ROCZNIKI HUMANISTYCZNE
Tom LXXII, zeszyt 1 – 2024
ZESZYT SPECJALNY
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18290/rh24721.3s

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ORIENTALISM IN EASTERN EUROPE: THE QURAN ADVENTURE OF THE PHILOMATHS

INTRODUCTION

The Philomath Society (Pol. Towarzystwo Filomatów) is one of the most fascinating secret organizations in Eastern Europe. Its purpose was both political and scientific. Some members became famous, while others stayed in the shade. The Philomath Society was short-lived but highly effective, with repercussions on the nationalist and scientific movements in Poland, Lithuania, but also in Belarus and Russia. The interest in Philomaths is still significant as demonstrated in the last international conference dedicated to them in November 2023 in Lublin, on the commemoration of the bicentenary of their condemnation by Tsar Alexander I in 1813. For many years, Polish historians have monopolized the possession and heritage of this prestigious society.[1] Indeed, the Philomaths participated in keeping Polish patriotism alive at the beginning of the 19th century, after Poland was painfully partitioned at the end of the 18th century. This contribution to Polish nationalism is highly valued

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[1] Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska i Czesław Łapicz, *Tefsir Tatarów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: XVI-wieczny przekład Koranu na język polski. Wydanie krytyczne zabytku polskiej kultury narodowej*, vols. 1-3 (Toruń, Komentarz filologiczno-historyczny, Université Nicolas Copernic de Toruń, 2018-2022). A beautiful and excellent very recent edition of the Koran of the Tatar, but the description of the authors among the Philomaths is still according to the "classical version" analyzed in this article.

in Polish historiography and the image of the Philomaths is unequivocally positive among Polish historians. However, there is a palpable tendency to politicize all their projects, and to neglect some of their scientific or literary contributions to fit an exclusive Polish patriotic narrative. Nevertheless, most of their works were literary and scientific. Let us not forget that "philomath" is an 18th-century term coined from the Ancient Greek *φιλέω* (philéō) 'to love' and *μάθημα* (mathêma) 'knowledge, science'. Philomaths therefore refers to lovers of science above all, including politics and nationalism. Several philomathic societies preceded the one in Vilnius, notably the *Société philomathique de Paris* in 1788. It is true that the Philomaths of Vilnius were more politically involved, which, however, should not overshadow their numerous scientific works. They had an impressive creativity, and the most iconic sign of their dynamism – with which they distinguish themselves from any other philomathic society – is their translation of the Quran (*Qur'ān*). The simple fact that an early-19th-century patriotic society in Eastern Europe devoted many years to translating the Quran, surprises or even dumbfounds many readers. The reaction could be positive amazement or misunderstanding, and a kind of denial by looking for a political explanation. The truth is that the translation of the Quran by the Philomaths raises several questions. Why such a project? Who are the real authors? How did they do it? What were their sources? Did they speak Arabic? What happened to their manuscripts?

Officially, several authors, mainly Polish and Lithuanian, have answered all these questions in numerous articles. However, in my research on the translation of the Quran in the 19th century for a master's degree, and then a doctoral dissertation in La Sorbonne on the most important Polish translator of the Quran, Albert de Biberstein Kazimirski (1808–1887), many of those "official responses" of the Quran of the Philomaths proved to be inaccurate (Drira 2024).[2] For an Arabist, with a good knowledge of the Quran, a Polonophile, but non-Polish, certain explanations put forward by these authors as self-evident, seem highly debatable. Furthermore, certain details that went unnoticed in Polish bibliography should instead be a priority. This article aims to present the latest research on the Quran of the Philomaths, such as the discovery of Kazimirski's links with this translation, as well as a categorical rejection of several official theories. The synthesis of this work was presented in November 2023 in an international conference on the Philomaths held in Lublin, Poland, that brought together the greatest Polish and Lithuanian specialists on this society. The welcoming reception from these scholars demonstrates that it is the time to introduce these new theories to a broader audience interested in Orientalism and the Philomaths.

[2] See also my *Kazimirski (1808–1887), L'ambassadeur de l'Orient, L'univers géopolitique du plus grand traducteur du Coran* [publication planned 2025].

So, how important is Eastern European orientalism, and what is the real story of the Quran of the Philomaths and the Tatars beyond all the myths and legends about them? To answer that, it will be interesting to devote a long first part explaining the Philomaths' interest in the Quran, then the sources and the method used by the translators, and finally the links of Kazimirski with this first Polish translation.

1. WHY SUCH AN INTEREST IN THE QURAN AMONG THE PHILOMATHS

1.1 A NON-POLITICAL PROJECT

In Polish and French historiography, it is customary to see Vilnius as the cradle of the Polish Uprising of 1831. Indeed, in 1820s Poland was divided between Prussia, Austria, and Russia, in addition to the free city of Kraków. Inside the Congress Kingdom under Russian supervision, the political and economic situation was rather stable. We can even consider that Polish culture was thriving. The national poet Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (1758–1841) served as secretary of state, and his patriotic *Historical Songs*, written between 1808 and 1810, were very popular in Poland, despite some censorship (Illouz 2021). The University of Warsaw was founded on November 19, 1816, by decree of the Tsar (1801–1825) and King of Poland (1815–1825) Alexander I. Nevertheless, at that time, it was in Vilnius, which unlike the Congress Kingdom had been fully annexed to the Russian Empire since 1795, that Polish literary, scientific, and patriotic dynamism were the most impressive. Professor Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861) founded the *Vilnius Weekly* (*Tygodnik Wileński*) in 1815 (Serejski 1961), in which his student Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855), a kind of "prophet" in Polish historiography, made his debut ("Opisy służbowe uniwersyteckie"). Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861), who held an important position in the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1801, was curator of the University from 1803 to 1823. The best example of this intellectual vigor in Vilnius is the Society of Philomaths founded in 1817 by Mickiewicz and his comrades, such as Józef Jeżowski (1793–1855), Franciszek Malewski (1800–1870), Tomasz Zan (1796–1855) and Józef Szczepan Kowalewski (1801–1878). Professor Joachim Lelewel was very close or perhaps a discreet member of the secret Society of Philomaths. In fact, it is this link that cost him his position at the University of Vilnius (Więckowska 1980). The Philomaths were brilliant students, patriots with a passion for poetry, with a well-documented philhellenism, especially after the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) (Kalinowska, Tomaszuk, and Borowska 2012). There is but one step from Greece to the Oriental lands, but their biographers have not highlighted this attraction for Orientalism.

Knowing that almost everyone who started the Polish Uprising was linked in one way or another to Vilnius and Lelewel, the logic followed in Polish historiography is that all their activities converged towards Polish independence. This is an obvious case, especially for a non-Polish person, of retrospective history. As a result of this mistake, the incredible and unique project of translating the Quran by the Philomaths was simply treated through the reductive lens of politics. No one disputes that patriotism was at the heart of the Society of Philomaths. While this is undeniable, portraying it as their primary motivation for all their works inevitably leads to fallacious reasoning. This is why it is necessary to first address the question of the Philomaths' interest in the Quran without the flawed premise that all their works had as their final objective the independence of Poland.

Of course, not all researchers have succumbed to this paralogism, but it is surprising that the most obvious reason for the project, which is an interest in Orientalism and in the Quran itself, is simply absent in most articles. In a paper by Czesław Łapicz on "the extraordinary fate of the first printed translation of the Quran in Polish", the motivation of the Philomaths is presented as follows:

> The first translation of the Quran, printed and published in 1858, was signed by Jan Musza Tarak Buczacki, a Tatar and Muslim from Podlasie in Poland. Today, however, it is known that the actual translators were two Philomats from Wilno, Father Dionizy Chlewiński and Ignacy Domeyko. They performed the task in the 1820s for the Muslim Tatars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, who over generations had lost their knowledge not only of liturgic language (Arab), but also of their ethnic languages and dialects (Turkic) (Łapicz 2013).

We will see that what Czesław Łapicz presents as a fact known by all – that Buczacki is not the author – is also debatable, but let's focus on the explanation presented here. According to Łapicz, the Philomaths have done the translation not for themselves, but out of altruism for the Tatars to help them better understand the Quran. The question of the difficulty for the Tatars to understand the Quran in Arabic or Tatar and their preference for Polish is a separate, interesting topic. But regarding the precise action of the Philomaths to translate the Quran to help the Tatars, is there the slightest tangible proof of this explanation? Such as an official request from the Tatars to this secret society, or at least some mutual visits between notable Tatars and Philomaths? Obviously not. The original sin is that for some the words "Polish" and "Orientalism" seem to be incompatible, and subsequently the reason is sought elsewhere. Czesław Łapicz justifies it by the desire to help the Tatars, while others mention some obscure political agenda. The reason would be to obtain the support of the Tatar for the Poles against the Russians, or even against the Lithuanians. Indeed, the Baltic Tatars had gradually settled in the region since the 14th century, receiving lands from the Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas the Great (1392–1430).

The Philomaths, by translating the Quran for the Tatars into Polish and not into Lithuanian, Belarusian or Russian, would have demonstrated the legitimacy of the Poles on the disputed lands of Kresy, the region on the north-oriental borders of the ancient medieval kingdom of the Two Nations. If an ironic caricature is permitted, this kind of explanation, without tangible proof, would make the translation of the Quran a political bribe.

First, not all the Philomaths or the Philaretes, and obviously not all the intellectuals of Vilnius University, were exclusively Polish, neither in their place of birth, nor in their attachments. An example is Michał Bobrowski (Michail Bobrovsky) (1784–1848). Born in Wólka in Podlasie, very close to the border of present-day Belarus, he graduated in theology and philosophy from Vilnius University in 1814. He followed the example of his father Cyril (Kirill) Bobrowski who was a Unitarian priest, then canon of the chapter of Brest in 1817. He was spotted by Adam Czartoryski, who financed part of his studies during five years of travelling across Europe, from September 1817 to August 1822, in Italy, France (notably at the Sorbonne), Dalmatia and Germany. He obtained his doctorate in theology in July 1823 in Vilnius and received a position as a professor of theology. Passionate about Slavic history and Orientalism, researcher of ancient Slavic manuscripts and the first printed Cyrillic publications, he is rightly presented as an orientalist in all mentions about him (Charkiewicz 1936). He was a member of the Asiatic Society of Paris and London, as well as the Society of History and Antiquity of Moscow University. His passion led him to take the initiative of teaching Arabic in his courses on the ancient Bible, even though he was not an Arabic speaker. His brother Michał also became a doctor of philosophy in Vilnius in 1830, and together with a group of Belarusian Poles such as Antoni Sosnowski, Ignacy Daniłowicz, Józef Onacewicz, and Józef Jaroszewicz, they initiated a new wave of research into the history of Lithuania and of Belarus (Siedlecka-Siwuda 2008) – to the point that Bobrowski is considered one of the fathers of the Belarusian national renaissance. Bobrowski was very close to the Philomaths, or even a full member of the Society.

So, it must be clear the Philomaths were interested in Orientalism as a literary and scientific discipline. Perhaps they also had political thoughts, but that is, at best, just the tip of the iceberg.

1.2 ORIENTALISM IN VILNIUS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Vilnius is a unique multicultural city in Europe. Lithuania was the last Christianized country in the continent. The majority of the country's inhabitants were of the Orthodox faith. Vilnius was home to the majority of the country's Catholics, as well as many Lutheran Protestants, including many Germans. There was also a large

Jewish community, hence the label "Jerusalem of the North" (Minczeles and Poliakov 2000), with diverse religious tendencies such as the Karaite Jews. To add an oriental touch, Muslim Tatars lived in the Vilnius region. All this combined created a unique cosmopolitan city in Europe. There is also the delicate question of Vilnius national affiliation: Lithuanian or Polish, or even partly Russian at that time? Without getting into a controversy over ethnic affiliation, it is recognized that Vilnius was, until the beginning of the 19th century, a heavily Polonized city. A parallel could be drawn with Brussels, the French-speaking capital in the Flanders region. For the more specific case of Vilnius University, Polishness was gradually achieved with the recognition of Polish as an official language in 1816. Therefore, Vilnius was at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th century, an important center of Polish nationalism. Many iconic Polish figures such as Adam Czartoryski, Joachim Lelewel, Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Aleksander Chodźko were shaped by this city. This influence is well known and, as mentioned before, it should not lead to over interpreting the interest for the Quran by the Philomaths.

Another troublemaking demon is the denigrating paternal view that Orientalism began in Western Europe, in France, in Germany, in England and that countries such as Poland or Russia only followed from a distance the orientalist movement. This is false. Polish Orientalism is one of the oldest in Europe, and it was precisely in Vilnius that this Polish Orientalism became scientific (Siwiec et al. 2016). Before that, in the 17th and 18th centuries, there was an era of "proto-orientalists" in Poland. The main actors of this movement were diplomats, travelers or Polish Catholic missionaries who were interested in the languages and cultures of Muslim oriental countries, but for various reasons, not necessarily scientific. Many of them were self-taught. The 18th century was the golden age of Polish dragomans (Reychman 1947). The apotheosis came in 1766 when King Stanisław August Poniatowski founded the Polish school of oriental languages in Istanbul, one of the first orientalist schools in the world. The results were not those expected (Siemieniec-Gołaś 2017), but the project, led by the Polish King himself, to give Polish Orientalism an academic base, was launched.

The first scientific place linked to Poland, which took over after that period of the dragomans, was the University of Vilnius, which was the largest and oldest (founded in 1579) university in the entire Russian Empire (Beauvois 2019, 79–88). Prince Adam Czartoryski, appointed as curator of the University in 1803, was in favor of a project for a university chair as proposed to him by the famous explorer, Count Jan Potocki (1761–1815), in several letters sent from Vienna and Troitsk (Russia) in 1804 and 1805 (Mejor 2009, 15–16). A position as a professor of oriental languages was offered in 1810 to the linguist and ethnographer from Berlin, Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1783–1835). Czartoryski personally guaranteed an additional salary out

of his own pocket. Klaproth declined the position and preferred to remain at the Academy of Saint Petersburg. Then, when war broke out with Napoleon, he returned to Berlin in 1812, then to Paris in 1815. However, interest in the Greek and Muslim East was so strong that teachers, although neither Arabic nor Persian speakers, broke the ice in 1810. The first Arabic lessons were given by Szymon (Sebastian) Feliks Żukowski (1782–1834), professor of Hebrew and Greek in 1810 (Bumblauskas et al. 2020). The imperial printer in Vilnius, Józef Zawadzki (1781–1838), unsuccessfully pleaded for Żukowski to obtain the vacant position of the Oriental chair, notably to teach Tatar and Crimean languages. Żukowski had a long correspondence with Lelewel, published in Warsaw in 2008 (Żukowska 2008). Lelewel encouraged him to deepen his knowledge of Arabic and Tatar.

So, Polish scholarly Orientalism was launched in Vilnius, but the oriental chair was still empty. In 1822, it was to be attributed to Józef Julian Sękowski (1800–1858), a Polish orientalist specializing in Arabic, Turkish and Persian, which are considered the "Muslim languages" (Versteegh 2020). Born in Lithuania in a Polish family, he was a member of the Scoundrels Society (Pol. Towarzystwo Szubrawców). It is known today that he wrote several articles under the pseudonym "Indian Sage" in the Society's satirical journal *Wiadomości Brukowe* (Street News), published from 1816 to 1822 (Kaji 2011). He criticized the Lithuanian nobility in the form of oriental metaphors. Very few people knew about it. On the contrary, he was seen as a diligent student detached from politics. He was appreciated by his teachers and learned a lot from the German philologist Gottfried Ernst Groddeck (1762–1825), a professor of Greek, under whom Adam Mickiewicz also studied. In 1819, he graduated from several departments, namely physics, mathematics, politics, and philology. His oriental flame was kindled in Lelewel's lessons, whom he considered his mentor for many years. Clearly, the "Vilnius nastavnik" had an orientalist impact. Moreover, one of Sękowski's first works was the translation of *Amtsal Lokman El-Hakim*, from Arabic to Polish, published in Vilnius in 1818 (Sękowski 1818). It is no coincidence that the first book of Albert de Biberstein Kazimirski (1808–1887) was likewise a Polish translation of *Amṯāl Lūqmān al-ḥakīm* (Kazimirski, *Przypowieści Lokmana mądrego* BK: 482), and his mentor was as well the unavoidable Lelewel.

In 1821, Sękowski received the position of "interpreter of oriental languages" for the College of Foreign Affairs in Saint Petersburg. His reputation in the orientalist field was growing and a successful scientific career awaited him. It is not clear whether he officially applied for the vacant position in Vilnius, but his name was spreading around. The journalist and secretary of the University, Kazimierz Kontrym (1776–1836), wrote a letter to Czartoryski about him to support his candidacy, specifying that he would first be a professor of Arabic, "a language of knowledge, useful for medicine, sciences, literature, diplomacy, military activities" (Mejor 2009, 21).

Czartoryski was enthusiastic about the project and gave his support for the nomination of Sękowski. On April 28, 1822, the rector of the University, Szymon Malewski, approved his appointment with a salary of 1,000 rubles. But the Tsar wanted him for himself and offered him the position of "professor of oriental languages" at the University of Saint Petersburg. Sękowski took a few months to make his decision and then informed Czartoryski on August 20, 1822, that he was declining the position in Vilnius (Serikoff 2009). At the same time, could he refuse the Tsar's offer? It granted him a better pay and greater scientific opportunities. From then on, he became Osip Ivanovich Senkovsky. Russia honored him – he was at the heart of the development of Russian Orientalism (Śliwa 2018).

Unlike Western Europe, Russia was aware of the potential of Polish orientalists and knew how to take great advantage of it in several areas. The fact that Polish orientalists served Russia in the 19th century (before Poland regained independence after the 123-years-long era of the Partitions) should not be a reason to subject them to *damnatio memoriae*. At least, no more than those who lived in Prussia or Austria, who, let us remember, also occupied part of Poland. Especially since several of these Polish orientalists and diplomats in the Russian Empire were loyal to Poland until their last breath. Some even published books in Polish from Russia or returned to their native home in Poland at the end of their lives.

Orientalism was in vogue in Vilnius at the beginning of the 19th century. This is the context in which the Philomaths made their studies. So, to finally answer the question of why Philomaths were interested in the Quran, the reason should be the simplest and most obvious one: they were attracted to Orientalism. To be more precise, through the project of translating the Quran, they wanted to make Polish Orientalism more scientific and academic. The translation of sacred books is a recurring fact among Polish orientalists at large. As for the Philomaths, who are constantly presented only as poets, historians, and politicians, it must not be forgotten that several of them were certified orientalists.

1.3 THE ORIENTALIST HEART OF THE PHILOMATHS

It is surprising that even scholars have not given much importance to the fact that several members of this secret patriotic Society either wrote directly about Islam or translated oriental books. Let us take four examples from the elite Philomaths. First, there is Józef Szczepan Kowalewski (1801–1878), one of the founders of the society. Few people know that around the 1820s he wrote a hundred-page-long biography of the Prophet Muhammad in Polish, *Apie Mahomet*. It was not published, surely because of the condemnation of the Philomaths, which explains its neglect among its biographers. It is preserved in excellent condition in Vilnius and should

be highlighted in future research (Kowalewski, *Apie Mahomet* VUB RS, F11-7).[3] Kowalewski, while remaining loyal to Poland, made a career in the Russian Empire as Ossip Mikhailovich Kovalevsky. After a visit to Saint Petersburg, he studied Mongolian, Tibetan, and Buddhism in Kazan. In 1833, he became a professor of Mongolian languages at the University of Kazan, the first chair of its kind in Europe, the dream that Jan Potocki had for Vilnius. Kowalewski published in Russian a *Mongolian Grammar* in 1835, then in three volumes, a *Mongolian Russian French dictionary* (1844–1849). He returned to Warsaw in 1862 and became director of the department of philology and history at the Warsaw Main School (1857–1869) and then at the Imperial University in Warsaw (1870–1915).

Another example that the Quran adventure is not an isolated case is Józef Sobolewski z Konkirantów. Little is known about him, but he certainly published in Vilnius, in 1830, a book in Polish on Islam and the Quran, *Wykład wiary machometańskiej czyli Iślamskiej wyjęty z części Kóranu i przykazań proroka Chadisiem zwanych, i ułożony przez mahometanina* (The faith of the Mohammedans, that is to say Islam, according to extracts from the Quran and the commandments of the prophet). The Kórnik Library, founded by Count Tytus Adam Działyński (1796–1861), who was the patron of many orientalists including Kazimirski, has a copy of Sobolewski's book. An intriguing fact is the decoration of the second cover of this book with the Capitoline She-Wolf, and the legendary founders of Rome: Romulus and Remus. This seems off-topic, but there is a link, in the conception of these students, between the Orient and the classical ancient world. In France too, many scholars took this path. Victor Hugo summarized this perfectly in 1829 in *Les Orientales*: "In the century of Louis XIV, we were Hellenists, now we are orientalists. There is a step forward. Never have so many minds explored this great abyss of Asia at once" (Hugo 1829, 4).

One person who would have confirmed that quote is the poet Józef Jeżowski (1793–1855), one of the founders of the Philomaths. After studying in Saint Petersburg, he lectured at Moscow University, then was appointed professor of philology at Kazan University. It was his vocation since Vilnius, where he had published several books on Homer. A relevant comparison can be made between the influence of the Quran on Arabic literature, and that of the *Iliad* and the *Odysseus* on Western literature.

[3] Dr. Veronika Girininkaitė from the University of Vilnius, head of the Department of Research and Heritage Collections of the Vilnius University Library gave a presentation, that will be published in an article, during the Conference on the Philomaths on November 15, 2023 on "The history and legacy of the Philomaths Society: More sources in the Manuscript Departments of Vilnius University Library." As she demonstrated there are still many archives about the Philomaths to be studied.

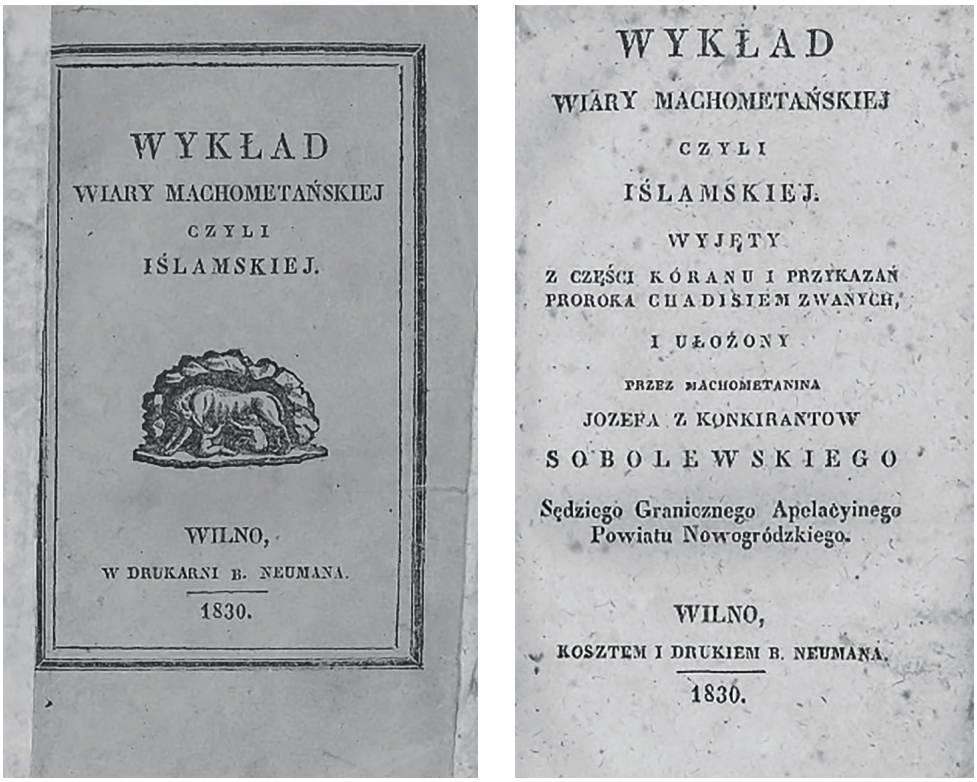


Figure 1. Second and third cover of the book on Islam and the Koran by Józef z Konkirantów Sobolewski, *Wykład wiary machometańskiej czyli Iślamskiej wyjęty z części Kóranu i przykazań proroka Chadisiem zwanych*. The inside cover is decorated with the Capitoline Wolf, and the founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus

Finally, it is imperative to mention the case of Jan (Ivan) Nepomucen Wiernikowski (1800–1877) (Zagoskin 1904), a certified member of the Philaretes. He published in 1823 a Polish translation of a Greek poem by Pindar (518 BC–438 BC). He studied Muslim languages in Saint Petersburg, then taught Arabic and Hebrew at the Kazan Gymnasium in 1827. He was promoted to professor of history at Kazan University in 1832. It was probably at this time that he translated the *Gazele Hafiza* [*The Ġazal of Ḥāfeẓ*] into Polish, making him one of the first three translators of Ḥāfeẓ, with Sękowski and Chodźko, all three of them having been initiated into Orientalism in Vilnius and then prospered in Russia. Wiernikowski's manuscript was published posthumously in Warsaw in 1960. This book in Polish language confirms that we cannot "depolonize" these Polish scientists and diplomats who lived in Russia. Wiernikowski was expelled from his post in Kazan for spreading what was considered anti-Russian ideas. He was deported to Simbirsk (Ulyanovsk), a town later known

as the birthplace of Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924). Wiernikowski did well during his deportation as he found a job teaching German and French and was promoted to director of the Simbirsk Gymnasium (Zieliński 1933, 590). He published a Polish translation of an Icelandic poem from the *Frithiof's Saga*. The Russian writer Alexander Ivanovich Herzen (1812–1870), considered "the father of Russian populist socialism", in his memoirs *My Past and Thoughts,* in volume 1851–1854 about his time in Simbirsk, praised Wiernikowski (Herzen 1968, 788–93). Likewise, the Russian Minister of Agriculture Leonid Lebedev, born in 1840 and having studied at the Simbirsk gymnasium, described Wiernikowski as a conscientious, erudite Orientalist teacher, close to his students, knowledgeable about Russian history, Latin and Slavic languages (Lebedev 1909). Wiernikowski ended his life in Kharkov (Kharkiv) where he lectured at the University which, founded in 1804, was then the oldest Ukrainian university in the Russian Empire (Lviv being Austrian at the time).

Orientalists at Vilnius University played a key role in the development of Orientalism in Russia with first, as previously mentioned, Sękowski, then other scholars of the Philomaths, and then their kind of successor, the Philaretes. The best example of the last group is Aleksander Borejko Chodźko (1803–1891). Great specialist on Iran, he had a successful diplomatic and scientific career, which was possible simultaneously in the Russian Empire. Born in 1804 in Krzywicze, in what is now Belarus, he arrived in Vilnius in 1820 and obtained in 1823 a degree in philology. He formed a friendship with Mickiewicz and joined the Society of Philaretes. He studied in 1824 at the School of oriental languages of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. He was sent on January 1, 1830, as dragoman of the Russian legation to Baku, part of the Russian Empire, and after that he was sent to the Persian Azerbaijan region. He remained in Iran and kept rising to reach the position of consul general of Gilan province on August 20, 1841 (Chodźko personal folder, AVPRI). Despite the distance, he remained close to his friend Mickiewicz. Pretending to be on a medical trip, he joined him in Paris in 1843. Russia promoted him in his absence to consul general of Russia in Iran on March 19, 1843. He never really held this position because he remained in Paris, where he became professor of the Slavic chair at the Collège de France in autumn 1857.

In the 19th century, the importance of Polish Orientalists from Vilnius diminished considerably in Russia. However, the man who directed the Eastern Faculty of Saint Petersburg for many years as dean of the University, was Antoni Muchliński (Anton Osipovich Muchlinsky) (1808–1877), a Pole born in Belarus, graduated from the University of Vilnius in 1826, and a former student of Lelewel himself. He emigrated voluntarily to Saint Petersburg and worked at the Imperial Academy of Sciences. He was sent on a mission to Constantinople in 1832 and took the opportunity to study Turkish and Arabic for two years. He traveled to Syria and lived for a year in

Egypt. He returned to Saint Petersburg in 1835 with manuscripts from the al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo. He lectured at the University of Saint Petersburg as Sękowski's substitute Arabic teacher. In 1839, he was appointed professor of Turkish literature. He also lectured at Kazan University. In 1846, he received the directorship of the Government Library in Warsaw and was also the inspector of Jewish schools in the Kaunas region, Lithuania. He could have settled for good in Poland, but he returned to his position as a professor of Turkish at the Oriental School in Saint Petersburg in 1853. When the Oriental Faculty opened in 1854, he received the position of senior professor of Turkish, to which he added in 1855 the teaching of Turkish history. In Vilnius, in 1857 and 1858, he translated from Tatar into Polish and Russian a book from 1558 on Sultan Suleiman, to which he added an introduction to the history of the Lithuanian Tatars. He also wrote in 1858 a book in Polish and Russian about Egypt. In the same year, he published a manual for learning Turkish for students, making him perhaps the first Orientalist professor to write a modern learning guidebook for his classes. He also had the brilliant idea of writing *a Dictionary of expressions in our language (Russian) taken from oriental languages*. The alliance of Orientalism with military education in the years 1850–1860 worked in his favor because Turkish was the language to focus on after the lost Oriental War (Crimean war). It was in recognition of all his work and sacrifices that Muchliński was elected dean of the Eastern Faculty of Saint Petersburg from 1859 to 1866. He returned to Warsaw in 1869, where he ended his days. He is probably the best example that these Polish Orientalists in the Russian Empire could be loyal to both Poland and Russia.

2. THE JOURNEY OF THE PHILOMATHS WITH THE QURAN

Deconstructing the political narrative is, in itself, an important step. Now it remains for us to accurately present the real authors and their methods. Here, again, the researcher has the right to be surprised: how was it possible for non-Arabic speakers to translate the Quran in Vilnius at the beginning of the 19th century? Why was this question approached so vaguely by previous writers?

2.1 TATAR TEFSIRS

The unique case of the Muslim Tatars – who arrived in the 15th century in the Duchy of Lithuania, being of Mongolian origin, speaking a Turkish language, writing with Arabic letters, having adopted Polish and Belarusian as the languages of communication with their Slavic neighbors – is a godsend for a historian. The discovery of a manuscript of Tatar *Tefsir* dated from 1686 in the Library of the Belarusian Na-

tional Academy of Sciences in Mińsk, sparked renewed interest in Poland, Lithuania, Russia, and Belarus about Tatar literature. Another crucial manuscript is the one of Alytus in Lithuania (*Tefsir z Olity*). Dated from 1723, it is also called Jabłoński's Tefsir, because the copyist has been identified as Izmael Jabłoński son of Mustafa. His manuscript was in 1836 the possession of a Polish imam, Ibrahim Januszewski, who developed and modernized the text (Starczewska 2023). Apparently, these Tatar *Tefsirs* circulated in the Muslim circle of Northern Europe without the attention of the Poles. Little did they know that they contained an interlinear translation into Polish, written with the Arabic alphabet. Indeed, the title *Tefsir* from Turkish, or *Tafsir* from the Arabic word *Tafsīr*, which means approximately clarification or explanation, and the exclusive use of the Arabic alphabet did not make it easier for a non-Arabist to imagine the content. It was assumed to be an exegesis, or some sort of explanation.

The translation of the Quran was treated with great caution by Muslims. As developed in an article on "The History of Quran Translation" (Kazimirski 2014), some Muslim scholars initially welcomed the project to help new converts. Abū Ḥanīfa (699–767) even authorized them to use these translations during prayer while waiting for their possible learning of Arabic. But in the 8th century, the debate focused precisely on the use of translations in prayer and with the Muslim "liturgy" in general. A consensus emerged in the 11th century that the translation was in no way equal to the Arabic original, and therefore not considered composed of true divine words and therefore unusable in prayer. Additionally, not all languages were equal. Persian, for example, enjoyed a privileged status. Overall, translations were not encouraged and only accepted as part of an explanatory book, the *Tafsīr*.

Some *Tefsirs* were extremely long, with dozens of volumes, explaining each verse in detail from historical, legal, linguistic, and other points of view. Others, on the other hand, were short and came close to a translation. The *Tefsirs* of the Northern European Tatars were of this type. Serious research has been carried out on the subject. The Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland, is a pioneer in the field. In 2017, after a careful analysis of more than twenty Polish Tatar manuscripts from Lithuania, Belarus and Russia from the 17th and 18th centuries, the University concluded that there was indeed a Polish translation dating from the second half of the 16th century. Thus, making Polish one of the oldest languages of Quranic translation, the third in Europe after Latin and Italian. There is also another ancient theory that the translation was first written in Belarusian and then translated into Polish in 1686, but there are no Belarusian manuscripts to confirm this.

The obvious question is: who is the author of this ancient Polish translation? According to Andrzej Drozd (2004, 241), "the matter is unambiguous: the author of the translation and at the same time the copyist is Urjasz ibn Ismaïl, imam of Minsk who completed his work in this city [Mińsk] in autumn 1686." However, it is not so

clear even for Andrzej Drozd himself, since he explains a few pages later that there is another, older *Tefsir* manuscript, from 1682, less complete but with notes in the margins, discovered in 1924 in Pskov in Russia, near Lithuania. In that case, Urjasz ibn Ismaïl would not be the first translator. Still, what matters here is just to know that the author of this *Tefsīr* was a Muslim Tatar, *a priori* an imam. So, apparently, it was a collective work with additions from one imam to another.

2.2 THE QURANIC TRANSLATORS OF THE PHILOMATHS

The historiography of this translation and the way in which the known authors acted implies that this project was undertaken from the start as a collective work done on behalf of the whole group. There must have been a collective decision by the Philomaths at the beginning of the 1820s, perhaps after some debates, with a distribution of tasks for the publication of an anonymous translation, produced collectively with the "trademark" of the Philomaths. Historians present three people who participated in the project without knowing the exact proportion of their contribution.

Initially, there was Father Dionizy Chlewiński, then most importantly Ignacy Domeyko (1802–1889), who is the protagonist recurring most often, which makes him the main author. Having graduated in philosophy in Vilnius in 1822, he went into exile in Paris in 1832, then followed an unconventional path by emigrating to Latin America, where he had a brilliant scientific career as a geologist and mineralogist (Wójcik 1995). From 1867 to 1883, he was the rector of the University of Chile in Santiago, where he modernized the education system in Chile, inspired by the model of the University of Vilnius. So, Domeyko was undoubtedly a talented character already in his youth. But that does not change the fact that he was not an Arabic speaker and had apparently never taken any Arabic course. Nevertheless, he was the leader of the project. He continued to work on the Quran translation even after the conviction of the Philomaths in 1823, during his "free time", on his farm, where he was sentenced to house arrest. For the anecdote, during his "oriental retreat" he purchased some Arabian horses from the famous Polish Orientalist Wacław Seweryn Rzewuski (1784–1831), a true Arabist, nicknamed by Emirs of the Hejaz, *Tāǧ al-faḫr* (Crown of Pride). Who knows if Domeyko had conversations with him about his work on the Quran. According to some sources, Domeyko also received help from Sobolewski, perhaps late in the year around 1830 (Kulwicka-Kamińska 2016).

Overall, the articles on the Philomaths are not precise about the distribution of tasks or the exact dates. Furthermore, no archival evidence is ever given. Despite this historical haze, three authors are identified: Domeyko (the main figure), Chlewiński and Sobolewski. What is clear is that none of them was an Arabist. Perhaps Sobolewski knew the language a little, but neither he nor his two comrades had the knowledge

of Sībawayh (c. 760–c. 796).[4] So how did these non-Arabic students attempt a task as arduous as the first translation of the Quran into Polish? It is hard to understand why such a fundamental question is not clearly addressed in dozens of articles.

Of course, from the 17th to the 19th century, some authors have translated the Quran based only on other translations, especially in Latin or French (Drira 2019). But in this case, their sources were known. So, what Quran did the Philomaths have in their possession in Vilnius? Getting an original Quran in Arabic was a complicated task for a non-Muslim. In 1820, it was not possible to simply order a Quran from a bookstore around the corner. Manuscripts were rare and expensive before the Arabic Quran printed in Leipzig in 1834 by Gustav Leberecht Flügel (1802–1870). Moreover, there is no indication that the Philomaths had at their disposal a Latin or another translation. This is a subject that could be explored in more depth with a detailed analysis of the catalog of the Vilnius Library, but apparently the University did not have any Quranic translation at the beginning of the 19th century.

On the other hand, what we find in the library archives is a magnificent complete *Tefsīr* of 956 pages, dated from 1788 and preserved in excellent condition at the Vilnius Library. This manuscript is the key to solve the puzzle. Indeed, as we can observe with an extract from sūrat (chapter) *al-Muṭaffifīn* (The Fraudsters) (83.6–9), the manuscript is perfectly readable, including a line of Polish letters for each line of Arabic script. Surely the talented Philomaths realized that what they had in their hands was not a classical *Tefsir* with explanation, but a Polish translation written in Arabic script. Their intention must have been to the transliterate into Polish Latin letters, with a review of the style and language to make it suitable for a wider audience. This is a useful and feasible project.

Let us add also that this type of a translation project, based on a transliteration and revision of the style, can encourage its authors not to consider it as a real creation, and therefore not create a strong attachment to the work. This would explain, without diminishing the importance of the project, the fact that none of the three Philomaths authors either completed the project later in their life or clearly asserted their copyrights. The heart of their Quranic translation project was rather to emphasize the pioneering contribution in Polish language, made by Tatars. The paradox is that today, as we saw in the previous quotation of Czesław Łapicz, the official theory claims exactly the opposite! Instead of the Philomaths following the Tatars, it is some Polish Tatars, the Buczacki family, who are accused of having usurped the translation of the Philomaths. It's the case of the world standing upside down or, as the French proverb would say, putting the cart before the horses.

[4] A famous expression in Arabic, since Sībawayh is considered the founder of Arabic grammar.

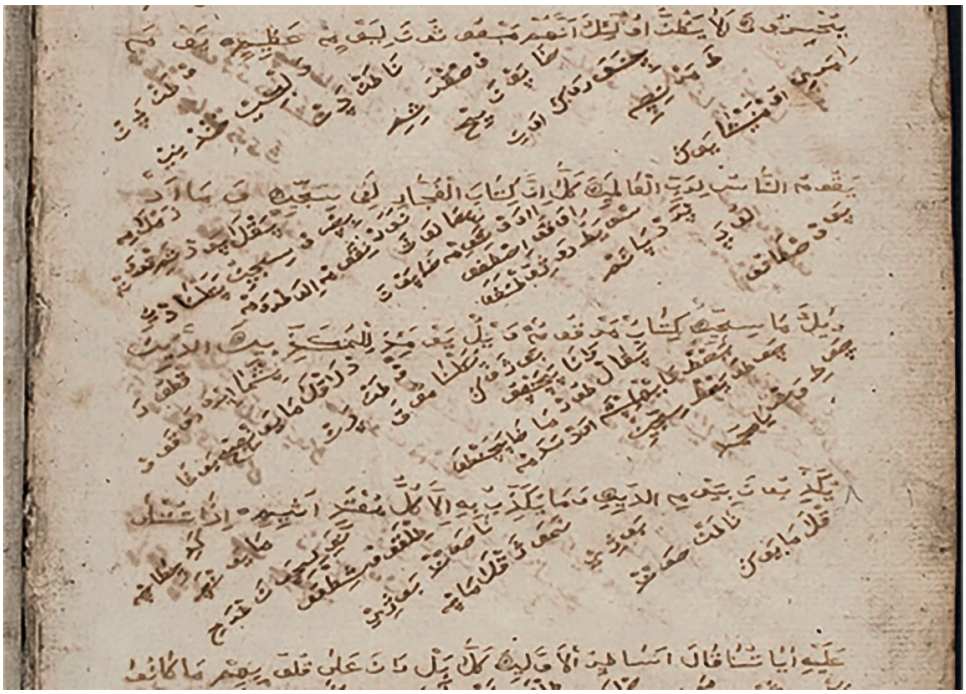


Figure 2. Page 33 (according to the library classification) of the 1788 Tefsir kept at the Vilnius Library: VUB RS, F3-392

2.3 THE BUCZACKI FAMILY TRANSLATION

The very first translation of the Quran into modern Polish was printed in Warsaw in 1858. The publication itself demonstrates that Russian censorship was more flexible than Prussian censorship, which, as we will see, fought for a long time against the publication of a Quran in Polish. On the other hand, this demonstrates the national Orientalist interest because the book was not aimed at Muslims in particular. This is an interesting historiographical observation. To compare, Greece did not have a modern translation until 1880, and Serbia, in the heart of the Balkans, not before1875. Another example is the *Perska księga* in Polish by Samuel Otwinowski (1575–c. 1650), the very first European translation from *Gulistan* of Saadi (Saʿdī) aš-Šīrāzī (c. 1210–c. 1292). It was published in Warsaw in 1879 to the detriment of Kazimirski's Polish translation *Gulistan, to jest Ogród różany Sa'dego z Szyrazu.* He paid dearly for having forgotten Samuel Otwinowski in his introduction, in his exhaustive list of all the European translations of *Gulistan*. Kazimirski took for granted that Western Orientalism was more developed and did not suspect that another Pole had preceded all European translators (Drira 2021).

It is no secret, but some Poles, even Polish historians, tend to compare Poland to France and Western countries, so they sometimes lack self-esteem for their contributions. Indeed, this feeling of belonging solely to the Western sphere leads some to judge the quality of the literary production of a Central or Eastern European country, mainly by the virtue of the similarity of their works with those in the West. Likewise, this preconceived idea of Western superiority since the Renaissance, generates a classification between developed countries, or undeveloped or in the process of doing so. Therefore, in the conception of several authors and thinkers of the contemporary era, it goes without saying that scientific or literary progress proceeds from the West to the East. A trap into which Kazimirski fell headfirst in 1876 with his translation of *Gulistan* with his omission of Otwinowski in his exhaustive list. The excessive comparison of Poland with Western Europe rather than the Eastern part is a subject raised for many years by the historian Dariusz Kołodziejczyk in multiple books, articles, and conferences, following the reflection initiated by his teachers Marian Malowist (1909–1988) and Antoni Maczak (1928–2003).[5] More generally, for the perception of Western superiority and its influence in literature, certain old books are still relevant today such as those of Lévi Strauss in 1952 in *Race et Histoire* or even the controversial *Orientalism*, by Edward Said in 1978, completed in 1993 by *Culture and Imperialism.*

In any case, the first Polish translation into Latin letter was published in 1858 and posthumously attributed to the Polish Tatar Jan Murza Tarak Buczacki (1830–1857) from Podlasie, near Lithuania and Belarus. The translation was reviewed by the Orientalist Władysław Kościuszko (1817–1862). It consists of two volumes only in Polish, the first containing an introduction and a "life of the Prophet", as well as a presentation of Islam and Polish relations with the Turks and the Tatars. The editor Aleksander Nowolecki suggested in his introduction that the real author is Buczacki's father, Jan Selim, who died in 1834, or perhaps his grandfather, Jakub Buczacki. At first, this did not stir up any complaints, but in the twentieth century, people began to doubt the affiliation with the Buczacki family. Then, with the fall of communism and the questioning of everything supervised by Russia, doubt turned into conviction. In 1995, Warsaw University historian Zbigniew Wójcik (1922–2014) claimed that it was in fact the translation of Dionizy Chlewiński and Ignacy Domeyko, but that publishing a book of the Philomaths in Russian Poland was not allowed, hence

[5] A good example is the project of the Institute of History of the University of Warsaw headed by Professor Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, "Wielka i Mała Rozbieżność widziane przez szkła korporacji: mieszkańcy Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w Azji w XVII wieku" [The Great and the Little Divergence seen through corporate lenses: Central and Eastern Europeans in Asia in the 17th century] (Warsaw, Narodowe Centrum Nauki, 2022). See also Kołodziejczyk (2011), where a comparison is made between the last king of Poland and the last khan of Crimea.

its attribution to a Tatar Pole (Wójcik 1995). This opinion is unanimous in Poland today, even though this theory is synonymous with a serious series of accusations of usurpations and lies. However, if we trust the theory of this article that Domeyko, Chlewiński or Sobolewski only transcribed an old Polish translation, this will explain the attribution of Aleksander Nowolecki and Władysław Kościuszko to Polish Tatars. Perhaps the Buczacki family compared the manuscript of the Philomaths, which was a transliteration from Arabic letters to modern Polish, with the original Tatar translation, which was previously known only as a Tefsir. Why not? But it is hard to imagine the complete invention of a Tatar translator without him or his family having added a little ink to the manuscript of the Philomaths. The 1858 translation is, in fact, a collective work and there are still some protagonists to be presented.

3. A COLLECTIVE WORK: THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF DZIAŁYŃSKI, POTOCKI AND KAZIMIRSKI

Figure 3. Moorish room of Kórnik Castle inspired by the Court of Lions of the Alhambra

The first Polish translation began in the Belarusian and Lithuanian lands in the 17th century, then it was transformed into a modern version in Vilnius at the beginning of the 19th century, to finally see the light in Warsaw in 1858. Another city

completes this picture, Kórnik, the city of Count Działyński and his large library in his castle with a unique style: gothic and oriental.

3.1 DOMEYKO'S MEETING WITH POTOCKI AND KAZIMIRSKI

Domeyko lived in Paris from 1832 to 1838. He certainly met Kazimirski since Domeyko founded the United Brothers Society with Mickiewicz in 1834, the same year Kazimirski created the Slavic Society with Mickiewicz. It may actually be the same society. Rafał Berger believes that they have worked together on the translation of the Quran (Berger 2016). This is incorrect because, as we will see, Kazimirski wanted to be a translator on his own, and certainly not a simple member of a group of Polish Quranic translators. It is true that Kazimirski had already read the Quran in Berlin in 1830. He often mentioned it in his correspondence with his mentor Lelewel. He wrote to him on November 23, 1830:

> I would not like you to draw the conclusion from my silence regarding the Arabic language that I care less about. On the contrary, I devote half of my time to reading Alcoran, *al-Mu'allaqāt* and al-Mutanabbī. I am seriously considering publishing a complete edition of *al-Mu'allaqāt* in a way that, if you allow me, Sir, I will explain later. It depends on certain conditions إن شاء الله دواهم (*in sha Allah dawāhim*).
> Please measure, Sir, all my undertakings solely by my diligence and assiduity. This is why, not relying on my abilities alone, I seek assistants and I preach for Brahmanism and for Islam (Letter to Joachim Lelewel, BJ 4435 III).

Kazimirski was interested in Quran since 1830 but he did not begin translating it before 1839. However, without going as far as Rafał Berger, it is highly possible that Kazimirski and Domeyko talked together about a Quran translation. In any case, it was on his way to Paris that Domeyko found an attentive ear for his translation of the Quran.

Indeed, the former Philomath met Andrzej Bernard Potocki (1800–1874) in Dresden in May 1832, the son of the great traveler Jan Potocki. Together they visited the pretty Bastei National Park, in the Saxon Switzerland region of Germany. It was surely during this trip that he left his manuscript with Potocki, who was genuinely passionate about Orientalism (Drira and Kubacki 2021). It turns out that in 1830 he had sent money to Kazimirski several times to pay for private lessons with Professor Franz Bopp (1791–1867). Andrzej Potocki was only a few years older than Kazimirski, but he was wealthy and married since 1825 to Claudine Potocka (1801–1836), born Działyńska, the sister of Count Tytus Adam Działyński (1796–1861). The links between Kazimirski, Potocki and Działyński are therefore old, and all three of them had an Orientalist flair. While for Domeyko it was only a youth fashion from which he moved on, far away in Chile. In the various letters preserved in Moscow

between Domeyko and Chodźko during the period from 1830 to 1849, not even once, there is any mention of the translation of the Quran or even of Orientalism (Chodźko, Letters to Ignacy Domeyko). That is regrettable, because they were both former Philomaths of Vilnius and knew the history of this Polish translation better than anyone. Fortunately, Lelewel talked a little bit about it with Domeyko.

Lelewel wrote to Domeyko on October 28, 1836: "I recently saw Bernard Potocki. He started printing the Quran under his editorship in Poznań, then he burned it" (Więckowska 1980, 85–86). This proves that Domeyko's manuscript, reviewed by Potocki, was printed in a very small edition, but the Prussian censor ordered its destruction. In 1841 Lelewel wrote to Count Działyński, in a letter dated October 20, 1841:

> Mr Bernard Potocki asked me many times concerning the continuation of the Polish translation of AlQuran. The search for translators was unsuccessful. Yet his old translation could easily be finished by someone more talented. If you could ask Kazimirski for such a service, he would not refuse it to you. This would also be easy for him because he has already translated the Quran into French and his translation is being reissued. Especially since he is currently back from Persia, and he is doing nothing currently (Więckowska 1949, 382).

Lelewel was right, if Count Działyński had asked his former *protégé* Kazimirski, he would not have refused him, especially in 1841 when he was unemployed. Unfortunately, the Count was at odds with Kazimirski from 1830 to 1850, due to Kazimirski's revolutionary leftist activity during the Polish uprising of 1830. In September 1842, Lelewel tried to directly convince Kazimirski to complete the Polish manuscript. But to his surprise, he categorically refused! Truth is, he had no desire to embark on a project that risked ending up in Prussian flames. Without the support of the Count Działyński, who else would have financed and published it in Poland? Therefore, he responded to Lelewel.

> The Quran translated into Polish without notice would further multiply the confusion and misunderstandings […] which are already unfortunately quite numerous in Polish minds both at home and among emigrants. It seems to me that in the current era of emigration, it would be better to publish a small work entitled *The flagellation of impostors and charlatans and the leeches on the heads of the enlightened mystics and conventionalists.*[6]

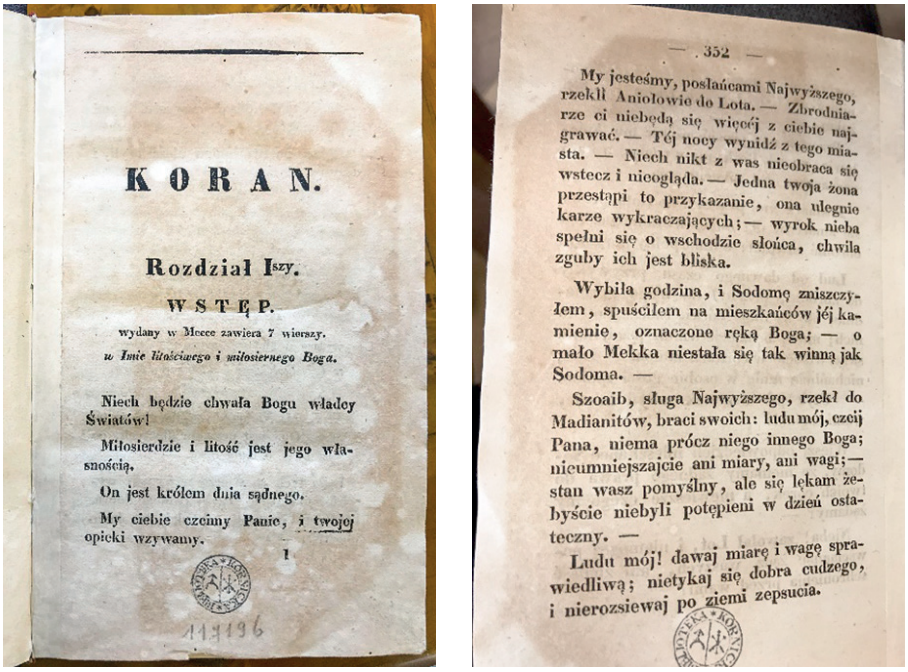
The last part is a dig against Andrzej Towiański (1799–1878) and Mickiewicz. However, for those who really know the work and life of Kazimirski, he was not against the translation of the Quran into Polish but had no desire for his work to be attributed to the Philomaths. When we see today the fate reserved for Buczacki,

[6] Mentioned in Turowska-Barowa (1938, 113), with the reference: "Library Rapperswil, 1265, correspondence from Lelewel, September 12, 1842."

perhaps Kazimirski had a premonitory vision. Who knows if he had taken on this project, maybe this would minimize his work, some might have even accused him of being inspired by the Philomaths for his French translation of the Quran.

Regardless, Potocki did not give up his efforts to print the Polish Quran, inherited by the Philomaths, and tried again its publication in 1848. It was once more destroyed by the Prussian authorities. The only vestige of this edition is a 352 pages manuscript kept in Kórnik, beginning with chapter (*sūrat*) *al-Fātiḥa* and finishing with chapter (sūrat) *Hūd*. So, approximately, a quarter of the Quran (BK: 117 196). The manuscript is not dated and might be "a pilot test", so a one manuscript edition[7]. It is very likely that Potocki, who did not know Arabic, used Kazimirski's translation of 1840-1842 to complete the Philomath's manuscript.

So, to summarize Potocki's contribution: he inherited the Polish Quran from the Philomaths, through the hands of Domeyko. Potocki published that manuscript a first time in 1836 but it was destroyed by the Prussians. In the 1840s, Potocki probably used the French work of Kazimirski published in Paris in 1840–1842 to print the Polish Quran a second time in Poznań in 1848, and again it was used as combustible material by the Prussians.



KORAN.

Rozdział Iszy.

WSTĘP.

wydany w Mecce zawiera 7 wierszy.

w Imię litościwego i miłosiernego Boga.

Niech będzie chwała Bogu władcy Światów!

Miłosierdzie i litość jest jego własnością.

On jest królem dnia sądnego.

My ciebie czcimy Panie, i twojej opieki wzywamy.

— 352 —

My jesteśmy, posłańcami Najwyższego, rzekli Aniołowie do Lota. — Zbrodniarze ci niebędą się więcéj z ciebie najgrawać. — Téj nocy wynidź z tego miasta. — Niech nikt z was niecobraca się wstecz i niecogląda. — Jedna twoja żona przestąpi to przykazanie, ona ulegnie karze wykraczających; — wyrok nieba spełni się o wschodzie słońca, chwila zguby ich jest bliska.

Wybiła godzina, i Sodomę zniszczyłem, spuściłem na mieszkańców jéj kamienie, oznaczone ręką Boga; — o mało Mekka niestała się tak winną jak Sodoma. —

Szoaib, sługa Najwyższego, rzekł do Madianitów, braci swoich: ludu mój, czcij Pana, niema prócz niego innego Boga; nieumniejszajcie ani miary, ani wagi; — stan wasz pomyślny, ale się lękam żebyście niebyli potępieni w dzień ostateczny. —

Ludu mój! dawaj miarę i wagę sprawiedliwą; nietykaj się dobra cudzego, i nierozsiewaj po ziemi zepsucia.

Figure 4. First and last page of the Quran manuscript printed by Potocki, BK: 117 196

[7] Lelewel in a letter addressed to Domeyko on October 28, 1836, asks him to send the rest of his manuscript of *Koran*, so that Potocki can finish printing the translation. It can be deduced that he is

3.2 KAZIMIRSKI'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROJECT

In 1887, the biweekly *Kurjer polski w Paryżu* (Polish Courier of Paris) mentioned that the first translation of the Quran into Polish, attributed to Buczacki in 1858, was written "under the watchful eye of Kazimirski".[8] Indeed, he is cited among the sources of the translation in the preface of Buczacki's edition. The Lithuanian philologist Mikołaj Akielewicz (1829–1887) also mentioned in his excellent obituary of Kazimirski, unpublished but preserved in the Warsaw archives,[9] that the Franco-Polish Orientalist has supervised the 1858 translation. Akielewicz is a perfectly reliable source, and his obituary contains impressive details confirmed by cross-sources. However, as for Kazimirski's contribution that he mentioned, he remained cautious and recommended a comparison of the two translations to assess whether he was the main source. A third author who mentioned the link from Kazimirski back to Domeyko is Rafał Berger. None of these authors mentioned their sources, and as we have seen in Lelewel's correspondence, Kazimirski flatly refused twice, in 1841 and 1842. But Kazimirski's correspondence with the Działyński family revealed that he changed his mind in the 1850s, because at that time he was again, and for the rest of his life, on good terms with the Działyński family.

The project of translating the Quran was revived by Jan Działyński (1829–1880). In a letter dated from July 31, 1856, Kazimirski wrote to Tytus Działyński: "Mr. Jan has ordered from me, for himself, a translation of the Quran into Polish for this fall. But if he has changed plans, don't worry about it."[10] This is strange because he mentions an ambitious project that he apparently accepted, while being ready to give up, if the Count's son changed his mind. Then he didn't talk about it again in the rest of his letters with both his patrons *(mécènes)* Tytus Działyński and then his son Jan. The date of the agreement in the letter, 1856, is also intriguing. So, two years only before the publication in 1858 in Warsaw of the first Polish translation. The dates are too close to be pure coincidence. Also, we must not forget Potocki family's connection with the Działyńskis and the Kórnik Library, and therefore the Philomath's manuscript. Most likely, and this is just a theory with no tangible proof, Kazimirski participated in the project in 1856 but didn't do a lot of work, otherwise it would have left prints. It is almost certain that he at least gave his authorization to use his

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referring to the partial translation which should have been printed the same year as this correspondence. However, all the Polish sources I have consulted, including the publisher of Lelewel's correspondence (*Listy emigracyjne Joachima Lelewela*), i.e., Polska Akademia Umiejętności, mention that the Polish *Koran* of Potocki was only printed in 1848, then destroyed by the German censor. So, were there two editions, in 1836 and 1848? If so, were they complete? There is no certain answer yet.

[8] *Kurjer polski w Paryżu* (Courrier polonais de Paris), July 15, 1887, 8.

[9] BN: 7300 (microfilm: 51411), p. 39–40 for the letters, and p. 41–43 for the obituary.

[10] BK 7439-2, letter from July 31, 1856.

French translation, which he reviewed for a third and last time in 1852. Kazimirski is therefore the inevitable translator of the Quran into French and even into Polish.

CONCLUSION

The Philomaths still have a lot to teach us. The adventure of their Polish translation of the Quran is different from the one presented in the numerous articles about them. Everything is not yet elucidated, and further research should be undertaken. However, it is already certain that this ambitious project was not motivated by an obscure political agenda. The Philomaths, or at least some of them, were interested in the Eastern world, as evidenced by the works of the founders: Józef Kowalewski, Józef Sobolewski, Józef Jeżowski and Jan Wiernikowski. Polish Orientalism is one of the oldest in the world and it was in Vilnius, partly thanks to the Philomaths, that it became scientific. A key figure of this transformation was Józef Julian Sękowski. The translation of the Quran by the Philomaths was part of the transformation of ancient Polish Orientalism into a modern scholarly Orientalism. Vilnius University was a source of knowledge in the Russian Empire and part of Europe. The Philomath Trial was a dark time for Vilnius University. However, the Russian Empire was able to take advantage, during the 19th century, from the knowledge and great potential of the students from Vilnius, including the Philomaths. The Philomaths, and Polish researchers from Vilnius, played a key role in making Orientalism thrive in the Russian empire.

The translation of the Philomaths is a collective work where everyone contributed to the final piece. First, the old Polish translation from the 17th century, written by Tatars from the Duchy of Vilnius. This translation, in the form of *Tefsir*, was the work of imams and Muslim scholars, perhaps the imam of Minsk, Urjasz ibn Ismaïl, in 1686. The Vilnius Library had a complete manuscript of a Tatar Tefsir, dated from 1788 containing a Polish translation with Arabic letters. This was the source of the Philomaths. Their translation was most likely, not a translation *ex nihilo*, but the transliteration from Arabic letters into Polish language, using Latin letters, while adjusting the style and language to make it more suitable for a larger audience. The work was entrusted on behalf of the whole group of Philomaths in the early 1820s. The main translator was Ignacy Domeyko, with the help of Dionizy Chlewiński and Józef Sobolewski. Domeyko continued the work after the conviction of the Philomaths in 1823 and after that he conveyed his manuscript to Andrzej Potocki in 1832. Potocki printed it twice in limited editions in Poznań in 1836 and 1848 but was forced by the Prussian authorities to burn them. Potocki probably used the French translation of the Quran of Kazimirski from 1852. For many years, Kazimirski declined Lelewel's

offer to complete the Polish translation in the hands of Potocki. However, in 1856 he agreed to translate the Quran into Polish for Count Działyński. Two years later, the first Polish translation was published in Warsaw, posthumously attributed to Jan Murza Buczacki. No one has usurped the work of others and certainly not the Tatars. This translation is a collective work. Without doubt, everyone participated: the Philomaths, Domeyko, Chlewiński, and Sobolewski, then Potocki, as well as Jakub and Jan Murza Buczacki, and finally Kościuszko, Aleksander Nowolecki and Albert de Biberstein Kazimirski.

Orientalism of Eastern Europe has its letters of nobility. Polish Orientalists have demonstrated throughout history a particular interest in oriental sacred books. It is no coincidence that the only translator of the Quran in France during the golden age of orientalism, during the entire 19th century was a Polish author, Albert de Biberstein Kazimirski.

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ORIENTALISM IN EASTERN EUROPE: THE ADVENTURE OF THE QURAN OF THE PHILOMATHS

Summary

The Quran of the Philomaths is a fascinating adventure led by brilliant patriotic students, mainly Polish. They spent several years in Lithuania in the early 19th century, writing the first Polish translation of the Koran using the Latin alphabet. Numerous articles were devoted to this Quran, as well as several books on the Tatars of Northern Europe. However, those papers emphasize the political patriotic goals behind that translation. This long article, based on my doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne, follows another path and demonstrates that the translation of the Philomaths was first a scientific and literary project motivated by the great interest in Orientalism shown by the Philomaths. To support this, the first part of the article is dedicated to demonstrating the importance of the Orientalist movement in Poland and Vilnius in general, and among several members of the Philomaths and the Philarets. The question of rehabilitation of Polish Orientalists who lived in Russia in the 19th century is also included. The second part of this research addresses essential questions about the Koran of the Philomaths, such as who the real authors are, their sources, their level of Arabic and their work methodology. Some of these practical questions have never been addressed. This paper also focuses on what happened to the manuscript of the Philomaths after their conviction in 1823. It is true that the first printed Polish translation of Buczacki in Warsaw in 1858 is linked to that of the Philomaths. Nevertheless, this research firmly rejects the accusations of usurpation, which are very popular today. Finally, this article shows the lesser-known contribution of other important authors, such as Andrzej Potocki and Albert de Biberstein Kazimirski.

Keywords: Philomaths; Philaret; Koran; Quran; Tafsir; Tatar; Orientalism; Vilnius; Polish translation; Domeyko; Kazimirski; Buczacki; Potocki

ORIENTALIZM W EUROPIE WSCHODNIEJ: PRZYGODA Z KORANEM FILOMATÓW

Streszczenie

Koran filomatów to fascynująca przygoda będąca udziałem błyskotliwych studentów-patriotów, głównie Polaków. Na początku XIX wieku spędzili oni kilka lat na Litwie, tworząc pierwsze polskie tłumaczenie Koranu, wykorzystując alfabet łaciński. Liczne artykuły oraz kilka książek poświęcono temu Koranowi, a także Tatarom Europy Północnej. Jednak publikacje te podkreślają przede wszystkim polityczne i patriotyczne cele leżące u podstaw takiego tłumaczenia. Niniejszy obszerny artykuł, oparty na mojej rozprawie doktorskiej obronionej na Sorbonie, podąża inną ścieżką i dowodzi, że tłumaczenie filomatów było przede wszystkim projektem naukowym i literackim, motywowanym ogromnym zainteresowaniem filomatów orientalistyką. Z tego względu pierwsza część artykułu jest poświęcona wykazaniu znaczenia ruchu orientalizmu w Polsce i Wilnie, zarówno ogólnie, jak i wśród kilku członków filomatów oraz filaretów. Poruszono również kwestię rehabilitacji polskich orientalistów, którzy żyli w Rosji w XIX wieku. Druga część badań dotyczy kluczowych pytań związanych z Koranem filomatów, takich jak: kim byli prawdziwi autorzy, jakie były ich źródła, poziom znajomości języka arabskiego oraz ich metodologia pracy. Niektóre z tych praktycznych pytań nigdy wcześniej nie były poruszane. Skupiam się również na losach rękopisu filomatów po ich skazaniu przez władze carskie w 1823 roku. To prawda, że pierwsze drukowane polskie tłumaczenie Buczackiego w Warszawie w 1858 roku jest powiązane z tłumaczeniem filomatów. Niemniej jednak badania te zdecydowanie odrzucają popularne dziś oskarżenia o uzurpację. Wreszcie artykuł pokazuje mniej znany wkład innych ważnych autorów, takich jak Andrzej Potocki i Albert de Biberstein Kazimirski.

Słowa kluczowe: filomaci; filareci; Koran; Tafsir; Tatarzy; orientalizm; Wilno; polskie tłumaczenie; Domeyko; Kazimirski; Buczacki; Potocki