

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN POMERANIAN VOIVODSHIP

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Summary: The paper aims to show the diversity of religious in Pomeranian Voivodship, indicating the presence of various churches and religious associations in quantitative and spatial resolution, if possible. The latest statement of religious statistics, published by the Central Statistical Office in the second half of 2010, presents a picture of religious diversity in Poland in the years 2006-2008. The year 2008 provides the basis for showing religious diversity in the region discussed in this article.

Key words: geography of religion, Pomerania, religious diversity.

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Introduction

Examining religious issues is not only challenging due to the complexity of the problem, but it fits well within the kind of civilizational challenge imposed on scientific community. At the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first century all over the world except Europe (eurosecularism) “an explosion” of religion is observed¹. The phenomenon of the

¹ J. Beckford, 2003, *Social Theory and Religion*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p. 68 [fol:] E. Hałas, 2007, *Konwersja. Perspektywa socjologiczna*, Scholar, Warszawa, p. 10, 11.

matter lies in the fact that social ties based on religion seem to be the most durable among others in historiosophic terms, building on the team of images and media culture. The author is willing to put forward a thesis, assuming a sociological concept of a nation, that a nation is a historical concept (as a few centuries ago, there were no nations in the current meaning, therefore, periods in which the role of nations' functioning within societies will change can be expected²), it may be well that religious, as well as language and family (ancestral) ties resulting from regional identity, will be one of the main determinants of social relations.

The structure of religion is one of the most problematic issues of demography. The authors of religious statistics in Poland indicate that such statistical tests can be conducted using censuses, sample surveys and the mass statistical reporting. This last method - voluntary questionnaires filled out by churches, is the foundation of statistical knowledge in relation to religious organizations, operating on Polish territory³. The Roman Catholic Church possesses its own statistical services and the results of their study differ significantly from the results obtained by external entities, so for the sake of accuracy of the statistic, the method of averaging is employed.

In the census, which began in April 2011 the question of religion has been raised for the first time since 1931. Question posed in the census survey applies to a formal denominational affiliation: "to which confession (church or religious association) do you belong?" The seven largest religious associations or churches in Poland are mentioned by name in census sections, the 8th category is the "other", which emerges after the development of a list of 165 other religious organizations. A different one may be added, if it is not mentioned in the form or its instructions. A following answer may also be given: "I do not belong to any confession", as well as a refusal to answer this question is acceptable.

Religious Diversity of Pomeranian Voivodship is dictated by demographic changes in the areas covered by the

² Z. Rykiel, 2006, *Podstawy geografii politycznej*, PWE, Warszawa, p. 153.

³ *Wyznania Religijne, Stowarzyszenia Narodowościowe i Etniczne w Polsce 2003-2005, 2007*, GUS, Warszawa, p. 9, 10.

administrative unit since World War II. It is estimated that up to 70% of the population of Pomerania before 1939 were Protestants (mostly followers of the Evangelical Church of old-Prussian Union, Evangelical United Church, but also of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession). After this time caesura, expansion and stabilization of the structures of the Roman Catholic Church is observed which became an extremely dominant confession in the denominational structure of the region. The so-called share of family reunification in the mid 50s and the second half of the 60s almost completely eliminated other confessions than Roman Catholic from the religious landscape of the region. Owing to political changes in 1989, the emergence of the new religious movements or reinforced structures of long-established churches, which were previously an unnoticed margin, has been observed.

Christianity – Catholicism

In 2008, the most frequently represented religion in Pomeranian Voivodship was the Roman Catholic Church. The region is covered by four dioceses that belong to three ecclesiastical provinces: The Metropolis of Gdansk (the dioceses of Gdansk, Pelplin), The Metropolis of Szczecin-Kamień Pomorski (Diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg) and The Metropolis of Ermland (Diocese of Elblag). The share of followers, based on baptisms, according to the Church is close to the national average, amounting in 2006 to 93.8% of the total population of Poland⁴. In the Diocese of Gdansk it is 93.9%, Koszalin-Kołobrzeg 93.0%, Pelplin - 93.0%, while the highest percentage is noted in the Diocese of Elblag - 95.7% (2008). These figures do not include atheists, agnostics and converts who have not committed the act of apostasy. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church gives lower than the accepted number of the population inhabiting the region, and this being the reference point, estimates usually give the number by about 5-6 percent points lower. Two-point surge in the number of followers on the national scale in 2007,

⁴ Since 2007, the statistical services of the Church (Institute of the Catholic Church Statistics) report a value of 95.8% (a sharp rise of 2 percentage points), further calls into question the reliability of these data.

compared with 2006 as presented by the Institute of Statistics of the Catholic Church, calls the official figures relating to the percentage of believers into question. Decrease in the number of believers is recorded in the Diocese of Koszalin-Kołobrzeg and Pelplin, while growth is observed in the Diocese of Gdansk.

Among the main places of worship in the province there are following:

- minor basilicas: The Basilica of St. Trinity in Gdansk Oliwa (the archcathedral), The Basilica of St. Mary in Gdansk (the co-cathedral), The Basilica of St. John Evangelist in Kwidzyn (the co-cathedral), The Basilica of St. Bridget of Sweden in Gdansk, The Basilica of St. Nicholas in Gdansk, The Cathedral Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption in Pelplin;
- collegiate churches in Gdansk Wrzeszcz, Gdynia and Wejherowo;
- sanctuaries in a strict sense: The Calvary of Wejherowo, The Calvary of Wiele, The Shrine of The Divine Mercy (The Church of The Resurrection in Gdansk Wrzeszcz), shrines to the Virgin Mary in Swarzewo, Matemblewo, Trąbki Wielkie, Gdansk (mentioned as a minor basilica), Wejherowo, Sianowo, Kościerzyna, Lubiszewo, Piaseczno, Warlubie, Chojnice, shrines of St. Adalbert – church as well as national sanctuaries.

The second most populous Catholic confession in Pomeranian Voivodship is the Greek Catholic Church (Byzantine-Ukrainian rite). In the west of the region there is overrepresentation of this religion compared to the rest of the country, which is a result of expulsions of minority groups from central Lesser Poland (Lemkos, Ukrainians) in the years 1944-1947 to the areas attached to the remains of the Polish state after 1945. 12 parishes in the province are covered by the Deanery of Słupsk, which belongs to the Eparchy of Wrocław-Gdansk (Fig. 1.). The most important temple, a co-cathedral is located in Gdansk. Most of the Greek Catholic Church celebrations are held in Roman Catholic churches. Parishes are located in Barcin, Barkowo, Bytów, Człuchów, Dębica Kaszubska, Gdansk, Lębork, Miastko, Miedzybórz, Słupia, Słupsk and Smołdzino. The area to the east of the

Vistula is nominally subordinated to the Archeparchy of Przemysł-Warsaw, to which two parishes belong: in Dzierzgoń and Żelichowo (Deanery of Elbląg). The census of 2002 recorded 2,831 people of Ukrainian nationality living in the voivodship. This number can roughly determine the number of followers of the Greek Catholic Church in the region.

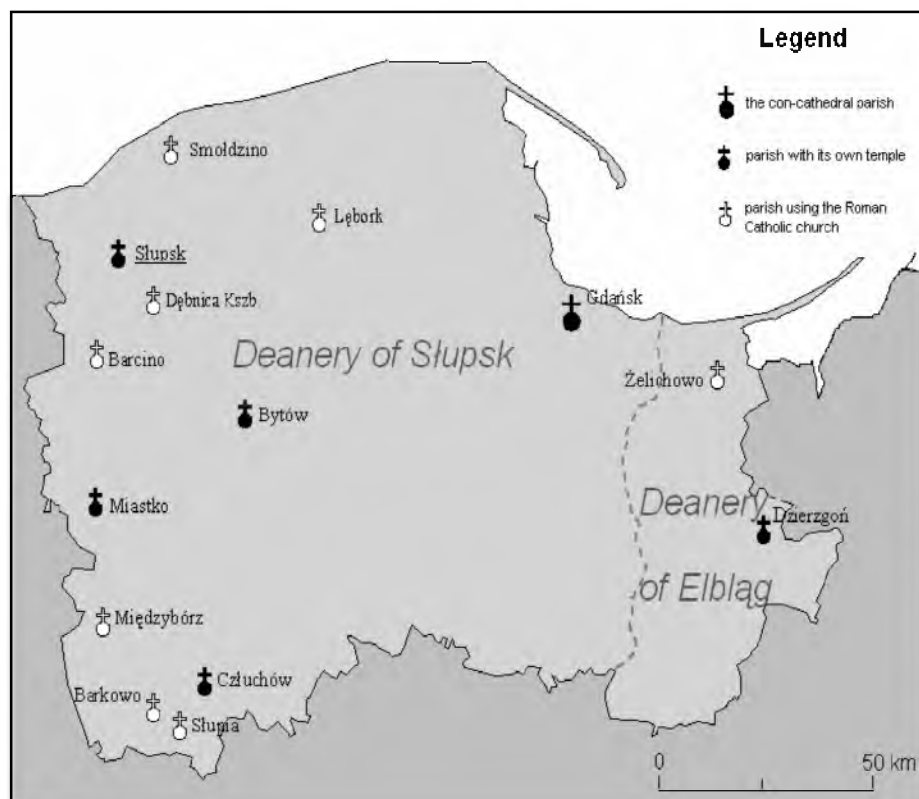


Fig. 1. The structures of the Greek Catholic Church (Byzantine-Ukrainian rite) in Pomeranian Voivodship in 2008.

Source: developed by the author on the basis of <http://webmgr.cerkiew.net/page.php?4;> <http://www.cerkiew.net.pl/index.php?glowna=dekanaty> [access 11.04.2011].

213 followers in Pomerania (1.1% of all church members) had the Polish Catholic Church in Poland in 2008. Temples of the Church are located in Gdansk and Gdynia. Established as a result of personal disputes, Polish National Catholic Church in Poland, had 100 followers in the

Pomerania, notwithstanding that it was not in a possession of a church building or a priest, and was the only unit of the Church. This data however, is disputable. The remaining Catholic denominations have no place of worship in the Pomeranian Voivodship. Only the Old Catholic Church in Poland, still had one priest in 2005. As many as 10.1% of the followers of this church are thought to have lived in the region in 2005 – 40 in total. Data specifications for 2008 no longer provide a number of believers. The closest Old Catholic church is situated in Dragacz, the village near Grudziądz (Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodship). 65 people admitted to the Mariavite Church confession. In the Tri-City area, the community of the Armenian Catholic Church is located, with one of the two personal parishes in Poland. Fr. A. Awdalian is the delegated priest for Armenian Diaspora in North Poland. Fr. C. Annusewicz is the direct vicar. In the Roman Catholic parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Gdansk (Żabi Kruk) there is a Shrine of St. Mary the Gracious with the 'miraculous icon' of the Armenian St. Mary the Gracious, moved out from Stanislaviv. The parish attends eminently to the descendants of people displaced from Eastern part of Lesser Poland and immigrants from Armenia, residing mainly in Gdansk and Rumia. The number of Armenian Diaspora is estimated at about 30 families.

Orthodoxy

It appears to be unable to determine the number of Orthodox believers in the region. According to Fr. A. Zielepucha there are about 2 thousand, but some estimates indicate about 16 thousand⁵. However, empirical facts are not in favour of the latter number. Parishes of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the second most-represented confession in the country, are located in Gdansk Wrzeszcz (Białystok-Gdansk diocese), and Słupsk (Diocese of Wrocław-Szczecin) - around 60 believers. In 1995 in Gdansk a military parish of The Great Martyr St. George the Victorious

⁵ According to an electronic mail message from Fr. A. Zielepucha, dated 1st December 2008.

was erected. In the vicinity of Szemud, the Roman Catholic 'Betlehemites' nuns cultivate the Eastern liturgy⁶.

Protestantism and trends derived from Protestantism

Protestant religions and confessions derived from Protestantism show the greatest diversity. According to internal church estimates, about 860 followers of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland live in Pomeranian Voivodship, from about 3,500 residing within the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Pomerania-Greater Poland. The author of this statement would assess it for 670-710 people. This Church, that marks the powerful influence of its cultural heritage in Pomerania, now has only two parishes: in Słupsk, having affiliates in Lębork, Główny and Gardna Wielka (the last two German-speaking) and Sopot (seat of the diocese) with affiliate in Tczew (Fig. 2.). German-speaking home devotions are held in Wierzchucino (more specifically, in the village of Brzyno). An affiliate of the parish of Elbląg is situated in Mikołajki Pomorskie, where the parish house was blessed in 2008. The german-speaking 'preaching station' in Wólca Wielka (near Miastko) is the affiliate of the parish of Koszalin.

A military ministry, represented by the Dean of the Navy and Land Forces Command Chaplain, functions in the voivodship. This fellowship is marked by a large share of converts, of up to 25% of the members of the community. Significant activity of Swedish (until 2000 the National), Evangelical Lutheran Church may also be observed. Only 38 followers are members of The Evangelical-Reformed Church in Poland. The congregation had its own parish and priest in Gdansk after World War II. Nowadays, devotions by appointment (approximately every 3-4 months) are held in the Evangelical-Augsburg Church in Sopot. Numerously represented just after World War II and reviled by the Polish party-state authorities the United Methodist Church had 109 followers in 2008, a one priest (in 2005 two) and two temples - in Gdansk and Słupsk.

⁶ See more: G. Pac, 2006, *Prawosławny katolik* [in:] Tygodnik Powszechny, Internet Edition (tygodnik2003-2007.onet.pl/1546,1306842,1,dzial.html)

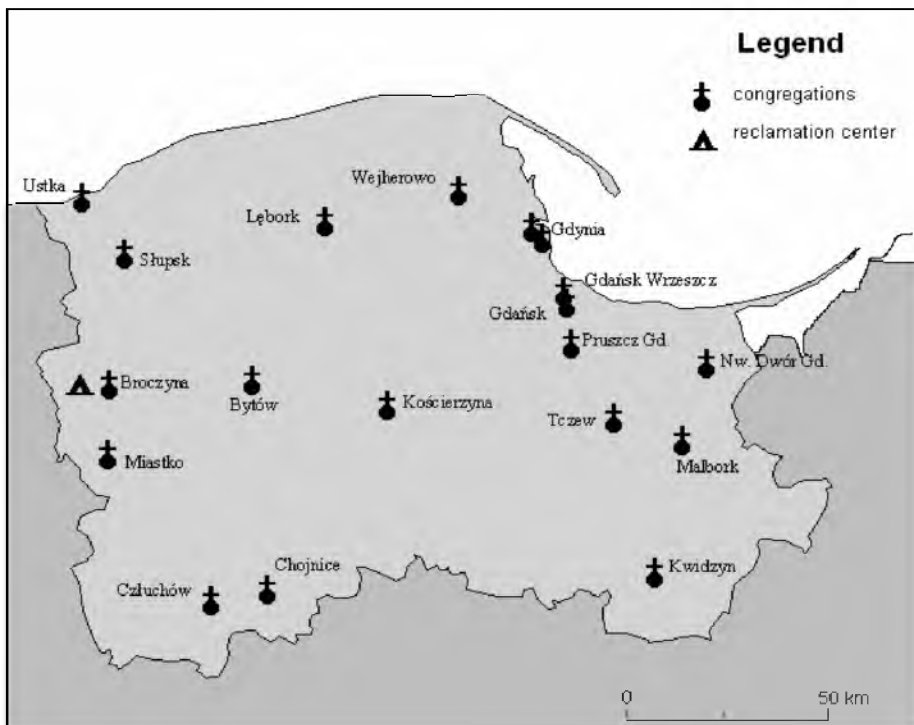


Fig. 3. Congregations of the Pentecostal Church of Poland in Pomeranian Voivodship in 2008.

Source: <http://kz.pl/zbory/> [access: 11.04.2011]

The Church of God in Christ boasts 79 followers. In fact, it is a Pentecostal fellowship, which operates a Christian Center called "Rivers of Living Water" along with a cafeteria and bookshop in Słupsk, as well as a church unit in Malbork, 36 of the faithful have two congregations of Evangelical Faith Christian Church (in Gdynia), and 60 - community of Churches of Christ. 2,167 followers (10.1% of total number of adherents in country total region's population), 32 clerics, 9 churches and 19 parishes (Broczyna, Miastko Bytów, Chojnice, Czluchów, two churches in Gdansk and Gdynia, Kościerzyna, Kwidzyn, Lębork, Malbork, Nowy Dwór Gdański, Pruszcz Gdański, Słupsk, Tczew, Ustka, Wejherowo) has the Pentecostal Church of Poland (Fig. 3.). In Broczyna runs Pentecostal Christian Social Mission "Teen Chalange" (reclamation center).

The Pentecostal Christian Fellowship is another representative of the Pentecostal movements. Meetings of this community meets three times a week in Gdansk Brzeźno. Baptist's Evangelical Brotherhood Church had 140 followers. It was characterized by a prominent spatial concentrations (borderland of Pomeranian, West Pomeranian and Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodships only).

Protestant Scripture scholars' movements, so-called Bible Students, derived from the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of "pastor" Ch. T. Russell in the region are represented by the Bible Students Association in Poland: 27 adherents (9.7% of total) with one congregation, 20 members of the Free Bible Students Association (0.01%) with one congregation and three 'seniors', 24 members of the Laymen's Home Missionary Movement with congregations in Gdansk and Przeworsk. In Pomeranian Voivodship there are 120 congregations (6.65% of the total number in Poland) of "Watchtower" - Bible and Tract Society, Registered Association of Jehovah's Witnesses Confession in Poland⁷.

There was no published data of the number of preachers in relation to the province. The author of this publication estimates this number for 8,400 – 9,000 persons (0.4% of Pomeranian population). One should not overlook the fact that this is the confession that has the main strength of the legacy of the Reformation to the present and the second mostly represented confession in the region. The major activity centers in relation to the number of inhabitants are located in Gdansk and Chojnice, although the oldest center of its activities in Pomerania used to be Gdynia. Several hundred residents of Slupsk and Wejherowo are also members of Jehova's Witnesses confession. In Malbork is situated one of

⁷ Although Jehovah's Witnesses disassociate themselves from Protestantism and its legacy, as well as the authors of religious statistics, since 2000 had ceased to assign a qualifier, attributed to the Protestant movement for this religious association, in contrast to other strands of Bible Students, originating with the doctrine of Ch. T. Russell, the author of this publication following J. W. Kowalski, who indicates the genetic-doctrinal connections of restorationism movements with Protestantism, account Jehovah's Witnesses to this category within the Christian religious community. (See: J.W. Kowalski, 1988, *Protestantyzm* [in:] J. Keller (red.), *Zarys Dziejów Religii*, Iskry, Warszawa, p. 745).

the seven assembly hall in Poland (architectural complex, with 1,100 seats hall).

Among other antitrinitarian faiths, in Pomerania a presence of the Unity of Polish Brethren is noted - 18 believers in 2002 (8.1% of all believers in the country), who are affiliated to one fellowship (no current data available) and the Unitarian Church - one congregation.

Due to having its head office in Gdynia, to rank of the most important churches in the province should be regarded proselytizing New Apostolic Church, having 761 followers in Pomerania (15.6% of total number of believers), as well as two temples and four churches. New Apostolic Church is one of the oldest churches enjoying state recognition of the attributes on Polish territory. The Church of Christ, which is of a uniquely regional nature that has the Polish head office in Sopot. There were about 1400 believers in the region (57.7% of the total number of the believers in the country; data for 2006), concentrated in three churches, served by 10 priests (in a temple in Sopot).

The Church of Free Christians in Poland (58 followers), relating to the Plymouth brethren, although in Poland having Roman Catholic roots, has a church in Gdansk and an affiliate in Słupsk. With the Protestant churches threnody in Pomeranian Voivodship also operates the Mission of Grace Church, located in Gdansk Wrzeszcz, Evangelical Reformed Church in Gdansk (which belongs to an informal Confederation of Evangelical-Reformed Churches), led by well-known in the conservative-liberal environment pastor P. Bartosik, Pentecostal Church in Poland - 17 members (former members of the Congregation "Jordan" in Gdynia), The Local Church in Kwidzyn (15 members) and The Christian Church "Word of Faith" with the central office in Gdynia (approx. 120 members). In 2005 in Pomerania lived two members of the Community of the Assemblies of God Seventh-day Christians. The Christian Center "New Wave" located in Gdynia in Mirecki Street consists of 80 members.

Other Christian movements

According to official statistics, 250 people in Pomerania are the followers of The Christian Church of the the Good News Preachers. The origins of this church are quite

controversial. It is believed that it is one of the churches, which was the result of legal preference for religious organizations, whose activities were connected with endowment system or foreign trade, while the doctrine was based on the doctrine of Bible Students. It never ran a pastoral activity, and its ventures were a cover for the operations of the "Pruszków" mafia⁸. As for the borderline Christian denominations, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is an example. In 2008, there were 51 Mormons in the province, who used to meet in a conference room of Hotel "Hevelius" in Gdansk, even though they are registered in Sopot. The region was inhabited by 12 members of The Anglican Church in Poland (data for 2002). They enjoyed the pastoral ministry of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, because of the lack of Church structures in the region.

A large number of communities, originating with the Pentecostal Charismatic currents, which are not officially registered, as well as do not belong to any churches is observed in the region. The 'Branhamites' (community-based on the Marrion Branham revelations) is an example of such movements. Its full number as well as the number of people, connected with is difficult to estimate.

Other religions – Islam

One of the three mosques in contemporary Poland is located in Gdansk - the only one in the country built after World War II. Custody over the temple is exercised by the Muslim Religious Union in Poland, to which officially belong 10 adherents, but the community is such bigger (more than 100 followers). The Union also supervises teaching of the religious studies. 5 persons in Pomerania are members of the Association of Islamic Unity. The Islamic Assembly of Ahl-ul-Bayt oversees the Shia minority in the region. In an attempt to meet the needs of the ever-growing Muslim community in

⁸ See also: W. Czuchnowski, 2004, *Kościół Głosicieli, Wyznawcy „Pruszkowa”*, Gazeta Wyborcza, 24th May 2004, p. 5;
http://wiadomosci.wpr24.pl/nowe_samochody_dla_falszywego_biskupa;
<http://polska.lokalna.pl/news/kosciol-gangsterow,533872>.

Poland, the Muslim League in Poland was established in 2004. Gdansk branch is under construction.

Judaism

Until 1999, in Gdansk there was one of the most important Jewish community in Poland, belonging to the Union of Jewish Congregations in Poland (ZGWŻ). As a result of the conflict between Union and the president of religious Community in Gdansk, Jewish Independent Congregation in Gdansk was formed, which consisted of 190 members in 2004, and has an affiliate in Slupsk. As of 2008, there were 200 members. In Gdansk, there is now an affiliate of ZGWŻ, managing the New Synagogue in Wrzeszcz.

Buddhism and oriental religions

Almost all oriental religious denominations have adherents, and their centers located in Pomeranian Voivodship - Kwan Um School of Zen in Poland (20 members), Kannon Zen Buddhist Community (31 members), the Buddhist Association Kandzeon Sangha (12 members), the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, with Temple in Gdynia, where five monks live, the Karma Kamtsang Buddhist Association in Poland with center in Gdansk (90 members), the Buddhist Mission "Three Refuges" in Poland (30 members), the Science of Identity Foundation "Chaitanya Mission" (132 members), Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, with the second largest center in Poland, based in Gdansk (30 members), Apaja Yoga Association (1 member), and very expansive in terms of number of attending people the Karma Kagyu Buddhist Association, situated in Pomorska Street in Gdansk.

Followers of religions not affiliated to leading denominations

In 2008 25 people of the Pomeranian population declared themselves as Karaites, who are called "the smallest minority"⁹, in terms of both – national and a religious minority. In Pomeranian Voivodship live 21,7% of the total number of Karaites in Poland. Among other religious associations,

⁹ http://archiwum.rp.pl/artykul/627810_Karaimi_najmniejsza_mniejszosc.html

independent from any leading denominations, a movement associated with the “New Age”, called Western Sufi Order (the head office used to be in Sopot in the past) had 85 members. 135 followers (of 225 in Poland) had a neo-pagan Native Faith. Sopot is the Polish headquarter of the Unification Church (Moon). The Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'í Faith was established in Gdansk in 1991. There are no contact details of the local structure on the official website of this religious association. However, the Report of the National Assembly elections in April 2009 recognized the presence of some Bahai followers in Gdansk¹⁰.

Conclusion

With 163 registered religious communities in Poland in 2008, the author found 59 of them being active in the Pomeranian Voivodship, of which 29 derive their origins in different currents of the Reformation, while some of the communities are local in nature. 7 of registered religious organizations have their head offices in the province. At least 22.5 thousand people (1.01% of region's population) admit to non-Roman Catholic denominations, of which two thirds are followers of reformist currents (Fig. 4.)

It is difficult to resist the conclusion, that in relation to the number of the region's population, a little overrepresentation of Protestants, second and third wave of the Reformation, Jews, Muslims, Karaites, and, in the western part of administrative unit - the Byzantine-Rite Catholics can be stated.

¹⁰ <http://www.bahai.org.pl/?p=2664>, see also: B. Zając, 1998, Wiara Bahá'í w Polsce [in:] *Nierzyskokatolickie kościoły i grupy wyznaniowe w Gdańsku w latach 1945-1995 oraz ich wkład w rozwój regionu gdańskiego*, UM Gdańsk, BWSH, Gdańsk-Koszalin p. 52–63.

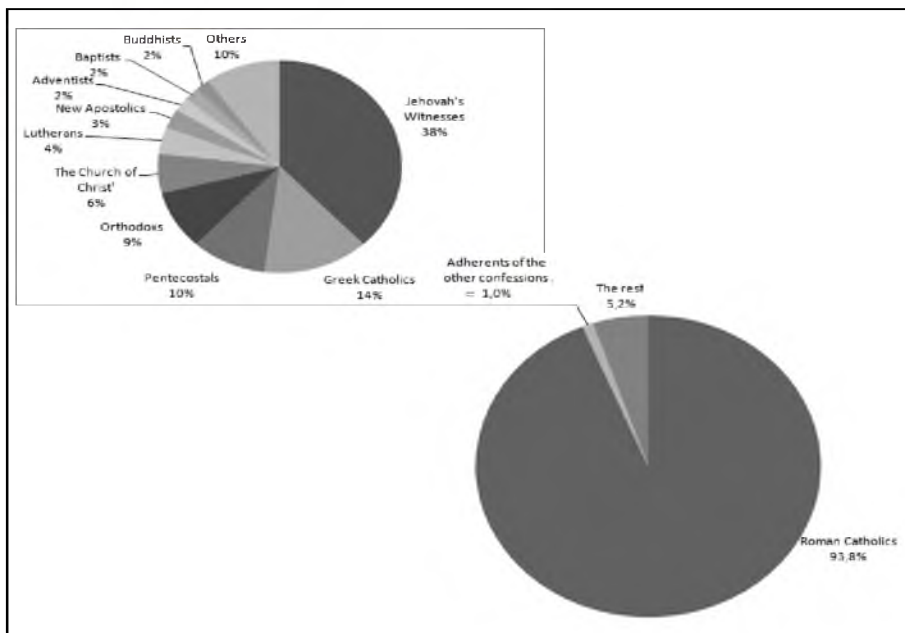


Fig. 4. Religious diversity of the Pomeranian Voivodship Population.

Source: developed by the author.

Definitely below average are situated communities which are represented in numbers on a national scale but of a highly regional nature in Poland (Lutherans, Orthodox, Polish Catholics). Most of the temples of worship are located in major cities: Gdansk (in particular in district of Wrzeszcz), Słupsk, Sopot, Gdynia, Wejherowo and Chojnice. Eastern Churches have gathered most of their followers in the territories incorporated to Poland after World War II, while Jehovah's Witnesses are characterized by the greatest uniformity of the spatial distribution, except Roman Catholics.

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