

The development of Turkic studies at Vilnius University

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Abstract. At the beginning of the 19th century, the financial possibility to establish a department of Eastern languages at one of the oldest universities in Eastern Europe, Vilnius University, appeared. Turkish was among the Eastern languages that were expected to be taught. The intensive preparation of lecturers was started. Unfortunately, the ambitious plans were destined to never become reality; in 1832 the university was closed. Nevertheless, over the following two centuries the Turkic direction did not disappear; in one form or another it surfaced and retained its vitality. There was a sympathetic environment: Tartars and Karaims—both Turkic ethnic groups—began settling in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 14th century. Vilnius University was the cradle of many famous Orientalists who maintained Turkic research by their activities. In such a way, two main research subjects appeared: Kitabistik and the Karaim language. In this article, the origin problems, development and prospects of Turkic research will be examined.

Introduction

Vilnius University, one of the oldest universities in Eastern Europe, was opened in 1579. The Faculty of Oriental Language Studies was to be opened in the early 19th century. In 1822 Kazimierz Kontrym prepared a draft concerning the establishment of an Institute of Oriental Languages. If the draft had been approved, it would have created the first centre for teaching and learning Oriental languages in Eastern Europe. In 1822 classes of Arabic were introduced at the Faculty of Arts of the university. Plans were also made for teaching Turkish, but those plans were not fulfilled since the university was soon closed down (1832). Some university alumni became leading specialists in Oriental languages. For example, Józef Sękowski was head of the Department of Arabic and Turkish at Saint Petersburg University.

In the 14th century, two ethnic groups of Turkic origin began residing in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Tatars and Karaims. In the early 20th century, an intensive examination of the historical, cultural, and linguistic dimensions of these two groups took place. Brothers Leon and Olgierd Kryczyński issued the annual *Rocznik Tatarski*; in addition, the journal *Mysł Karaimska* was published, the Tatar Folk Museum in Vilnius was in operation, and the opening of a Karaim museum in Trakai was planned.

The activities of renowned specialists in Turkology—Władysław Kotwicz, Tadeusz Kowalski, Antoni Muchliński, Haji Seraya Hachan Shapshal, Jakub Szyrkiewicz, and Ali Woronowicz—were also connected with Vilnius. In 1932 and 1937, Vilnius hosted the 2nd and 7th Congresses of Polish Orientalists. In 1930 Shapshal taught the Turkish language to members of the Society of Karaim History and Literature Admirers.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Centre of Oriental Studies was opened in Lithuania. Curricula for teaching Arabic, Turkish, and other Oriental languages have been developed. The establishment of the Turkish Language Centre took place in 1997.

The present article is devoted to the formation and developmental problems of the Oriental Centre at Vilnius University.¹ More specifically, in the framework of the development of Oriental studies, we will be interested in the formation of one branch of Oriental Studies, Turkology. The formation process of the Oriental Studies Centre occurred throughout the 19th–20th centuries. This is why one cannot disregard world famous Oriental centres that were being established around the same time in Russia (Saint Petersburg) and Poland (Cracow, Warsaw, and Lvov). Moreover, during that period, Lithuania was closely connected with those states historically. Lithuanian territories constituted part of the Russian Empire till 1918. Meanwhile Poland was divided between Russia, Austria and Prussia. This is why the academic centres and policies pursued by those centres were totally dependent on the state that had annexed the relevant territories. In this way, the reasons and conditions for the newly established Oriental centres were approximately the same. As Polish Orientalist Stanisław Stasiak maintains, ‘Having produced world famous Orientalists, Vilnius University may justly be referred to as a cradle of Oriental studies’ (ZOP 1934a, 23). The necessity for Biblical exegesis became the main reason for the development of Oriental studies, which gradually grew into a separate branch of science.² A similar process in the development of Oriental studies may be traced in virtually all the aforementioned educational institutions.

Origins of Oriental studies in Eastern Europe in the 16th–18th century

The first department for teaching Hebrew, the forerunner of an emerging need and interest in Oriental languages, was established in 1528 at Jagiellonian University in Cracow. It was, however, short-lived. A new attempt to create such a department was made in 1549, but it was equally unsuccessful. On Antoni Opolski’s initiative, sporadic

¹ The author expresses sincere gratitude to the reviewer of the article, Prof Ewa Siemienieć-Golaś, PhD, of Jagiellonian University for her valuable comments.

² For further details, see Migoń 2004.

teaching took place in 1774. Oriental languages were taught by Christof Idatte in 1780–1783 and by Vincent Smachniński in 1786–1790. By the early 19th century, teaching Oriental languages at Cracow University had become purposeful. By decree of the Austrian Council of 8 August 1805, Cracow and Lvov Universities were merged. The Statute of 1814 included a mention of the Department of Oriental Languages. A separate department operated from 1818 to 1827.³ In the project proposed by Józef Soltykowicz (1762–1831), besides the necessity of teaching Hebrew, attention was paid to teaching Arabic, Persian and Turkish as languages that played an important role in diplomacy. Wilhelm Münnich, the renowned Orientalist of the 1830s, chaired the department, and in 1826–1830 he was head of the Department of Greek, Roman, and Latin Literature at Vilnius University. Münnich offered seminars in the Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages to second-year students. The department was closed in 1827 and was annexed to the Department of Biblical Studies at the Faculty of Theology, and in 1827–1832 Hebrew, Syrian and Chaldean were taught by Piotr Pękalski, a student of Münnich. In 1832 Pękalski was followed by Jan Schindler, alumnus of the Oriental Academy in Vienna. Schindler's curriculum was notable, as, alongside teaching Oriental languages, Schindler was the first to make a suggestion that an introductory course in Islamism be taught (Michalewska 1966). Schindler taught *Elements of Islam*, basing his teaching on literature and interpretation of the Qur'an in the Arabic language. His interest in Islamism is evidenced by his report 'Key elements of Islam', which was delivered at the Cracow Scientific Meeting in 1834. His curriculum did not include teaching Turkish, Persian, or Oriental literature.

Considering the formation of Oriental departments and centres in the relevant territory, one cannot pass over the Academic Gymnasium Danzig. Founded in 1558, the gymnasium also operated as a school of higher education. Among its students was Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt (1685–1735), who in 1716 succumbed to the persuasion of Peter the Great and left for Siberia with the objective to describe its peoples and languages. He paid significant attention to 'Tatar', the term used to refer to Turkic languages of Central and East Asia at the time. The fruits of Messerschmidt's research remained in his manuscripts, including 'Nomina animalina arabico-tattarico-latina'. The scholar brought to Europe the manuscript by Ebul Gazi Bahadır Han *Kitab-i sedzere-i Türk*, which contained the genealogy of the ruling khans in Central Asia. Later the manuscript was translated into European languages and became an invaluable source of information on the peoples of Central Asia (Reychman 1969, 104).

³ The department was reopened in 1921. For further details, see Michalewska 1966.

Throughout the 16th–18th centuries, one of the most important Oriental centres was situated in Silesia. Among the more famous Orientalists of the time, one should mention Petrus Kirstenius (1577–1640) and Andreas Acoluthus (1654–1704). They focused their research activities on the Muslim East. At the centre of their attention was learning the Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages as they considered these languages to be the starting point for further research on the Qur'an and culture, history and literature of the East. Among the books published by Acoluthus, there is one book titled *Tetrapla Alcoranica sive Specimen Alcorani quadrilinguis, Arabici, Persici, Turcici, Latini* (Berlin 1701) (Migoń 2004, 275). Throughout his creative life, Acoluthus was preparing himself for the translation and philological interpretation of the Qur'an. His collection comprised around forty manuscripts of the Qur'an, including a translation of the Qur'an into Turkish, which was given to him by Francis Meninski (*ibid.*, 277). After Acoluthus' death, his rich manuscript collection was divided between Dresden and Leipzig book depositories (*ibid.*, 281). Among the manuscripts of Acoluthus' collection was a manuscript in Slavic written by Lithuanian Tatars in Arabic script (Fleischer 1838).

Kirstenius was not an Orientalist per se. A doctor by vocation, he was involved in book publishing. During the period from 1608 to 1611, he published nine books in the Arabic language. That Kirstenius had in his possession Arabic printing type played an important role in the development of Oriental Studies in Europe. Thanks to Kirstenius' Arabic printing type, the first part of the oldest grammar of Turkish, *Institutionum linguae turcicae libri quatuor* (1612) by Hieronymus Megiser, was printed in Wrocław (Migoń 2004, 283–4). The publishing of the grammar was finalised in Leipzig.

Vilnius University,⁴ one of the oldest universities in Eastern Europe, was founded in 1579. Even though the interest in Oriental languages, culture and history in Europe was at its peak in the 17th–18th centuries, plans to open a department of Oriental languages at Vilnius University date back to the early 19th century.

At Vilnius Academy (1579–1773), the interest in Oriental languages had its own long-standing tradition, and, as usual, Oriental studies were closely linked to the needs of the exegesis of the Bible or Classical philology.

On the other hand, the permeation of Oriental elements was facilitated by the fact that starting from the 14th century the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

⁴ Throughout the centuries, the name of the university underwent a number of changes: The Vilnian Academy and University of the Society of Jesus (*Almae Academia et Universitas Vilnensis Societatis Jesu*, 1579–1773), the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (1773–1803), the Imperial University of Wilno (1803–1832), Stefan Batory University (1919–1939), Vilnius State University (1944–1955), Vilnius State University n.a. Vincas Kapsukas (1955–1989), and Vilnius University (since 1990). Regardless of the time frame, the term Vilnius University is used throughout this article.

became home to two ethnic groups of Turkic origin: the Tatars and Karaims, while the territory of the Polish Kingdom was additionally populated by 'Armenians speaking Kipchak' (Zajączkowski 1966, 31). It was these ethnic groups that naturally became guides of Oriental culture in these territories. Throughout the centuries, neither the Karaims nor the Tatars had lost their connection with their compatriots in the East. There is significant data providing evidence of the journeys of Karaims to the Crimea, to the Holy Land, and the city of Jerusalem, while Tatars travelled to Istanbul and Mecca. Thanks to their knowledge of Turkish, representatives of these ethnic groups were of great benefit to the state that had welcomed them (*ibid.*, 32). Lithuanian Tatars could often be found occupying positions in the chancery or acting as interpreters or ambassadors in embassies to the Ottoman Empire and to the Crimean Khanate. One should mention the following Tatar interpreters: Timurchin Jushenite (1475), Khamsa Kharaburdite (1480), Lekhush of the Khasbiyevicz family (1506), and Sobol (1571). In 1492 and 1501 the Tatar Bairash was appointed Ambassador to the Crimean Khan from King Alexander; in 1668 the Tatar Ibrahim was employed at the embassy in Istanbul; and in 1716 King August II sent Stefan Sulkiwicz, a Tatar cavalry captain, to the Crimean Khan Kaplan-Girei.

Starting in the 14th century, contacts between the Rzeczpospolita on the one hand and the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate on the other were progressively intensifying. In turn, these age-old contacts were becoming an important stimulus for keen interest in the culture and languages of the Turkic peoples. The emergence of rich Polish literature devoted to Turkic-related issues (which is evidenced by the publication of dictionaries, grammars, descriptions of the missions of ambassadors, travel notes, diaries, and so on) took place in the 17th century (Yakar 2007, 178).

There was also the possibility to study the language with local Muslims. For instance, Waclaw Rzewuski (1785–1831) started learning Arabic under the supervision of a Muslim imam, who was a migrant from Turkey and resided in Kazavchina nearby Rzewuski's home estate, Sawrani.

In this way, the 16th–18th centuries came to be a preparatory stage for systematic studies of Turkic languages and culture.

Centres of Oriental studies in Eastern Europe in the 19th century

The growth of interest in the Orient across Europe in the early 19th century is connected with the increased significance of the Orient in the world's politics and economics. As trade and political relations with the East developed, the demand for translators and connoisseurs of this region grew. Russia experienced the necessity to

open centres of Oriental studies too, which is evidenced by a series of Departments of Oriental Languages founded at Kharkov (1805), Kazan (1807), and Moscow (1811) universities, as well as at the High Pedagogical School in Peterograd (1818). Meanwhile the influence of the Illuminati was very strong in Russia, particularly after 1815, as their ideas contributed to the intensification of Bible-related studies. Alexander I and his minions spent time reading the Bible, and the Tsar contributed significant sums of money to translations of the Bible. He personally considered projects aimed at the promotion of relations with Palestine and was an active supporter of the Bible Society, the influence of which spread to embrace Wilno (Vilnius) as well (Reychman 1957, 71).

The rise of Polish Oriental Studies is associated with the scientific environment of Vilnius University. Despite its incomplete thirty years of operation (1803–1832), Vilnius University soon took a leading position among educational institutions of the time. Some compared it to acknowledged universities such as Oxford or Göttingen (Zajączkowski 1966, 41). In 1809 the question of teaching Oriental languages at the Faculty of Literature and Fine Arts rather than the Faculty of Theology was raised. The activities of professors such as historian Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861) and philologist Gottfried Ernest Groddeck (1786–1825) were of great significance for the development of Oriental studies. Both scholars knew Arabic. Among the major works of the historian Lelewel are *Géographie du Moyen-Âge* (Bruxelles 1852–1857) and *Géographie des Arabes* (Paris 1851), which are still relevant for Arabic cartography. On many occasions Groddeck, professor of Classical Philology, emphasised to the students dealing with classical antiquity the need to deepen their knowledge in the sphere of the history and philology of the Orient.

Projects on the foundation within Vilnius University of a separate institute of Oriental Languages in which Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Mongol and Armenian would be taught could not be implemented immediately due to the lack of corresponding staff. In 1810, the Department of Oriental languages chaired by Julius Heinrich Klaproth (1783–1835) was founded at Vilnius University. However, Klaproth unexpectedly left, and the newly-established department lost a specialist who could head it. To prepare such specialists in the future, the decision was made to send the best students abroad. In 1817 Mikhail Bobrovski (1784–1848) was sent abroad. After five years spent at Vienna and Paris universities, he returned to Vilnius University in 1822 and offered his students a course in Arabic. In 1819, two years after Bobrovski, Józef Sękowski (1800–1858) was sent abroad. While at university and influenced by Lelewel and Groddek, he took personal interest in the Orient. Prior to his journey, he had already been the author of a number of works in Oriental studies. Among them, one should mention a translation from a description in Turkish of the journey

by Ahmed Efendi, ambassador of the Ottoman Empire, to Berlin; notes on the state of medicine in Turkey; and sketches on Turkish literature. During his stay abroad, Sękowski was expected 'to refine his knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, to get acquainted with miscellaneous documents on the history of relations between Poland and Turkey, and to collect materials necessary for the compilation of an extensive history of peoples of the Orient' (Reychman 1957, 77). Within two years Sękowski visited Istanbul, Smyrna, Beirut, Damask, Alexandria, and Cairo. While in the East, Sękowski sought to make his knowledge of Arabic and Turkish more profound. Upon Sękowski's return to Wilno in 1822, Kazimierz Kontrym developed a draft for the establishment of a department of Oriental languages at Vilnius University. Sękowski however used the offer to head the envisaged department of Oriental languages at Vilnius University in order to implement his ambitious plans and moved to St Petersburg, where he held the position of ordinary professor at the Department of Arabic and Turkish Philologies for 25 years (1822–47). The results of his search for documents on relations between Poland and Turkey were summarised in Sękowski's extensive work *Collectanea z dziejopisów tureckich rzeczy do historii polskiej służących, z dodatkiem objaśnień potrzebnych i krytycznych uwag przez J.J.S. Sękowskiego* (Warszawa, vols 1–2, 1824–25).

The list of Vilnius University alumni who were prominent Orientalists and headed Oriental centres in St Petersburg, Kazan, and Cracow should be supplemented by such names as Jan Wernikowski, Józef Kowalewski, Antoni Muchliński, Aleksandr Chodzko, Ludwig Spitznagel, and others. Many of them were close friends and colleagues of Adam Mickiewicz. Thanks to Mickiewicz, who had started to study Arabic himself, and his colleagues in Wilno, the 'Oriental theme' became ingrained in Polish literature.

In 1824, after the trial over the Filarets and Filomats, Kowalewski (1801–1878) was exiled to Kazan, where at Kazan University he studied Oriental languages (Arabic, Persian and Tatar). Kowalewski is one of the founders of scientific Mongol Studies. A number of his works on Mongol Studies and Buddhism are kept as manuscripts in various collections in Russia and Lithuania. Wernikowski (1800–1877) also studied in Kazan and after his graduation taught Arabic and Persian in the Kazan 1st Gymnasium.

In 1824–1831 Chodzko (1804–1891) studied at the Institute of Oriental Studies in St Petersburg. He left his mark on Polish literature, in particular, by introducing Eastern motifs into poetry. To date, his works on Persian literature in English and French remain scientifically relevant. Spitznagel (1805–1829) studied together with Chodzko at the Institute of Oriental Studies. In addition to Arabic, Persian and Turkish, he also studied Hebrew and Chaldee. In 1828 Muchliński (1808–1877)

was transferred from Vilnius University to St Petersburg, where he began to study Oriental languages at the Institute of Oriental Studies. In 1832–1835 he was awarded a state grant and travelled to the East, where he visited Turkey, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. The result of Muchliński's journey was ten volumes of travelling notes. However, of the ten volumes only one volume was published: it was 'Wyjatek z podróży po Wschodzie' in the journal *Pamiętnik Religijno-Moralny* (1858).⁵ After 1835 Muchliński was assistant professor to Professor Sękowski, and in the periods 1832–1845 and 1849–1853 he held the position of professor of Turkish Philology. Besides his interest in the Orient and Turkish philology, he devoted considerable time to ethnic minorities residing in Lithuania: Tatars and Jews. Muchliński's publication 'Zdanie sprawy o tatarach litewskich' (Muchliński 1858) revealed the content of the treatise *Risale-i Tatar-i Leh*, which was written in Turkish for Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent by an unknown Tatar. The treatise contained data on the legal status of Lithuanian Tatars in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, their first settlements, ceremonialism, and language. Scholars believe the treatise *Risale-i Tatar-i Leh* to be one of the earliest known sources of information on Lithuanian Tatars. To this day, the treatise remains an oft cited historical source, even though the absence of the original and availability solely of its 19th century reprint places the authenticity of this work in question. In science, Muchliński is also credited with the discovery of the writing of Lithuanian Tatars, as his works provide excerpts from Polish and Belarusian texts written in Arabic script (Mukhlinskiy 1857).

From 1 August to 14 August 1893, the Moscow Archaeological Society held the 9th Archaeological Congress in Wilno. One of the sections of this congress was entitled 'History of Tatars, Jews, Karaims, and Gypsies in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Tyszkiewicz 2008, 174).

As can be seen from this short overview, if it had not been for the Tsar's repression and closure of Vilnius University in 1832, in the 19th century Oriental studies in Wilno could have produced their own specialists. These plans could not be brought to fruition since Lithuania was not independent and could only be implemented after the country had gained independence in the 20th century.

The development of Turkic studies at Vilnius University in the 20th century

In terms of the 20th century, the first department of Oriental Studies in Eastern Europe was established in Cracow in 1919. Its founder was Tadeusz Kowalski. One year later,

⁵ For more details on Muchliński's creative heritage, see Kotwicz, Kotwiczówna 1935; Deryagina, Frolova 1997; Bairašauskaitė 2000; Bairašauskaitė 2001.

thanks to the efforts of Professors Andrzej Gawroński and Władysław Kotwicz⁶ the Department of Oriental Languages was founded in Lvov, and in the 1930s the efforts of Professors Stanisław Schauyer and Ananiasz Zajączkowski resulted in the emergence of a corresponding department in Warsaw.

Although an Oriental studies centre was not established at Vilnius University, interest in the Orient in Wilno was just as keen. From 1924 onwards, the journal *Myśl Karaimska* was published, and it became the forerunner of the journal *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*. The journal was established by Wilno's Board of the Karaim Society. Ananiasz Rowski was editor of the first and second issues of the journal, and starting from issue 3–4 (1934) he was replaced by Zajączkowski. Before the war 12 issues were published, the last of which appeared in 1939. After the war, the periodical resumed publication to produce the first and the last issue entitled *Myśl Karaimska. Rocznik naukowo-społeczny* (Seria Nowa) (1945–1946) (Dziekan 1998). Zajączkowski was editor for the issue. During this period, the monthly publications *Życie Tatarskie* (vols I–VI, 1932–1939) and *Przegląd Islamski* (Islamic Review) (1930–1937) and the yearly publication *Rocznik Tatarski* (vols I–III, 1932, 1935, 1938) appeared. The third volume of the *Rocznik Tatarski* contained Stanisław Kryczyński's monograph entitled *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej*. The relevance of the monograph in the late 20th century is evidenced by its translation into Lithuanian in 1993 and the reissue of the original in 2000 (Kričinskis 1993; Kryczyński 2000). The range of issues covered in the monthlies *Przegląd Islamski* and *Życie Tatarskie* was particularly diverse: publications included archive materials and historical evidence; they reflected the social and demographic state of Lithuanian Tatars and provided explanations on the fundamentals of Muslim religion, as well as commentaries on selected suras of the Qur'an. Nevertheless, the level of some of the publications does not always allow one to refer to these journals as an objective and reliable source about the history, culture and writing of Lithuanian Tatars.

In 1929, affiliated with the Islamic High Council, the People's Tatar Museum (Tatarski muzeum narodowy) was opened in Wilno. The same year the museum's catalogue (KTMNW 1929) was published. Shapshal initiated the establishment of the Karaim Museum in Trakai (1938). The rich collection of Oriental manuscripts and household artefacts compiled by Shapshal became part of the museum's exposition (Zajączkowski 1962). Shapshal was also the founder of the Society of Karaim History and Literature Admirers (Towarzystwo miłośników historii i literatury karaimskiej), established in 1932 (Anonymous 1934, 97–101). The society had the objective to

⁶ Upon their graduation from Vilnius Gymnasium (1900), Władysław Kotwicz and Ignatij Kraczkowski entered the Institute of Oriental Studies in St Petersburg. The former became a specialist in Mongol studies and the latter in Arabic studies.

carry out research in the historical destinies of the spiritual and material culture of the Karaims (*ibid.*, 99). Since 1925, under the auspices of brothers Leon and Olgierd Kryczyński the Cultural and Educational Union of the Rzeczpospolita Tatars had published newspapers and journals containing articles on the culture and history of Lithuanian Tatars. The tradition of preparing specialists within the country was resumed, and talented representatives of young Tatars and Karaims were sent to study at the institutes of Oriental languages, as well as abroad. Thus Tatars Ali Woronowicz⁷ and Mustafa Aleksandrowicz as well as Karaims Ananiasz Zajączkowski and Włodzimierz Zajączkowski were sent for further studies to other institutions.

In 1930–1939 Shapshal taught the Turkish language at the School of Political Sciences, which was affiliated with the East European Research Institute (*Szkola Nauk Politycznych przy Instytucie Naukowo-Badawczym Europy Wschodnej*). A students' textbook was specifically developed for this purpose (*Szapszał* 1932). Turkish was taught by Musa Kiasim, a teacher who had come from Istanbul (*Bairašauskaitė* 1993, 6). Some students of Vilnius University studied in the three-year school. Under the guidance of Shapshal, the Student Turkologist Society was established. In 1934 Shapshal, alongside other members of this society, began organising scholarly trips to Turkey and to the Balkans. Even though the Department of Oriental Studies affiliated with the East European Research Institute had not been established, two staff members of the institute were Orientalists: Shapshal and Kowalski.

It is not known exactly whether it was the initiative of the Society of Polish Orientalists (*Polskie Towarzystwo Orientalistyczne*) or the professoriate of the School of Political Sciences, but in Vilnius on 27 March 1935, Kowalski delivered a speech over the radio in the Turkish language on the 500th anniversary of Karaim settlement in Poland. A lot of attention was devoted to the relations between Poland and Turkey (*Tyszkiewicz* 2008, 179).

In the pre-war period, seven congresses of Polish Orientalists took place: the first (Warsaw, 1931), second (Wilno, 1932), third (Cracow, 1933), fourth (Lvov, 1934), fifth (Warsaw, 1935), sixth (Wilno, 1937), and seventh (Cracow, 1938) (*ZOP* 1934a; *ZOP* 1934b; *ZOP* 1935a; *ZOP* 1935a; *ZOP* 1937; *ZOP* 1938). As can be seen, two congresses, the second and the sixth, were held in Wilno. The congresses were organised by the Society of Polish Orientalists, which was supervised by Kotwicz and Kowalski. Shapshal and Leon Kryczyński were also members of the society, from 1928 and 1932 respectively. The opening of the Second Congress took place on 16 May 1932, at Vilnius University in the Franciszek Smuglewicz Hall. In addition to the 17 members of the Society of Polish Orientalists, representatives of Tatar and Karaim communities took part in the proceedings of the congress. Of nine reports, two were delivered by

⁷ For more details on Woronowicz's range of activities, see *Tyszkiewicz* 1995.

natives of the region of Vilnius. In his report entitled 'On the significance of Vilnius for Polish Oriental studies', Shapshal referred to documents and manuscripts relevant to researchers and kept at the Tatar and Karaim Museums, as well as at the Manuscript Department of Vilnius University. The Manuscript Department of Vilnius University Library include dozens of Oriental documents: letters of the khans and messages of Turkish border pashas. An unfinished Turkish–Russian dictionary by Muchliński, Kowalewski's manuscripts, etc. are also kept here. Shapshal pointed out that despite the dire state of Oriental studies at Vilnius University, where classes in Hebrew were given only at the Department of the Holy Scripture, the Faculty of Humanities hosted a series of lectures on the history of the Girai Khanate by Professor Ludwik Kolankowski, a famous specialist in Crimea–Tatar relations (ZOP 1934a, 22). Stanisław Szachno-Romanowicz had prepared a report on the topic 'Ibrahim-Beg Strash, a Polish renegade on the Turkish payroll since 1551 (died in 1571)' (*ibid.*, 27).

At the Sixth Congress, which took place on 20–25 June 1937, out of eleven reports five reports were devoted to Turkology: 'A description of a trip made by the Turkish Embassy to Poland in 1755' and 'Diplomatic correspondence of the Sublime Porte regarding first elections in Poland' by Shapshal, 'On the knowledge of the Turkish language in Poland in the 15th–17th centuries' by Bogdan Baranowski, 'On travels and research carried out in Anatolia' by Kowalski, and 'Research in Altaic languages' by Kotwicz.

It should be pointed out that Turkology-related issues received due attention at the First Congress as well as the subsequent congresses. Thus, at the First Congress, Kowalski delivered the report 'The significance of the description of the journey of Evlia Celebi for the history of the Crimean Khanate' (*ibid.*, 13). The range of topics covered at the subsequent congresses was remarkable, varying from grammar-related topics (Zajączkowski's 'Arabic–Persian borrowings in the Turkish language. On the example of the creative works by early Ottoman authors') to topics dealing with the history of art ('A Collection of East Asian artefacts' by W. Jabłoński). Issues related to the local Oriental element were also given attention ('The Tatar Kitab of Adam Asanowicz from the little town of Ilia in the region of Vilnius' by Szachno-Romanowicz and 'The Karaim Historical and Ethnographic Museum in Trakai' by Szymon Firkowicz).

Thanks to research activities initiated by Kowalski (1925) and Shapshal (1928) and devoted to the language, culture, and history of the Karaims residing in Vilnius and Trakai, the Karaim theme would become ingrained in the research curricula of Cracow, Warsaw, and Vilnius universities (starting in 1979).⁸

⁸ In 1887 the language of the Trakai Karaims became the object of research for Wilhelm Radlov, who published the first dictionary of the Karaim language. For more details, see Tyszkiewicz 2008, 174; Dubiński 1959.

With the discovery of a kitab⁹ in the village of Forty Tatars in Vilnius District in 1915, scholars regained an interest in Slavic-language texts written by Lithuanian Tatars in the Arabic script. In literature this kitab is known by the name of Ivan Luckevic, the Belarusian historian and archaeologist who found it. Stories about the manuscripts of Lithuanian Tatars appeared in print, while Luckevic's kitab inspired several research works (Luckevic 1920; Stankevici 1924). Throughout the 1920s to 1950s, excerpts from various manuscripts were printed and attempts were made at the scientifically grounded transliteration of texts. In the 1960s the kitabs became the major research topic for Anton Konstantinovich Antonovich, professor at Vilnius University. His monograph *Belarusian texts written in Arabic script and their graphic-orthographic system* (1968) brought the scholar European fame. For many years this monograph became a reference book for subsequent generations of kitab researchers. Professor Antonovich had plans to publish textbooks that would contain texts from the 16th–17th centuries, compile a dictionary of kitabs, and publish deciphered texts, which could be of use not only to linguists, but also to historians, ethnographers, and folklore specialists. However, these plans were never to be fulfilled due to Professor Antonovich's sudden death on 17 January 1980. He did not have any students who could carry on with his research. It was only because during the last year of Professor Antonovich's life, his colleague, Valeriy Nikolayevich Chekmonas, worked side by side with him that the scholarly research of kitabs of Lithuanian Tatars was not discontinued, and the tradition of studying the Slavic-language manuscripts written in Arabic script was sustained at Vilnius University. Professor Chekmonas also offered yearly papers and diploma theses on Karaim-related issues.

In 1988 the author of the present article defended her doctoral dissertation entitled 'The oldest manuscripts of the Lithuanian Tatars (Graphics. Transliteration. Translation. The structure and content of the texts)', which formed the basis for a published study guide for students (Miškinienė 2001). The new stage of research about manuscripts in Slavic written by Lithuanian Tatars in Arabic script is also represented by a project initiated in Vilnius and devoted to the textual analysis of texts (Miškinienė, Temchin [forthcoming]). At the present time, this project is carried out by the same authors (Galina Miškinienė and Sergey Temchin) at the Institute of the Lithuanian Language.¹⁰

⁹ Kitab (Ar. 'book') is a type of manuscript written by Lithuanian Tatars. Kitabs include legends about the life and activities of the Prophet Muhammad, depictions of rites and rituals, and description of the main responsibilities of Muslims; Biblical legends are not infrequent, and stories with a moral or sometimes even Oriental adventure narratives can also be found.

¹⁰ Concerning major research trends of the manuscript heritage of Lithuanian Tatars and the development of kitab studies at Vilnius University, see Miškinienė 2009.

Since 1991, shortly after Lithuania regained its independence and thanks to the efforts of the Department of Slavic Languages at Vilnius University, the Turkish language has been offered to students as an optional subject. Since 1993, the Ministry of Education of Turkey has regularly sent a lecturer in the Turkish language to Lithuania. On 2 June 1997, with the participation of Turkish President Suleyman Demirel and Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas, the Turkish Language Classroom was opened at the university. It is equipped with all relevant audiovisual technology and a rich library to ensure a quality study process. Throughout the 1999–2000 academic year, a new curriculum of bachelor's studies of Lithuanian philology and a foreign (Turkish) language was under development at the Faculty of Philology of Vilnius University. Since 2001 the four-year programme has been put into effect. Students are offered an extensive programme made up of, in addition to the contemporary Turkish language, subjects such as Turkish culture and history, Introduction to Turkology, History of Turkish Literature (19th–20th centuries), Introduction to Islam, History of the Turkish Language, and Standardisation of the Turkish Language.¹¹

Since the 2008–2009 academic year, a new programme called Comparative Asian Studies (Turkology) has been offered at the Centre of Oriental Studies of Vilnius University. Students are enrolled every other year.

In this way, after the Eastern European Research Institute had been liquidated in Vilnius in 1939–1941 and after the closure of the Department of the Holy Scripture at Vilnius University, until 1991, i.e., for the period of 50 years, not a single attempt was made at establishing a department that would be preparing specialists in Oriental Studies. Despite the absence of the relevant administrative unit, new scholars did emerge within the walls of Vilnius University. They carried on with research in the sphere of Oriental Studies, in topical issues of Karaim studies and Tatar studies. Established in 1993, the Oriental Studies Centre at Vilnius University, as well as the newly-developed programmes, ensures the up-to-date development of Turkology at the present and in the future.

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¹¹ For more details on the programme, see Miškinienė 2000; Miškinienė 2004; Miškinienė, Nasibova 2010.

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