KITABISTICS A NEW DIRECTION
OF THE ISLAM STUDIES IN POLAND
(THE LITERATURE OF POLISH-LITHUANIAN TATARS)

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ABSTRACT
The literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars constitutes the most important and richest part of their cultural heritage as well as a lasting trace of Tatar settlements in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The literature that flourished during the spiritual revival of the Renaissance and Reformation somewhere in the seemingly God-forsaken, remote Eastern Borderlands has not been forgotten; on the contrary, it has been recognised as a unique phenomenon of great spiritual, literary and cultural value. This phenomenon manifests itself in the extraordinary combination of the oriental Islamic culture and Christian culture, two components that appear to be mutually exclusive but are in fact in perfect harmony with each other both in the life of society and in the literary works of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars.

There is an ongoing interest in the literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars even though it is not an easy subject of research. On the one hand, difficulties arise from the limited access to old writings which are held in private hands or library collections in post-Soviet countries. Another reason is the content and form of these works, written in Arabic script in Belarusian and Polish, interspersed with Turkish and Arabic texts. Combined with the enormous diversity of the content and peculiar character of these manuscripts, anonymity of authors and impossibility of chronological ordering, all these factors pose a considerable challenge to the exploration of the field referred to by researchers as “kitabistics” (a term derived from the most representative type of manuscript, the kitab).

The paper will be dedicated to the characteristics of this field as a new direction of the Islam studies in Poland with particular consideration of the philological and historical project of the compilation and critical edition of the first and oldest translation of the Koran into a Slavic language (Polish/Belarusian), namely the Tafsir of the Tatars of the Great Lithuania Duchy of the 2nd half of the 16th century, realised by the scholars of Nicolas Copernicus University in cooperation with Polish, Lithuanian and Belorussian researchers.

Field of Research: the literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars, kitabistics, translation of the Koran into a Slavic language

1. Introduction – Tatar settlement on the territory of Poland

History of Islam in Poland, whose heritage has been experienced until today, begins in 14th century, together with the beginning of the Muslims’ settlement in the Great Duchy of Lithuania which was in the union with Poland. The very first Muslims in Poland were the Tatars of the Golden Horde, the war prisoners taken captive during the war between the Golden Horde and the Lithuanian Dukes, and emigrants who left their homeland because of the period of famine and fight for power, which, quite often they engaged themselves in and had to flee from the persecution resulting from the defeat. The first historically confirmed instance of the Tatar settlement took place in 1397, after the expedition of the Great Duke Witold to the Black Sea Steppe where he captured many captives. Later,
the Tatars arrived to Lithuania throughout 15th, 16th, and to a lower extent in 17th century. The number of Tatars living in the 17th century in the Great Duchy of Lithuania and the Crown province is estimated to be 15 thousands. From the beginning of 16th century until the 1980’s the majority of Polish Muslims were, almost exclusively, the Tatars.

From its very beginning the Tatar settlement was of the military nature, since the grounds were granted in exchange for the military service. The first Tatar settlement include: Kozakłary, Mereszłany, Prudziany and Sorok Tatary, located near the important political and economical centres such as Vilnius, Trakai, Grodno, Navahrudak, Kaunas and Minsk, which ensured a fast mobilization in case of war. The Tatars were granted the freedom of religion, they were able to profess Islam and raise their children in this denomination; they were able to wed Ruthenian, Lithuanian and Polish women who belonged to the Orthodox or Catholic Church, they were able to found cemeteries where the dead were buried in accordance with the principles of Islam, and build mosques, some of them travelled to Mecca and Muslim countries. The Constitution of May 3, 1971 confirmed the Muslims’ freedom of religion without granting the political rights, however the Constitution of the Warsaw Duchy of 1807 and later on of the Kingdom of Poland of 1815 granted Muslims the political rights. Throughout the centuries, Muslim settlers were fighting in the Polish and Lithuanian Army in the majority of wars fought by these countries. They were famous for their bravery and gallantry and found their place in the glorious history of the Republic of Poland. In the 17th century the Tatars lost their mother tongue and started speaking the language of their compatriots – Polish, Lithuanian or Byelorussian. During the Counter-Reformation the situation of the Muslims in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth worsened because they were forbidden to marry Christian women, employ Christian service, the construction and renovation of the mosques was being hindered. The treasury was in arrears with the soldiers’ pay for the Tatar troops. When king John III Sobieski came to power he reestablished the old rights and in 1697 granted them the grounds of Studzianka, Kruszy.nio, Nietupy, Łużany, Drahole, Malawicz, Bohoniki in exchange for the unpaid soldiers’s pay. This was the beginning of the Tatar settlement within the boundaries of the Republic of Poland. In Bohoniki and Kruszy.nio in the Podlaskie Voivodship there are mosques and cemeteries founded by these settlers and their descendants, which are still open (Following works discuss the history of the Tatar settlement in the territory of the former Republic of Poland: Tałko-Hryncewicz, 1924; Kryczyński, 1935; Kryczyński, 1938; Kryczyński 1997-1998; Tyszkievicz, 1989; Tyszkievicz, 2002; Tyszkievicz, 2008; Sobczak, 1984; Borawski, 1986; Borawski, 1991; Borawski, 1983; Borawski, Dubiński, 1986; Grygajtis, 2003; Łowmiański, 1983; Dumin, 1991; Dumin 2006; Kołodziejczyk 1997; Konopacki, 2006; Konopacki, 2010; Dziadulewicz, 1986. Katalogi zabytków tatarskich: Gutowski, 1997; Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 1999; Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000; Kołodziejczyk, 1998; the contemporary history of the Tatar community is discussed in the following works: Miśkiewicz, 1990; Miśkiewicz, 1993; Miśkiewicz, 2009; Miśkiewicz, Kamocki, 2004; Czerwonajna, Chazbijewicz, 2014. Monographs dedicated to the issues of this community include: Warmińska, 1999; Łyszczarz, 2013).

The literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars constitutes the most important and richest part of their cultural heritage as well as a lasting trace of Tatar settlements in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The literature that flourished during the spiritual revival of the Renaissance and Reformation somewhere in the seemingly God-forsaken, remote Eastern Borderlands has not been forgotten; on the contrary, it has been recognised as a unique phenomenon of great spiritual, literary and cultural value. This phenomenon manifests itself in the extraordinary combination of the oriental Islamic culture and Christian culture, two components that appear to be mutually exclusive but are in fact in perfect harmony with each other both in the life of society and in the literary works of Polish-

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1 Scientific publications use such terms as: “Polish-Lithuanian Tatars”, “Polish Tatars”, “Tatars of the Republic of Poland”, “Lithuanian Tatars”, “Tatars of the Great Duchy of Lithuania”.

2. State of the research

Scientific literature dedicated to Polish and Lithuanian Tatars is available in quite a wide range, although mostly in Polish and not foreign writings. In the foreground of the Tatarology research one can primarily find historical positions documenting the history of Tatar settlement in the boundaries of the former Republic of Poland. Complex grasp of the history of the relationship between Tatars and Poland and Great Duchy of Lithuania can be contributed to Jan Tyszkiewicz who presented the history of Polish Tatars starting from the Mongolian raids until World War II in a number of publications, the most important of which were published in 1989, 2002 and 2008. Contemporary history, as well as issues connected with the functioning of the Tatar community in Poland such as religious issues and social and cultural activity is discussed to a great extent in publications written by Aleksander Ali Miśkiewicz (1990, 1993, 2004, 2009). The analyses of the more detailed issues concerning the problems of the Tatar settlement can be found in papers by Jacek Sobczak (1984), Arkadiusz Kołodziejczyk (1997), Krzysztof Grygajtis (2003), Artur Konopacki (2006, 2010), Urszula Wróblewska (2012). It is worth to mention the popular-science syntheses of the Tatar history written by Piotra Borawski (1986) and the works of the prewar researches: Talko-Hryncewicz (1924) and Kryczyoski (1938), discussing the history of the Tatar settlement in the Great Duchy of Lithuania, Tatars’ religion and customs, relics of the material culture and functioning the social and professional structure of the Tatar community in the old Poland. The wide array of the publications dedicated to Tatars also includes the works on heraldry (Dziadulewicz, 1929; Dumin, 2006) and studies on the boundary of history and linguistics connected with the research on Tatar personal names (Dacewicz, 2013). In the last two decades, apart from the papers published in Tatar press, one can only find a few positions dedicated to the contemporary problems of Polish Tatars (Zaniewska, 1999, 2000). The most valuable publications in this group include the studies of the identity of this social group (Warmioska 1999; Łyszczarz 2013). An honorable place among the publication discussing Polish and Lithuanian Tatars is taken by the catalogues of the Tatar monuments (Gutowski, 1997; Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 1999; Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000; Kołodziejczyk, 1998).

As far as the writings of Polish and Lithuanian Tatars are concerned, the history of the kitabistic research reaches the 19th century, and the first scholar to undertake the research on one of the Tatar manuscript monuments (chamail of lipsk) was a German orientalist, Heinrich Fleisher (1838). His lack of the command of Slavic languages prevented him from identifying the content, thus we can only speak about the discovery of Tatar literature for the science since the works of a great orientalist, professor of the Turkish philology department in Petersburg University, Antoni Muchlioski (1858) had been published. However, he failed to find the continuators of his work and the return of issues connected with the writings of the Tatars of GDL happened only at the beginning of the 20th century in the works by Belorussian social anthropologist Iwan Łuckiewicz (1920) and belorutenist Jan Stankievicz (1925, 1933). Since then few authors have reached for the Tatar texts, including an orientalist and translator of the Quran into Russian Ignacy Kraczkowski (1922, 1952), renowned Islamic theologian and orientalist Jakób Szynkiewicz (1932, 1935), the author of the Muslim terms dictionary, Ali Woronowicz (1935) and Ananiasz Zająckowski (1951), however, until 1950’s only small fragments of the manuscripts had been published, the basic problem being their transliteration into Slavic Language. In 1968 Anton K. Antonowicz (1968) reviewed the monuments of Tatar manuscripts he had...

3. Characteristics of the literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars

The literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars, where the elements of two different cultures, religions and traditions permeate each other, is quite varied in terms of content and form. There is no doubt that all aspects of the history of this literature are worthy of attention: the origins of Tatar literature, questions of authorship and chronology, tradition of transcribing and copying, analysis of the language, script and content as well as the external aspects, the covers and ornaments; some are works of both literature and religious art. I wish to give a brief presentation of these old writings using the criterion of content and form, which makes it possible to distinguish several kinds of manuscripts: the primary books that include manuscripts of the Qur’an, tafsirs, kitabs and the so called chamails; auxiliary books, including tajwids, sufras and vocabularies; amulets represented by the so-called dalawars, hramotkas and nuskas; and the last group comprising tablets and muihirs.

Alongside the prayer books, Qur’an manuscripts (Al-Qur’ān meaning “recitation”) are the most popular handwritten works of Tatar literature. In terms of content, the most essential was the full text of the Holy Book of Islam (ar. Al-Qur’ān) in Arabic, supplemented, at the beginning and end, with prayers (ar. ءUNIXIt) and rules governing the recitation (ar. tāḡwīd, tiﬁwa). Additional information sometimes appeared, e.g. a list of intentions (ar. niyya) with which Qur’an verses (ar. ayāt al-Qur’ān) should be recited, or the text of Sura 36 “Ya Sin” which is very popular in funeral rites. Qur’an manuscripts usually consisted of about 200–300 sheets, mostly in the 20 cm x 17 cm format. In the 19th and 20th century, most Tatar families owned such books (Drozd, 2000b, pp. 12–13; Konopacki, 2010, pp. 132–137. Catalogue of the Qur’an manuscripts: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, p. 49-50).

Tafsirs (Arabic word for “exegesis”) are extensive volumes with the full text of the Qur’an supplemented with an interlinear translation into Polish and an interpretation. As was the case with Qur’an manuscripts, tafsirs were supplemented, at the beginning and end, with prayers (ar. ءUNIXIt) and descriptions of the rituals accompanying the recitation of the Holy Book (ar. tāḡwīd, tiﬁwa). Tafsirs comprised 400 to 500 sheets in the uniform 35 cm x 20 cm format. Extremely costly, these books were often ordered by an entire group of parishioners as a waqf (ar. waqf) for the mosque. Until the


Kitabs (kitab) is the Arabic word for “book”, “volume”) varied in size and content. Thus in kitabs you can find stories about prophets (ar. anbiya[G]), and outstanding persons of Islam, tales based on Muslim tradition (ar. sunna), apocrypha, the Quran (ar. Al-Qur’â'n) and the Bible (ar. Al-In[Q]), eschatological visions, moralising and devotional works, prayer books, hadith works (ar. had[Q]), commentaries to some suras of the Quran (ar. tafs[Q]), descriptions of religious rites and rituals (ar. far[Q], ar[Q]n ad-d[Q]n), aspects of Muslim law (ar. qawa[Q]), religious discussions, magical texts, Turkish and Arabic vocabularies, tjawids (ar. tağwid) and, more rarely, texts of a non-religious nature, mainly works of fiction of oriental or old Polish origin. Kitabs usually comprised 150 to 300 sheets and the most frequent formats were: 35 cm x 20 cm and 20 cm x 17 cm. In the 19th and 20th century, kitabs were owned by one out of several or even more than ten Tatar families (Drozd, 2000b, pp. 13-14; Konopacki, 2010, pp. 139-140. Catalogue of kitabs: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, pp. 50-54. Detailed description of the so called Milkamanowicz Kitab is contained in the work by Łapicz (1986a); Łapicz 1991, pp. 161-19).

Chamails (the term derived from Arabic hama‘il meaning “what one carries on oneself”) had the character of prayer books and were definitely the most popular form of Tatar literature. Chamails consisted of texts on religious subjects, among which the most essential was a practical description of Muslim rituals (ar. far[Q], ar[Q]n ad-d[Q]n), including ablation (ar. wu[Q]n), prayers (ar. al[r]), life cycle rituals (the ceremonies of naming, circumcision and marriage), collections of Arabic and Turkish duai prayers (ar. du‘a’), prayers for various occasions and devotional texts, aphorisms, maxims zikras (ar. dikr), chikmietas (ar. dikma), boards with the Muslim calendar (ar. attaqw[Q]m al-hi[Q]r[r]). In addition, magical texts appeared, namely prayers used in rites of exorcism (healing mental illnesses), fa‘l prophecies (ar. fa‘l), very short prayers and talsims (ar. tals[Q]m) magical/healing formulas. In terms of content and purpose, two types of chamailly can be distinguished: the mullah type, used by mullahs to perform rituals, and the faldżej type, used by a faldżej (soothsayer) to perform magic and fortune-telling. Chamails prayer books comprised 100 to 300 sheets and the predominant formats were 10 cm x 8 cm or 15 cm x 10 cm. In the 19th and 20th century, every Tatar family had one or more such prayer books (Drozd, 2000b, pp. 13-14; Konopacki, 2010, pp. 141-151. Chamail catalogue Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, pp. 54-60. A few monographs describe the so called Aleksandrowich Chamail: SzachnowRomanowicz, 1997, pp. 7-25; Dziekan, 1998, pp. 27-43; Dziekan, 2008, pp. 81-89; Dziekan, 2013, pp. 125-133).


2 Until recently it has been thought that the author of the first translation of Quoran (1858) into Polish was Polish Tatar, Jan Murza Tarak Buczacki, however, the research performed by Z. J. Wójcika proved that the basis of this work was the Philomate translation of the Holy Book of Islam for the Polish Tatar community made in 1820’s – 1830’s by fr. Ignacy Chlewinski and Ignacy Domeyko (the final version of this translation was established by Joachim Lelewel). This translation, which had been printed in 1848 in Poznań and then confiscated by the censor’s office, was used by Buczacki. Subsequent translation into Polish: Koran, translation from Arabic by Józef Bielawski (Warsaw 1986); Święty Koran, translation from English by Ahmadiyya Society (UK 1990), Koran, translation from Arabic into English Ali Dnal, translation from English into Polish by Jaroslaw Surdel (New Jersey 2011).

sifr - volume) are volumes containing one thirtieth of the Quran (ar. ﷺز‎, typically used to teach children and for prayers said at the body of the deceased on the night preceding the funeral (ar. ﷺز‎). Wokabularies (Polish term coined by researchers) are manuscripts containing words, expressions and phrases along with their translations into Polish and Belarusian (catalogue of vocabularies see: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, p. 60).

Dalawars (derived from du’alar – “prayers, collection of prayers”), prayer scrolls laid into the grave together with the deceased, are still used by Tatars today. Dalawary contained a selection of suras (ar. sura) and verses from the Quran (ar. ﷺت‎ al-Qur’ân), written in Arabic, and sometimes in Turkish, the principles of faith (ar. ﷺت‎ mın‬), penitential prayers (ar. tawba) and prayers for salvation (ar. ḍu’ā’). All of those were believed to help the deceased in the Last Judgement (ar. Yawm ad-Dül), Yawm al-Mīrāb) and achieving salvation in Paradise (ar. al-Ḥanna). Folded flat or rolled up, dalawars consisted of the main part, placed on the corpse laid into the grave, as well as additional parts: nuskas (ar. nusха) – pieces of paper with short Arabic formulas placed in the hands, on the forehead, lips and chest of the deceased; and muhircyzks – slightly larger pieces of paper nailed above the head of the deceased to the wooden planks lining the walls of the grave and hanged on a stick inserted into the wall of the grave, level with the chest of the deceased. The main part was 5 m to 15 m long and 8 cm to 15 cm wide (Drozd, 2000b, p. 14; Konopacki, 2010, pp. 152-153. Catalogue of dalawars: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, pp. 60-61).

Hramotkas (bbrus. “a letter, short document”) are prayer scrolls carried by living persons. Alongside chamails, they are the most numerous works of old Tatar literature. Sometimes they are referred to as dalawars, similarly to the scrolls laid into the grave. Hence the funeral and protective types of dalawars are distinguished. The latter contained protective verses and Quran verses (ar. ﷺت‎ al-Qur’ân), principles of faith (ar. ﷺت‎ mın‬), prayers for the absolution of sins and success in earthly life (ar. ḍu’ā’), magical formulas and symbols, called talsim (ar. talsим). A special group among the protective dalawars were children’s hramotkas, supplemented with formulas protecting against illnesses and presented to children during the naming ceremony. 2 m to 6 m long and 4 cm to 12 cm wide, hramotkas were made in a similar fashion to dalawars and, after being folded flat, were carried in a small case attached under the right arm, a custom maintained until the present day in traditional Tatar communities (Drozd, 2000b, p. 15. Hramotkas catalogue: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, p. 60-62).

Nuskas (derived from nusha meaning “copy, manuscript”) are pieces of paper with short Arabic prayers (ar. ﷺت‎ al-Dıl), magical formulas and figures (ar. talsим) having protective or healing powers, copied from chamails, and carried in small cases attached to various parts of the body, nailed above the entrance to a house or buried at the doorstep. They were also referred to as duajki (ar. ﷺت‎ ɑ’а) (Drozd, 2000b, p. 15. Nuskas catalogue: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, p. 62).

Boards (term used by scholars) are paper or carton boards serving devotional and didactic purposes, hanged in mosques and inside homes and resembling muhiry both in form, application and content (descriptions of rituals, prayers, selected verses of the Quran with translations, ethical advices) (catalogue of tables, see: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, pp. 62-63) (Drozd, 2000a, pp. 38-43. Catalogue of muhirs: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, pp. 67-80).

Muhirs (muhr meaning “stamp”) are decorative boards or cloths with inscriptions or images of objects, buildings or places of religious or magical value. Their role was to adorn the interiors of homes and places of worship, their magical powers ensuring the safety and well-being of homes and their inhabitants. Muhirs feature a key theme in the form of an inscription or image of holy sites, accompanied by calligraphic, geometric, floral and architectural decorations or Muslim emblems. Two main types of muhirs are distinguished depending on the kind of the key theme: an inscription or image (Drozd, 2000a, pp. 38-43. Catalogue of muhirs: Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000, pp. 67-80).
4. Assumptions of the project of philological and historical study, criticism, and publication of socalled tafsir of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

There is an ongoing interest in the literature of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars even though it is not an easy subject of research. On the one hand, difficulties arise from the limited access to old writings which are held in private hands or library collections in post-Soviet countries. Another reason is the content and form of these works, written in Arabic script in Belarusian and Polish, interspersed with Turkish and Arabic texts. Combined with the enormous diversity of the content and peculiar character of these manuscripts, anonymity of authors and impossibility of chronological ordering, all these factors pose a considerable challenge to the exploration of the field referred to by researchers as “kitabistics” (a term derived from the most representative type of manuscript, the *kitab*) (www.tefsir.umk.pl).

At present, the most intensive work is conducted by an international team headed by Professor Czesław Tańcz of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. Since 2012, the team has been implementing a linguistic and historical research project aimed at the critical edition of the so-called Tafsir of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It aims to:

- formulate the rules of transliteration and transcription of Polish and/ or Belarusian texts of the Muslims of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania written in the Arabic script into the Latin alphabet and standardise and disseminate them in international *kitab* research;
- decipher interlinear translations of the Quran into Polish/ Belarusian in purposefully selected *tafsir* manuscripts written in the Arabic script and transliterate them in line with uniform rules which will be formulated and revised in practice;
- define research areas and develop methodological tools for a multifaceted philological and historical description of *tafsir* manuscripts of Tatars;
- prepare an online publication and make original literary sources, that is the manuscripts of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars available to researchers via the Internet (www.tefsir.umk.pl).

The Project is meant as long-term collaborative work on the documentation, study, and editing of texts with profound significance for both national and European culture and heritage as the subject of research is the first Slavic (Polish/ Belarusian) and the third, after the Latin and the Italian, translation of the Quran rendered directly from the original text written in Arabic into a European language. The Slavic translation was made in the second half of the sixteenth century, the time of Reformation and peak development of the translation of scriptures (such as the Bible) into the vernacular. In line with the Muslim principle of *i’dzaz* (the inimitability of the Quran and the prohibition to translate the original into other languages), the Polish translations had the form and status of a *tafsir*, a ‘commentary, interpretation or explanation’ to the original Quran written in Arabic. In fact, the *tafsir* manuscripts of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania contain faithful interlinear translation of the Islamic scriptures into the Polish language of the time with elements of (Old) Belarusian (www.tefsir.umk.pl).

Until the mid-1990s, only short passages of these translations had been published without any profound philological analysis of their content. The obstacle was the Arabic script in which the original was written, thus making the text hermetic and unavailable for direct research. Consequently, it is urgent and important to develop a uniform and universal system of transcription and transliteration from the Arabic script into the Latin alphabet. A complementary study of the Tatar translation of the holy book of Islam, whose immanent feature is multilingualism - the Oriental layer is written in Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, whereas the Slavic one in the early variety of Polish spoken at the borderlands with Belarus and Lithuania and Old Belarusian), demands regular cooperation of specialists in Slavic and Oriental studies. It requires the knowledge of Polish and Belarusian diachronic linguistics as well as great competence in Oriental studies and in the theory and history of translation of religious texts (www.tefsir.umk.pl).
The sixteenth-century protograph of the translation of the Quran into Polish has not survived until today, we have several copies (manuscripts) of tafsirs. The core of research will comprise two full-length copies of the tafsir: one of the oldest ones (dated 1723) and the most recent one (dated 1890). Each copy consists of about 1,000 pages of manuscript written in the Arabic alphabet. Thus, the publication prepared on the basis of the copies (a further phase of works) would include the original text (manuscript) transliterated from the Arabic script into the Latin alphabet and a specialist philological and historical commentary written by both experts in Slavic and Oriental studies. Several purposefully selected fragments of all remaining copies, that is sura 36 and the last four suras would become subject of a comparative analysis whose aim would be to determine the scope of language evolution and changes in the form and content of consecutive copies. They are a series of copies made for over four hundred years, not only at a different time, but also in different places and by copyists with various linguistic and religious competence.

The Project is both international and interdisciplinary. The participants include historians and specialists in Polish, Slavic, and Oriental studies from Poland, Lithuania and Belarus. Belarus is represented by Professor Heniadź Cychn, Associate Professor Michas’ Tarėka and Doctor Iryna Synkova; Lithuania by Professor Sergey Temchin, Associate Professor Galina Miškinenė, and Ekaterina Pokrovskaya, MA, whereas Poland by Professor Marek Dziekan, Professor Henryk Jankowski, Professor Czesław Łapicz, Doctor Artur Konopacki, Doctor Joanna Kulwicka-Kamioska, Doctor Magdalena Lewicka, Doctor Anetta Luto-Kamioska, and Doctor Iwona Radziszewska. Owing to this, the research team comprises specialists in Slavic, Oriental, Polish, Belarusian, Arabic, and Turkish studies as well as linguists and historians.

5. Conclusion and Future Recommendation – State of the realisation of the research within the project of philological and historical study, criticism, and publication of so-called tafsir of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

Up until now (January 2015) it was possible to realize the appreciable part of the project, starting from the formulation of the rules of transliteration and transcription of Polish and/or Belarusian texts written in the Arabic script into the Latin alphabet by deciphering interlinear translations of the Quran into Polish/ Belarusian in one of the two selected tafsir manuscripts written in the Arabic script and transliterating them in accordance with these rules (Tefsir of Olita, 1723). Until the end of 2015 it is planned to read and transliterate the second text selected for the research (Tefsir of Józefów, 1890) (www.tefsir.umk.pl).
We managed to define the research area and formulate the theses and questions which will be answered as a result of the analyses of the transliterated material, including, above all the following:

1. Is it possible to specify the time of translating the Quran into the Polish and/or Belarusian language on the basis of the preserved copies of tafsirs with their linguistic and graphic, notation and layout features?

2. Can the preserved tafsirs help determine reliably which language was the basis for the first translation of the Quran into a Slavic language – Polish or Belarusian? In other words, is it possible to establish whether the lost protograph, which is the first link in the chain of successive copies, was written in Polish or Belarusian?

3. Can the tafsir manuscripts of the Tatars of the GDL help determine from which language – Turkish or Arabic – the first translation of the Quran was rendered into Polish?

4. Can the linguistic material of the tafsir help specify (revise) the time of the origin of the texts of the Tatars of the GDL at all?

5. Can the analysis of the language of such unique philological sources as tafsirs reveal new information about the history of the Polish and Belarusian languages?
6. Whether the first translators of the Quran into standard Polish (i.e. Vilnius Philomaths – Fr. Dionizy Chlewioski and Ignacy Domeyko) used the Tatar tafsirs in their work or patterned their translation on them?

7. The texts of Tatars – Muslims of the GDL – contain examples of alphabetic conversion (transliteration? transcription?) from the Latin alphabet (printed) into the Arabic script [30], which is the reverse of the assumptions of this Project. What were the conditions, principles and rules of such a conversion from the Latin alphabet to the Arabic script?

8. Do the texts of Tatars – Muslims of the GDL – which originated at a different time and place and which are based, to a considerable extent, on phonetics, document the process of the evolution of the north-eastern borderland variety of Polish based on the Belarusian substratum?

9. Do these texts reflect and document the dialectal diversity of the Belarusian language at different stages of its development? To what extent?

10. Is it possible to specify the rules and techniques of copying the manuscripts of the Tatars of the GDL on the basis of copies which originated at a different time and place? If so, to what extent?

11. Can the comparison of several manuscript copies with different chronology (especially in terms of gaps in the text, copyists’ mistakes, etc.) help determine the order (succession) of links in the chain of interrelated copies?

12. Is it possible to determine whether any patterns were followed or references made to the translation rules applied in the translation of Christian holy books (the Bible) when it comes to language and translation techniques?

13. Can the translation of the Quran into the Polish (a Slavic) language help indicate references to (the influence of) the tradition of translation of religious Christian books into other Slavic languages, such as translations into the Old Church Slavonic (Orthodox) language?

14. What conclusions about the (historical and) linguistic and cultural Slavic and Oriental relations can be drawn on the basis of the translation of the Quran into Polish?

15. Can the Arabic (or Turkish?) translation of the Quran into Polish and/ or Belarusian become the subject of assessment even on the basis of limited material? The assessment would cover the accuracy of the notation of the horizontal verses by the copyists of the Arabic original of the Quran.

16. Is it possible to specify to what extent tafsirs were quoted and used in other Muslim manuscripts, especially in kitabs and chamails, and in which form and language tafsir fragments were implemented in other religious books? Were they, depending on the copyist, type of book or need, translated ad hoc from Polish into Belarusian or from Belarusian into Polish? Is it possible to determine specific sources of these quotations? (www.tefsir.umk.pl)

Hence, the final stage of the project will be obtaining the answers to the above questions and preparation of an online publication including the transliterated material which will allow to make the original literary sources, that is the manuscripts of Polish-Lithuanian Tatars available to other researchers (www.tefsir.umk.pl).
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