
BOOK REVIEWS

Paul Suter, *Alfurkan Tatarski. Der litauisch-tatarische Koran-Tefsir*. Köln, etc. Böhlau: 2004. XXI, 555 S. (Bausteine zur slavischen Philologie und Kulturgeschichte. N. F. R. A: Slavistische Forschungen. Bd. 43).

The study of the manuscript heritage of the Polish-Lithuanian Tatars (the so-called “kitābistics”) has a lot in common with the study of Muslim-Spanish manuscripts *aljamiado*: both are unlikely to be published in their original form. In both cases the preserved texts are evidence of the language of their epoch of which few other sources have preserved since Latin served as the main written language, and the “local” languages were used mostly by the minorities of other faiths. This causes the domination of the interest in the linguistic aspect of these monuments over the interest in their contents, and the aspiration to convey them in transcription to make them readable for those who do not master Arabic graphics.

The appearance in 1986 of the book by Cz. Łapicz *Kitab Tatarów litewsko-polskich* in the publishing house of Toruń University defined a new period in kitābistics. Years ago the Harrassowitz publishing house announced the book by Sh. Akiner *The Religious Language of the Byelorussian Tatars* which has not yet been published, and meanwhile several important monographs have appeared apart from numerous articles. In Poland the following books were published: A. Drozd, *Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII wieku* (Warszawa, 1999); as the third volume of the *Katalog zabytków tatarskich*, an annotated and well illustrated catalogue of A. Drozd was published together with M. M. Dziekan and T. Majda *Piśmiennictwo i muhiry Tatarów polsko-litewskich* (Warszawa, 2000), and Cz. Łapicz together with H. Jankowski published a translation of *Klucz do rajy. Księga Tatarów litewsko-polskich z XVIII wieku* (Warszawa, 2000). This translation is notable as Spanish researchers prefer not to translate texts written in *aljamiado* into the modern Spanish language, but to provide them with glossaries. In Lithuania G. Miškinienė's book was published called *Seniausio Lietuvos Totorių rankraščiai* (despite the Lithuanian title, most of the book is written in the Russian language) (Vilnius 2001), which was presented as an “educational-methodological text-book”.

Paul P. Suter's book was published in the famous series of monographs called *Bausteine zur Slavischen Philologie*

und Kulturgeschichte. In fact it is a dissertation written in Zürich University and bears all features of one including its lay-out. The text is divided into 19 sections with smaller sub-sections inside most of them.

In the first section, the “Introduction”, such notions as “Lithuanian Tatars” and “kitābistics” are explained and the history of its studies is told beginning from A. Muchliński, the absence of a full world inventory of manuscripts is noted and most famous places of their storage are listed (however, the abovementioned catalogue by A. Drozd and others is unknown to the author). When dividing the manuscripts into different types, the author points to incorrect orthography of oriental words ascribed to the copyists who did not always understand what they were copying. The Slavic texts of the manuscripts are mostly translations, just Polish or just Byelorussian is rarely found in them, and we usually come across a mix of the two languages. The text of the *tafsīrs* is Polish, but the Qur'ānic texts in the *kitābs* are in the Byelorussian language. Basing on this the author makes an assumption about the once existing but later lost Byelorussian *tafsīr*. The names of the translators have not preserved. In the same section other European analogues are mentioned: the Spanish and Bosnian *aljamiado*. All this information can be found in all research works on kitābistics, but their repetition in the dissertation is inevitable.

In the following sections different types of comments and translations are considered (replication and insets of comments) as well as Slavonic conformities to the Arabic grammatical structures, adoptions from the Arabic, Turkish and Persian languages, the already mentioned alternative versions in the *tafsīrs* and the Qur'ānic quotations of the *kitābs*. Everyone who has dealt with the translation of the canonic texts into the “local” confessional languages will find here many typologically familiar phenomena.

The next section contains a review of the sources where apart from *tafsīr* manuscripts, the texts of many of which are unknown as they are kept in private collections and their owners are reluctant to make contacts with the researchers, the “outside” sources about the Polish-Lithuanian Tatars are reviewed: *Tārīh-i Peçevî* where they are mentioned casually and *Risāle-i Tātār-ı Leh*. Some researchers assume that the later is A. Muchliński's invention, but the manuscript is indeed kept in the Oriental Library of the St. Petersburg State University.