

Andrzej B. Zakrzewski

MUSLIM CHARITY
IN THE POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH

It is not easy to trace the way charity was administered by the Muslims inhabiting the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. They were a small group. The register of 1528 showed only 651 horses¹. The revision of Tartar estates of 1631 showed a few more than 400 horses put out for military service by this community². Assuming — according to an eminent historian Henryk Łowmiański — that the average population of a household was 6.5 people³, and multiplying this number by, respectively, 651 and 400 horses (which could be estimated as a number of households) — we arrive at a few more than 4,200, and over 2,500 Tartars liable for military service, together with their families. Another Polish scholar Jan Tyszkiewicz estimates that in the middle of the 17th c. about 3,500 Tartars lived in towns⁴. Muslims who served Lithuanian magnates should also be taken into account. In the Radziwills' estates alone the Tartars put out about 120 horses at that time⁵. Muslims living in the

¹ See H. Łowmiański, *Zaludnienie państwa litewskiego w wieku XVI (The Population of the Lithuanian State in the 16th c.)*, ed. A. Kijas and K. Pietkiewicz, Poznań 1998, p. 71.

² P. Borawski, W. Stenkiewicz, T. Wasilewski, *Rewizja dóbr tatarskich 1631 r. — sumariusz i wypisy (The Revision of Tartar Property in 1631 — a Summary and Excerpts)*, "Acta Baltico-Slavica" (henceforward: ABS) XX: 1991, p. 72, table 1.

³ H. Łowmiański, op. cit., p. 154.

⁴ J. Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce (The Tartars in Lithuania and Poland)*, Warszawa 1989, p. 275.

⁵ P. Borawski, *Tatarzy — ziemianie w dobrach Radziwiłłów, XVI–XVIII w. (Tartar Landowners in the Radziwiłł's Estates, 16th–18th c.)*, "Przegląd Historyczny" (henceforward: PH) LXXX: 1991, fasc. 1, p. 46.

estates of other magnates, as well as the Tartars who in the first half of the 17th c. settled in the regained Smolensk region, should also be taken into consideration. There was also a large number of common Muslims who could not be enclosed in the above structures. All in all, the strength of this community can be estimated, at the height of the settling process, at a little over 10,000 people. This was less than one per cent of the population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The sources created and left to us by Muslims are relatively scarce. If we rely on the twenty-odd testaments⁶ and some fragments of religious manuscripts, this will allow us, at the most, to form very thin hypotheses. Documents concerning custody, or more strictly — its financial aspect, are much more frequent, but less interesting, since they were influenced in a greater degree by the legal system of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This does not mean, of course, that Muslim testaments were free of this influence. On the contrary, the literature on the subject has frequently drawn attention to the similarity between the form of the Muslim and Christian testaments in Lithuania⁷.

There are no mentions of charity in the records concerning this era, either. The few sources that exist rather drew attention to the peculiarities of architecture, dress or customs, which were easier to notice and did not require special perceptiveness. Catholic clergymen, on the other hand, were mostly interested in the potential danger that the Muslims created for their flock. *Tartari cum sua moschea locum tenent* — the ordinaries of Lithuanian dioceses reported to Rome⁸. On the other hand, if (let it be our initial assumption) the Islamic charity was close to that of other denominations — this did not attract a special note.

⁶ St. Dziadulewicz, *Herbarz rodzin tatarskich w Polsce (The Armorial of Tartar Families in Poland)*, Wilno 1929, in the part devoted to families who had preserved Islam up till the 1930s, made use of 20 testaments. He had access to private collections later lost during the Second World War. This shows that these documents were relatively rare. Andrzej Rachuba points out that the court registers of Oszmiana offer some new opportunity for research.

⁷ It seems that the first to have shown it was Fabian Dobrianskiy, see *Akty izdavaemye Vilenskoyu Kommiseyu dlia Razbora Drevnikh Aktov* (henceforward: AWAK), vol. XXXI, Wilno 1906, preface, p. XXXI.

⁸ *Relationes status dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae*, ed. P. Rabikau-skas, vol. I, Roma 1971, pp. 90, 214, 153, 161, 264.

One of the pillars of the Muslim faith was alms — *zakāt*⁹. *Wykład wiary machometañskiej (The Exposition of Mohammedan or Islamic Faith)*, written in 1830, ordered: “every believer will give alms from his property”¹⁰. This duty existed also in the consciousness of Muslims living in the Commonwealth. This duty was not, presumably, as in the doctrine a tax amounting to 2.5% of the value of the property¹¹, but had rather the character of alms¹². It is not known who should be the collector of this money. At any rate the sources do not indicate that the *mullahs*, Tartar standard-bearers or marshals were active in this respect. It is difficult to prove the thesis posed recently by a Muslim researcher Mahmud Taka Zhuk that the *zakāt* was collected by Dervish Chelebi — since 1586 the *cadı* of all the Tartars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania¹³. It is hard to imagine the method of collecting such a tax. In 1588 Chelebi was a *mullah* at a small Lithuanian township of Dowbuciszki, so one can hardly assume that it was he himself who collected the tax from the Muslims scattered over the whole big area of the Grand Duchy. Perhaps the *pososzne* — two zlotys per *socha* (primitive plough), paid to the mosque in Łostaje, known at the beginning of the 19th c., was a form of this duty¹⁴. This might have been *sumy wakufowe* (waqf sums), mentioned in

⁹ See J. Tyszkiewicz, *Fundacje pobożne muzubnanów litewsko-polskich (Religious Foundations of Lithuanian-Polish Muslims)*, in: *Fundacje i fundatorzy w średniowieczu i epoce nowożytnej*, ed. E. Opaliński, T. Wiślicz, Warszawa 2000, pp. 155–156.

¹⁰ *Wykład wiary machometañskiej czyli iślamskiej wyjęty z części Koranu i przykazań proroka chadisiem zwanych i ułożony przez machometanina Józefa z Konkirantów Sobolewskiego sędziego granicznego apelacyjnego powiatu nowogródzkiego (The Exposition of Mohammedan or Islamic Faith Taken from a Part of the Alcoran and the Prophet's Commandments, Known as Hadit and Prepared by the Mohammedan Józef Sobolewski of Konkirant Family, a Border Appellate Judge of the Nowogródek District)*, Wilno 1830, p. 81.

¹¹ See A. Miśkiewicz, *Tatarzy polscy 1918–1939 (Polish Tartars 1918–1939)*, Warszawa 1990, p. 98.

¹² *Klucz do raju. Księga Tatarów litewsko-polskich z XVIII wieku (A Key to Paradise. A Book of Lithuanian-Polish Tartars of the 18th c.)*, translated and edited by H. Jankowski and Cz. Łapicz, Warszawa 2000, p. 74, note 150.

¹³ A. B. Zakrzewski, *Osadnictwo tatarskie w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim — aspekty wyznaniowe (Tartar Settlements in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania — Denominational Aspects)*, ABS XX: 1991, p. 145.

¹⁴ Ł. Kryczyński, *Rejestr dokumentów na dobra tatarskie Łostaje, 1600–1789 (The Register of Documents of the Łostaje Tartar Property, 1600–1789)*, “Ateneum Wileńskie” VII: 1930, fasc. 1–2, p. 13.

1783, a tax which the Islamic community (*dzhemiat*¹⁵) in Łowczyce bound itself to pay: “as at the times of our ancestors”¹⁶. The legal inquisition of 1763 concerning the conflict between Kazimierz Murza Juszyński — captain of horses in the Radziwiłłs’ Tartar company — and the peasants from the village he was the tenant of, contains an interesting mention. Juszyński was accused of excluding Polish peasants from the village, and settling Tartars in their place. Supposedly, he did it “because he would not be able to bring a *mullah* here, if there were too few Tartars”. The question: “Do the Poles make some collection for this *mullah*?”, was answered: “Some gave a tithe in sheaves of corn and money”¹⁷. It is possible that this tithe was a mechanical transfer of the rights of the Church to a mosque. One can also suppose that Christians provided money for the *imam* in order to prevent being expelled, while the taxes they were to deliver were analogous to those of the Muslims. In this case, we may form a hypothesis that there were permanent taxes imposed on the Muslims, collected — probably, although the sources keep silent about it — by the *imam*. This is, however, piling hypotheses up. The records of this permanent duty in the sources are uncertain, scarce and late.

The Islamic doctrine recommended treating the poor, of one’s free will, to a meal called *ṣadaqa*¹⁸. The command to feed your neighbour can be also found, among other books, in the *kitāb* — a religious manuscript of Lithuanian Tartars dating back to the end of the 18th c.¹⁹: “Do good to your nearest and dearest, relatives as well as the poor, orphans [...] do not turn the beggar away, even if he were a *kāfir* [an infidel], since God says: Whoever is considerate and takes care of the poor, orphans and prisoners, whoever would feed them with his dishes without demanding pay

¹⁵ Religious community of Tartars living in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and some areas of the Polish Crown; also of Turkish-speaking Karaites, *Słownik karaimsko-rosyjsko-polski (Karaites–Russian–Polish Dictionary)*, ed. by N. A. Baskakov, S. M. Szapszał, A. Zajaczkowski, Moskwa 1974, pp. 171, 176.

¹⁶ See S. Kryczyński, *Historia meczetów w Łowczycach i Nowogródku (The History of Mosques in Łowczyce and Nowogródek)*, “Przegląd Islamski” 1934, fasc. 3–4, pp. 16–17, the year 1783.

¹⁷ Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych — Central Archives of Historical Records (henceforward AGAD), Radziwiłł Archives VII, N° 294

¹⁸ *Klucz do raju*, p. 74, note 150.

¹⁹ More extensively on religious manuscript literature: Cz. Łapicz, *Kitāb Tataarów litewsko-polskich (The Kitāb of Lithuanian–Polish Tartars)*, Toruń 1986, pp. 60–69.

or praise — this man will be fed in Paradise by God who will show him his face”²⁰.

Another 18th c. manuscript — the so-called *Kitāb Milkamawowicza* — frequently cites both *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*²¹. However, in practice those two customary alms were not always distinguished one from the other²². Similar recommendations concerning the manifestations of charity can be found — according to Andrzej Drozd who studied this issue recently — in many other, still unpublished, manuscripts of Lithuanian Tartars²³. The *imams* in the mosques ordered the believers: “do good”²⁴.

However, the institution of *ṣadaqa* — according to Stanisław Kryczyński, who described the situation of the period between the two World Wars — “actually lost the character of alms; while in the Islamic East *ṣadaqa* was offered only to the poor, the Lithuanian Tartars during various celebrations distributed it to all the present — poor as well as rich. *Ṣadaqa* may consist of bread, fruit or sweets”²⁵. We do not know when alms changed into a treat. Perhaps this element, too, was connected to the rites of Turkish nomads, as was observed by Aleksander Dubiński in his description of the customs and celebrations connected with the cult of the dead among Lithuanian Tartars²⁶. Customs changed very slowly. Relying on Stanisław Kryczyński’s observations, we can assume that *ṣadaqa* was, essentially, a kind of treat if not from the very beginning of the Tartar settlement, then perhaps towards the end of the Commonwealth. In support of this hypothesis we can cite an uncertain mention in a testament of 1661, where the testatrix decided, among other things: “to

²⁰ J. Szywniewicz, *O kitabie (On the Kitāb)*, “Rocznik Tatarski” (henceforward: RT) I: 1932, p. 192.

²¹ *Klucz do raju*, pp. 75, 105, 106, 138, 139, 147, 167.

²² *Klucz do raju*, p. 74, note 150.

²³ Relevant vocabulary was alive in colloquial speech and the written language of Tartars. A. Drozd, *Arabskie teksty liturgiczne w przekładzie na język polski XVII wieku (Arabic Liturgical Texts in the Polish 17th c. Translation)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 80.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 101.

²⁵ St. Kryczyński, *Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej (Lithuanian Tartars. An Attempt at a Historico-Ethnographic Monograph)*, Warszawa 1938 (RT III: 1938), p. 174, note 8.

²⁶ P. Borawski, A. Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy. Dzieje, obrzędy, tradycje (Polish Tartars. History, Rites, Traditions)*, Warszawa 1986, p. 196. Cf. St. Kałużyński, *Tradycje i legendy ludów tureckich (The Traditions and Legends of Turkish Peoples)*, Warszawa 1986, pp. 119–120.

assign two oxen, estimated at 15 zlotys each, for *kurans*²⁷. This could be true, if we assume that the oxen were to be eaten and not sold to get the money for the prayers — *kurans*. Anyway, these treats were mentioned, even if rarely, in testaments. The last will of Prince Alej Januszewicz Kalina, (supposedly forged?)²⁸, included expenditures “on the funeral banquet and singers at the graves”²⁹. Abraham Korycki’s testament of 1810 included — on the occasion of the funeral — not only expenditures “on the poor”, but also on a funeral banquet and four other suppers: on the third, tenth and fortieth day after the funeral and on its anniversary³⁰. Bequests demanding that inheritors should also take into account “other funeral requirements according to our customs”³¹, or should organize a funeral “according to the law of our Muslim faith with all the rites”³², might mean that a treat was to be offered, too. However, we cannot be sure this was the case.

The fragment of *kitāb* cited above shows still another element of charity — concern for one’s neighbours, especially orphans³³. This can also be seen in the relatively frequent mentions of custody or adoption in the sources. The earliest date back to the beginning of the 16th c. A typical example is the case of the Tartars Habil and Tochtamysz Nurkowicz. Their brother Achmet signed a contract: in return for the custody of his three daughters, endowing them and giving them away in marriage — his brothers would receive his property³⁴. In the same period Murat Mamtikowicz took his nephew Husejn Ajdarowicz — “as his son”, and on his deathbed, bequeathed to this adopted son a

²⁷ Vilnius University Library (henceforward VUL), MS F.7, *The Troki Royal Official’s Court Register 1661–1665, document of 28 June 1661*.

²⁸ AWAK XXXI, pp. 327–332.

²⁹ AWAK XXXI, p. 324, the year 1645.

³⁰ A. Kołodziejczyk, *Dwa XIX-wieczne testamenty tatarskie z Podlasia (Two 19th c. Tartar Testaments from Podlachia)*, in: i d e m, *Rozprawy i studia z dziejów Tatarów litewsko-polskich i islamu w Polsce w XVII–XX wieku*, Siedlce 1997, p. 165.

³¹ *Testament Dawida Murzy Najmańskiego Kryczyńskiego chorążego tatarskiego powiatu oszmiańskiego, rotmistrza JKMci (The Testament of Dawid Murza Najmański Kryczyński, Tartar Standard-bearer of the Oszmiana District, His Majesty the King’s Captain of Horses)*, ed. L. N. M. Kryczyński, RT II: 1935, p. 446, the year 1771.

³² VUL, F.7 — 5959, p. 564.

³³ *Klucz do rajy* also contains a command to show concern for orphans: pp. 153, 182; it also emphasizes the importance of good deeds: pp. 158, 160, 182, 230.

³⁴ AGAD, *Lithuanian Metrica* (henceforward: LM 197), p. 387.

third of his inherited estate³⁵. Such situation happened many times. Almost a century and a half later — in 1642 — Samuel Abrahamowicz, the son of the Wilno standard-bearer, adopted an orphan to whom he bequeathed all his property³⁶. Jarosz Achmatowicz — a Tartar living in the Radziwiłłs' Birże estate, noted in his testament of 1662: "Having no children of my own, I adopted and brought up my nephew Jarosz Bielakowicz Romanowski"³⁷. Almost a century later — in 1759 — Ismail Nowosielski acknowledged the custody held by three Tupalski brothers "due to whose favour and charity I had been brought up for four and a half years, and due to whose favour I was sent to school and received my religious education in the Islamic faith"³⁸. A concern for one's closer or more distant relatives is, however, something natural, and cannot be treated as a Muslim specificity; we can find it among the representatives of other denominations as well. This was a general phenomenon, also in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and is corroborated e.g. by the studies of Juliusz Bardach³⁹ and Jan Loho-Sobolewski⁴⁰.

Islamic law knows also an institution called *waqf* — property excluded from turnover that provides the means for the maintenance of sanctuaries or charity⁴¹. In the few testaments under our analysis we encounter more frequently bequests in money for the mosque⁴² or the *mullah*, than assigning land for this purpose: in the testaments known to us, the latter situation occurred only twice or three times. The legacy "of Kulziman's garden with a pasture, for the glory of God to the mosque in Gudziany" in

³⁵ AGAD, LM 197, p. 388.

³⁶ *Istoriko-yuridicheskiye materialy izvlechennyye iz aktovykh knig guberni vitebskoy i mogilevskoy* (henceforward: *IJM*), XXV, Vitebsk 1894, p. 404.

³⁷ *Biržu dvaro teismo knygos 1620–1745*, ed. V. Raudeliūnas and R. Firko-vičius, Vilnius 1982, p. 323.

³⁸ A. K. Antonowicz, *Beloruskiye teksty pisannyye arabskim pismom i ikh grafiko-orfograficheskaya sistema*, Vilnius 1968, p. 176.

³⁹ J. Bardach, *Adopcja w prawie litewskim XV i XVI w. (Adoption in Lithuanian 15th and 16th c. Law)*, in: *idem, Studia z ustroju i prawa Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego XIV–XVII w.*, Warszawa 1970, p. 242 ff.

⁴⁰ J. Loho-Sobolewski, *Prawo opiekuńcze w dawnej Litwie (Guardianship Law in Old Lithuania)*, "Studies in the History of Polish Law", vol. XV, fasc. 2, Lwów 1937.

⁴¹ See A. Shoukry Bidair, *L'institutions des biens dits "habous" ou "wakf" dans le droit de l'Islam*, Paris 1924, p. 17 ff.

⁴² *IJM* XXV, p. 406.

1687⁴³, was not strikingly generous. There was another, more imposing legacy: a field, garden and orchard — “the life annuity” of the testator’s wife, which “on her demise should belong for ever to the mosque in Niemieża and to the *dzhemiat* [the Islamic community]”⁴⁴. Also Walerian Meysztowicz, in fact mainly dealing with the property of the Catholic Church, mentions only one, the first of the above, grant for the mosque⁴⁵. Even if we take into account the destruction of many documents, it seems that these legacies were not very frequent. In the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania there were about 30 mosques⁴⁶, to which we should add a few Muslim sanctuaries in the part of Podlachia and Volhynia belonging to the Polish Crown. Probably not all of them were endowed with land. It seems that landed property of mosques, especially in comparison to this of other denominational groups in the whole of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, to say nothing of the Crown — was rather small. Towards the end of the Commonwealth in 11 districts of Western and Central Belorussia 31,532 households (hearths) belonged to various Churches and religious communities (the Catholic Church owned 27,039 buildings), while to the *dzhemiat* belonged only one⁴⁷. The inventories of magnates’ estates show that 51–85 ha was generally assigned for one Tartar serving on horse, while most frequently 17 ha only was assigned for the *mullah* or the Tartar mosque⁴⁸. It is impossible to estimate the revenues obtained from this area. We do not possess any data concerning the economy of the *waqf* property. One can doubt, however, whether such a grant allowed, apart from the maintenance of the *imam* with his family and the mosque, for any charity⁴⁹. Beyond any doubt, Muslim com-

⁴³ AWAK XXXI, p. 487.

⁴⁴ Cit. from: P. Borawski, A. Dubiński, *Tatarzy polscy*, p. 197.

⁴⁵ W. Meysztowicz, *Dobra kościelne jako przedmiot uprawnień w prawie W. Ks. Litewskiego (Ecclesiastical Property as the Subject of Rights in the Law of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania)*, Wilno 1935, p. 140.

⁴⁶ A. B. Zakrzewski, *Osadnictwo*, p. 140.

⁴⁷ P. G. Kozłowski, *Struktura własności ziemskiej i faktycznego posiadania ziemi w zachodniej i środkowej Białorusi w drugiej połowie XVIII w. (The Structure of Land Ownership and the Actual Possession of Land in Western and Central Belorussia in the Second Half of the 18th c.)*, “Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych” XXXIII: 1972, p. 67, tab. 2.

⁴⁸ A. B. Zakrzewski, *Osadnictwo*, pp. 146–147; *Inventari magnatskich vladenij Belorussii XVII–XVIII vv. Vladenije Timkovichi*, ed. P. G. Kozłowski et al., Minsk 1982, pp. 49, 117.

⁴⁹ J. Tyszkiewicz, *Fundacje pobożne*, pp. 155, 160, points out that foundations — most frequently poor ones were mainly assigned for the maintenance of mosques.

munities did not keep almshouses — *imarets*. This fact was pointed out by Jan Tyszkiewicz in his analysis of a 16th c. report to the Sultan on the situation of Muslims in the Commonwealth⁵⁰.

Thus, in the light of the sources known so far, the scale of Muslim charitable work cannot be estimated exactly. It cannot be doubted, however, that it was small. This phenomenon should be explained by the fact that the Muslims living in the Commonwealth did not represent much wealth. The majority of them were poor. Even those Tartars who were *hospodars* (liable for military service) — close in status to the gentry⁵¹, owned only one house each. According to the calculations of a Belorussian scholar Valeriy Menzhinskiy — based on the register of 1528 — the Tartar landowners, making up 4.7% of all landowners in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, owned only 3.2% of the land⁵². Thus, the average property of a Tartar was smaller than the average property of a Christian boyar. Exceptions were rare and did not change the general picture⁵³. Poor Muslims had, in the first place, to feed their families, and they could not bequeath their possessions to the mosque. The laws forbidding the alienation of land for the sake of ecclesiastical institutions played probably a certain role here, too. It is true that the Constitution of 1635 agreed: “If anybody granted some plot of land to support a poor parish church, this should not be considered as being *pro contraventione* of this law”⁵⁴. However, a Tartar could perhaps find it harder to

⁵⁰ J. Tyszkiewicz, *Tatarzy na Litwie i w Polsce*, p. 285.

⁵¹ In fact Tartars, even *hospodars*, i.e. liable for military service, did not belong to the gentry estate, although they benefitted from some rights of the gentry — those concerning judicial law — see A. B. Zakrzewski, *Czy Tatarzy litewscy rzeczywiście nie byli szlachtą? (Is it True that Lithuanian Tartars Did Not Belong to the Gentry?)*, “Przegląd Historyczny” LXXIX: 1988, fasc. 3, pp. 572–580; idem, *Położenie prawne Tatarów w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim (XVI–XVIII w.) (The Legal Situation of Tartars in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania [16th–18th c.])*, in: Kipčićaku — *turku Orientas Lietuvoje, istorija ir tyrimu perspektyva*, Vilnius 1994, pp. 118–129. This question continues to be the subject of discussions, see I. Rychlikowa, *Tatarzy litewscy 1764–1831 częścią szlacheckiego stanu? (Were Lithuanian Tartars Part of the Gentry Estate in 1764–1831?)*, “Kwartalnik Historyczny” XCVII: 1990, N° 3–4, p. 77 ff., *ibidem* literature.

⁵² V. S. Menzhinskiy, *Struktura feodalnogo zemlevladieniya v VKL (po materialam Perepisi voyska 1528)*, “Istoriya SSSR” 1987, N° 3, p. 167, tab. p. 171.

⁵³ More extensively: A. B. Zakrzewski, *Zamożność Tatarów w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim, XVI–XVIII w. Próba oceny (The Financial Status of the Tartars in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, 16th–18th cc. A Tentative Assessment)*, “Prace Naukowe WSP w Częstochowie”, *Zeszyty Historyczne* V: 1998, pp. 5–13.

⁵⁴ *Volumina Legum* III, 856.

defend such a donation for a non-Christian community. This, of course, is another hypothesis.

A testament is usually drawn by the owner of some property. If there is no property — the *mortis causa* will have not much sense. In this situation, the written wills of Tartars occurred rarely. Legacies of a charitable character included in them, were still less frequent. The instructions contained in testaments, to arrange a funeral “according to our old order, custom and faith, within our powers”⁵⁵ or: “all the gifts according to our powers”⁵⁶, prove that attempts were made not to surpass the reasonable costs of the burial.

It can be assumed that some patterns of piety had undergone very little change over the ages. Hence, of great interest is the testament of Jachia Sobolewski of 1829, which chronologically goes beyond the framework of the Old Polish era. Its author, however, certainly followed the pattern of earlier times. The testator assigned “300 zlotys for the clothes of poor Muslims”⁵⁷. It cannot be ruled out that similar legacies happened earlier, too, although their records had been destroyed over the ages of turbulent history in Lithuanian-Ruthenian lands.

It would be a gross simplification to reduce the whole of the charitable work of Muslims in the Commonwealth to funeral banquets and custody of relatives. However, the shortage of sources does not allow us to show the alms in money or food mentioned in the above-cited *kitāb*, hence very probable. The dimensions of these alms cannot be estimated, but we cannot rule out that they were offered.

The Tartar community, just as all the others, despite its religious commands, could not provide for all its members living in penury. The latter looked for assistance elsewhere. Hence, we find the following notice in the accounts of the Court Treasury: “to Jan Abramowicz, a Tartar standard-bearer, according to the letter of His M.[ajesty] the K.[ing] 100 Polish zlotys by way of alms”⁵⁸. This was not an exceptional case neither for Tartars, nor

⁵⁵ Lithuanian State Historical Archives, SA-5939, p. 194. The year 1677.

⁵⁶ VIL. F.7 — 12/5966, The Troki Royal Official's Court Register 1677-1679, p. 610. Perhaps the command to bury “in the earth according to financial possibilities”, had a similar sense, AWAK XXXI, p. 473, the year 1682.

⁵⁷ T. B a i r a š a u s k a i t e, *Lietuvos totoriai XIX am(i)uje*, Vilnius 1996, sup. p. 276.

⁵⁸ VUL. F. 3 — 281, p. 35 (materials from volume XL of the *Records of the Vilnius Archaeographic Commission*, still unpublished).

for the believers of other denominations. It is, however, impossible to estimate the scale of poverty.

The above remarks indicate how difficult it is to show the dimensions of charity among the Tartars, as well as its character. Documents lacking, we can only surmise some of its symptoms. A small, indigent community, undergoing strong assimilation processes, as a result of the restless history in the 17th, 18th and 19th c. in the lands where they settled, could not create and preserve too many sources concerning charity. Therefore, it will be difficult to extend considerably the source basis of our inquiry or to draw any definite conclusions in this matter.

(Translated by Agnieszka Kreczmar)