

## MELIKA'S NUSKA. IDENTIFICATION – CLASSIFICATION – DESCRIPTION

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### ABSTRACT

The author examines a new Tatar nuska kept in the private collection of Iza Melika Czechowska. No research and no historical and philological description of this nuska has been carried out until now. Based on its content, it can be classified as a nuska but particular attention should be paid to the material used to make the inscription, namely a shoulder-blade of ram, which makes it an exceptional amulet among other manuscripts in this category. The author describes the nuska starting from its essential details and moving on to the transliteration of the text, identification of the content and translation into Polish, textological and philological analysis of the relic, including the description of the content from the perspective of textual scholarship and the linguistic layer, primarily with regard to the handwriting and orthography.

**Field of Research:** kitab studies, Tatar manuscripts, Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, nuska, textological and philological analysis

### 1. Introduction

The subject of this study is a description of a new handwritten nuska from the private collection of Iza Melika Czechowska. The main goal of the authors' research was to prepare a description including the essential details of the relic, to read and transliterate the inscriptions it contains, and then to identify and discuss its content as well as present a translation of the original text into Polish.

### 2. Methodology

According to the classification of Tatar literature proposed by Drozd (1995: 33-47) and based on the criterion of content and form, the relic analysed in this study represents amulets, similarly to dalawars and hramotkas, the other groups being the primary books, including manuscripts of *The Quran*, tefsirs, kitabs and chamails, auxiliary books, including tajwids, sufras and vocabularies; finally, at the intersection of literature and religious art, boards and muhirs.

The first attempt at the classification of Tatar manuscript literature was made by Szykiewicz (1935: 138-139) who distinguished Quran manuscripts, sufras, tajwids, tefsirs, kitabs, chamails and dalawars. The authors of subsequent studies mentioned the types of books above while omitting some of them, usually *Al-Qurʿān* and sufras. This was done, for example, by Łapicz (1986: 65-67; 1989: 163) who additionally included hramotkas among the manuscript types. More types of Tatar manuscripts were added by Drozd (2000: 12) whose classification, based on the criterion of content and form, distinguishes the primary books: manuscripts of *The Quran*, kitabs, tafsirs and chamails; auxiliary books: tajwids, sufras and vocabularies, amulets: dalawars, hramotkas and nuskas; boards

and muhirs. This classification is supplemented by Jankowski (2003: 114-115) who indicates the need to expand the previous descriptions of Tatar manuscript literature to include epigraphy (sepulchral inscriptions) and documents, including legal and parish documents as well as private letters.

Nuskas (Ar *nus* → *na* □ “copy, manuscript”) is a Tatar relic manuscript whose character is similar to hramotka, i.e. prayer scroll worn by living persons, as opposed to a scroll placed in tombs – the so-called dalawar. Sometimes referred to as duajka (Ar *du’ā’*), nuska has the shape of a small sheet containing texts of Arabic prayers (Ar *du’ā’*), magical formulas or figures (Ar *īlsam*) copied from the chamail and having protective or healing powers. They are carried in small cases attached to various parts of the body, nailed above the entrance to a house or buried at the doorstep (Drozd, 2000: 15).

Dalawars (Tur *du’ālar* “prayers, collection of prayers”) – prayer scrolls put in the grave together with the deceased. They are the most vital type of the Tatar literary manuscripts as they are still in use today. They consist of excerpts of *The Quran* (chosen surahs and verses) and principles of the faith (Ar *īmān*), penitential prayers (*tawba*) and deliverance prayers (*du’ā’*) which are to support the dead in the positive outcome of the Final Judgement (Ar *Yawm ad-Dīn*, *Yawm al-ġisb*) (Drozd, 2000: 14; Konopacki, 2010: 152-153).

Hramotkas (Belarusian: “writing, small writing”) – prayer scrolls worn by living people, the most numerous Tatar relics manuscripts, alongside the chamails and dalawars. They are also called dalawars, similarly to the scrolls laid into the grave (they are made in a similar way and after being folded into a small package, they are worn in a little holder placed under the right arm), hence the division into funeral (sepulchral) and protective dalawars (Drozd, 2000: 15).

Manuscripts of *The Quran* (Ar *Al-Qur’ān* □ “recitation”) – alongside the chamails (prayer books), they are among the most popular Tatar relic manuscripts whose basic element is the full text of the Holy Book of Islam in Arabic, enriched with sets of prayers (Ar *alāt*) and guidelines regarding the rules of recitation (Ar *tawīd*, *tilwa*), placed on the first and last pages. Sometimes, alongside the above-mentioned components, additional information occurs such as the list of intentions (Ar *niyya*) where the appropriate verses of *The Quran* were to be recited (Ar *ayāt al-Qur’ān*), or the text of the 36<sup>th</sup> surah Ya-Sin (Kryczyński, 2000: 190, 195; Drozd, 2000: 12-13; Konopacki, 2010: 132-137).

Tefsirs (Ar *tafsīr* □ “comment, explanation”) – quite extensive works containing the full text of *The Quran* with the interlinear translation into Polish complemented with the exegetic layer. Similarly to the manuscripts of the Holy Book mentioned above, they contain additional elements such as prayers and description of the ritual of *Quran* recitation, written on the opening and closing pages of the tefsirs. Since these works often contained 400-500 pages (with a set size of 35x20 cm), they were often ordered by a whole group of “parishioners” as a wakf (Ar *waqf*) for the mosque. What is especially relevant, up until the appearance of the Polish translation of *The Quran* in 1858, these works had remained the basic source of the Tatars’ knowledge on the content of the Holy Book (Kryczyński, 2000: 195; Drozd, 2000: 13; Konopacki, 2010: 137-139).

Kitabs (Ar *kitāb* – “book, booklet”) – manuscript relics of varied content and volume, a kind of reading matter with an educational role, usually dealing with religious matters. They contain stories of the prophets (Ar *anbiyā*) and other renowned characters of Islam, stories based on Muslim traditions (Ar *sunna*), apocrypha, *The Quran* (Ar *Al-Qur’ān*) and the Holy Bible (Ar *Al-Injīl*), eschatological visions, moralizing, devotional and prayer texts, hadiths (Ar *ḥadīṡ*), comments to some surahs of *The Quran*, descriptions of rites and rituals (Ar *farāḥ*, *arkān ad-dīn*), elements of Muslim law (Ar *qarāa*), religious discussions, magic texts, Turkish and Arabic vocabularies, tajwids (Ar *tawīd*) and, rarely, non-religious texts among which oriental and Old-Polish texts predominate (Kryczyński, 2000: 190-191, 194-195; Drozd, 2000: 13-14; Konopacki, 2010: 139-140).

Chamails (Ar *ḥamā'il* – “something one carries with themselves”) – definitely the most popular kind of Tatar manuscripts, bearing some features of a prayer book and, consequently, encompassing various texts on religious subjects: practical descriptions of the Muslim rituals, including ablutions (Ar *wuḥūḥ*), prayers, rites of the cycle of life, name-giving (Ar *ḥamā'il*), circumcision (Ar *ḥimān*), wedding (Ar *zawāj*), sets of Arabic and Turkish *du'a* prayers (Ar *du'ā'*), occasional formulas and devotional texts such as *zikhrs* (Ar *dīkr*), *cchikmiets* (Ar *ḥikma*), charts with the Muslim calendar (Ar *at-taqwīm al-ḥirāq*). Quite often, chamails contained magic texts: prayers for chanting (healing mental diseases with exorcisms), prognostics of *fa'l* (*fa'l*), short prayers and magical healing formulas, i.e. *talsims* (Ar *ḥilsam*) (Kryczyński, 2000: 192-196; Drozd, 2000: 13-14; Konopacki, 2010: 141-151; Radziszewska, 2010).

Tajwid (Ar *taḥwīd* – “The Quran recitation learning”) – a special type of lectures in Turkish explaining the rules of articulation (Ar *qirā'a*) and recitation (Ar *tilāwa*) of the Holy Book of Islam with interlinear Polish-Belorussian translations. Books of this type occur sporadically, sometimes they comprise an additional component of other relics of Tatar manuscripts such as *kitabs* and *chamails* (Drozd, 2000: 14; Konopacki, 2010: 153-154).

Sufras (Ar *sifr* – “book”) – small manuscripts containing a thirtieth part of *The Quran* (Ar *ḥuzū*), a type of didactic booklets used for teaching children and for prayers for the dead during the night preceding the funeral (Ar *ḥalāt al-ḥanāza*) (Ar *ḥalāt al-ḥanāza*) (Drozd, 2000: 14).

Vocabularies (name given by the scholars) – manuscripts containing, in accordance with the etymology of the name, lexical resources, phrases and expressions together with their translations into Polish and/or Belorussian (Drozd, 2000: 14).

Boards (name given by the scholars) – paper or cardboard boards of an didactic and devotional character, placed in houses or mosques, resembling *muhirs* both in form (board, sometimes framed), usage (hung on the wall) and content (descriptions of the rites, prayer formulas, chosen verses from *the Quran* along with the translation and ethical guidelines) (Drozd, Dziekan, Majda, 2000: 62-63).

*Muhirs* (Tur *muhr* – „stamp”) – ornate cards of pieces of fabric containing inscriptions or pictures of items, buildings, or places of a sacred or magical character. Their function was ornamental, embellishing the interiors of houses and temples; and magical, protecting houses and their residents. They are classified according to thematic criteria and divided into inscription *muhirs* and presentation *muhirs* (Drozd, 2000: 38-43).

The inherent trait of Tatar relic manuscripts is the intermingling of elements of two different cultures, religions and traditions (Slavic, linked with Christianity, and Muslim, representing the Orient), which is reflected both at the level of textual scholarship and language of this literature because they are characterised by (alongside their manuscript character and anonymity of the authors) multilingualism (the oriental layer: Arabic and Turkish, more rarely Persian; the Slavic layer: Polish spoken in the northern borderlands (*Kresy*) in the initial stage of its development, Old Belorussian), considerable thematic variation (oriental layer: Muslim commentary literature, fiction, devotional, liturgical, instructional, magical-prognostic literature; the Slavic layer: adaptations of excerpts or full texts of Judeo-Christian literature, fictional works of Old Polish origin), and, finally, the most distinctive feature of this literature, i.e. the notation method based on the exclusive use of the Arabic script to write down the texts making up the books.

Two factors determined the manuscript character of the Tatars' literary output. The first one, particularly significant, was surely the reference to the literary output in the world of Islam, especially regarding religious literature that, due to the high rank of calligraphy, was subjected to the printing process quite late (calligraphy had been one of the key forms of art owing to the ban on

figurative representation) and in the context of the religious texts, the manual copying of the books became ritual in form. Additionally, the manuscript form was favoured by the local cultural context, namely the return to manuscripts characteristic of the period of Sarmatism, for this is the period when the formation and the development of Tatar works of this kind took place.

Anonymity, as a typical feature of all the manuscript literature, is also characteristic of the Tatar works discussed. Only two names of authors are known with regard to such works: Hodyna (Kitab of 1645) and Uriah son of Ismail (Tafsir dated at 1686) as opposed to the scribes who often disclosed their names in colophons. Surely, bearing in mind the excellent command of Arabic and other Oriental languages and the general erudition of Tatar authors, which results from the character of their work, including the compilation and adaptation of texts of Slavic and Middle Eastern provenance, they were the representatives of the intellectual elite of the Tatar society. What is significant in this context, the impossibility of discovering their personal details and the resulting anonymous character of Tatar literary output implicate a major hindrance in the process of chronological definition which can only be based on indirect presumptions: philological and contextual analysis, dates of the subsequent copies of the books, historical, social context, etc. (Drozd, 1999: 36-37; Drozd, 1995: 37; Drozd, 2000: 24-25, 33-34; Konopacki, 2015: 271-286; Kryczyński, 2000: 192-196, 207-208).

Two kinds of texts can be distinguished in Tatar manuscript literature based on the criterion of authorship: the first group consists of texts in Polish and Belarusian, created, compiled, adapted and translated by Tatars while the second group consists of texts in Oriental languages, borrowed from Eastern languages. The Arabic language layer has not been a subject of in-depth analysis so far because scholars of Polish and Belarusian studies have focused exclusively on the Slavic layer; the author of this article has taken up research in this respect (Lewicka, 2015a: 107-132; Lewicka, 2015b: 417-433; Lewicka, 2015c: 37-67; Lewicka, 2016: 104-127).

As far as the most distinctive feature of this literature is concerned, i.e. the notation method based on the exclusive use of the Arabic alphabet to write down both the Oriental and Slavic layer of the texts, it was a reference to the manuscript culture, especially of religious character, present in the world of Islam. The use of the Arabic script instead of the Slavic graphs surely stemmed from the particular respect for religious books and Arabic writing (which was used to write down *The Qur'an*) because the sacred value encompasses not only the content of the books but also their form, i.e. the graphs used in the notation. The Arabic alphabet also functioned beyond Tatar literary manuscripts, namely in grave epitaphs, sacred ornamentation and often private texts (letters, documents, signatures of the documents), all the more that the Tatars preserved the ability to use the Arabic script until the 20<sup>th</sup> century even though their excellent command of this language was lost over the centuries. What is particularly significant in this context is that the Arabic alphabet must have been adapted to write down Slavic texts or, to be more precise, the phonological system of these languages through the introduction of the additional graphemes and change in the phonetic value of some existing letters (Drozd, 2000; Łapicz, 1986).

### **3. Subject of research**

This article focuses on the nuska that has been kept in the private collection of Iza Melika Czechowska since 2013. The relic contains exclusively oriental texts – in Arabic, without any introductory or explanatory notes or interpolated fragments in Slavic languages characteristic of Tatar manuscript literature. Based on the content, the text can be classified as a nuska but it should be stressed that it stands out among other relics of this kind because of the material used to make the inscriptions, particularly rare in the case of manuscripts created by this community. The only

nuska made in a similar manner, i.e. on a shoulder blade of a ram, to be identified and preliminarily described so far is the relic kept by the Historical Museum in Białystok (MBH/1546) and originating from the area inhabited by the Muslim community in Bohoniki or Kruszyniany. It contains formulas used to predict the fate of a sick person, in the form of a combination of Arabic letters and numerals, taawwuz (Ar *taawwu*), the phrase *A* (ل<sup>ا</sup> bi-*#-ll*hi min *#-ay*ni *#-rra*mi i.e. "I invoke God against the damned Satan," basmali (Ar *basmala*), phrase *Bi-smi* *#-ll*hi *#-rra*mni *#-rra*mi, i.e. "In the name of the merciful and compassionate God"), sura CXII written into a rectangle and a magical formula with the name Muhammad, composed of three intersecting lexemes Muammad.

*The origin and the owners of the relic:* currently (since 2011), the nuska is in the private collection of Iza Melika Czechowska, whereas earlier (from 2005 to 2011) it was owned by Musa Czachorowski. There is very little information about the origin and previous owners. It is only known that the nuska belonged to a Tatar family from present-day Belarus, including Daniel Malaj who died in the 1960s and whose grandson found it among his grandfather's belongings and handed it over to Czachorowski.

*Condition of the relic:* quite good.

*Dating of the relic:* it is difficult to make any assertions in this respect because there is no colophon; the kind of material on which the inscription was made, the linguistic layer and the content of the relic do not offer any clues concerning the age.

*Scribe/scribes:* there is no straightforward information in this respect. An analysis of the handwriting suggests that there were at least two scribes.

*Volume and dimensions of the relic:* 17.5 cm (the longest part) x 10 cm (the widest part); 3 cm in the central part (with a bone crest on the back surface); about 1 cm at the edge; in the upper part 1 cm from the upper edge there is a hole, 0.8 cm in diameter, enabling one to hang the nuska.

*Material from which the relic is made:* shoulder blade of a ram, with numerous cavities, visible discolouration, defects, cracks, lack of the lower parts on both sides, which resulted in the partial loss of inscriptions in the last verse of the text.

*Ink:* black, the same in the entire text.

*Number of verses:* inscriptions on one side, 6 verses, between verse 5 and 6 there is a magical formula composed of three intersecting lexemes.

*Punctuation:* no punctuation marks separating sentences or *āyāt* and no bullets (dots, circles, dashes) particularly characteristic of the Oriental layer of Tatar relics.

*Division of text:* no bullets separating the text of each unit and marking the beginning of a new entity.

*Characteristics of the handwriting:* the handwriting of the author/scribe is homogeneous and neat (the verses are in straight lines) although not well-trained, mostly legible; all the glosses are written in Arabic script, with black ink. In the last verse one can note a change in the handwriting and the intensity of the ink colour.

*Content:* the relic consists of protective formulas characteristic of Tatar manuscripts in the amulet group.

#### 4. Textological and philological analysis

The research work encompassed, apart from establishing the essential details, reading and transliterating entries in the nuska, adding commentary in the form of footnotes and identifying the content.

The transliteration is based on the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) system used in Polish scholarly literature related to Arabic studies because of its accuracy (letters of the

Latin alphabet are complemented with additional markings due to the variation of Arabic sounds and each of them denotes a single sound. In the “simplified” transcription, on the other hand, one letter of the Latin alphabet can denote a few Arabic sounds and some of them are not included in the notation, which causes a hindrance in pronunciation and disturbance of communication in the articulation layer whereas in the layer of notation it precludes the reversal of the process, re-transliteration, i.e. the return to the original text), international character and conformity with other works related to Arabic studies. The process of transliterating the material below was based on a characteristic way of notation, an inherent trait of Tatar relics, namely a notation that includes full vocalization (unlike texts in Arabic where only consonants, long vowels (ā, ī, ū) and diphthongs (ay, aw) are written down while short vowels (a, u, i) are marked only occasionally (when required in texts serving educational and prescriptive purposes) by means of special vocalization marks (used to record short vowels, the absence of a vowel or a double-consonant), placed above or below a letter), which means that the text contains all consonants and vowels (long and short) and additional marks that do not belong to the alphabet and that are used to mark the absence of a vowel or doubling of a consonant.

Referring to the definition of transliteration, defined as representing symbols (graphemes) in one alphabet with symbols (graphemes) in another alphabet, without taking account of the phonetic properties of sounds denoted by symbols (graphemes) in the transliterated alphabet, these symbols should be understood as all graphemes used in the notation of the analysed material, including letters (both belonging and not belonging to the alphabet) as well as vocalization marks. That is why the transliteration of the text is based on ascribing each Arabic symbol its equivalent in the Latin alphabet and thus representing the notation graphemically, not phonetically (because this would mean a transcription, i.e. conversion of the written text that is based on the phonetic representation of the properties of sounds denoted by letters of one alphabet by means of the spelling system of another alphabet, and makes re-transliteration (i.e. restoring the original notation) impossible). For example:

- transliteration encompassing all graphemes (letters and marks): *bi-smi al-lḷhi al-rraḍḍmi al-rraḍḍmi*

- transliteration encompassing letters only: *b-sm al-llh al-rḍḍn al-rrḍḍm*

- transcription: *bi-smi lḷhi rraḍḍmi rraḍḍmi*

The letter *alif* in the word-initial position, depending on the accompanying mark in the form of *fatḥa* (vowel a), *ḡamma* (vowel u) or *kasra* (vowel i) is transliterated as a, u, i respectively even though the proper notation should have the additional *hamza* mark. The letter *alif* occurring in the word-initial position as a component of the definite article *al-* is written as *a* even though the proper notation should have the additional *waḥḥa* mark or *hamza* and *fatḥa* marks.

The Arabic text is presented in its full form, without emendation, in order to reflect the state of its preservation while information on conjectural emendations that appeared in the process of determining the content and identification of defects is presented in the form of footnotes accompanied by comments. No punctuation or intonation marks and no marks to separate clauses are introduced in the translation into Polish because the notation in the manuscript does not contain any graphemes or separating symbols. Arabic numerals denote the number of the consecutive rows in the manuscript while notes about corruptions in the text are in square brackets. Besides the lacunae (missing text) resulting from physical damage to the relic, there are corruptions arising from the inattention (or lack of linguistic competence) of the scribe who omitted or confused graphemes (letters and vocalization marks) and diacritical marks (dots above or below letters to distinguish between phonemes); these issues are indicated in the footnotes

1: *li-lḷhi<sup>1</sup> akbaru<sup>2</sup>*

God is great

2: *inna<sup>3</sup> ʾaḷṭ<sup>4</sup> wa-nusuḳ<sup>5</sup>*

verily my prayer, my rites of sacrifice

3: *wa(a)<sup>6</sup>-maʾuḅya<sup>7</sup> wa-maḥṣ*

my living and my dying

4: *li-lḷhi<sup>8</sup> rabbim<sup>9</sup> al<sup>10</sup>-ʾ(u)laṃna<sup>11</sup>*

are for Allah, Lord of the worlds<sup>12</sup>

5: *bi-smi al-lḷhi al-lḷhu<sup>13</sup> akbaru<sup>14</sup>*

in the name of God God is great

6: *muḍammad muḍammad muḍammad*

Muhammad Muhammad Muhammad<sup>15</sup>

7: [the damage to the relic caused the loss of text, missing initial letter of the first lexeme *b]sm al-llh al-rrḍmn al-rrḍ*] [the damage to the relic caused a loss of text, the final letters of the last lexeme *mn* are missing]<sup>16</sup>

[in] the name of God Merciful Compassio[nate]

The prayer and protection function of the nuska is reflected in the style and language layer of the analysed relic. Thus, the text is in the form of a ritual monologue addressed to God, with modal characteristics (voluntative and expressive) while the predominant stylistic feature is the formulaicity on the semantic level based on Muslim phraseology shaped by the source text of Islam, the Quran and Tradition. The material analysed contains a Quranic verse, namely, ayah 162 of Surah VI “The Cattle” (verses 2-4), and the following formulas, i.e. fixed sets of words, expressions and

<sup>1</sup> Incorrect phrase *li-lḷhi* instead of *al-lḷhu*. The long vowel *ī* is marked by the scribe with a vocalization mark, the so-called short alif and not a letter; a similar situation happens in authentic Arabic texts.

<sup>2</sup> Missing *hamza* mark below the letter *alif*.

<sup>3</sup> Missing *hamza* mark below the letter *alif*.

<sup>4</sup> The notation of the long vowel *ī* in the final position in the form of the letter *alif maqḥ* (ra preceded by a vocalization mark, resembling the so-called short alif but placed below the preceding letter (whereas the short alif is below the letter). In authentic Arabic texts, the long vowel *ī* is presented graphically as the letter *yī* preceded by *kasra* but in a Quranic text the letter *yī* in the final position is written as *alif maqḥ* (ra).

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 26.

<sup>6</sup> Two *fatḥa* marks above the letter *wāw*.

<sup>7</sup> Incorrect notation of the *ḥamma* mark instead of the *sukūn* mark above the letter *ḍ*. Diacritical marks (two dots) that should be below the letter *yī* were moved to the right, which leads to an incorrect reading as *ḍm* and *bḍ*; correct notation: *wa-maḥḍya*. *Yī* in the final position is written as *alif maqḥ* (ra, as in a Quranic text.

<sup>8</sup> The long vowel *ī* is marked by the scribe with a vocalization mark, the so-called short alif and not a letter; a similar situation happens in authentic Arabic texts.

<sup>9</sup> Incorrect notation of the letter *bḍ* in the final position, which makes identification difficult and leads to an incorrect reading as *rabbim*.

<sup>10</sup> The *sukūn* mark above the letter *alif* instead of the letter *lām* in the definite article *al-*.

<sup>11</sup> Two marks above the letter *ayn*: *fatḥa* and *ḥamma*. No diacritical marks (two dots) below the letter *yī*.

<sup>12</sup> Verses 2-4 are ayah 162 of Surah VI “The Cattle” (Al-Qurʾan, <https://quran.com/6>).

<sup>13</sup> Missing *hamza* mark below the letter *alif*.

<sup>14</sup> Missing *hamza* mark below the letter *alif*.

<sup>15</sup> This notation has the shape of a magical figure composed of intersecting lexemes Muhammad.

<sup>16</sup> This phrase is without vocalization, with vocal marks: *bi-smi al-lḷhi al-rraḍṃni al-rraḍmi*.

phrases regularly used in the same contexts, characteristic of text of religious origin: *basmla* (ar. *basmla*) – phrase *Bi-smi al-Ilāhi al-rraḥmāni al-rraḥīmī* “In the name of God Merciful Compassionate” (verses: 5, 7); *takbir* (Ar *takbir*) – phrase *Al-Ilāhu akbaru* “God is great” (verses: 1, 5); the so-called “beautiful names of God” (verse: 7).

At the linguistic level, the following characteristics of the relic should be indicated:

- missing *hamza* mark above/below the letter *alif* in the initial position: *li-Ilāhi akbaru* (verse 1); *inna ʾalāṭi wa-nusuk* (verse 2); *bi-smi al-Ilāhi al-Ilāhu akbaru* (verse 5);
- missing long vowel *ā* in some lexemes, similar to what happens in authentic Arabic materials; in vocalized texts, e.g. handwritten *Qurans*, it is marked as a vocalization mark, the so-called short alif: *li-Ilāhi akbaru* (verse 1); *li-Ilāhi rabbi al-ʾilāmna* (verse 4);
- the notation of the long vowel *ā* in the word-final position in the form of the letter *alif maqṣūra* preceded by a vocalization mark, resembling the so-called short alif but placed below the preceding letter (whereas the short alif is below the letter): *inna ʾalāṭi wa-nusuk* (verse 2);
- incorrect notation (confusion, omission) of diacritics (in the form of dots written above and below the letter and helping distinguish phonemes): *wa(a)-maḥubya wa-mahṣ* (two dots that should be below the letter *y* were moved to the right, which leads to an incorrect reading as *ḥm* and *b* instead of *ḥ* and *y*, verse 3); *li-Ilāhi rabbim al-ʾilāmna* (two dots missing under the letter *y*, verse 4);
- incorrect notation (confusion, omission) of vocalization marks (in the form of dashes written above and below the letter and helping distinguish short vowels): *wa(a)-maḥubya wa-mahṣ* (incorrect notation of the *ḥamma* mark instead of the *sukūn* mark above the letter *ḥ*, verse 3); *wa(a)-maḥubya wa-mahṣ* (the letter *w* is accompanied by two *fatḥa* marks, one over the other, verse 3); *li-Ilāhi rabbim al-ʾilāmna* (the *sukūn* mark incorrectly complements the letter *alif* instead of the letter *lām* in the article, the letter *ayn* is accompanied by two vocalization marks: *fatḥa* and *ḥamma*, verse 4);
- incorrect notation of the letters (shape): *li-Ilāhi rabbim al-ʾilāmna* (incorrect notation of the letter *b* in the final position, which makes identification difficult and leads to an incorrect reading as *rabbim*, verse 4)
- incorrect notation of entire words: *wa(a)-maḥubya wa-mahṣ* (correctly: *wa-mamṭ*, verse 3);
- incorrect notation of entire phrases: *li-Ilāhi akbaru* (correctly *al-Ilāhu akbaru*, verse 1).

## 5. Conclusion and Future Recommendation

Neither the linguistic layer nor the content of the relic offers any clues concerning the age; neither do they allow the identification of the origin of the texts in the manuscript because the prayer character determines the distinguishing traits of the style: formulaicity, schematism and, consequently, the lack of differences in terms of the content of handwritten books/inscriptions of this kind created at various times and in various areas. The difficulty in dating and locating the text content of this nuska in a specific geographical space is further compounded by the language – classical Arabic – that became established already in the first centuries of Islam and was functioning in the same form in the entire Muslim world.

The functioning of handwritten books belonging to the category of amulets, primarily nuska and hramotkas, is closely related to the magical practices of the GDL Tatars (Aleksandrowicz, 1935; Kryczyński, 2000; Baranowski, 1991; Dziekan, 2000; Radziszewska, 2013), both of Middle Eastern (Turkish and Arabic) as well as Christian origin, arising from beliefs in malicious spirits and jinns

(“demons”, “good or bad ghosts”) and fierejs (“ghouls”), against which various kinds of incantations and specific actions taken by “sorcery” specialists called *fałdziej* and *siufkacz* are meant to protect. A detailed description of them can be found in the prognostic texts in the *chamaił* that describe divination practices, the so-called *fał* (“divination”, “omen”, “forecasting”, “fortune-telling”), using various mantic methods including divination based on *The Qur’an* (“al-Quran *fał*”), behaviour of animals, e.g. ravens (“raven *fał*”), letters of the alphabet (“abjad *fał*”, “alif *fał*”) or the stars (“seven- or twelve-planet *fał*”) (Aleksandrowicz, 1935: 372; Kryczyński, 2000: 288; Dziekan, 2000: 45-46).

The basis for creating nuskas was the conviction about their protective power. They were to perform a dual function: on the one hand, they allowed healthy people to avoid the influence of the fierejs associated with them and, on the other hand, they ensured the healing of those who succumbed to the power and harmful influence of the fierejs. The magical healing methods eliminating this harmful impact include making animal sacrifices and wearing dalawars written with animal blood, reading prayers and blowing air on the sick person, drinking water with an appropriate prayer formula immersed in it or washing the sick person’s body with it, burning a talisman with magical formulas and cleansing the sick person with the smoke, burying sheets with specific prayers in places where evil spirits dwell as well as attaching sheets with magical formulas written in Arabic script to the right or left hand or wearing them on the back (Szachno-Romanowicz, 1997; Dziekan, 2000).

The content of the nuskas that one should carry, bury under the doorstep or hang over the doorway leading into a house in order to avoid the harmful influence of evil spirits, or to get over the ailments caused by them, was not precisely determined because the information contained in the *chamaił*s did not mention the names of these prayers and formulas. They could take the form of a combination of Arabic letters and vertical lines, sentences or word strings, specific Quranic verses or fixed phrases characteristic of Muslim rituals (i.e. basmala, hamdala, haukala, taawwuz etc.). The talismans varied in content and layout, and usually consisted of several or more than ten elements, very often not linked logically with each other; some of these elements occur in almost all nuskas (and hramotkas) while others occur very rarely. The most frequently occurring elements of these magical and healing amulets are as follows: basmala, the word Allāh, the names and attributes of Allāh (the “beautiful names of God”), the names of Arab and Hebrew prophets, angels and archangels, orthodox caliphs, names of the Holy Books, quotations from The Quran, haukala, Mohammad’s seal, incantations, mysterious letters of the Quran, combinations of numerals, letters, vertical lines and marks of undiscovered sound. Some of them are present in the material examined in this article. Based on its identification and description of the preserved fragments, the category of the text was confirmed and the relic was classified as a nuska.

The conclusions above constitute further findings with regard to the Arabic language layer of Tatar manuscripts and will serve as a starting point for further analyses both from the philological and textological perspective, taking into account transcription, which will enable research on them not only by scholars of Arabic studies but also other domains (e.g. history, religious studies and cultural studies). The material discussed here can be the basis for comparative studies, a comparison with other preserved nuskas and amulets and, in a broader perspective, for insight and analysis of the entire Tatar manuscript literature that, as it has been mentioned above, is a particularly valuable source not only for philological studies but also for interdisciplinary research, including domains such as history, ethnography, cultural studies and religious studies (Lewicka, 2015d; Lewicka, 2016b).

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