

LITHUANIA

by

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1992

INTRODUCTION

The Islamic MSS in Lithuania were the property of Muslims, mainly Tatars, who used them for religious purposes and ritual only. The contents of the surviving MSS substantiate this assumption. The majority of them are Qurʾāns, the remainder *tafsīr*, prayers, and explanation of belief. There are no MSS on Islamic science or history, for example. During communist rule the only mosque, at Kaunas, was closed and its few Islamic MSS, together with other Islamic and Christian MSS, were put in a museum. They were regarded as historic museum pieces only, and were ignored and neglected.

In the wake of recent political changes, there is now a tendency to look at MSS not as dead historical relics but as objects which bear the core and value of a living culture. Nevertheless, more pressing and urgent problems, in particular the economic crisis, do not allow time and energy to be spent on matters such as Islamic MSS. The largest collection of Islamic MSS in Lithuania, at the Museum of History and Ethnography, is housed in a room together with a large number of Christian MSS. A thorough and time-consuming investigation of all the existing MSS may in the future reveal the exact number and significance of the Islamic MSS in this small and neglected country. The few institutes which possess collections of Islamic MSS are entangled in various problems. As a result the authorities of these institutes are not very responsive to a call for the investigation of their MSS.

To overcome the language barrier, we could not have produced this survey without the valuable assistance of Mr ALGIS UŽDAVINYS, a research fellow of the Academy of Sciences in Vilnius. He helped us as a translator in approaching the authorities of the institutes, and his knowledge of Russian was of great help to us. Our thanks are also due to Mrs B. KULNYTE, the director of the Museum of History and Ethnography of Lithuania, who allowed us to view the collection of Islamic MSS, and to Mrs S. RŪTA who took the trouble to pull out the Islamic MSS from among all the other MSS available at the Museum and put them in a separate place for us to see them. We should also like to express our gratitude to Dr GEOFFREY ROPER, the editor of this *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts*, who kindly provided

us with some useful information on the institutes which possess Islamic collections of MSS, before our trip to Vilnius.

Wimbledon
10 December 1992

UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS

1968. *Belorusskie teksty, pisannye arabskim pis'mom, i ikh grafiko-orfograficheskaya sistema.* By A.K. ANTONOVICH. Vilnius: Vil'nyusskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet. 418pp.

Incl. very detailed descriptions of Belorussian MSS, in Arabic script, in collections in Vilnius & elsewhere.

INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

VILNIUS

Lietuvos Istorijos ir Etnografijos Muziejus (Museum of History and Ethnography of Lithuania)

Arsenal 1

Tel.: 617612

Date of establishment: 1855

Status: Public museum

Conditions of access: In principle the Museum is open to the public, but it cannot meet the demands of researchers who would wish to consult the MSS under present circumstances. All the Islamic MSS have been put in a room together with many Christian and European MSS, which have not been investigated at all. There is no listing, let alone a catalogue, and therefore it is difficult to view the MSS.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 38 (mainly Arabic; Belorussian; Turkic). This figure refers only to the MSS which were put on a table for viewing during our visit in December 1992.

Description of collection: This is the most important collection of Islamic MSS in Lithuania and includes the contents of two other collections transferred here:

1. During communist rule, a small mosque of the Muslim Tatars in Kaunas was closed and its collection of MSS transferred to the

Museum of Atheism and the History of Religion. This Museum was originally the church of St. Casimir (Šv. Kazimiero), the oldest baroque church in Vilnius founded by Jesuits in 1604. In the wake of recent political changes the church has been restored to its original status. The MSS were a complete Qurʾān in Arabic, and a book of prayers in Arabic, with an explanation in a Turkic language, which was donated to the mosque in Kaunas in 1930. These two MSS now form part of the Museum of History and Ethnography's collection.

2. The private collection of the late professor of Oriental Studies of Vilnius University, Shapshala (ŠAPŠALA), was also transferred to this collection.

The majority of the MSS are Qurʾāns (25 of the 38 MSS). A couple of them were perhaps written in the 16th–17th centuries, but most of them were written towards the end of the 19th century. The Qurʾān MSS are complete and would have been used by Muslim Tatars for religious purposes. Some of the Qurʾān MSS have been translated or interpreted into Turkic/Belorussian languages written in the Arabic script. Some of the Qurʾāns are decorated and written in a beautiful *naskh* style. The other MSS are on prayer or doctrine, written in Arabic, with an explanation in Turkic/Belorussian languages in the Arabic script. Most of the MSS have the seal of the Mufti of Poland. One seal is dated 1835.

The physical condition of the MSS is very poor, and they are in need of urgent restoration.

One of the interesting and significant MSS is a *tafsīr* of the Qurʾān in Belorussian. It is of a large format, with the text in Arabic, and the *tafsīr* given underneath each line in Belorussian in the Arabic script. It was written in 1890.

The present holding of this collection has not been sorted out and investigated thoroughly, therefore the exact number of Islamic MSS is not known. The curator of the collection informed us that she could not find at least a dozen Islamic MSS which she knew existed in this collection. They were amongst the other MSS.

No list or inventory is available at present.

Lietuvos Mosklų Akademijos Biblioteka (Lithuanian Academy of Sciences Library)

Žygnantis 2/8

Tel.: 623667

Date of establishment: 1941

Status: Academic library

Conditions of access: Open to the public

Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Belorussian, in Arabic script).

Description of collection: The only available MS. in this collection is on prayer. It explains the Islamic doctrine in a popular way for Muslim Tatars. The MS. was found in 1915 in Sorok Tatory (Forty Tatars) village, and belonged to the descendants of a Tatar molla.

Unpublished catalogue:

A card catalogue provides some details about this MS.

Vilniaus Universiteto Mokslinė Biblioteka (Vilnius University Library)

Rankraščiu skyrius

Universiteto 3, 232633 Vilnius

Tel.: 7-0122-617311

Date of establishment: 1579

Status: University library

Conditions of access: Open to the public. A ticket is issued on the spot.

Monday – Friday: 09.00 – 18.00

Saturday: 09.00 – 17.00.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 3 (1 Arabic; 2 Turkic/Arabic) and one map in Arabic.

Description of collection: The collection contains a Qurʾān in Arabic written in 1788 with interlinear Turkic translation, and two other MSS on prayer and belief. The prayer, which includes Qurʾanic verses, is written in Arabic with an explanation and interpretation in a Turkic language. The collection contains also a MS. of the late professor JOACHIMO LELEVELI who taught at Vilnius University in the 19th century. This MS. is an Arabic map very similar to that of IDRĪSĪ.

Six photocopies of MSS which belonged to the late scholar ANTONOVICH are also kept here. They are Belorussian MSS written in the Arabic script, mainly on prayer and belief. The originals of these MSS were kept in the Museum of History and Ethnography.

Published catalogues:

1968. See Union Catalogue by ANTONOVICH above.

Unpublished catalogues: These MSS have been catalogued in brief. The catalogue cards are kept in the library.

MACEDONIA

by

Muhamed Ždralović

1991