

## From the editors

We hereby present the readers with a critical edition of the first translation of the Qur'an into a Slavic language. Regrettably, the original translation, made as early as in the late 16<sup>th</sup> or the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, by Tatars – the Muslims of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (hereafter GDL; see map on page 614), has not survived until today. Consequently, the edition is based on the oldest (1723) unabridged copy of a Tatar *tefsir*, i.e. a sublinear translation of the Holy Book of Islam into Polish (the variety spoken at the north-eastern borderland of the country).<sup>1</sup> Due to the place where it is held, this copy is referred to as the *Alytus Tefsir* (TAL, from the Lithuanian town of Alytus). The copy is a literary monument<sup>2</sup> held by a private person. Only a part of the manuscript has its genesis in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The passages that were later corrected, supplemented, or added by users date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, specifically to the year 1836, a fact established on the basis of colophon.

Comparative material for interdisciplinary research, the results of which are presented in this edition, comprised of 14 other *tefsir* copies, which originated from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries:

1. The *Minsk Tefsir* (TCNB), dated 1686 and held at the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in Minsk (reference number П16–18/Cp2 (P 214)).
2. The *London Tefsir* (TL), dated 1725 and held at the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum in London (reference number No. 33264).
3. The *Tefsir from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the National Library of Belarus (11Pк 473 (reference number MH 16 1–3) /positive/, 11Pк 474 (reference number MH 16 1–3) /negative/).
4. The *Vilnius Tefsir* (TW), dated 1788 and held at the Vilnius University Library (reference number F 3–392).

---

<sup>1</sup> In Islam, a *tafsir* is a commentary to the Qu'ran (Arabic: *tafsīr* “explanation, interpretation, clarification, or commentary – particularly that of or to the Qu'ran”). GDL Tatars use the term *tefsir* to refer to comprehensive manuscripts containing the full text of the Qu'ran with interlinear translation into Polish with Belarusian features, recorded in the Arabic script, and supplemented with the exegetical layer.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this text, the term "monument" denotes a historical text.

5. The *Tefsir from the Last Quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg (reference number D 723).
6. The *Tefsir from the Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the National Library of Belarus (reference number 11H//230K).
7. The *Petersburg Tefsir* (TUP), dated 1811–1825 and held at the Library of the Faculty of Asian and African Studies of the Saint Petersburg University (reference number 867).
8. The *Novahrudak Tefsir* (TN), dated at the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and held in a private collection in Belarus.
9. The *Chalil Józefowicz Tefsir* (TCHJ), dated at the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and held in a private collection in Belarus.
10. The *Ali Jakub Żdanowicz Tefsir* (TJŻ) from 1858, held in a private collection.
11. The *Tefsir from the Last Quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the Yakub Kolas Central Scientific Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus in Minsk (reference number II19–20/Cp4 (P 223)).
12. The *Tefsir from the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, held in the private collection of Ibrahim Konopacki in Belarus.
13. The *Józefów Tefsir* (TJW) from 1890, held at the National Museum of Lithuania in Vilnius (reference number HMJI R-13.012).
14. The *Hrodna Tefsir* (TG) from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, held at the Hrodna State Museum of the History of Religion (reference number KII 31388). It is a translation of the Qur'an into Polish, published in 1858 by Jan Murza Tarak-Buczacki, retransliterated into the Arabic script, and provided with the synchronously-positioned Arabic original.

Our research included certain fragments of *tefsirs* in the form of references and quotations in several in several Tatar *kitab*s and *chamails*:

1. The *Luckiewicz Kitab* from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, held at the Wroblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences (reference number F21–814).
2. The *Milkamanowicz Kitab*, dated at the years 1782/1783 and held in a private collection.
3. The *Kitab from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the British Library (reference number OR 13020).
4. The *Aladdyn Krynicki Kitab*, dated 1883 and held in a private collection.
5. The *Mustafa Żdanowicz Kitab*, dated 1883 and held in a private collection.
6. The *Pastavy Kitab from the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century or the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, held in a private collection.
7. The *Semi-Kitab from the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, held in a private collection.
8. The *Chamail from the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the Hrodna State Museum of the History of Religion (reference number Ч3 1814).

9. The *Chamail from the Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century*, held at the Kazan Federal University (reference number 3246 ap.).
10. The *Sulejman Bajraszewski Chamail*, dated 1852 and held in a private collection in Slonim.<sup>3</sup>

The most valuable *tefsir* manuscripts, which have survived until the present, is the *Alytus Tefsir*, due to the fact that – as it has already been mentioned – it is the oldest dated copy, comprising the unabridged translation of the Qur'an into Polish (the north-eastern variety of Polish). Hence, the edition and critical commentaries are based on this monument.

The following Qur'anic *surahs* have been selected and subjected to detailed analyses: *surah* 1 – *Al-Fātiḥa*, i.e. *The Opening*; *surah* 36 – *Yā Sīn*, i.e. *The Heart of the Qur'an*, and the *surahs* treating of the Oneness of God – e.g. *surah* 16 – *An-Naḥl*, *surah* 17 – *Al-Isrā'*, i.e. *The Bee*, *The Night Journey* and the closing *surahs*, particularly *Al-Iḥlās*, i.e. *Sincere Religion*. The reason for such a choice was the subject of these *surahs*, directly connected with the doctrine of Islam.

The task of publishing a critical edition with a philological and historical commentary of the Tatar *tefsir*, comprising the unabridged text of the monument, i.e. the Slavic layer in transliteration<sup>4</sup> and the Oriental layer in the ISO transcription, was undertaken by an international interdisciplinary team of scholars, within the framework of a project of Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki [The National Programme for the Development of Humanities]. The *Tefsir* project, of which we are the authors, was realised in the years 2013–2016 (module 1.2 no. 12 H 12 0041 81) and has been continued in the years 2017–2022 (no. 11 H 16 0319 84).<sup>5</sup> We have invited the vast majority of researchers of Tatar writings, who represented various fields of study and specialisations, to collaborate. The group has included: Slavists (Polish Studies and Belarusian Studies), Orientalists (Turkology, Arabic Studies, and Semitic Studies), historians, literary scholars, cultural studies scholars, political science scholars, and lexicographers from 12 academic and research centers, from five countries.

The edition is comprised of: a theoretical and commentary volume, containing the historical, political science, translation, linguistic, and literary parts – both Slavic and Oriental – and the critical edition of the volume. The commentary volume includes: the instruction to the edition, the guide to reading the Tatar monuments developed by the interdisciplinary research team, the specification of the *Alytus Tefsir*, and the analysis of the watermarks of the manuscript. The critical edition is comprised of: facsimiles, the

<sup>3</sup> A plethora of Tatar monuments, including the ones mentioned in this text, are described in catalogues, see *Bibliography* in this part.

<sup>4</sup> The transliteration system of *tefsirs* was developed by the scholars involved in the *Tefsir* project: Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska and Czesław Łapicz.

<sup>5</sup> To find a detailed description of the *Tefsir* project, visit: <http://www.tefsir.umk.pl/> (last accessed: 24 May, 2021).

transliteration of the whole *tefsir* text, and the transcription of selected fragments of the Oriental layer. The *tefsir* edition is provided with footnotes, including, among others, an explanation of the words and larger passages of texts of Oriental origin; an explanation of words that today are recognised as archaic, but historically present in the Polish, the Ruthenian, and, rarely, Russian, lexical resources; hybrid forms; newly-created forms, which do not occur in Slavic languages; as well as the forms which were recorded as late as in 19<sup>th</sup>-century lexicographic sources, but which had been used in earlier copies of the monuments of Tatar literature.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth mentioning that manuscript literature presents rich and varied research material, which is of fundamental importance for not only ethnic or national, but also European heritage and culture. Consequently, during the implementation of the *Tefsir* project, we have published nine monographs on this topic (see *Appendix*), dedicated two volumes of the „Litteraria Copernicana” journal to Polish-Lithuanian Tatars (see *Appendix*), organised 14 international academic conferences, held in three countries of which the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was comprised, i.e. Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus, delivered several lectures, e.g. „Co łączy Polskę z Turcją? Przenikanie kultur a granice tożsamości. Islam-chrześcijaństwo – czy pokojowa koegzystencja jest możliwa?” [*What connects Poland and Turkey? The Interpenetration of Cultures and the Limits of Identity. Islam and Christianity – Is Peaceful Coexistence Possible?*] (2015), „Wielojęzyczność w kraju nad Wisłą” [*Multilingualism in the Country upon the River Vistula*] (2017), „Język Tatarów polskich” [*The Language of Polish Tatars*] (2018), „Tefsiry, kitaby, chamaiły, czyli ...islam po polsku!” [*Tefsirs, Kitabs, Chamails or... Islam in Polish*] (2018), „Najnowszy przekład Koranu na język polski” [*The Recent Translation of the Qu’ran into Polish*] (2019), and participated in several television and radio programmes, e.g. V Międzynarodowy Kongres Azjatycki i XII Międzynarodowa Konferencja: „Kierunek Azja. Różnorodność. Odmienność. Dialog” w 100-lecie odzyskania niepodległości Polski i niepodległości Azerbejdżanu [*The 5th International Asian Congress and the XII International Conference: “The Direction of Asia. Diversity. Difference. Dialogue” on the 100th anniversary of Poland’s independence and Azerbaijan independence*] (2018), „Ja z tatarskich hrabiów pochodzę...”. O filomackim przekładzie Koranu [*I Derive from Tatar Counts...” On the Philomath Translation of the Qu’ran*] (2020). Moreover, within the framework of the exhibitions organised by The Ossolineum Library, titled „Złota epoka Jagiellonów 2020” [*The Golden Age of the Jagiellon 2020*] and the Polish History Museum, we prepared modules dedicated to the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Thus, we have completed the first and most important task of kitabistics: a critical edition of the Tatar *tefsir*. Moreover, we are working on publishing a transcription of the Tatar *tefsir*, i.e. a transcription of the manuscript in a form similar to modern spelling,

---

<sup>6</sup> Numerous lexicographic studies were used for the etymological and semantic description of language units, see *Bibliography*.

while preserving selected essential features of the manuscript language. This will be a form of the popularisation of the *tefsir*, which is crucial in making the oldest translation of the Qur'an available to a wider audience.

In addition, our research into the Tatar cultural legacy has been expanded to encompass comparative studies conducted in the Balkans and Spain. As of 2019, we have been carrying out a joint project: "Aljamado Literature in Renaissance Europe. A Comparative Study".

## Bibliography

### Dictionaries

- Баранов Х. К., 1984, *Арабско-русский словарь*, Москва.
- ДСБ – Аляхновіч М. М., Klimchuk F. D., 1989, *Дыялектны слоўнік Брэстчыны*, Мінск.
- ГСБМ – *Гістарычны слоўнік беларускай мовы*, 1982–2017, vols. 1–37, Мінск.
- КГС – Булыка А. М. (ed.), 2015, *Кароткі гістарычны слоўнік беларускай мовы*, Мінск.
- ПГС – *Падручны гістарычны слоўнік субстантыўнай лексікі*, 2013, vols. 1–2, Мінск.
- СлРЯ XI–XVII вв. – Бархударов С. Г. et al. (eds.), 1975–, *Словарь русского языка XI–XVII вв.*, Москва.
- СЛУМ XVI–I пол. XVII ст. – Гринчишин Д., Чікало М. (eds.), 1994–, *Словник української мови XVI – першої половини XVII ст.*, vols. 1–28, Львів.
- СБГПЗБ – Мацкевіч Ю. Ф. (ed.), 1984, *Слоўнік беларускіх гаворак паўночна-заходняй Беларусі і яе пагранічча*, Мінск.
- ТС – Крывіцкі А. А. (ed.), 1982–1987, *Тураўскі слоўнік*, vols. 1–5, Мінск.
- ЭСБМ – *Этымалагічны слоўнік беларускай мовы*, 1978–2010, vols. 1–13, Мінск.
- ЭССЯ – Трубачев О. Н. (ed.), 1963–2018, *Этимологический словарь славянских языков. Праславянский лексический фонд*, vols. 1–39, Москва.
- Danecki J., Kozłowska J., 1996, *Słownik arabsko-polski*, Warszawa.
- ЕКТР – *Elektroniczny korpus tekstów polskich z XVII i XVIII w. (do 1772 r.)*, [https://korba.edu.pl/query\\_corpus/](https://korba.edu.pl/query_corpus/) (last accessed: 8 April, 2022).
- ESJP XVII i XVIII – *Elektroniczny słownik języka polskiego XVII i XVIII wieku*, <https://sxvii.pl/> (last accessed: 8 April, 2022).
- ESJPBań – Bańkowski A., 2000, *Etymologiczny słownik języka polskiego*, Warszawa.
- Re – Reczek S., 1968, *Podręczny słownik dawnej polszczyzny*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków.
- SEJPBo – Boryś W., 2005, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków.
- SEJPBr – Brückner A. (ed.), 1927, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków.
- SEJPSł – Sławski F. (ed.), 1952–1982, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, Kraków.
- SGP – *Słownik gwar polskich*, IJP PAN w Krakowie.
- SL – Linde S. B., 1854–1860, *Słownik języka polskiego*, vols. 1–6, Lwów.
- SMPP – Grek-Pabisowa I., Ostrówka M., Jankowiak M. (eds.), 2017, *Słownik mówionej polszczyzny północnokresowej*, Warszawa.
- SPraśł – Sławski F. (ed.), 1974–2001, *Słownik prasłowiański*, Wrocław.

- SPXVI – Mayenowa M. R., Peplowski F. (eds.), 1966–2021, *Słownik polszczyzny XVI wieku*, vols. 1–39, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków.
- SStp – Urbańczyk S. (ed.), 1953–2002, *Słownik staropolski*, Kraków.
- Stachowski S., 1968, *Osmanisch-türkische Wörter im Wörterbuch von P. S. Pallas (1787–1789)*, „Folia Orientalia”, vol. 9, pp. 53–68.
- Stachowski S., 1975–1986, *Studien über die arabischen Lehnwörter im osmanisch-türkischen*, vols. 1–4, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk.
- Stachowski S., 2005, *Glosariusz turecko-polski*, Kraków.
- Stachowski S., 2007, *Słownik historyczny turcyzmów w języku polskim*, Kraków.
- SWil – Zdanowicz A. et al., 1861, *Słownik języka polskiego*, Wilno.
- Wehr H., 1985, *Arabisches Wörterbuch für die Schriftsprache der Gegenwart. Arabisch-Deutsch*, Wiesbaden.

## Directories

- Ганчарова І. А., Цітавец А. І., Тарэлка М. У. (eds.), 2003, *Рукапісы беларускіх татар аў канца XVII–пачатку XX стагоддзя з калекцыі Цэнтральнай навуковай бібліятэкі Нацыянальнай акадэміі навук Беларусі: каталог*, Мінск.
- Доўнар Л. et al. (eds.), 1997, *Рукапісныя і друкаваныя кнігі беларускіх татар аў: каталог выставы*, Мінск.
- Мишкинене Г., 2011, *Сводный каталог арабскоалфавитных рукописей литовских татар: коллекция Гродненского государственного музея истории религии*, „Kalbotyra”, no. 56 (2), pp. 93–120.
- Мишкинене Г., 2012, *Сводный каталог арабскоалфавитных рукописей литовских татар: Львовская научная библиотека им. В. Стефаника НАН Украины*, [in:] J. Jaroslavienė, V. Meiliūnaitė, N. Morozova, J. Zabarskaitė (eds.), *Naujausi kalbų ir kultūrų tyrimai*, Vilnius, pp. 45–58.
- Мишкинене Г., 2015, *Арабграфичные рукописи литовских татар в контексте культурных взаимосвязей: коллекции Казанского Приволжского федерального университета и Национальной библиотеки Республики Татарстан*, [in:] O. Mastianica, D. Michaluk, R. Miknys, V. Pugačiauskas, V. Žaltauskaitė (eds.), *Kintančios Lietuvos visuomenė: struktūros, veikėjai, idėjos*, Vilnius, pp. 42–59.
- Мишкинене Г., 2020, *Арабграфичные рукописи литовских татар из одного частного собрания: новые находки*, „Slavistica Vilnensis”, vol. 65 (2), pp. 136–148.
- Мишкинене Г., Намавичюте С., Покровская Е., 2005, *Каталог арабскоалфавитных рукописей литовских татар*, Вильнюс.
- Тарэлка М. У. (ed.), 2015, *Рукапісы татар аў Беларусі XVIII–пачатку XXI стагоддзя з дзяржаўных і грамадскіх кнігазбораў краіны. Каталог*, Мінск.
- Тарэлка М. У. (ed.), 2020, *Тафсіры, кітабы і хамаілы з прыватных кнігазбораў Беларусі: каталог*, Мінск.
- Тарэлка М. У., Цітавец А. І. (eds.), 2011, *Рукапісы татар аў Беларусі канца XVII–пачатку XX ст. з дзяржаўных кнігазбораў краіны. Каталог*, Мінск.

Цітавец А. І., 2009, *Рукапісы нашчадкаў татараў Вялікага княства Літоўскага ў калекцыях свету*, „Забыткі: дакументальныя помнікі на Беларусі”, vol. 9, Мінск, pp. 49–62.

Drozd A., Dziekan M. M., Majda T., 2000, *Piśmiennictwo i muhiry Tatarów polsko-litewskich*, „Katalog Zabytków Tatarskich”, vol. 3, Warszawa.

## Studies

<http://www.tefsir.umk.pl/> (last accessed: 24 May, 2021)

Miškinienė G., 2021, *The Kitab of Ivan Lutskevich a Monument of Lithuanian Tatar Culture*, Vilnius.

## Appendix

Abkowicz M., Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Miškinienė G. (eds.), 2022, *Narodziny turkologii we Wschodniej Europie i jej znaczenie dla mniejszości turkijskich*, Poznań.

Krajewska M., Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Szulc A. (eds.), 2016, *Święte księgi judaizmu, chrześcijaństwa i islamu w słowiańskim kręgu kulturowym*, vol. 1: *Księgi wyznawców islamu. Kitabistyka*, Toruń.

Krajewska M., Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Szulc A. (eds.), 2016, *Święte księgi judaizmu, chrześcijaństwa i islamu w słowiańskim kręgu kulturowym*, vol. 2: *Księgi wyznawców judaizmu i islamu. Historia – Socjologia – Sztuka*, Toruń.

Krajewska M., Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Szulc A. (eds.), 2016, *Święte księgi judaizmu, chrześcijaństwa i islamu w słowiańskim kręgu kulturowym*, vol. 3: *Słowiańscy chrześcijanie Wschodu i Zachodu. Język – Dialekt – Piśmiennictwo*, Toruń.

Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Łapicz C. (eds.), 2013, *Tatarzy Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego w historii, języku i kulturze*, Toruń.

Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Łapicz C. (eds.), 2015, *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. Teoria i praktyka badawcza*, Toruń.

Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Łapicz C. (eds.), 2019, *Rękopis z Czombrowa. Filomacki przekład Koranu – edycja i studium historyczno-filologiczne zabytku*, Toruń.

Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Łapicz C., Miškinienė G. (eds.), 2018, *Tatarskie dziedzictwo kulturowe*, vol. 1: *Rękopiśmienne księgi religijne. 50 lat kitabistyki*, Toruń.

Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Łapicz C., Miškinienė G. (eds.), 2018, *Tatarskie dziedzictwo kulturowe*, vol. 2: *Historia. Literatura. Sztuka*, Toruń.

Kulwicka-Kamińska J., Łapicz C., Miškinienė G. (eds.), 2020, „Litteraria Copernicana”, no. 1 (33): *Tatarzy i Słowiańszczyzna*.

Lewicka M., Łapicz C. (eds.), 2016, „Litteraria Copernicana”, no. 2 (18): *Tatarzy polscy – adoptowani do narodu*.

Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska  
Czesław Łapicz