

## **THE MARRIAGE OF KORANIC ARABIC AND THE BELARUSIAN, POLISH AND TURKISH LANGUAGES AT TATARS MANUSCRIPTS OF THE XVIIITH-XXTH CENTURIES**

The proposed article related of Arabic Alphabet Manuscript books of the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Tartars from the Golden Horde and the Crimean khanate who settled in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the ancient State of Belarusians and Lithuanians) during the 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> centuries wrote the books. The territory the Grand Duchy was never under domination of the Golden Horde and there were constant contacts between both countries.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania began to expand rapidly during the second half of the thirteenth century; troops were needed not only to conquer new lands but also to protect those already acquired. The Tartars were outstanding soldiers. Rival fractions constantly made war on each other and those who were defeated frequently took service under foreign powers. Vitaut, the most brilliant and far-sighted of all the rulers of the Grand Duchy (1350-1430), was particularly active in encouraging Tartar soldiers to settle in his realm. In order to facilitate this, he gave them the rights to intermarry the indigenous population and to have children of such unions brought up in the faith of the father.

This, allied to their close social and economic ties with the local Slav population, made it inevitable that Tartars, coming from many different tribes, should lose their native language. By the mid-sixteenth century the majority of Belarusian Tartars didn't know Turkic and made use of Belarusian and Polish. This process of abandoning the native tongue was no doubt accelerated by mixed marriages of Tartars with local women. The only field in which the originality of local Tartars preserved was the religion (Islam).

A very valuable part of the cultural heritage of Belarusian Tartars lies in their writings. All of such works known today are in a manuscript form, written in neat Arabic letters and read in the usual for the Arabic script manner from right to left. Writings in the Belarusian language but in the Arabic script are especially interesting for researchers.

The oldest known manuscripts of Tartars belong to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but there is a supposition that the origins of their writings go back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there was in Minsk a group of Tartars who were fully proficient in the Arabic script and were engaged in copying the Koran and other works of a religious nature. The writing - or copying - of books has been going on to the present day.

The literature of Belarusian Tartars is essentially religious and is intimately connected with their Moslem faith. There are comparatively few original works among the writings of Belarusian Tartars, the majority of them being translated from a variety of Oriental sources. The writings may be divided into a number of groups

In the first place there are Korans, the Holy Scripture of Muslims. It is typical for the Korans written in Belarus that in addition to the essential holy text in Arabic the books usually contain small introduction in the vernacular explaining how to prepare for reading.



**Koran.** – 1853 y.

↓ Binding: dark brown leather over pasteboard. Binding shabby, the spine is absent. Some leaves fell out from the bound. The paper is in a bad condition: almost all the leaves are damaged. The Arabic text of the Koran at the beginning of the book is in the worst condition. The paper along the lines is almost destroyed. The paper has brown shades; leaves have traces of water spilling, spots, tears.

↓ The copyist Mustafa Miskevich (Uzda, Minsk region). On the cover there is a note of copyist: "The sacred writing was completed by Mustafa Miskevich in Uzda in 1853".

For the Belarusian Tatars Tefsirs have the special importance. Though the Arabic word Tefsir usually means "commentary", Belarusian Tefsirs in essence are translations of Koran from Arabic into Polish or Belarusian having some elements of commentary. The books include the Koran texts written in Arabic where under each horizontal line of Arabic text there is a translation, aligned obliquely to the original. In the Central Science Library of the Belarus National Academy of Sciences there is the Tefsir dated 1686 which includes the oldest copy (from remained and known) of Koran translation into Polish.



**Tefsir.** 1797. [watermarks: Laucevičius E. № 360 – 1784, 1785 yy.; Klepicov S.A. The book I, № 5 – 1787, № 361 – 1786, The book 2, № 11 – 1794; № 89 – 1782 [1786]; № 90 – 1786 [1787]; № 1217 – 1774]. Smilovichi, Minsk region.

↓ 2° (33 x 20). 480 p.

↓ Arabic, Belarusian, Polish in the Arabic graphic. Script naskh in one hand (?) in black ink. The text on pp. 5-6 is closed in two-lined frame. Custodies. On p. 361 there is a table (?).

↓ Binding: dark-brown leather over pasteboard, plain tolled: on the front pages there is a frame with planted ornament. The book-cover is not connected with the

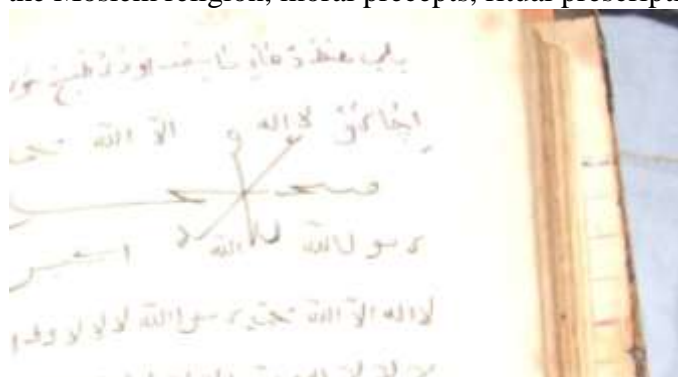
block of the leaves, shabby, with ruptures above and below. The paper has traces of water spilling, the leaf corners are dirty.

↓ The book belonged to Yakub Meishutovich, than was the property of Ismail Kanapatski.

Next come the Tejwids, which are treaties on how to read the Koran.

The Chamails (usually of small size) are informal manuals of prayers and ritual containing in particular several prayers and spells thought to have magic or medicinal powers.

Finally there are the Kitabs (from the Arabic word Kitab meaning "the book"), which are especially interesting for ethnographers and philologists. These collections incorporate the tenets of the Moslem religion, moral precepts, ritual prescriptions, legends, pious tales and apocrypha.



**Chamail.** The first half of XIX century (?). Minsk.



**Kitab.** 1832. [watermark: Klepicov S.A. The book I, № 68 – 1814, 1829, [1830]; see also the copyist's note – pp. 156-157]; Smilovichi, Minsk region.

↓ 4° (34 x 22). 158 p.

↓ Arabic, Belarusian, Polish in the Arabic graphic. Script naskh in one hand in black ink. The separate words are distinguished

or underlined in red ink. The copyist – Abragim Hasenevich. Custodies.

↓ In the pp. 1-8 – the genealogical table of prophets, halifes, and imams. In the p. 156 there is a not in Arabic, Polish, Russian (by civil writing): “Abragim Hasenevich wrote this book in the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1832 and signed with enclosure by his hand in Tatar, in Latin, in Polish and in Russia Abragim Hasenevich”. On the p. 157 there is a not in Arabic, Polish, and Russian (by civil writing): “Abragim Hasenevich wrote this book in the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1832 and signed with enclosure by his hand Abragim Hasenevich”. Above the note was painted a stamp. Inside there is a text in Arabic.

↓ Binding: dark-brown leather over pasteboard, plain tolled: on the front pages there is a smooth frame with planted ornament in the middle. The book-cover is shabby, there is an absence of leather below the cover, and the corners are shabby.

↓ The book consists of oriental stories, legends, moral and ethics recommendations, solution of dreams, knighted stories, witchcraft on the letters of Koran.

The majority of the Belarusian Tartar manuscripts besides the texts in Belarusian, Polish or their mixture- as might be expected - contain texts in the Arabic and Turkic languages. In the manuscripts there are re-written Eastern texts, fragments translated from Eastern sources into Belarusian or Polish and original texts in the local language. Thus, they are polyglot records, which represent great value for Orientalists and Slavists. In contradistinction to Cirilic records the language of the Belarusian texts written in the Arabic script is very close to the people spoken tongue. For the best reflection of the local pronunciation some letters have been added to the Arabic alphabet, they include letters representing the sounds which are typical for the Belarusian pronunciation [d'z'] and [c'] (so called "dziekannie" and "cekannie").

The studies of the Tatar manuscripts begin in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first scientist who in 1838 described a manuscript of the Lithuanian Tatars containing Belarusian texts was the German Orientalist O.Fleischer. In 1857 the professor of Petersburg University A.Mukhlinsky published his work "The research on the Origin and State of the Lithuanian Tartars". In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the subject was developed in the works of J.Stankevich, I.Luckievich, J.Karski and others. A.Antonovich has researched thoroughly a great number of Belarusian texts written in the Arabic script, gave detailed linguistic evaluation, made some estimates about the time of writing and geographic origin of each book, studied the graphical aspect of alphabet and the special letters that were used by Tatars to reflect the Belarussian phonetics, published many transliterated excerpts. Contemporary publications of Belarusian scientists I.Kanapacky, V.Niescerovich, English orientalist G.M. Meredith-Owens and Belarusian enlightener A. Nadson, Lithuanian professor G.Mishkinienė, Polish researchers H.Jankovsky, C.Lapich, A.Drozd have revealed new aspects in this field.

Investigations of well known and little known Tatar manuscripts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania sometimes reveal a number of interesting problems, which can be solved only by combined efforts of researchers from different scientific directions.

One of the most important ways of scientific researches is study of cultural legacy of Tatars. Since 1993 till 2005 11 International Scientific conferences have been hold in Belarus. At the conferences were adopted recommendations for holding on the next research work in study history, culture, Muslim religion of Tatars in Belarus, Lithuania and Poland.

In 2003 the group of librarians (I. Gancharova, E. Tsitavetz, M. Tarelka) has published the catalogue of Islamic manuscripts in the Yakub Kolas Central Science Library of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus. It includes documents (14 units) of the end of the XVII<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> centuries. We would now plan to publish an enlarged catalogue from the private collections.

This literature is a very valuable part of the cultural heritage of Belarusian Tatars. A large part of it has been keeping in Tatars families to the present day. A number of these rare books

are constantly decreased. They are purchased by the private persons and kept in their own collections. We want to preserve the cultural legacy of Tatar's, which is a part of their Ethnic Identity.

If in the nearest future will not made and receive programmers of preservation and development, collection and conservation of historical Tatars monuments, this original literature – Belarusian Tatars Manuscripts will soon disappear.