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Temasektion

# *Tabligh, Tarbiyyat* and the Religious Education of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Scandinavia

**Keywords:** Ahmadiyya, Islam in Scandinavia, Islamic religious education and learning, social capital, bridging and bonding

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**Abstract** The article is based on a study of the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK and its Scandinavian-born Muslim students and alumni for an MA thesis. Drawing on fieldwork and interview material collected between September 2019 and January 2020, it identifies *tabligh* (propagation) and *tarbiyyat* (upbringing) as central aspects of Ahmadiyya religious learning. It explores how *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* are instrumental in the preservation and transmission of Ahmadiyya teachings and faith within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ). While the starting point is the Jamia Ahmadiyya, a Muslim seminary, also highlighted is the upbringing program, *waqf-e-nau*, and various auxiliary groups formed of Ahmadi men and women that are sites of religious education and learning and illustrate the multifaceted nature of the organization and its learning practice.

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Religious education and learning are instrumental in transmitting and preserving the teachings and faith of the Islamic reform movement or community, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ), particularly when established in a Christian majority environment such as Scandinavia, the region examined in this article. As with other Muslim minorities in Scandinavia, the AMJ relies on foreign teaching institutions to train its imams and must organize its own learning arenas; moreover, as a minority within a Muslim minority, AMJ members are faced with more limited access to such arenas due to their theological beliefs, which diverge from the Muslim mainstream. How does a Muslim double minority in Scandinavia ensure the maintenance and survival of its faith? Based on empirical material gathered between September 2019 and January 2020, I outline the multifaceted arenas and sites for

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Ahmadiyya religious education and learning in order to explore how faith and teachings are preserved and transmitted within the AMJ. Based on the material and previous studies, I identify *tabligh* (propagation) and *tarbiyyat* (upbringing) as central aspects of Ahmadiyya religious learning. While my starting point is the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK – one of 13 international institutions specializing in Ahmadiyya religious education – I also highlight the upbringing program, *waqf-e-nau*, and various auxiliary groups formed of Ahmadi men and women, such as Khuddam and Lajna, as sites of religious education and learning. I begin the article with a brief introduction of the AMJ, before turning to the terms *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* and finally exploring how religious education is organized and practiced within the community.

## The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat: Brief Historical Background, Establishment in Scandinavia, and Mission Project

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat (AMJ) was founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (d. 1908) in Qadian, India, while it was under British colonial rule, and it is estimated that there are between twelve and fifteen million adherents in the world today (Valentine 2008, 37). The AMJ shares some characteristics with the Sunni Islamic tradition and is often described as a Sunni subgroup as well as an Islamic reform group and a messianic sect (Sorgenfrei 2018, 88-89; Khan 2015, 4-6), although it regards itself an Islamic revival movement (AMJ official website). Following Ghulam Ahmad's death and disagreements over his successor and status as a prophet (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 360),<sup>1</sup> the movement split into Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islami (AAII, headquarters in Lahore, Pakistan) and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, which this article examines.<sup>2</sup> In 1947, upon the Partition of India and Pakistan, the AMJ's headquarters were moved from Qadian to Rabwah in Pakistan, and later to London in 1984 due to its controversial relations with mainstream Islam (Friedmann 1989, 16-18).

There are two principal reasons for the AMJ's controversies in regard to other Islamic groups: firstly, its view of Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet, in contradiction to the established Islamic doctrine of *khātām al-nubuwwa* (finality of prophethood),<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The AAII does not believe in Ghulam Ahmad as a prophet but emphasizes his role as a reformer (*mujaddid*).

<sup>2</sup> On the split between the AAII and the AMJ, I refer the reader to Chapter 3 in Khan (2015). According to Jacobsen et al., the AAII does not have any organized communities in Scandinavia, although its website states that it has branches in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK. The complete list of its world-wide branches is available at: <https://www.aaiil.org/Pages/?ContentId=53>.

which teaches that Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet of God (Khan 2015, 1; Jacobsen et al. 2015, 360); and, secondly, the AMJ's belief that Jesus survived crucifixion and was not taken up to heaven to return at the end of time, as most Sunni and Shia Muslims believe. Rather, the AMJ believes that Jesus disappeared for some days and travelled to India, and later died in Kashmir (Khan, 2015, 2; Jacobsen et al. 2015, 360).<sup>4</sup> The first fatwa against the AMJ declaring it *kufir* was issued in 1891 by the Ahl-i-Hadith group ("People of the Prophetic traditions") in India, who spearheaded the opposition against Ghulam Ahmad (Khan 2015, 31-32). Ahmadis constantly experience persecution and discrimination and are considered non-Muslims by several Muslim groups and organizations (Valentine 2008, 32-37). In 1974, the movement was officially declared a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan's Constitution due to its belief in a prophet after Muhammad. Later, in 1984, Pakistan's blasphemy laws were introduced, which can be used to criminalize the religious practice and proselytization of Ahmadis (as well as other religious minorities) (Khan 2015, 1-4; Nielsen & Otterbeck 2016, 152). In 2015, the Asian Human Rights Commission and International Human Rights Committee presented a report on the human rights violations and discrimination directed at Ahmadis in Pakistan stemming from the blasphemy legislation and specific anti-Ahmadi laws. The report records that Ahmadis face discrimination and targeted attacks at political, economic, social, and educational levels, and attests to multiple personal attacks on Ahmadis, which it describes as escalating, especially since the 2010 Model Town Mosque massacre where 86 Ahmadis were killed. In the first attack against Ahmadi women and children, in July 2014, eight Ahmadi family homes in Gujranwala were targeted, and eight women and children were killed, with the survivors being forced to leave the city (AHRC & IHRC 2015, 18-21; 30-36; Larsson 2018, 172-177).

3 Friedmann (2013) explains that upon declaring himself a prophet, Ghulam Ahmad emphasized that the Qur'an is the last heavenly book that will "forever remain valid". Ghulam Ahmad also made a distinction between "non-legislative" and "legislative" prophethood. In his view, his prophethood was "non-legislative" and therefore did not contradict the Islamic prophet doctrine. Larsson's *Muslims Accused of Apostasy* in Vinding et al. (2018, 174-177) also elaborates on the AMJ's conceptualizations of prophethood.

4 For an elaborate description and outlining of the death of Jesus in Ahmadiyya teachings, see Todd Lawson's book *The Crucifixion and the Qur'an: A Study in the History of Muslim Thought* (2009) and Valentine (2008, 18-29). For discussion of Ahmadiyya concepts of prophethood, and Ghulam Ahmad's prophet status, see Chapters 1 and 2 in Khan (2015).

## The AMJ in Scandinavia

The persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan has led many of them to emigrate to Europe. According to Sorgenfrei (2018, 90) the AMJ has organized communities in 200 countries worldwide and is engaged in comprehensive missionary work, interreligious dialogue, and charity work (Nielsen & Otterbeck 2016, 152). The first Ahmadiyya communities in Scandinavia were established

as early as the 1950s by the missionary Kamal Yousuf (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 361-368), and went on to construct the first purpose-built mosques in Scandinavia; the Nusrat Djahan Mosque in Hvidovre, Copenhagen, was established in 1966-1967, the Nasir Mosque in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 1976. Between 1979 and 1980 the Ahmadiyya community in Norway bought a villa in Frogner, Oslo, and renovated it into a mosque which opened in 1980, and then opened the first purpose-built mosque in 2011, Baitun Nasr in Furuset, Oslo, which is the largest mosque in the Nordic region (Larsson & Björkman 2010, 19; Strand 2016, 53-65, 71-73). There are estimated to be around 1,641 Ahmadi in Norway (Department for Children and Families 2021), approximately 940-960 in Sweden (Sorgenfrei 2018, 95), and 700 in Denmark (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 362), an increase that is largely due to migration from Pakistan, as well as a small number of conversions. The differences between the communities in the region, as pointed out by Jacobsen et al. (2015), are related to how the Scandinavian states organize the funding of religious communities and organizations in their respective countries (Jacobsen et al., 361, 368-371); the rituals, theology, and general practice, are the same in the three countries.

“The Ahmadiyya Controversy” affects its Scandinavian communities to a certain extent. The AMJ is, for instance, excluded from Islamic umbrella organizations, such as the Islamic Council of Norway (IRN), and its members are not buried in the same graveyards as Muslims in Norway and Sweden. The IRN has allegedly also been reluctant to accept AMJ representatives as members of the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway (STL) because of theological differences. However, in 2017, when the IRN took a break from the STL, the AMJ applied for full membership and received it in 2019 (Bergh 2019). Furthermore, anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments are frequently expressed by other Muslims and there are negative mentions of the group on the internet (Jacobsen et al. 2015, 361-365). As Sorgenfrei’s (2018, 90) interlocutor from Malmö attests, “Sweden is safer than Pakistan ... but sometimes we become the enemies of both extreme Muslims and Islamophobes. It feels like it’s getting closer” (my translation). My own interlocutors also mentioned both anti-Ahmadiyya attitudes among other Muslims, and microaggressions, Islamophobia, and racism from people who belong to the white, non-Muslim majority population in their respective countries (Mahmood 2020, 2022).

A more recent example of anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments among Pakistani Muslims in Norway appeared in a news story about the Ahmadiyya imam, Yasir Fawzi, and his claims against Oslo-based radio-host and public debater, Ali Chishti. The imam accused Chishti of defending Pakistan's persecution of Ahmadis on the basis of conspiracy theories about the AMJ's alliance with "enemies of the country" (namely India, Israel, and the USA); indeed, Chishti seemingly went further to support the death penalty for treason in a Facebook post, arguing that Ahmadis (and any other person committing treason) should be hanged; he also explained in the newspaper article that he "theologically doesn't view Ahmadiyya as Muslims" (Færseth 2021). The story sparked reactions, and a number of Sunni, Shia, and non-Muslims distanced themselves from Chishti's views. For instance, the Norwegian queer Muslim organization, Salam, expressed solidarity with Ahmadiyya on social media, explaining how "similar to us in Salam, Ahmadiyya Muslims fight to be recognized as fully worthy Muslims" (SalamNorge's Instagram post, January 25, 2021. My translation). This demonstrates that the internal dividing lines between Muslim groups in Scandinavia are not clear-cut.

Jacobsen et al. (2015, 269) add that during Islam's organizational establishment in the Scandinavian countries in the 1950s and 1960s, the internal differences and dividing lines between the AMJ, Sunni, and Shia Muslim groups appeared minimal. Muslims who did not belong to the AMJ, for instance, attended AMJ mosques and their celebrations. It was during the 1970s, when anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments grew internationally and a growing number of Muslim groups arrived in the region, that the AMJ was distanced from other Sunni and Shia groups.

### The AMJ's Mission Project

The AMJ is a strong missionary movement; indeed, Valentine (2008, 211) describes mission as "the life-blood and *raison d'être* of the movement". The founder, Ghulam Ahmad, established the *sadr anjuman* ("supreme council of the AMJ") in 1906. In his will (*Al-Wassiyat*), he wrote that the *sadr anjuman* was to function as the movement's central administrative organization, spread the Ahmadiyya teachings and faith after his death, and organize missionary work. Jonker (2015, 24) writes that the "Ahmadiyya mission project" can be considered the first professionalized Muslim missionary organization. During the 1920s and 1930s,

the AMJ established several mission stations both in Europe and USA. Describing the AMJ's mission endeavors as ambitions, Stokkedal (2019, 31-34, see also Jonker 2015) writes that the movement needed funding for the expanding mission project. Accordingly, the second Khalifa<sup>5</sup> – the founder's son, Basheer-ud Din Mahmood Ahmad – established the charitable fund *tehrrik-e-jadid* (“the new plan”) in 1934, the purpose of which was to strengthen missionary activities and achieve the goal of global mission by collecting generous donations of both time and money from Ahmadis. *Tehrik-e-jadid* financed both missionary stations abroad and the printing of literature, in addition to a training center for missionaries (Jonker 2015, 45-46; Stokkedal 2019, 31-34; Khan 2015, 82). The fund, which still operates and is crucial for Ahmadiyya mission work, finances all Jamia Ahmadiyya campuses through annual subscriptions, and Ahmadis are encouraged to donate generously.

There are no Ahmadiyya mission centers in Scandinavia, but the AMJ communities are still dedicated to missionary work and Ahmadiyya mission in the region includes a range of different activities. Jacobsen et al. (2015) and Stokkedal (2019) highlight inter-religious dialogues, mosque visits from schools and universities, stands, as well as writing, translating, and publishing books, magazines, and pamphlets about Islam and the AMJ for the public – *Aktiv Islam* (“Active Islam”) and *Zeinab* are both Ahmadiyya magazines that are publicly available; two examples of arenas for inter-religious dialogue are the AMJ's annual peace conference and the marking of International Hijab Day. Stokkedal (2019, 95) notes that mission activities are an important part of the religious lives of the Ahmadis (both missionaries and lay Ahmadis) he met during his fieldwork in Oslo, with his informants describing the AMJ as a mission movement, and understanding that missionary work is a religious duty for members of the community. The mission activities are also the subject of frequent discussions and the country's missionaries attend regular meetings to plan and discuss their work and make necessary adjustments to it (Stokkedal 2019, 95-96), and I met the Scandinavian-based imams and missionaries whom I interviewed at what they referred to as a “refresher course”. While I could not take part in the meeting, the imams explained to me that they use these courses to share experiences, report back on the mission activities in their respective communities, and, as Stokkedal's informants also mentioned, discuss and adjust their work.

5 Within the AMJ, the title of “Khalifa” is assigned to the successors of the movement's founder, Ghulam Ahmad.

## Previous Studies

When presenting the AMJ's history and organization I primarily build on Simon Ross Valentine's (2008) and Adil Hussein Khan's (2015) seminal works on the movement's organization, beliefs, and history. Larsson and Björkman (2010) offer an overview of South Asian Muslims in the Nordic countries and present the existing data on the establishment and institutionalization of South Asian Muslim groups in the region, including the AMJ, while Sorgenfrei (2018) and Jacobsen et al. (2015) deal specifically with the establishment and organization of the AJM in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Several MA theses from the University of Oslo in recent years (Strand 2016; Moraga 2018; Wærsted 2018; Stokkedal 2019) also provide insights into the AMJ's establishment history, self-image, women's organization, and mission in Scandinavia. Stokkedal (2019) casts light on the specific mission practices of the movement in Oslo, Norway, and describes both the adjustments Ahmadi missionaries make based on their status as a religious minority in Norway as well as their status as a minority within the Muslim minority in the country; his empirical material supplements my own. Furthermore, the works by Ahmed-Ghosh (2006) and Beyeler (2012) highlight the religious education and mission activities of Ahmadi women, which Stokkedal (2019) and I only briefly cover.

While the aforementioned research touches upon Ahmadi religious education and instruction more broadly, Mahmood (2020; 2022) present an in-depth analysis of the Jamia Ahmadiyya learning institution and the educational trajectories of Scandinavian-born Ahmadis. In the article, I investigate the impact that young Scandinavian-born Ahmadis' religious education – gained at Jamia Ahmadiyya UK, the movement's theological seminary – and their local social and cultural capital, has on their positioning as imams and missionaries in Scandinavia, suggesting that the young Ahmadi imams and missionaries exemplify so-called “new moderators” (see Døving 2012; Roy 2004). My analysis illustrates the Jamia's institutional authority and how the valuation of the Scandinavian-born Ahmadis' social and cultural capital (knowledge about the local context and language skills) impacts their religious capital (Islamic knowledge and status as imams, missionaries, and Jamia students) and strengthens their epistemic authority (Mahmood 2020, 2022; Vinding 2018, 241-245).

Drawing on the same study (Mahmood 2020; 2022), in this article I direct the focus to the notions of *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat*, as well as educational arenas beyond the Jamia Ahmadiyya campuses, and present new empirical data on Ahmadiyya religious education and Islam in Scandinavia. Moreover, in contrast to Larsson and Björkman (2010) I emphasize the religious life and practice of Muslims born in Scandinavia with South Asian backgrounds rather than that of the generations who migrated to the region; thus, the article also contributes to shedding light on generational dynamics (Larsson and Björkman 2010, 16-17, 21-22). It is based on data collected between September 2019 and January 2020 through semi-structured interviews with Ahmadiyya imams, missionaries, and Jamia UK students and alumni from the Scandinavian communities.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, I include field notes from a guided tour of the Jamia UK campus by one of the teachers (referred to as “the guide” in the text) in October 2019. In total, the data consist of interviews with ten informants (including the conversation from the guided tour), all cisgender men, a sample which reflects the exclusively male arena of Jamia UK; I also rely on the Jamia Ahmadiyya websites for the campuses in the UK, Canada, and Germany, where a brief history of the Jamia Ahmadiyya, its curriculum and admission process can be found.

In the following section, I outline the terms *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* as conceptualized by a handful of imams and missionaries (in training) within AMJ before turning to the Jamia Ahmadiyya, *waqf-e-nau* and AMJ’s auxiliary organizations for Ahmadi men and women in order to investigate the role *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* practices have in religious education and learning within the AMJ in Scandinavia.

6 I have pseudonymized all my informants’ names in the article. Distinguishing between senior imams, Jamia UK alumni, and Jamia UK students, I refer to the senior imams as Arif and Bilal, and the Jamia UK alumni as Gohar, Nadir, and Irfan. The students’ pseudonyms are Asim, Barkat, Darwish, and Ehsan. The Jamia UK alumni and students are Scandinavian-born, while the senior imams were born in Pakistan and received their religious education and missionary training from Jamia Rabwah.

### ***Tabligh and Tarbiyyat***

The terms *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* appeared as central concepts in my material and were described as important tasks for Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries by my interlocutors; however, both are also regarded as important inclinations for lay Ahmadi (Stokkedal 2019, 3; Valentine 2008, 211). In this section I explain the terms and how they are understood within the AMJ and by my interlocutors. In the subsequent sections, I investigate the ways in which *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* are related to Ahmadiyya religious education.



Kupier (2018, 4) points out that *tabligh*, often translated as “conveying” or “communicating”, can be used synonymously with *da‘wa*, which translates as a “call” or “invitation [to Islam]” in modern Islamic discourses. Both are Islamic terms and, as Kupier explains, central to Muslim missionary activities but they are different in their reach; while *da‘wa* is centripetal (“calling/inviting *toward* Islam”), *tabligh* can be understood as centrifugal, meaning “conveying the message of Islam *outward*” (Kupier 2018, 4). Some contemporary examples of *da‘wa* are mosque sermons, street preaching, translation of the Qur’an and other Islamic books, inter-religious dialogues, Muslim websites, and recruitment to jihadi groups. Within the AMJ *tabligh* is often understood as preaching or propagation, and “spreading the message of Islam peacefully and not by force” is emphasized (Valentine 2008, 203). In his glossary, Khan (2015, 188) explains that *tabligh* is used synonymously with preaching or other missionary activity within the movement. During our interview, senior imam Bilal described the community as “very active” in terms of *tabligh*, and listed a range of such activities that an Ahmadiyya missionary performs in a Scandinavian country that included collaboration with different faith and religious communities (for instance in seminar formats), stands, “Ask a Muslim” campaigns, food stalls, blood donation centers, and seminars on various topics (some examples are “Jesus in Islam”, “Jesus in Religions”, and “What is the true meaning of Christmas?”) to which they invite the general public and people of different faiths (interview 2019). Similar activities are also described by Jacobsen et al. (2015) and Stokkedal (2019).

Stokkedal (2019), in his in-depth study of the Ahmadiyya mission in Norway, writes that in his experience Ahmadi use *tabligh* to describe missionary activities amongst themselves, but use the term “mission” for outsiders (Stokkedal 2019, 7). Describing the position of “Secretary of Tabligh” within every Ahmadiyya community, he notes that there is one position for a man and one for a woman. According to Stokkedal (2019, 63-64) the Tabligh-secretaries are instrumental in the performance of local *tabligh*: both in organizing *tabligh* activities on a local level and giving community members *tabligh* training. Accordingly, while *tabligh* has direct connotations to mission, the ideal is that every Ahmadi is engaged with it.

In contemporary Arabic, the term *tarbiya* means “education”, but can also mean “to let grow” and “to educate” (Günther 2017).

Within the AMJ, the Urdu counterpart *tarbiyyat* is frequently used, referring both to the upbringing “at home” and the moral training and spiritual upbringing of Ahmadi children. Moreover, the AMJ regards *tarbiyyat* as an important task for Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries. For instance, it is common to refer to the main imam at the mosque as *murabbi*, and both Arif and Gohar explained the term as meaning the person who performs *tarbiyyat* (interviews 2019). The Jamia students and alumni I encountered also referred to the senior missionaries working at their local mosques as “*murabbi sahib*”.

In my interview material, the interlocutors place considerable emphasis on the importance of Jamia Ahmadiyya in terms of *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat*. For instance, Arif explained that the Jamia campuses educate future Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries, adding, “So then, [the Ahmadi’s] *tarbiyyat*, those who will give [community members] teaching, they are those who are taught at Jamia. So, in this way, the whole world’s teachers – the actual teachers – they are being born there, they are in the making there [at Jamia]” (interview 2019). Asim also explained that his role as a future imam and missionary will be to “transfer the knowledge [that] you have received at Jamia to the people in the community” (interview 2020).

On the same note, it is important to clarify the use of the titles “imams” and “missionary” with regard to my interlocutors. Within the AMJ and in my interview material, my interlocutors used these terms interchangeably. Arif, however, disambiguated these terms and titles during our interview. First, he explained that he is educated as a missionary from Jamia – a *muballakh* – which means “the one who does *tabligh*”. Furthermore, he specified that this role is outward-facing, echoing Kupier’s (2018) definition of *tabligh* and Stokkedal’s (2019) findings as well. Within the community, Arif explained that his role is that of a *murabbi* – one who performs the *tarbiyyat* of the community members. Within the Scandinavian context, however, the AMJ publicly uses the imam title rather than missionary, and Arif explained that this has to do with the majority society’s familiarity with the term for Islamic religious leaders. Moreover, he also points out his assumptions that “missionary” is a word that people from the majority society connect with Christianity and its history of violent mission activities amongst non-Christians (interview 2019).

## “It starts with Jamia”: UK Campus, Religious Education, and Missionary Training

To preserve the Ahmadiyya faith and teachings and secure future Ahmadi scholars, a *madrassa* (religious learning institution) was established by the group’s founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as early as 1905, called *Madrassa-e-Ahmadiyya*. The Ahmadiyya *madrassa* laid the foundations of the Jamia Ahmadiyya, a theological seminary, which was established in 1928 in Qadian. Today, there are 10-13 Jamia campuses around the world, perceived as fundamental for the movement (Jamia Ahmadiyya UK website, n.d.; Sorgenfrei 2018, 97), and the higher Islamic religious education of Ahmadis is limited to these institutions. Every Ahmadiyya imam and missionary, including those deployed in the Scandinavian communities, has been trained and educated at a Jamia campus. During the recruitment process I learned that young Ahmadi men from Scandinavia apply to the Jamia campus in the UK to pursue missionary training, primarily because it is close to their home countries, the languages of instruction (English and Urdu) are familiar to them, and they are able to have frequent meetings with the Khalifa (interviews 2019 and 2020; Mahmood 2020, 2022).

In the following section I turn to the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK (Jamia UK) and discuss the students’ and alumni’s’ emphasis on missionaries as teachers and role models as well as their *tarbiyyat* work.

### Jamia Ahmadiyya UK

Jamia UK was established in 2005 by the fifth Khalifa, Mirza Masroor Ahmad. In 2012, the campus was relocated to an old hotel building in Haslemere, Surrey, due to a growing student body and insufficient facilities, my guide explained. The Jamia has a clear international profile, and Ahmadis from around the world apply for admission there. Twenty-nine students from the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, and Norway enrolled at Jamia UK in its first year. During my visit in 2019, the school had 136 students, of whom six were from Scandinavia. Admission to Jamia Ahmadiyya is similar in every campus, my guide informed me, and reserved for young Ahmadi men above the age of 16. The different Jamia websites list the specific admission requirements for their campuses and provide application forms.<sup>7</sup>

Jamia UK offers a seven-year study program, called the Shahid (“witness”) course.<sup>8</sup> The seven years are divided into three phases, and the subjects are also broken down by year and presented in an orderly fashion. I refer the interested reader to the Jamia UK website, where a detailed overview of the different stages and subjects that make up the Shahid course are described in more detail.<sup>9</sup> Some subjects are taught throughout the program (Arabic and English language subjects and Qur’an, Translation Studies, General Knowledge [includes subjects such as social and natural sciences], and Lecture Training) while other subjects are introduced in later stages of the course. The students start to work on their final dissertation in the sixth year and submit it in the seventh year when the final exams are also held.

The Jamia UK’s curriculum mostly, but not exclusively, consists of the AMJ’s own literature and is generally in Urdu and, according to my guide, is compiled by an academic committee appointed by the Khalifa. The Khalifa also has the final approval of the curriculum and discusses any updates or changes to it with the teachers, although the guide explained that this does not happen on a regular basis. Consequently, the curriculum is characterized by a high degree of continuity rather than change. I was not given the chance to see any of the set textbooks, although I was told that the students are also encouraged to read outside of the curriculum, including more general textbooks, echoing the Islamic ideal of always seeking more knowledge (Mahmood 2022, 25).

Finally, the Jamia student’s trajectories after graduation are not limited to missionary work, although the main purpose of Jamia Ahmadiyya is often described as producing future missionaries for the movement (Mahmood 2022, 26). For instance, the guide clarified that the learning institution can be understood as a training center that aims to produce “people who serve the Ahmadiyya movement in any way they are asked to”. This entails not only missionary and imam work, but also roles such as Amirs, Jamia teachers or other administrative positions. Another opportunity for Jamia graduates is the four-year specialization course, *takhassus*, offered at the Jamia campus in Rabwah. Nonetheless, “their mission remains the same”, as the guide put it, which is to serve Ahmadiyya. Ultimately, the institution of Jamia Ahmadiyya is understood as a foundation for the movement; as Bilal explained it: “It starts with Jamia”, and he believes that the spreading of the Ahmadiyya faith and

7 The Jamia UK website has been updated since my fieldwork and data collection, and I could not find any link to the form this time around. I refer interested readers to the German form which is available at: <https://www.jamia.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Aufnahmeantrag.pdf>. (accessed December 8, 2022). Compared to the form retrieved from Jamia UK websites for my MA thesis, it is only the language that differs.

8 During the leadership of the fourth Khalifa, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, a four-year study course was introduced to meet the demand for missionaries around the world, called Mubashir (“one who brings good news”) (Stokkedal 2019, 60). To my knowledge, the course is no longer offered.

9 Link to the Jamia course-homepage: <https://www.jamiaahmadiyya.uk/jamia-course/> (accessed Dec 8, 2022)

teachings across the whole world is carried out by Jamia students. In the following I focus on the *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* work that the senior imams, alumni and students perform in Scandinavia.

### Ahmadiyya Imams and Missionaries' *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* tasks

Barkat, a student, explained that Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries focus on *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* in equal measure in their work, although *tarbiyyat* and related tasks are given more emphasis in the other interviews. For instance, Gohar, an alumnus, compared his work to the role of parenthood: “Like a father or mother raises their children, and the children [imagine a world] – that is an image they have received from their parents, and that is the role I see as my work.” Gohar added that he thinks about this a lot and explains his work as a “great responsibility to be carried out now” and when he plays out the Khalifa’s role where he works, he said, the responsibility intensifies. He also explained that a *murabbi* is always there to help members of the movement, which entails remembering them in his daily prayers. As Gohar said, “Their hardships, they tell me about them. And it takes up all the time [of my prayers]” (interview 2019). Ehsan, another student, likewise pointed out the responsibility an Ahmadiyya imam has for his community’s members as a *murabbi*: “[An imam’s] first priority is his members. Like, do their *tarbiyyat*. And second, is to present the true image of Islam, and spread it, [to counteract] Islamophobia and all that” (interview 2020). Bilal also listed *tarbiyyat* as one of the main tasks “within *jama’at* [the AMJ]”, while “outside *jama’at*, it’s preaching work [*tabligh*]”. He added that his tasks include guiding young people, who face both Islamism and Islamophobia in Scandinavia. As he explained, “[I]n Western countries, especially at this time, it’s Islamophobia, how to counteract, how to work against that, or the work that has to be done to end it,” meanwhile teaching the young “how to make efforts to end [Islamism/fundamentalism].”<sup>10</sup> According to the informants’ reflections on their roles, they do not have contradicting views on the centrality of *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* to their work. Furthermore, their understanding of *tabligh* echoes Kupier’s (2018, 4) description of it as centrifugal, as moving outward to the non-Muslim general public while *tarbiyyat* tasks are directed inwards to

community members and seem to range from spiritual guidance for AMJ's members to helping Ahmadi youth to navigate both Islamophobia and Islamism/fundamentalism.

Bilal explained that the *tarbiyyat* work takes place during monthly classes, as well as at parallel monthly meetings for the movement's women, men, and children. He also emphasized the teaching of young people “[with an] Islamic background, how to live in Western society”. In her work on education among Ahmadi women in the USA, Ahmed-Gosh (2006, 43) explains that AMJ communities work to ensure that their members can “cope with their adopted land”. Thus, the *tarbiyyat* Bilal mentions here is not exceptional to the Scandinavian context; however, common to all my interlocutors is that they believe the new generation, or “home grown”, imams and missionaries can better execute this *tarbiyyat* task, thus emphasizing their epistemic authority (Vinding 2018, 241-245). This is connected to the perception of imams and missionaries as role models, and the high valuation placed on the “home grown” students and alumni's social and cultural capital – their fluency in their respective Scandinavian languages and familiarity with local societal norms and manners – together with their religious education (Mahmood 2022, 26-29). According to the senior imams, this is especially true for the youth and teenage boys; for instance, as Bilal emphasized, he does not have the same language skills and familiarity with the realities of being Muslim in Scandinavia as the alumni who are born and raised there, and cannot relate to young people's questions and problems in a similar manner (interview 2019). The students and alumni also stressed that their socio-cultural background and knowledge of the local society and language is beneficial for their potential roles as imams and missionaries in Scandinavia. Asim, for example, highlighted his and his fellow students' Scandinavian (or European) upbringing as Ahmadis (Mahmood 2022, 27), while Darwish, another student, also pointed out that he and his peers may be able to manage certain situations more easily than imams and missionaries born and raised in Pakistan. They have grown up in Europe, he explained, and therefore “[the students] can understand, maybe we can understand the youth in a better way because we are raised in the same culture, at the same time” (interview 2020).

Previous studies have pointed out the importance of local knowledge for imam and missionary work in Scandinavia

10 It is not very clear what Bilal means by “Islamism” and “fundamentalism” in the interview transcripts. In the original it says, “And then, alongside it [Islamophobia] Islamism is spreading quickly – you can say fundamentalism, how to make efforts to end it.” I interpret the terms as referring to what Bilal views as dogmatic interpretations of Islam.

(Døving 2012, 22), and this, together with the formal education they have gained from the Jamia institution, clearly applies to the new generation of Ahmadiyya religious leaders. While the centrality of epistemic authority is foregrounded in studies about imams in the Global North (Vinding 2018, 242-244; see also Gaffney 1994; Hallaq 2001; 2009; Lincoln 1994; Rosenthal 1970), Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries' own emphasis on authority based on knowledge and personal qualities can also be linked to the AMJ's profile as a strong missionary project. While my informants focus on the beneficial impact their local knowledge has on their *tarbiyyat* tasks, it also enhances their ability to undertake *tabligh* tasks in their respective communities, as they are familiar with their languages and societal norms, although both types of tasks are, of course, intertwined. As Ehsan explained, the members do not only look to the imam and missionary for answers to questions regarding faith and religious practice, but also when allegations are made against Islam: "So, if anyone attacks [or challenges, questions] Islam in your society, you look to the imam. It is he who will respond to these questions" (interview 2020). Consequently, as noted above, both the students and alumni's social and cultural capital in combination with their religious education reinforce their religious capital and positions as religious leaders who undertake *tarbiyyat* and *tabligh*, as well as speaking and preaching about Islam.

### ***Waqf-e-nau* and auxiliary organizations**

In the previous section I focused on the Jamia Ahmadiyya institution and the religious education of Ahmadiyya imams and missionaries, as well as their *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* work. However, the organization and practice of religious education and learning within the AMJ go beyond the Jamia campuses and are not solely reserved for the movement's imams and missionaries. In the following section, therefore, I turn to the movement's numerous auxiliaries and the children's upbringing program, *waqf-e-nau*, other central sites for religious education and learning within the AMJ (Khan 2015, 81-81; see also Ahmed-Ghosh 2006).

### **Waqf-e-nau**

During the period of his leadership during the 1930s, Mahmood Ahmad asked the movement's members to offer themselves as "living endowments" (*waqf*) to increase the number of missionaries. Mahmood Ahmad's appeal included encouraging parents to persuade their children to dedicate their lives to the movement, which meant enrolling them in the newly founded Jamia Ahmadiyya seminaries and undergoing missionary training. Moreover, influential Ahmadis were asked to give lectures and take part in producing Ahmadiyya literature. Ahmadis pursuing higher education were advised to seek the Khalifa's counsel in choosing a study course beneficial for the movement before applying (Khan 2015, 82-83). The *waqf-e-nau* scheme ("new sacrifice", henceforth: "*waqf* program") was launched in 1987 by the fourth Khalifa, Mirza Tahir Ahmad. It can be viewed as an expanded and updated version of Mahmood Ahmad's *waqf* initiative, and encourages parents to dedicate their children, often before they are born or during infancy, to "the Ahmadiyya cause". The children are trained as *waqfin*, devotees, and are selected for special training in order to spend their lives fulfilling community needs (Valentine 2008, 184-185; Balzani 2010, 293, 300-301 n28-30). In accordance with the increased requirement for Ahmadi missionaries around the world during the period, future Ahmadiyya missionaries were also secured through the program (Khan 2015, 82-83). My interlocutors explain that the *waqf* program is practiced in the same way in every AMJ community. Thus, there are no clear Scandinavian-specific practices, although it is worth noting that the *waqf* program operates and is present in Ahmadis' lives and religious practice in the region.

According to my interlocutors, at the age of 15 or 16 (18 in some cases), children are invited to a mosque meeting and asked if they want to continue their *waqf*; if they do, they are expected to devote a period of study to religious training and follow the community's guidelines about appropriate career paths (Balzani 2010, 301 n30). My interlocutors referred to this as *waqf-e-zindagi* ("life-long *waqf*"), and explained that the devotees sign a form and are expected by the community to take responsibility for specific tasks given to them. To my knowledge, the number of *waqfin* is high; however, less than half choose to continue lifelong *waqf*.<sup>11</sup> Common career paths *waqfin* are encouraged to pursue are medicine or teaching, which enable them to work as doctors or teachers at AMJ hospitals and schools around the



world (interviews 2019).

In terms of the transmission of religious education, Valentine (2008, 185) describes the *waqf* program as an “important element in maintaining the structure and discipline of the movement”; it is also an arena for the *tarbiyyat* of the children, instructed by both the community and parents who are helped in the training and upbringing of *waqfin* by the community secretary (Valentine 2008, 184-185). The *waqf* program entails weekly “special classes”, as Valentine refers to them, and weekly meetings are also held at the mosques. Language skills are an integrated part of the training, and Valentine writes that in Britain, for instance, the *waqfin* are taught in Urdu and English, as well as German, French, Danish or Spanish. The idea, according to Valentine (2008, 185), is to “create a potential army of well-educated bilingual missionaries”.

As *waqfin*, the alumni and students of my study explained that they were dedicated to the AMJ before they were born and introduced to religious teachings and practices from an early age, participating in weekly classes at the mosque, or “Sunday classes”, as they called them, and following a *waqf* curriculum. The students and alumni remember their Sunday classes as opportunities to meet their friends from the community and learn Urdu, the correct recitation of the Qur’an, and the history of the movement from the mosque’s main imam. They would also participate in sports and religious knowledge competitions and occasionally meet Jamia students and listen to them talk about their studies (interviews 2019).

### Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiyya, Majlis Atfal al-Ahmadiyya and Majlis Ansarullah

The AMJ has three men’s auxiliary organizations based on age. The Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiyya (“organization for the servants of Ahmadiyya”, henceforth Khuddam) was founded in December 1938 and consists of young men aged 15 to 40. Khuddam elects its local leader (*qaid*) and its national president (Sadr Majlis Khuddam al-Ahmadiyya) who report directly to the Khalifa. In July 1940, a separate organization was created for boys between the ages 7 and 15, Atfal al-Ahmadiyya. Khan (2015, 82) describes it as a subset of Khuddam, mainly because it falls under the jurisdiction of the *Qaid* and does not have its own local leader. Finally, the third men’s auxiliary organization is the Majlis

<sup>1</sup> The AMJ’s own figures from August 2004 estimate that there were 28,300 members in the *waqf* program at that time (Balzani 2010, 304 n30).

Ansarullah (“the helpers of Allah”, henceforth Ansar), which was established for men over 40. According to Khan (2015, 82), Ansar often provides intellectual and spiritual guidance for younger (male) members as the movement’s “elders”. The organizational structure of Ansar follows the same lines as Khuddam: they elect a local leader (*Zaim*) along with a national leader (Sadr Majlis Ansarullah), who reports directly to the Khalifa.

In what follows I focus on the Khuddam organization, as the students and alumni with whom I talked are all members of this group. Poston (1990, 113) describes it as a “principal feeder group” that encourages “teenage males to become actively involved in the missionary outreach of the movement”. My interview material suggests that the children and teenagers who are the most active and devoted, both in *waqf* classes and Khuddam activities, are those directly encouraged to continue their *waqf* and pursue Jamia education. Upon the opening of the Jamia UK campus, for instance, Gohar remembered how he and some others from his Sunday class were given more information about the Jamia by the main imam at their mosque (interview 2019).

Khuddam membership entails attending regular meetings and participating in various activities, such as sports and different types of voluntary work both in the mosque and elsewhere. These activities are not directly related to religious education as such, but I understand them as ways in which Ahmadi teenage boys and young adults are socialized in the AMJ and become familiarized with its structure and organization. They also exemplify the *tarbiyyat* of Khuddam members. As my interlocutors recall, Khuddam activities are opportunities for them to socialize and create fraternal bonds with each other (interviews 2019, 2020). In Haslemere, where the Jamia UK campus is located, my guide explained that the students participate in voluntary work at the community center and donate blood, or smaller gestures such as handing out chocolate to the local children during the Christmas season, which exemplify Jamia UK’s attempts to integrate the AMJ and its Jamia students into their host society and engage with the local community. He told me that the Khalifa had given the Jamia administration instructions to make the students “part of the local community” and for them to be “well-behaved, not to create uneasiness amongst the locals”. These initiatives are similar to the Scandinavian AJM communities’ traditions of cleaning public places, such as town hall squares after the New

Year celebrations.

In the interview material, the practice of *waqfe arzi* (“temporary dedication”) emerges as an important element of religious devotion and instruction for the members, which Valentine (2008, 216) describes as a form of *tabligh*. *Waqfe arzi* entails that members of the movement dedicate their private time, usually for a period of between two and six weeks, to work for the AMJ. Tasks are undertaken in pairs and include visiting community members’ homes, for instance, and encouraging them to pray more, read the Qur’an, and attend the mosque. Open to both men and women, the students explained that *waqfe arzi* is an opportunity for community members to dedicate their private time to working for the movement at their own expense. They apply by sending a letter to their Amir, who forwards it to the Khalifa for his approval, whereupon the volunteers are placed wherever they are needed. The students describe the initiative as an opportunity to try out the tasks of a missionary and learn more about the structure and organization of the AMJ. Darwish, for instance, undertook *waqfe arzi* when he graduated from high school, working in the AMJ administration in London for two weeks, because he did not know what he wanted to pursue next. Meanwhile, on a family member’s recommendation, Ehsan had been active in *waqfe arzi* since the age of 15 and had been sent to London every year; he recalled the experience as an opportunity to see how the imams and missionaries work and learn about the movement’s organization (interviews 2020). As a form of *tabligh*, *waqfe arzi* once again emphasizes the central place mission has within the AMJ; however, it also illustrates how the communities’ own members take part in each other’s *tarbiyyat*.

## Ahmadi women and religious education

During my visit to Jamia UK, my guide stressed that religious education is open to both women and men; however, as both Stokkedal (2019, 60) and my material attest, entry to Jamia Ahmadiyya is restricted to Ahmadi men because Ahmadi women cannot take on roles as imams and missionaries within the movement. Due to the nature of missionary work, the movement requires women’s proximity to their family when propagating on behalf of AMJ, one of Stokkedal’s (ibid.)

informants explained, because Ahmadi women's duties lie with the family, primarily the children.<sup>12</sup> The topic of women's missionary work and education was not discussed in detail with my interlocutors. However, my guide at the Jamia UK did mention that there is a *madrassa* solely for Ahmadi women in Rabwah and that the British Ahmadiyya community wishes to open a somewhat similar institution in the UK (interviews 2019; Stokkedal 2019:60; see also Gualtieri 2004).

Corresponding to the auxiliary organizations for Ahmadi men and boys, in December 1922 Mahmood Ahmad established the women's auxiliary organization Lajna Ima'illah (henceforth Lajna) for Ahmadi women aged over 15. The name can be translated as the "council for the handmaidens of God". According to Khan (2015, 81) it was the second Khalifa's attempt to "give them [Ahmadi women] voice" and some autonomy in the administration of their own affairs. Mahmood Ahmad also formed the Nasirat al-Ahmdaiyya in December 1938 for Ahmadi girls aged between 7 and 15. Each association has a local organization and elects its own local president; on national level, Lajna elects a national president (Sadr Lajna Ima'illah), who reports directly to the Khalifa (Khan 2015, 81). According to the AMJ's own literature (Zirvi 2010, 362), Lajna formulates programs for the educational and moral training of its members, as well as undertaking social work and preaching to non-Ahmadis. Lajna's primary aims, defined by Mahmood Ahmad are listed by Zirvi (*ibid.*):

To educate Ahmadi women and reinforce the necessity of living their lives according to Islamic teachings.

To prepare them to serve their fellow beings lovingly and to preach Islam in the best manner possible.

To encourage them to instruct, guide and train their children in the precept and practices of Islam.

To promote in Ahmadi women such a spirit of sacrifice as to keep them ever ready for offering their lives, properties and their children in the cause of Islam and for the preservation of the Ahmadiyya Khilafat.

These aims are echoed in the Ahmadi women's magazine "The Ayesha", based in California: "[Lajna] shall serve the spiritual and intellectual development of Muslim women and enable them to better rear their children in Islam and to serve humanity with beneficial program[s]" (Ahmed-Ghosh 2004, 81). Ac-

12 Stokkedal (2019, 84-85) notes that Ahmadi women may take part in indirect mission but emphasizes that his material cannot support this claim.

cordingly, Lajna, including the organization's branches in Scandinavia, aims to encourage women to pursue higher education, participate in debates, organize meetings, and make speeches (Wærsted 2018, 12). Lajna's official Swedish website lists the seventeen objectives presented by Mahmood Ahmad, the tenth of which particularly focuses on the upbringing of children:

x) You should especially realize your duty regarding the Tarbiyyat (upbringing) of your children and not allow them to be distracted, negligent, or lazy in religious matters. Instead, you should try to make them active, alert, and capable of bearing difficulties. Teach them all the factual matters of religion of which you are aware and instill in [them] love and obedience to Allah, the Prophet (saw)<sup>13</sup> [Muhammad], the Promised Messiah [Ghulam Ahmad], and the Khalifa. Instill in them the passion to use their lives to further the true religion and, in accordance with their desire, formulate the means to make this possible and act accordingly. ("Om oss", Swedish Lajna website, n.d.)<sup>14</sup>

In her article about Ahmadi women in California and their religious learning, Ahmed-Ghosh (2006, 38) describes how education within Lajna is organized and practiced. Her findings suggest that the AMJ argues that every member should have the same opportunities for education, while Ahmadi women's education is also especially emphasized in the context of children's upbringing and proselytization of Ahmadiyya. The general idea is that women need to be knowledgeable themselves to be able to transmit Ahmadiyya faith and values to their children; moreover, religious education is also important when they talk about their religion to non-Ahmadis (Ahmed-Ghosh 2006, 38-40; Wærsted 2018, 17-18). The topics of women's religious education revolve around women's role in Islam (for instance as mothers and wives), how to counteract stereotypes of Muslims in the West, and knowledge about other religions (especially Christianity) (Ahmed-Ghosh 2006; Beyeler 2012; Wærsted 2018).

According to the Norwegian Lajna website, the organization has monthly meetings which focus on the religious, moral, social, and general training of its members. It also mentions "knowledge courses" (*kunnskapskurs*) for the younger members, which enable Muslim girls to socialize. Moreover, specific

13 Abbreviation of the phrase "peace be upon him".

14 My translation.

activities and courses are listed, including cooking courses, sewing courses, educational seminars, Qur'an courses, and more. The Lajna group also engages in "public service" (*folketjeneste*), which includes visits to nursing homes and collaboration with the Red Cross. True to the AMJ's *tabligh* practices, Lajna has a unit for bridge-building work that works to promote dialogue and understanding "across backgrounds". Lastly, Lajna members aged between 15 and 25 are part of a subgroup called "Lajna A". According to the website, the group serves as an arena for their youngest members to meet bimonthly to "talk about things that concern them" ("Om oss", Norwegian Lajna website, n.d.). Stokkedal's (2019, 63-64) one and only women informant mentioned the annual Hijab Day event and 17<sup>th</sup> May celebrations at the mosque as two examples of Lajna's *tabligh* practices in Norway. The informant also explained that the Lajna sets up courses to give women *tabligh* training. Nevertheless, much more remains to be explored and neither Stokkedal's (2019) nor my material adequately illuminates women's education within the AMJ in Scandinavia. In line with more recent studies on Muslim women's religious education, practices, and organization in Scandinavia (Jensen 2022; Lyngsøe 2022), the limitations of my study suggest new avenues of research concerned with the AMJ and women's education both in and outside the Scandinavian context.

## Conclusion

By studying religious education and learning within the AMJ with a focus on Scandinavian Ahmadiyya imams, missionaries, and Jamia UK students, the article has provided minority perspectives on Islamic higher education, complementing existing research on this, the changing structures of Islamic religious authority in the region, and generational dynamics within South Asian Muslim groups. The study has illustrated the centrality of educational institutions in the preservation and transmission of faith and also examined other settings outside of such institutions as sites for religious learning and teaching, including the Jamia Ahmadiyya, the children's upbringing program *waqf-e-nau*, and various auxiliary organizations for Ahmadi men and women. I have identified two important common denominators across Ahmadiyya religious learning

and teaching sites – *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* – the centrality of which demonstrates that the learning and maintenance of Ahmadiyya faith and teachings are tied to the movement’s mission project, thus highlighting the strong missionary element of the AMJ.

Based on interviews with the Scandinavian AMJ communities’ imams and missionaries, as well as Jamia UK alumni and students from the region, I have described the Jamia Ahmadiyya UK and how it is understood as fundamental for religious learning within AMJ, both in terms of its training and, in turn, in how the imams and missionaries it produces are responsible for the transmission of Ahmadiyya faith and teachings both outwards and within AMJ. Furthermore, as noted, other elements of religious education exist alongside and are intertwined with Jamia Ahmadiyya. I have described the movement’s upbringing program *waqf-e-nau* and the various auxiliaries for men, especially Khuddam, of which the alumni and students featured in my study are members. Lastly, although my own material is limited to the organization and practice of education and learning for Ahmadi men, I have included brief accounts of religious education amongst Ahmadi women based on studies by Ahmed-Ghosh (2006), Wærsted (2018) and Stokkedal (2019), and Lajna’s respective Scandinavian websites. Thus, while the organization and practice of religious education within the AMJ are multifaceted, the Jamia, upbringing program, and the various auxiliary organizations are strictly Ahmadiyya arenas. This illustrates the limitations of religious learning and preservation of faith within the movement.

As suggested in previous works (Stokkedal 2019; Valentine 2008; Mahmood 2022), it is necessary to understand the AMJ as a missionary movement in order to grasp how religious education is organized and practiced. In my material and in previous studies of Ahmadi women and education (Ahmad-Ghosh 2006) *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* emerge as recurring elements of the various sites of religious education I discuss above. Within the Jamia Ahmadiyya context, *tabligh* and *tarbiyyat* can be understood as required learning in order for students to fulfil their roles after graduation; both are explained as important tasks for an Ahmadiyya imam and missionary, and proper training in them is secured by the seminary. Yet the students’ and alumni’s social and cultural capital, as well as their religious education, is significant for their ability to undertake *tabligh* and

*tarbiyyat* in Scandinavian contexts. All my interlocutors emphasized that the relevant socio-cultural background and knowledge of Scandinavian society and language is beneficial for the roles of imams and missionaries in the region. Issues such as Islamophobia, racism, anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments, and growing up as a Muslim in Scandinavia were raised as examples of the topics that Scandinavian-born imams and missionaries are better equipped to teach and explain to the local youth.

Lay Ahmadi men aged between 15-40 also engage with *tabligh* activities through the auxiliary organization Khuddam, while young Ahmadi women get *tabligh* training and participate in AMJ's mission project via events at the mosque and various courses organized by Lajna. Meanwhile, both Khuddam and Lajna serve as arenas where young Ahmadi adults and teenagers are socialized within the AMJ community, learn more about the movement's structure and organization – which can be regarded as an example of their *tarbiyyat*, as the focus is on moral and religious training – and discuss topics that relate to being Ahmadi Muslims in Scandinavia. As the examples of Lajna activities show, the auxiliary organizations provide opportunities to invite non-Ahmadis to the mosque and other settings, and undertake inter-religious dialogue with both majority and minority religious groups in Scandinavia. Through the upbringing program *waqf-e-nau*, some Ahmadi children are introduced to the Ahmadiyya faith and teachings from a very young age. Instruction that is part of the moral and spiritual upbringing of the children takes place in special classes at the mosques; however, it is the parents who are crucial to the maintenance of the *waqf*-program. As the studies of both Stokkedal (2019, 60) and Ahmad-Ghosh (2006) demonstrate, this task is often assigned to the mothers; consequently, women's religious education within the AMJ is primarily linked to the moral training, or *tarbiyyat*, of AMJ's women members and their children. However, a more comprehensive study of the religious education of Ahmadi women and children in Scandinavia is needed, and I hope the article gives rise to interesting questions for future research.

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### Interviews

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