

THE QUR'ANS OF THE SPANISH MORISCOS AND THE TATARS OF THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA: DRAWING COMPARISONS AND TRACING PATTERNS*

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Abstract. This paper is aimed at presenting a preliminary comparative study of the Qur'anic translations produced by two autochthonous European Muslim communities: Spanish Mudéjars (Muslims who remained in the Iberian Peninsula after the Christian reconquest) and Moriscos (former Muslims forced to convert to Christianity) and, on the other side of Europe, the Tatars of Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). The framework for this comparison is provided by some basic facts: over the span of two centuries, in the case of the Morisco population (starting with the conquest of Granada in 1492, until the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609)¹, and three centuries in that of the Tatars of the GDL (17th to 19th centuries), their literary production was exclusively hand-written. Both groups preserved their Muslim religiosity but, with some erudite exceptions, had only scarce knowledge of Arabic, the holy language of Qur'anic revelation. Moreover, without having access to one another's culture, both Moriscos and the Tatars of the GDL adapted the Arabic alphabet to their vehicular languages, Romance and Slavic respectively². Thanks to this adaptation strategy, they maintained the sacred aspect of their writings and were able to translate the Qur'an into a language they fully understood. However, in spite of these striking similarities between the two groups, there were also notable differences. While the Tatars of the GDL were granted full religious freedom, the Moriscos

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1 The expulsion edict was decreed in 1609, and the physical expulsion process lasted until 1613.

2 Previous works that point to similarities between the Moriscos' and Tatars' handwritten sources are: Czesław Łapicz, "Czy piśmiennictwo Tatarów – muzułmanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego jest słowiańskim aljamiado?", in: *W podróży za słowem: księga pamiątkowa z okazji jubileuszu 70-lecia urodzin profesora Email Tokarza*, red. Mateusz Warchał, Bielsko-Biała: Akademia Techniczno-Humanistyczna w Bielsku-Białej, 2014, s. 59–70 (here for the first time in the field, the term "aljamiado literature" was used to refer to the Tatar manuscripts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) and Marek M. Dziekan, "Zastosowanie pisma arabskiego do zapisu wybranych języków indoeuropejskich. Perspektywa historyczno-porównawcza", in: *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Teoria i praktyka badawcza*, e-monografia, red. J. Kulwicka-Kamińska, Cz. Łapicz, Toruń, 2015, s. 75–99.

were heavily persecuted for any signs of adherence to Islam. In order to shed more light on the phenomenon of European Muslim cultures, in this paper I will present various manuscript examples of these groups' Qur'anic translations, and draw some preliminary conclusions regarding the information that can be retrieved from this kind of sources.

Keywords: the Tatars of Grand Duchy of Lithuania, European Muslim communities, the Qur'anic translations, Spanish Moriscos.

ISPANIJOS MORISKŲ IR LIETUVOS DIDŽIOSIOS KUNIGAIKŠTYSTĖS TOTORIŲ KORANAI: PALYGINIMAS IR BENDRŲ BRUOŽŲ SURADIMAS

Santrauka. Šio straipsnio tikslas – pristatyti preliminarų palyginamąjį Korano vertimų, kuriuos atliko ispanų mudeharai (musulmonai, likę Iberijos pusiasalyje po krikščionių užkariavimo) ir moriskai (musulmonai, priversti priimti krikščionybę), o kitoje Europos pusėje – Lietuvos Didžiojoje Kunigaikštystėje (toliau – LDK) – totoriai, tyrimą. Ispanijos mudeharai ir moriskai bei LDK totoriai laikomi autochtoniškais Europos musulmonų bendruomenėmis. Šio palyginimo pagrindą sudaro keli pagrindiniai faktai: tiek moriskų (nuo Granados užkariavimo 1492 m. iki moriskų išvaymo 1609 m.), tiek LDK totorių (XVII–XIX a.) literatūrinė kūryba buvo išskirtinai rašyta ranka. Abi grupės išsaugojo išpažįtamą religiją – islamą, tačiau menkai temokėjo arabų (su kai kuriomis retomis išimtimis) – Korano apreiškimo šventąją kalbą. Be to, neturėdami sąlyčio vieni su kitų kultūra, tiek moriskai, tiek LDK totoriai pritaikė arabų abėcėlę savo kalboms – atitinkamai romanų ir slavų. Taikydami šią adaptacijos strategiją jie išlaikė savo raštų šventumą ir sugebėjo išversti Koraną į jiems visiškai suprantamą kalbą. Tačiau, nepaisant šių ryškių dviejų grupių panašumų, būtų ir esminių skirtumų. LDK totoriams buvo suteikta visiška religijos laisvė, o ispanų moriskai buvo smarkiai persekiojami dėl bet kokių islamo išpažinimo ženklų apraiškų. Siekdama geriau nušviesti Europos musulmoniškų kultūrų fenomeną, šiame darbe pateiksiu įvairių šių grupių Korano vertimų rankraštinių pavyzdžių bei preliminarias išvadas apie informaciją, kurią galima gauti iš tokio pobūdžio šaltinių.

Raktiniai žodžiai: Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės totoriai, Europos musulmonų bendruomenės, Korano vertimai, ispanų moriskai.

There are the only two places in early modern Europe that hosted historical Muslim communities which did not result from the Ottoman expansion: Iberia with the communities of Mudéjars (Muslims who remained after the Christian reconquest) and Moriscos (former Muslims forced to convert to Christianity) and, in north-eastern Europe, the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) (Muslims

who settled in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). Operating as enclaves in predominantly Christian societies, these two groups developed strikingly similar strategies for preserving their religious knowledge, and their juxtaposition raises a number of questions. For example, how did these European Muslims cope with preserving their religion despite their scarce knowledge of Arabic? Or, more broadly speaking, what were the adaptation methods of European Muslim communities in early and late modern Europe (15th to 19th centuries)? One way of answering such questions is to turn to manuscript sources of Morisco and the Tatars of the GDL, written, respectively, in Romance vernaculars and in Polish-Belarusian dialects. In this particular case, I will concentrate on their Qurʾanic translations. Firstly, I would like to present some of the Morisco translations, and subsequently move on to the chronologically later translations of the Tatars of the GDL.

The Moriscos' Literary Production

In the 19th century, thanks to the work of collectors and scholars such as Pascual de Gayangos, Eduardo Saavedra (Índice general de la literatura aljamiada), Francisco Guillén Robles (Leyendas moriscas, Catálogo de los manuscritos árabes existentes en la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid), Pablo Gil and Julián Ribera (Colección de textos aljamiados), and Miguel Asín Palacios (Noticias de los manuscritos árabes del Sacro-Monte de Granada), Moriscos' manuscripts began to attract scholarly interest and were partially edited³. These manuscripts, sometimes referred to as *aljamiado*, follow a consistent system adapted for transliterating the Iberian Romance vernaculars in Arabic script. From the oldest copies preserved (15th century) until the last ones produced at the beginning of the 17th century, a standardized graphic and orthographic system was employed in producing these peculiar Spanish texts⁴.

Today these manuscripts are held in the Spanish National Library in Madrid, which expanded its vast collection with the purchase of the Gayangos collection in 1900. In 1884, a hidden room was discovered in a house in Almonacid de la Sierra containing more than a hundred manuscripts, of which about 60 were saved from destruction or burning and became part of the collection of the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios, and later the Tomás Navarro Tomás Library (CCHS-CSIC). The extant manuscripts from the Almonacid de la Sierra trove are now housed

3 A. M. Paramio, 2010, p. 17–26.

4 See, for example, N. de Castilla, 2019, p. 111–30.

in the Tomás Navarro Tomás Library, CCHS-CSIC in Madrid (mainly) and the Escuelas Pías of Saragossa, while the manuscripts from Calanda are in the Library of the Cortes de Aragón (Saragossa)⁵. Morisco literature poses numerous challenges for researchers, such as its script, predominantly Islamic subject matter, Arabic-influenced lexicon, and above all its transcultural nature. Nevertheless, by now it has been studied in greater detail, and our knowledge of how *aljamiado* texts often transgress religious borders has greatly improved. Considerable research initiatives have been dedicated to studying the extant corpora of these texts⁶.

Morisco Qur'ans

The extant copies of these Spanish translations of the Qur'an can be dated to the mid of the 15th and the early 17th centuries; these translations were produced and copied in order to circulate among and within Muslim communities no longer proficient in Qur'anic Arabic. After 1502 in Castile and 1526 in Aragon, the Mudéjar Muslims were no longer allowed to practice Islam, and were forced to convert to Christianity. In this period they came to be collectively referred to as 'Moriscos', many of whom were still secret practitioners of Islam. Understandably, their clandestine condition contributed to the scarcity of teachers and schools, and any discovered attempt of possessing or attending readings of the Qur'an received the immediate attention of the Inquisition. Ultimately, in 1609 it was decreed that the Moriscos must leave Spain.

There are some twenty-eight extant Spanish translations of the Qur'an from the Mudejar-Morisco period, all of them in manuscript form, except a single printed edition. To date, only one complete version has come to light, while the remaining copies are either abridged or fragmentary. Some of the translations are monolingual and others bilingual Arabic/Romance, where the translation appears next to the Arabic text of the original. Furthermore, while some of the translations

5 J. C. Villaverde Amieva, 2010, p. 91–128.

6 For instance, a series of undertakings have been conducted by the Seminario de Estudios Árabo-Románicos (SEAR: <https://www.arabicaetromanica.com/>) at the Universidad de Oviedo (Spain). The aim of this research group has been to study the linguistic and literary influences between Arabic literature and writings in Romance vernaculars, and it has centered mainly on Aljamiado-Morisco texts and on the borderlines of Arabic-Romance Philology. Among other activities, the SEAR publishes editorial series: "Bibliotheca Arabo-Romanica et Islamica" (<https://www.arabicaetromanica.com/biblioteca-arabo-romanica-1/>) and "Colección de Literatura Española Aljamiado-Morisca" (CLEAM <https://www.arabicaetromanica.com/cleam/>). The SEAR also offers various online resources, such as the "Corpus de Textos Aljamiado-Moriscos" (COTEAM <https://www.arabicaetromanica.com/coteam/>).

are written in the Latin alphabet, others are in *aljamiado*. Although *aljamiado* is an aragonese phenomenon, the translations written in Latin characters might feature the Castilian dialect from central Spain⁷. Of the twenty-eight identified Morisco translations of the Qur'an, twenty-four are in *aljamiado*, while only two are in Latin characters: BNF Arabe 447 and Castilla-La Mancha BP 235. Here we will focus on these last two cases of the Morisco Qur'ans: firstly the Qur'an of Thessaloniki (El Corán de Salónica, BNF Arabe 447, 1569) and secondly the Qur'an of Toledo (El Corán de Toledo, Castilla-La Mancha BP 235, 1606).

As mentioned before, many Morisco manuscripts were found inside the walls of the houses they were forced to leave behind, but the Moriscos continued their literary production during their exile in the places that welcomed them, such as Thessaloniki, Tunisia or Morocco. Written in Spanish, such texts reveal their nostalgia and attachment to the old country. The forced conversions occurred in different Christian kingdoms in the first third of the 16th century, and the situation of the Moriscos only worsened, especially after the War of Granada in 1568. They found themselves deprived of the right to wear their distinctive clothes or maintain their customs. Due to these persecutions, some Moriscos decided to leave the Iberian Peninsula and look for a new homeland even before the expulsion. Testimonies of these journeys have come down to us in the form of travel itineraries. Several route descriptions recommended that Moriscos travel first to Venice and there ask for the Sephardic Jews, i.e., Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula in the late 15th century, in order to get instructions on how to reach Thessaloniki, their final destination being North Africa or Türkiye⁸.

One of the testimonies of this diaspora of the last Spanish Muslims is an abbreviated compendium of the Qur'an, copied in Thessaloniki, in which the verses in Arabic alternate with their translation into Spanish written in Latin letters (see Annexes No. I). According to the colophon, it was Ibrahim Isquierdo who, on the 17th of Shawwal 976 H (the 4th of April 1569 CE), completed a selection of passages from the Qur'an. In the mid of the 18th century the manuscript was donated by the French orientalist Antoine Galland to the Royal Library in Paris (now the National Library of France), where it remains today. The transmission of this codex from the time it was copied to when it was donated remains unknown. The copyist Ibrahim Isquierdo was probably also the author of the translation, because the text that has come down to us is not related to other *aljamiado* translations. Also, the Romance target language is significantly different from the archaic and Arabizing

7 C. López-Morillas, 2006, p. 255–94; Pablo R. C., 2022, p. 199–216.

8 L. López Baralt, 2010, p. 222–224.

texts typical of *aljamiado* translations: it is a very refined Castilian, copied in neat humanistic handwriting. Finally, the translation is very faithful to the Arabic original, compared to what we find in other translations that rely heavily on traditional Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*)⁹.

Regarding the Qur'an of Toledo, it was produced in 1606 by an anonymous Morisco in Aragon (see Annexes No. II). Its importance lies in the fact that it is the only complete translation of the Qur'an from Arabic into Spanish that has come down to us from the Mudejar and Morisco periods (15th to 17th centuries). Even though this solitary status can be easily explained, as all manuscript corpuses suffered great losses, and even more so the Islamic ones, which were victims of inquisitorial persecution and exile, it is a fact that no other complete Qur'anic version survives, be it in Spanish or in *aljamiado*. Indeed, the remaining incomplete copies were all originally intended as abridged Qur'ans, and were not merely complete Qur'ans that became truncated by, say, the loss of leaves at the beginning or at the end. All the other translated Mudejar and Morisco Qur'ans contain only a selection of the sacred book: sometimes it is an abbreviated compendium, sometimes one or two quarters of the total text, sometimes single verses. Therefore, the mere fact that the Toledo translation covers the Qur'an from the beginning to the end makes it truly unique.

Interestingly enough, the Qur'an of Toledo does not include the original Arabic text. This apparent omission seems especially relevant given the attachment of Spanish Muslims to the Arabic alphabet: the *aljamiado* script was deemed an appropriate vehicle for Islamic texts. Although this particular Qur'an is presented to the faithful in the "Christian script", its scribe confesses that he copied it from an original that contained the sacred book both in Arabic and in *aljamiado*¹⁰.

Muslims in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a political entity officially established in July 1569, but which had effectively acted as a united territory since 1386, thanks to the marriage of the "king" of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland, Jadwiga (Hedwig)¹¹, and the head of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Grand Duke

9 N. Martínez de Castilla, 2010, p. 228.

10 C. López-Morillas, 2011, p. 11–14.

11 Jadwiga was the first female monarch of the Kingdom of Poland, reigning from 1384 until her death in 1399. She was canonized as a saint of Catholic Church in 1997, and titled an apostle of Lithuania and patroness of Poland.

Jogaila, crowned, upon his conversion from paganism to Christianity, as King Władysław II Jagiełło of Poland. The eighteenth-century partitions (territorial seizures and annexations conducted by the Habsburg Monarchy, the Kingdom of Prussia, and the Russian Empire) put an end to this vast and populous European country. The First Partition (1772) and the Second Partition (1793) greatly reduced the state's size, and the Third Partition (1795) eliminated the Commonwealth altogether.

Before the partitions, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth proved for several centuries to be a successful realization of a concept of a common state for ethnically, linguistically, and confessionally distinct communities. The state system of this federal “republican monarchy” was based on civil rights, and thus allowed the different communities to recognize it as their own. Moreover, it attracted many religious-political refugees from other European states. It is probably safe to say that religious freedom was always seen as an intrinsic component of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth domestic policy. With one of the greatest Jewish diasporas of the 16th century, native Muslim communities (the Tatars of the GDL), Kipchak Karaims, and numerous groups of non-Catholic Christians (including the Oriental Armenian Church and the Protestant anti-Trinitarian movement), the Commonwealth was a bastion of religious freedom during a period when religious persecution was the norm throughout the rest of Europe. Of course, such liberties did not exclude the freedom to argue that one religion was superior to another, even to the point of ridiculing other groups' sets of beliefs. At least one complete anti-Tatar polemic written by a Christian author has come down to us, and traces survive of other hostile treatises on the same subject¹².

The process of Tatar settlement in the GDL can be divided into two waves: in the first stage, in the 14th and 15th centuries, the migration of Tatars from the empire of the Golden Horde and the khanates located on the banks of the Volga River was provoked by the compulsory Islamization led by Uzbek Khan (1312–1342), although eventually, despite the exodus, this group also came to renounce paganism and embrace Islam. The Grand Duke of Lithuania, Vytautas (1392–1430), granted the Tatar settlers land and privileges, including freedom of religion, in exchange for military service, especially against the Teutonic Knights, former Crusaders in the Holy Land who, under the pretext of fighting Lithuanian pagans, sought to settle on Polish and Lithuanian soil.

The second stage of settlement occurred between the 16th and 18th centuries, and first consisted of prisoners of war captured during the war with the Crimea

12 P. Czyżewski, 2013.

Horde, and subsequently of civilians from the Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates fleeing from the Russian occupation. By the end of the 17th century, King John III Sobieski (1629–1696) granted the Tatar settlers demesnes in the Podlasie district¹³.

Studies on GDL Tatars' Manuscripts

Like Morisco manuscripts, the manuscripts of the Tatars of the GDL have first aroused scholarly interest over a century and a half ago. The first authors to publish on the topic were Heinrich Fleischer (“Codices Arabici, Persici, Turcici” 1838) and Anton Muchliński (“Исследование о происхождении и состоянии литовских татар”, 1857). In the first half of the 20th century, researchers of the Belarusian region noticed the phenomenon of Tatar books thanks to Ivan Lutskevich’s acquisition of the 18th century kitab in Forty Tatars Village (in Lithuanian – Keturiasdešimt totorių kaimas). It was recognised as an important source for the history of the Belarusian language. Subsequently, several works were published by Tatar authors such as Jakob Szynkiewicz (“O kitabie”) and A. Woronowicz (“Kitab Tatarów litewskich i jego zawartość”, “Szczątki językowe Tatarów litewskich”). Nevertheless, orientalists such as A. N. Samojłowicz (“Литовские татары и арабский алфавит”), Ignatij Krachkovsky (“Рукопись Корана в Пскове”), Ananiasz Zajączkowski (“Tzw. chamał tatarski ze zbiorów rękopisów w Warszawie”), Władzimir Zajączkowski (“Resztki językowe Tatarów litewskich”) drew attention to the Tatar writings only occasionally; the sole exception being Stanisław Szachno-Romanowicz, who undertook systematic research but most of his works remained in typescript for many years. The 1960s and 1970s brought a significant revival, mainly due to the work of Anton Antonowicz (“Белорусские тексты, писанные арабским письмом, и их графико-орфографическая система”, “Краткий обзор белорусских текстов, написанных арабским письмом”). Another wave of interest in the field, which continues until today, was opened in the second half of the 1980s by the works of Cz. Łapicz (“Kitab Tatarów litewsko-polskich”).

In the end of the 1990s, orientalists joined the researchers of Belarusian language, traditionally the most active in the field of Tatar of the GDL literature. Major achievements in this field were the works of Andrzej Drozd: a study of the prayer for the sultans entitled “Sultan dua (święteczna modlitwa za sułtanów)” and a monograph “Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII wieku”, which scrutinises the Polish translation of three Arabic festive orations

13 M. Lewicka, 2016, p. 2.

present in a manuscript from the collections of the Library of the Oriental Faculty of the University of St. Petersburg. Other ground-breaking publications were the works of the researchers from Vilnius: Galina Miškinienė (“Ivano Luckevičiaus kitabas”) and of Paul Suter (“Alfurkan Tatarski: der litauisch-tatarische Koran-Tefsir”), who attempted to evaluate the translation of the Qur’an in its philological and translational aspects by studying the second sura, Al-Baqarah. Shirin Akiner transcribed the British Library Kitab and provided it with a general introduction on the Tatars of the GDL and a study of their language (“Religious Language of a Belarusian Tatar Kitab. A Cultural Monument of Islam in Europe”). Most recently, in 2013, Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska (Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń) launched a research project named the “TEFSIR”, dedicated to critical edition of the tefsir and translation into Polish.

Qur’ans of the Tatars of the GDL

The extant manuscripts of the Qur’an are one of the most abundant written artifacts produced by the Tatars of the GDL. They are outnumbered only by *chamails*¹⁴, which of course also feature fragments of the Qur’an. The Qur’anic manuscripts contained not only the full text of the Holy Book in Arabic, but also prayers and guidelines for correct recitation. Sometimes, they also included the list of intentions (Ar. نية) or some selected *ayāt*, particularly the text of the 36th surah, Ya-Sin, recited at funerals. Hand-written copies of the Qur’an that remain until now are numerous¹⁵, preserved in private collections as well as at the Lithuanian National Museum in Vilnius and the Belarusian National Museum of History of Religion in Grodno. The earliest of them date from the early 19th century¹⁶.

At this point it should be noted that when they first took up residence in the GDL, the Tatars of the GDL were making use of Muslim literature in Turkish,

- 14 *Chamail*: from Ar. حمل , “to carry with oneself”, a type of a prayer book containing various texts on religious themes: practical descriptions of Muslim rituals, including ablutions, prayers, rites of the cycle of life, name giving, circumcision, marriage, sets of Arabic and Turkish *duai* prayers, occasional formulas and devotional texts, charts with the Muslim calendar, and in some cases magical texts.
- 15 “Manuscripts of The Quran usually number 200–300 pages, of the dominant size of 20 x 17 cm. In the 19th and 20th centuries they were owned by the majority of the Tatar families and were passed down from generation to generation” – M. Lewicka, 2016, p. 5.
- 16 A. Drozd, M. M. Dziekan, T. Majda, 2000, s. 49–50. There is also a tantalizing mention of a 1682 manuscript of the Qur’an containing a partial translation into Polish, kept at the Historical-Archaeological Museum in Pskov. Despite my numerous emails, I have not received any answer from this museum.

brought by the settlers in the 14th and 15th centuries, or acquired later. Around the year 1620, testimony from a former Turkish captive indicates that the Tatars of the GDL had begun translating the Qur'an into the language of the 'unfaithful' Poles, although in Arabic script¹⁷. It is estimated that the process of language assimilation lasted from the 16th to the first half of the 17th century, and resulted in the use of Polish and Belarusian (but not Lithuanian) as the vehicular languages of the diaspora. Interestingly enough, as a rule of thumb, texts were translated from Arabic into Polish and from Turkish into Belorussian; thus, the Qur'an was rendered into Polish¹⁸.

As the act of translating the Qur'an from Arabic into any other language was a highly polemical issue, the full text of the Qur'an with the interlinear, oblique translation into Polish was labelled as 'Tefsir'. Up to date, twenty-six *Tefsir* manuscripts have been identified¹⁹. The earliest of them dates to the end of the 16th century and is a translation into Turkish.

The next *Tefsir* (1686) contains a translation into Turkish of the first eighteen suras, and a Polish translation of the rest of the Qur'an. According to the colophon, the translator and copyist was Uryash ibn Ismail²⁰, Imam of Minsk, an otherwise unknown figure.

All the later *Tefsirs* are Polish translations, or rather variations on the same translation. The original translation was made by an unknown translator, possibly in the late 16th or early 17th century. The translation from Arabic is heavily mediated by Turkish exegetical material.

The oldest complete copy of this translation is the *Tefsir* from Alytus (Polish: *Tefsir z Olity*), also called Jabłoński's *Tefsir*, dated 1723. It should be noted that the original part of the translation dates back to the beginning of the 18th century, whereas its corrected, supplemented and added fragments date from 1836. The exact date of the copy is transmitted in the colophons in Polish and in Arabic. Also thanks to the colophon, we know that the copyist was the son of Mustafa, Izmael Jabłoński. The copyist who expanded, supplemented and modernized the

17 A. Drozd, M. M. Dziekan, T. Majda, 2000, s. 49–50.

18 Lithuanian Polish (Pol. *Dialekt północnokresowy*): a group of diverse dialects, gradually established after 1569 in the territory of the GDL. Its features are the result of the overlapping of the Polish language with a Belarusian and Lithuanian substrate.

19 Рукапісы беларускіх татараў канца XVII – пачатку XX стагоддзя, 2003; Г. Мишкинене, С. Намавичюте, Е. Покровская, 2005; Рукапісы татараў Беларусі канца XVII – пачатку XX ст. з дзяржаўных кнігазбораў краіны, 2011; Рукапісы татараў Беларусі канца XVIII – пачатку XXI ст. з дзяржаўных і грамадскіх кнігазбораў краіны, 2015; Тафсіры, кітабы і хамаілы з прыватных кнігазбораў Беларусі, 2020.

20 Transcribed into Polish as Urjasz ibn Ismail.

text was the imam Ibrahim Januszewski. In the 19th century, the manuscript belonged to Samuel Ułan, a co-organizer of a Tatar squadron in the Napoleonic army in 1812. At present, the manuscript is held in a private collection in Lithuania. Apart from the Tefsir text, it contains prayers recited at the beginning and end of Qur'anic recitation, a list of intentions, and some private notes. Marginal glosses, written in the Latin alphabet, testify to the Tatars of the GDL interest in Biblical literature, examined in order to find information complementing Islamic sources²¹.

The 1890 translation, called Jozefowicz's Tefsir (see Annexes No. III), contains the same translation as the one in the above-mentioned manuscript. The copyist's name was Adam Jozefowicz and it was commissioned by Adam Mahamet Mejszutowicz.

Further study of these manuscripts will benefit greatly from a critical edition²². The manuscripts span two hundred years, from 1723 to 1900, and are preserved in private collections, the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library in London, the Library of the Oriental Studies Department at Saint Petersburg State University, the Library of Vilnius University, the Embassy of Iran in Warsaw, the National Museum of Lithuania, the Central Science Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, and the Belarusian National Museum of History of Religion in Grodno.

Similarly to the Morisco translations of the Qur'an, in the manuscripts of the Tatars of the GDL the sacred character of the text is highlighted by the use of Arabic script, here adapted to convey the phonological features of Slavic languages. The Tatars of the GDL completed the process of adapting the alphabet by the second half of the 16th century. All the Polish-Tatar texts were vocalized, and additional letters were introduced in order to render the text more legible. Some of these letters were of Turkish origin, and some were home-grown modifications²³.

21 J. Kulwicka-Kamińska, 2015, s. 159.

22 The research on the Tefsir of the Tatars of the GDL has been conducted since 2013 by the research team headed by prof. Czesław Łapicz and Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, see the Project TEFSIR website: <http://www.tefsir.umk.pl/0,1,0-projekcie.html>. The ultimate critical edition has been edited in three volumes: *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury narodowej*, t.1: *Komentarz filologiczno-historyczny*, red. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, Czesław Łapicz, Toruń, 2022. *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury narodowej*, t.2: *Faksymile*, Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, Czesław Łapicz, Toruń, 2022. *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury narodowej*, t. 3: *Transliteracja*, Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska, Czesław Łapicz, Toruń, 2022.

23 J. Kulwicka-Kamińska, 2018, s. 85–110.

Surprisingly, even though the pages were numbered with the Western Arabic numerals current in Europe, Eastern Arabic numerals were used in the main text. Also, the manuscripts are bound in the European style.

Preliminary Considerations instead of Conclusions

The Morisco and Tartars' of the GDL Qur'ans pose numerous challenges for the researchers, such as its script, translation idiosyncrasies, and above all its liminal character. It is precisely due to these features, however, that they are perfect examples of how European Muslims built their self-image in relationship to their Christian neighbours; these artefacts attest to the permeability of the Muslim and Christian intellectual communities, as can be visible in their glosses and annotations. Thanks to the Morisco studies, we have been able to appreciate to what extent their written production influenced the religious and cultural heritage of Europe; the study of the circulation of Tatar manuscripts among non-Muslim Europeans could equally contribute to our understanding of these phenomena. Moreover, examining how the Tatar readers annotated their religious texts with the reference to the Christian Bible brings forth the strategies which are fundamental for understanding European interwoven religiosities. Some centuries earlier, in Iberia, the Moriscos have used not only the Old Testament figures such as Adam, Abraham and Moses, but also Jesus and Mary to explore the points of convergence between Christianity and Islam. It might have seemed that the Moriscos were interested in blurring the boundaries between these two religions. Particularly, in the texts prepared for Christian readers, the Morisco authors thought that it was beneficial for the patrons to focus their attention on the figures familiar from the Bible. Thus, I believe that a close reading of these sources and paying special attention not only to the main text but also to all forms of glosses and interlinear annotations can be of key importance to understand not only the European Muslims' religiosity but also the aspects of Islamic doctrine exploited by European Christians, be it for intellectual or polemical reasons.

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