February 1998 it was a monthly publication, then it transformed into a quarterly magazine and was issued irregularly and less frequently. Unfortunately the publication of "Polonez" has been suspended, its website has expired and the last edition was published in mid-2010 (Malewska-Malek 2010). In March 1997, exactly one year after the first edition of "Polonez", the first issue of the magazine of the Polish diaspora in Lebanon, "Polish Cedars" appeared. It was inspired by "Polonez" and is still published today. Articles in both magazines were concerned primarily with major events in Poland but they also relayed what was happening

within the Polish diaspora in Egypt and Lebanon, thereby forming an excellent document of the life of the Polish diaspora.

In addition, the 'Society of Egyptian-Polish Friendship' has operated in Egypt since May 1996, mainly uniting the graduates of Polish universities. The main activity of this association was the teaching of Polish which started 1999 and was taken up by a 700 people per year at its peak. The teachers were Polish women living in Egypt permanently. They developed their own textbooks, exercises and recordings and they also created their own Polish-Arabic and Arabic-Polish dictionary (Kawalec 2009). There was a consultation point for Polish children at the Polish Embassy in Cairo, but it was visited by only a few. Likewise, workgroups for children of the Polish diaspora were not popular.

The Polish archaeologists at the Mediterranean Archaeology Research Station in Cairo also had an impact on the unification of the Polish community in Egypt. Thanks to their discoveries, Egyptians began to take interest in Poland. They also conduct meetings and archaeological picnics for Polish-Arab families, which creates additional opportunities for integration (Knopek 2001). In contrast, Polish archaeologists in Lebanon have had virtually no impact on the deepening of the links in the Polish diaspora. The Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw has operated in Chhim since 1996, but it was smaller, more recent and did not interact unduly with the Polish diaspora (Zaleska-Saleh 2006).

The founding of the Polish school in Lebanon was an initiative of the Polish community and the Catholic Church. The School of Polish Language and Culture opened its doors in February 1993 and thanks to a combined effort, textbooks were imported from Poland and teachers willing to work for free were found. Apart from Polish language teaching, the curriculum also included lessons in Polish history and geography. From the opening of the school until 2006, over 100 students studied there and some of them went on to study at Polish universities (Karczewska-Ayat 2006). Classes were held on Fridays. At the end of the year the students received a certificate of completion, which is not treated as an official document. The prize for the best students was the opportunity to take part in summer camps in Poland organised by the Polish Community Association (Stowarzyszenie "Wspólnota Polska") NGO in Warsaw. It wasn't unusual that for some children, Polish was their fourth language after Arabic, French and English. At the moment, teachers at this school use photocopies of textbooks published in 1999 by the Catholic University of Lublin.

Due to the strong promotion of studying the Polish language by the Polish diaspora in Lebanon, significantly more children of mixed marriages in Lebanon speak Polish. Most spoke Polish very well, while in Egypt up to 40% of children of mixed marriages had little knowledge of Polish or did not know it at all (Knopek 2001). What these children had in common was a very good knowledge of English and French in addition to Arabic as primary education was frequently carried out in one of these languages. Thanks to this many of these children have graduated from prestigious universities, such as the American University of Beirut or its counterpart in Cairo, and found well-paid jobs in senior positions, often in the countries of the Persian Gulf.

Mixed marriages and acquisition of habits of the country of emigration

In heterogeneous Lebanon, Polish women married representatives of different religions and faiths. Most frequently their husbands were Sunnis, then Maronites, Druze, and sometimes followers of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Orthodox Christians and Shi'ites. A growing number of marriages with Palestinians was also observed. Palestinians are deprived of a nationality so marriage with a Pole gives them the possibility to acquire Polish citizenship. In Egypt, Polish women usually marry the followers of Sunni Islam, which is the dominant religion in this country.

A common feature of marriages in both countries is that the woman is, in many ways, marrying not just her husband but in effect, his whole family. In Egypt the family has the right to interfere in the marriage of son and this is a right that is frequently exercised, particularly when the son is financially dependent on the family (Związek Rodzin Polsko-Egipskich 2012). This is often forgotten about by foreign women, including Poles, who must learn to live with an over-protective mother-in-law, or return to Poland, unless it is too late.

There have been incidents in which a Polish woman lived for several years in closed communities, such as the Armenian community, and only after some time earned the trust of her husband and his mother and was permitted to contact the local Polish community. Often there are situations in which Polish women face a very difficult fate. One example occurred in the isolated Beqaa Valley where Polish wives of Shi'ites could not leave the house and were allowed only to deal with household duties and child-raising. Family breakdowns also occur when the Polish women flee to Poland with their children or even leave them behind and start a new life.

It is probably due to Lebanon's diversity and social tolerance of different religious beliefs that it is only in exceptional cases in mixed Polish-Lebanese families that marriages come into dispute on religious grounds, as was emphasised by the Consul of the Embassy of Poland in Lebanon, Lech Faszczka. He noted that the nature of the migration to Lebanon also played a role in the general lack of marital conflict in mixed Polish-Lebanese marriages, in contrast to the tourist-oriented countries in the Arab countries (such as Egypt) where many ill-thought through marriages took place after contact with tourists.

The high degree of tolerance in Lebanon also allowed Polish-Lebanese children to be raised in the Christian tradition, and this happened very frequently. Children take the sacrament of Holy Communion and at the request of the Polish women, a priest comes to their homes during Christmas. Another manifestation of the openness to Polish culture by the Lebanese husbands of Polish women is often the widespread use of the Polish language, which applies not only to those Lebanese who studied in Poland. Sister Urszula⁹ states that this tolerance of a wife who followed a different religion to the husband was not acceptable in Egypt where Christians are discriminated against. Sister Urszula also emphasised that despite everything, the most successful mar-

riages occur when both husband and wife are not deeply religious or are not practicing. Despite Lebanon's tolerance, even there situations have occurred in which the Polish diaspora supported Polish women spiritually and materially. In one case, they even collected money to buy a woman a ticket back to Poland.

An important issue for Polish women who marry Egyptian and Lebanese men in these countries, is the wedding itself. In Lebanon, there is no civil marriage so the only option is a religious ceremony, which is not recognised by Polish law. As a result, many Polish women decide to travel to Cyprus to marry in a ceremony that is recognised by Polish law. There are even travel agencies in Lebanon that organise 'wedding trips' to Cyprus for the happy couple. Otherwise, if the couple are not of the same religion, one must convert and only then can they marry in a religious ceremony. In Lebanon it is rare for somebody to convert and more and more young people are opting for a civil marriage in Cyprus (Polish Embassy in Beirut 2012). In contrast, for a marriage to be legal in Egypt it must take place in the Civil Registry Office and then the Polish spouse remains in the care of the Polish state. Religious certificates of marriage in Egypt are not considered to be documents in the light of the current bilateral agreements between Poland and Egypt.

Common to the both countries' patriarchal family model is the fact that the husband is responsible for the maintenance of the family, while a wife does not have to (or should not) work. Foreigners, especially women, who do not speak Arabic face problems in finding satisfying employment. Unfortunately, even holding a university degree, which is common among Polish women in Lebanon, help them find a good job. Often this is due to the language barrier, as only few Polish women can speak and write Arabic. This also means it is harder to get things done through the official bureaucracy, which limits a woman's independence and increases her dependency on her husband. Most Poles learned Arabic by listening and they often talk in Polish, French or English with their husbands. Polish women with a medical education found it easiest to get a professional job in Lebanon but even then they had to pass special exams. Other Polish women often worked in nurseries or in catering and one worked at the American University of Beirut. Overall most women did not work although in some cases they were employed illegally.

Polish women in Egypt rarely undertook professional and most frequently they worked in schools as teachers of English or science, or in travel agencies. The small number of Polish women working as professionals also had its advantages, as it allowed them to keep a Polish atmosphere in their families. The situation for Polish wives of Palestinians was different as they had to work because their husbands were unable to work officially and could only get very low and insufficient earnings from illegal jobs. Polish women living in Lebanon took on local behaviours. Polish woman with a better financial status, often with no profession, hire housekeepers (mainly from countries such as Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Philippines) who act as round-the-clock servants.

⁹ A member of the Order of Saint Clare on mission in Beirut since 2007, having been earlier based in other Arab countries including 9 years in Egypt.

Summary

Due to the different nature of contemporary migration in the two countries considered, it can be expected that the Polish community in Egypt will increase due to the development of mass tourism while the Polish community in Lebanon will decrease, unless more tourists from Poland travel there. However,

this will happen only if the long-term political stability of Lebanon develops. Changes in the size of the Polish community in both countries may also result in the creation or disbanding of Polish organisations in these countries and the activities undertaken by them.

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