

PREFACE

This collection of articles is a part of the official events programme confirmed by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania to mark the Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture in 2021, which was declared as such by the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania. Lithuania's Tatars left a clear mark in the country's history, participating in all its wars and uprisings and fighting for Lithuania's freedom and independence. The Tatar community in Lithuania significantly contributed to the restoration of Lithuania's statehood, its history and culture, linking its existence with Lithuania, and is therefore a part of its history. Descendants of the Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (henceforth – GDL) live in three countries: Lithuania, Belarus and Poland, while other Tatars can be found today in Crimea, Tatarstan and Türkiye. Interest in this small ethnoconfessional community continues to grow, leading to the tradition nurtured in independent Lithuania to organise international conferences dedicated to research of Lithuanian Tatar history, culture, writing and religion. It is no accident that an international conference and the publication of the resulting conference material were incorporated into marking the Year of Lithuanian Tatar History and Culture in 2021. That is why the international scientific conference, *Tatars in the History and Culture of Lithuania from the 14th to the 21st Centuries: the Latest Research*, held at Vilnius University on the 9th–11th of September 2021, was an attempt to continue earlier work in examining this Turkic nation's (the Tatars) transformation in the 20th century and to present and discuss the new challenges this nation will potentially have to face in the 21st century.

Conferences, seminars, exhibitions and video documentaries dedicated to Lithuania's Tatars have been organised since 2007 in collaboration with our regular partners from the Turkish Language Centre in the Faculty of Philology and the Centre for Stateless Cultures in the Faculty of History at Vilnius University, as well as the Centre for Kitab Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. International conferences dedicated to marking the 610th, 615th and 620th anniversaries of Tatar settlement in the GDL were held at Vilnius University in 2007, 2013 and 2017 respectively. Three anthologies of peer-reviewed scientific articles based on the content of these conference presentations were compiled and published, laying a firm foundation for focused and consistent research of this community¹. Their authors

1 Orientas Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicijoje: totoriai ir karaimai. Specialusis „Lietuvos istorijos studijos“ leidinys, t. VI, sud. T. Bairišauskaitė, H. Kobeckaitė, G. Miškinienė, Vilnius: Vilniaus universitetas, 2008; Tiurkų istorija ir kultūra Lietuvoje. Specialusis „Lietuvos

were scholars from Belarus, Bulgaria, Spain, Israel, Poland, Lithuania, Tatarstan, Türkiye, Ukraine and Hungary, for whom this GDL ethnic minority – the Tatars – has become an object of research, helping provide a new evaluation of the integrality of the GDL and issues concerning the existence of various ethnic minority cultures in the state. One of the best examples of studies of this kind was the founding of the Centre for Kitab Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń in 2014 (headed by prof. habil. dr. Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska), where a team of international researchers was formed that implemented a research project, which received support and funding from the National Programme for the Development of Humanities in Poland (*Narodowy Program Rozwoju Humanistyki Ministerstwa Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyższego*, 11 H 16031984; 2017–2022). The result of this co-operation was a 3-volume publication titled “Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego. XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język Polski” (2022).

In exactly the same way, the international scientific conference on the 9th–11th of September 2021 organised by the Faculty of Philology at Vilnius University and the Tatar community of the Vilnius District was also a contribution to exposing issues in Lithuanian Tatar history, culture, religion, writing, integration and assimilation, and the situation of the historic diaspora. The conference partners were the Centre for Stateless Cultures in the Faculty of History at Vilnius University, as well as the Centre for Kitab Studies at Nicolaus Copernicus University. Some of the conference papers reflecting the results of the latest research on Lithuania’s Tatars developed into articles, which have been compiled into this collection.

The articles in this publication are divided into five thematic sections. Chapter 1 features articles on the traditional historic theme: there is a discussion of the Turkic population in the steppe territory at the GDL and the Crimean Khanate border, paying attention to the fate of Tatars after the adoption of Christianity in the 15th–16th centuries – namely, the cases of the Glinski, Jagoldai and other Tatar ducal and noble families. The authors discuss the question of authorship of the still extant authentic source “Alfurkan Tatarski” (Wilno, 1616/17), which provides historic information about the oldest ethnoconfessional group in Lithuania (the Tatars). Readers will also have the chance to learn about comparative research attempts at making the first tentative steps towards a description of the GDL Tatar and Spanish Morisco translations of the Qur’an.

istorijos studijos“ leidinys, t. XI, sud. T. Bairašauskaitė, G. Miškinienė, Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2014; “Tatarzy i Słowiańszczyzna”, *Litteraria Copernicana* 1 (33), pod redakcją Joanny Kulwickiej-Kamińskiej, Czesława Łapicza i Galiny Miškinienė, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika, 2020.

Chapter 2, titled “Culture and Tradition”, includes articles about the formation of ritualised traditions once the native language was lost. The loss of their native language actually prompted the emergence of the exclusively Lithuanian Tatar manuscript tradition in the 16th century. Manuscripts written in Arabic, Turkish, Belarusian and Polish (such as kitabs, khamails, tefsirs and tajwids), yet in Arabic script, became an inseparable part of Lithuanian culture. The texts contained in these manuscripts reflect their cultural value and importance and are testimony of the values and priorities of one of the oldest Muslim communities settled in Eastern Europe. The folkloric material in certain manuscripts formed a system of spells, healing incantations and protective rituals, which were popular not only within the Muslim community but among Christians and Jews as well. The article about the faith of the Lithuanian Tatar and Dobruja Tatar concerning auspicious and inauspicious days, and another article analysing a text about fortune-telling using astrological horoscopes, broaden and supplement earlier known precious sources of such texts, allowing us to consider the prospect of conducting textological research of such documents in the future. We should note that the reinstatement of cultural diplomacy between Türkiye and Lithuania in the 1980s has had an enormous influence on Lithuania’s Tatar traditions and their culture in general.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to authors who have revealed hitherto unknown biographical facts about eminent Tatars: ranging from the pedagogical and educational activities of the Crimean Tatar Ismail Gasprinsky to the political figure, scientist and first Lithuanian Tatar mufti, Jakub Szynekiewicz, and the mystery of his “three lives”. Meanwhile, it was also found that the astronomer and surveyor Anton Shahin was most likely of Tatar descent.

The next chapter, titled “Language and Literature”, offers a closer introduction to a linguistic analysis of the texts in Lithuanian Tatar manuscripts. The texts rewritten in Turkish found in Lithuanian Tatar manuscripts are of great importance to Turkish language researchers. One such text – the story of the Mi’raj – offers a great deal of valuable material to linguists. Texts written in Ruthenian and Polish often feature hybrid characteristics. An example of this would be the text found in an 18th-century manuscript book about the birth of the Prophet Muhammad – Mawlid. The comprehensive discussion of proper names in the toponymics of any region offers information about the most important stages in the material and religious cultural history of a land’s nation, as a historic fact lies behind each geographic name. In this way, the sacred landscape of Vokė is revealed in the geography of Tatar narratives.

Chapter 5, “Community Life and Crafts”, reveals new facts concerning the migration of GDL Tatars to America, based on submitted passenger forms, meeting

protocols, birth and death registries and other sources being publicised for the first time. Also, readers can learn many new things about the fur processing craft in Raižiai in the 20th century, patterned leather from Kazan as one of the oldest traditional Tatar crafts, and also about traditional Tatar musical instruments from the Volga region, which Lithuanian Tatars could have used at a certain time and on certain occasions in the past.

The articles are published in their original languages (English, Belarusian, Lithuanian, Russian and Turkish) with summaries in English and Lithuanian. This principle was determined by the international nature of the collective of authors and the understanding that in this way, the articles could be accessed by a larger number of readers.

Expressing the most sincere gratitude to the Presidency For Turks Abroad And Related Communities (*Yurtdışı Türkler ve Akraba Topluluklar Başkanlığı*) and the Vilnius City Municipality for their good-willed support in the release of this collection of articles, as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye in the Republic of Lithuania for mediating in this publication project, the editors hope that this book will foster interest in society and among academics in the development of Lithuanian Tatar history and culture, as such publications serve as a significant contribution to Lithuanian culture as a whole.

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