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THE BULGAR-TATAR OSSIAN

I

Eight years ago there appeared in Kazan a very modestly hectographically published book in Russian. Its front page runs as follows:

Klub "Bulgar al Džadid"
Mikail Baštu Ibn Šams Tebir
Šan Kyzy Dastany
(Skazanie o dočeri Šana)
882 g.
Redaktor F. G.-X. Nurutdinov
Kazań 1990
(11,5 x 8 inch, 91 pp)

A year later luxurious Turkish translation was published in Ankara with woodcuts by noted artist Rafail Masautov of Kiev. Some other publications and translations followed, e.g. Ukrainian, 1992; Bulgarian in Sofia 1997, 189 pp.

The "Lay of Šans Daughter" is becoming now a fact, and the Turkologists are confronted with a weighty question: how comes that the oldest epic lay in Turki from A.D. 882 had remained completely unknown in scholarship.

Is it necessary to completely revolutionize all our knowledge of coming into being of Islamic Turkish literary language?

First let me give here (in my translation and with my queries) the introduction by the editor Farkhad Nurutdinov.

N.:¹ "The work which we bring forward to the interested reader was written by the prominent Bulgarian poet Mikail Baštu (ca. A.D. 835-900)".

P.: What other sources speak of him? How the dates of his life-span were established?

N.: "He (Baštu) was an offspring of the distinguished Bulgarian clan by the name of *Sindž* (according to Bulgarian pronunciation it was *Sintyau*, *Tintyau*, *Timtyau*). His distant ancestor – an Indian merchant *Sindž* established himself in Khwārizm, from where his offspring by the name Gabdulla (= 'Abd Allāh) Tebir (already a Muslim himself) had settled in a Khazarian city of Semender" (p. 1).

P.: What are the sources for the career of this remarkable clan *Sindž* and especially for 'Abd Allāh Tebir?

Under which phonemic laws the name *sindž* could be changed in Bulgarian into *sintyau* (*tintyau*) *timtyau*? And what Bulgarian language is here involved? Ibn Faḍlān mentions strange adventure of an adviser to the Volga Bulgarian king, who was from Muslim India (*Sind*). Is he meant here?²

N.: "The son of Tabir, Šams, settled in *Baštu* (modern Kiev), the Ukrainian residence of Ajdar, the ruler of Black Bulgars, where in 825 he, as well as a part of Black Bulgar nobility, was converted to Islam.

P.: What sources speak about Šams and his missionary activity? How the crucial date A.D. 825 was established? How do we know about the presence of the Black Bulgars in Kiev at that time? The name *Baštu* for Kiev does not occur in any known source. Where can one find proofs for this identification?

N.: "He (Šams) established in Kiev a secluded Dervish monastery which later was reorganised into (Christian) Kievan Caves Monastery".

P.: Until now no traces of either Muslim *Ribāt* or *Khānaqāh* was found in Kiev, and certainly none on the premisses of the Kievan Caves Monastery. The oldest (and the only) mentioning of a *ribāt*

¹ N. = Nurutdinov; P. = Pritsak.

² I am using the phototypical edition of Andrij Kovalivs'kyj (with Russian translation): *Kniga Axmeda Ibn-Fadlana o ego putešestvii na Volgu v 921-922 gg.* (Xarkiv, 1956), Arabic text fol. 207A-207B = Russ. translation, p. 137.

("fortified Mosque") in old Kievan literature refers to a Volga Bulgarian mosque in their capital city in 987 as *ropat'*³. The institution of *Khānaqāh* appears in the East of the Islamic world (Khorasan, Māwarānnahr) not earlier than by the end of the ninth – beginning of the tenth century⁴. How could a dervish convent have been established in Kiev at so early date?

N.: "Mikail, the son of Šams served as secretary of (King) Aydar's son – Gabdulla (= 'Abd Allāh) Džilki and at the same time devoted himself to the missionary work".

P.: What source basis is for the activity of Mikail? On Džilki see below.

N.: "Around A.D. 865 he (Mikail) started writing his poem *Šan gyzy destany*, the "Tale of Šan's daughter" – on the basis of the old Bulgarian heroic epics of the same name".

P.: How the date A.D. 865 was established? What are the sources for the existence of Old Bulgarian epic poetry prior to A.D. 865? The existing scholarly studies know nothing about this; see e.g. *Boringi Tatar edebiyati* (Kazan, 1963); *Tatar edebiyati tarikhi. Alti tomda*, vol. 1 (Kazan, 1984); Fatikh I. Urmavčeev, *Ėpičeskie skazanija tatarskogo naroda* (Kazan, 1980).

N.: "In A.D. 864 the Black (Western) Bulgars were defeated by the Khazars. Mikail left with Džilki and a part of the Black Bulgars for the Volga-Kama region. There, in A.D. 865, Džilki proclaimed the Islamic Bulgarian Kingdom. Mikail became adviser to Džilki (865-882), and later to his sons king Bat-Ugor (882-895) and Almuš Dža'far (895-925). He (Mikail) started to call himself 'Baštu' ('the Kievan') after his birthplace".

P.: No sources are known which would deal with the Khazar hostility against the Black Bulgars. On what authority do you make your statement? How it comes that here the color 'Black' designates

³ The Primary Chronicle (*Povesť vremennyx lět*), ed. D. S. Lixačev (Moscow – Leningrad, 1950), p. 75. Concerning the etymology of *ropat'* see Max Vasmer, *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 2 (Heidelberg, 1955), p. 536.

⁴ See O. Akimuškin 'Khānaqāh' in *Islam. Ėnciklopedičeskij slovar'* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 272-273.

'West'? The proclamation of the Islamic Bulgarian Kingdom in the Volga region in A.D. 865 is completely out of question.

Džilki (Ibn Faḍlān writes his name as Šilki)⁵ could not be the ruler who converted the Volga Bulgars to Islam, since he died a pagan. His son, King Almuš, who was visited in 921/922 by Ibn Faḍlān, stated clearly (in his conversation with the latter) that his father was unbeliever and only posthumously received the Muslim name 'Abd Allāh, which – as well known – was reserved for such purposes.

Almuš himself must have had accepted Islam and his Muslim name Ġa'far around A.H. 295/A.D. 908. S. A. Janina established that the oldest Volga-Bulgarian dirhams with the name Ġa'far b. 'Abd Allāh belonged to that date⁶.

Therefore, the Islamization of the Volga Bulgars did not start in A.D. 865, but rather much later, probably ca. A.H. 225/A.D. 908. By A.H. 309/A.D. 921-922, there were still many undersolved ritual problems; hence the mission of Ibn Faḍlān who was by profession a Muslim divine.

N.: "In 882 Mikail completed his life's work – the poem *Šan kzyz dastany* and devoted it to But Ugor who just had ascended the Bulgarian throne".

P.: What sources are for the existence of King Bat-Ugor (882-895)?

N.: "The poet (Mikail) was a great champion of the enlightenment. Still during the reign of Džilki he attached to the Common Turkic language (the 'Turki') the status of a literary language; he devised the Bulgarian alphabet on the basis of the Arabic script system, and established a Bulgarian educational network consisting of several dozens of *mektebs*, i.e. Islamic schools. Hence his poem, the first Bulgarian literary work written in Turki and in Arabic script, could have been read by thousands of well educated Bulgars". [but see here p. 6]

P.: Again, what are the sources for this enlightened activity? It is highly improbable that by the end of the 9th – beginning of the 10th c. Muslim schools existed where vernacular literature could be studied.

⁵ Ibn Faḍlān ed. Kovalivskyj, 1956, fol. 204 b = Russian translation, p. 133.

⁶ S. A. Janina, "Novyye dannye o monetnom čekanе Volžskoj Bolgarii X v.", *Trudy Kujbyševskoj arxeologičeskoj ekspedicii*, vol. 4 (Moscow, 1962), pp. 181-187.

Such secular patriotic idyll was difficult to establish in the Volga Region, even in the second half of the 19th century; witness Šihāb ad-Dīn Mergānī (1815-1889)⁷.

N.: "In A.D. 895-898 Mikail directed the first popular census in Bulgarian history. By the same time he constantly was engaged in missionary activity, spreading Islam into the most distant parts of the country".

P.: What is the basis for those statements?

N.: "Around A.D. 900 Mikail went for his last missionary trip, and was drown during a storm in the Kama river (*Čulman*). According to a legend, the pagans had seen his body in the silver radiance and called the river Kama *Nukrat-Idel* 'the Silver River'. The chief of the pagans let hang the body of Mikail on a tree and said while doing so: "O great shaman! We hang you on the tree so that you may be reborn in our land". These pagans started calling their kin *Tintyau* in honour of Mikail; they adopted Islam and later became a component part of the Bulgarian nation. About Mikails death writes also Aḥmad Ibn Faḍlān, an Arabic diplomat, who came to serve to the Bulgarian king Almuš in A.D. 922.

Following the orders of (King) Džā'far, the body of Mikail was buried in Tebir (Deber) – a sufi-dervish monastery on the river Svijaga which was founded by the poet".

P.: How this legend has been preserved? Aḥmad b. Faḍlān knows nothing about Mikail Baštu.

N.: "The son of Mikail – Gabdulla Ibn Baštu, the celebrated Bulgarian diplomat, became also a famous poet (his name is mentioned in the notes of Ibn Faḍlān). In A.D. 931 he wrote a poem *Kisekbaš Kitaby*, "Book of the chopped off head", which he devoted to the Bulgarian King Mikail-Yalkau (931-943) and which came down to us in the original language namely in 'Turki'.

P.: In fact, Ibn Faḍlān mentions 'Abd Allāh b. Baštū three times. Firstly, he states that 'Abd Allāh b. Baštū Al-Khazarī (i.e. 'The Khazarian') was an envoy of the Bulgar King to the Khalīfah al-Muqtadir (in May, 921)⁸; from two other mentionings is only evident that 'Abd

⁷ See Gerhard v. Mende, *Der nationale Kampf der Russlandtürken* (Berlin, 1936), esp. pp. 31-43.

⁸ Ibn Faḍlān ed. Kovalivskyj, 1956, fol. 197 a = Russian translation, p. 121.

Allāh would return to Bulgaria with Ibn Faḍlān's embassy⁹. All other data, esp. on 'Abd Allāh's poem *Kisekbaš Kitaby* have remained unknown to the scholarship. The only known *Kisekbaš kitaby* is anonymous, and belongs to the 12th-13th century, see Ja. S. Akhmetgaleeva, *Issledovaniya tjurkojazyčnogo pamjatnika "Kisekbaš kitaby"* (Moscow, 1979).

N.: "It was destined for the poem by Mikail Baštu to survive to our days in an elaboration in Russian by I. M.-K. Nigmatullin. The fact is that the epic poem (*Šan qyzy*) soon was forbidden by some Islamic zealots because of the presence there of pagan motifs; the work was therefore not well known and popular with the people. [compare p. 4]

The last copy of the *destan*, which is presented here in Russian elaboration, apparently was lost in the thirties of the century, when in the Soviet Union books in Arabic script were destroyed, and those people, who tried to save them were severely persecuted.

But, a few Bulgarian poetic pieces were preserved in the work of the excellent Muslim philologist Maḥmūd Kāšgharī (11th c.). Two of them are almost identical as far as its contents goes with some parts of Nigmatullin's text, which bears witness of their belonging to the original poem by Mikail.

In this way the reader can get on their basis an idea how was the language, poetic and musical structure of the immortal poem by Mikail Baštu".

P.: Scholarly world would appreciate more documentation about the fate of Mikail Baštu's poem.

It is of course a very bold statement on the part of Nurutdinov namely that Kāšgharī (ca. 1070) copied from Baštu's poem, an early existence of which is still only a supposition.

II

In editor's note we read:¹⁰

"The poem *Šan qyzy dastany* came down to us in Russian elaboration done by Ibraqim Moxammad-Kasimov Nigmatullin (1918/1916-1941) in city Petropavlovsk (Kazakh Republic)".

⁹ Ibn Faḍlān ed. Kovalivskyj, 1956, fol. 197 b = Russian translation, p. 122.

¹⁰ P. 79, Fn. 1.

In his publication of *Šan qyzy dastany*, Nurutdinov probably believes that two quatrains of Baštu's poem were better preserved in Kāšgharī's work than in Nigmatullin's renderings. Hence he replaces them in his text publication by his own quotation from Kāšgharī (unfortunately he does not give which edition of Kāšgharī he was using) and his Russian rendering of the Turkic text:

Nigmatullin's version:

"Это уловка шайтана – Обманывать людей Сладостью меда И великолепия шелковых одежд"	"This is devil's trick to cheat the people by means of sweetness of honey and by the splendor of silk robes" ¹¹
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Nurutdinov's rendering of Kāšgharī:

Бал татеб ютрю як санга бярди. Кал белеб телюйвга кя дибян барджин	"Держа мед К тебе черт навстречу шагал. Одевая в шелка – в дураках оставлял" (<i>šan</i> , 58) "Holding honey Devil was approaching you Dressing you in silk he made a fool of you". ¹²
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Kāšgharī's text and its translation:

bardi saḡa yäk utru tutup bäl barčïn kädibän telwä bolub qäl.	"Devil confronted you and gave you honey (meaning the sweetness of this world). You even put on his silks (so much were you enchanted by him therefore) remain and live on in madness (since you have not recognised his scheme)". ¹³
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¹¹ *Šan qyzy dastany* (= *ŠQD*), p. 79.

¹² *ŠQD*, p. 58.

But they (certainly) had preserved the main things."¹⁷ Но сохранили главное

Who wrote these words? Nigmatullin or one of his authorities? Is this not to understand that these was a long barrier (probably also a linguistic one) between Baštu and those who at one early time had chance to read his work and to memorise (partially?) it, and those who got a second hand knowledge of the lay (from those who had memorise it). At any event, Nigmatullin's copy (if it ever existed) went back not to the written but rather to oral tradition.

III

It is difficult to judge over the language of a literary work which is not available in its original version. The only data at the disposal is the onomastic materials. Let us check the data.

'Turki' (of the 10-11 th c.)	-egi	Tatar -i = ŠQD <i>bi</i> (< <i>begi</i>) 'lady' ¹⁸
'Turki'	-ay	Tatar -au = ŠQD <i>tau</i> (< <i>taγ</i>) 'mountain' ¹⁹
'Turki'	y-	Tatar <i>dž-</i> = ŠQD <i>džil</i> (< <i>yel-</i>) 'wind' ²⁰
'Turki'	-d	Tatar -y = ŠQD <i>qiy</i> (< <i>qid</i>) 'cut off' ²¹
'Turki'	-d-	Tatar -y- = ŠQD <i>quyan</i> (< <i>qodan</i>) 'hare' ²²

¹⁷ ŠQD, p. 5

¹⁸ Used after the proper name, e.g. *Boz-bi* (ŠQD, p. 32 *et passim*).

¹⁹ Used after the proper name, e.g. *Kujan-tau* 'Kievan Hills' (ŠQD, pp. 68, 77).

²⁰ *Alp džil* – 'lord of the winds' (ŠQD, p. 14).

²¹ The Bulgarian Kan Kurbat (historical Kubrat, ca. 605-665) allegedly called his younger brother *Šambat* (about this name see at the end of this footnote) *Kyj*, i.e. 'the cut off', since he refused to return to his service after he founded his own realm (ŠQD, 68). The name *Šambat* for an alleged Kievan prince has apparently its source in Constantine Porphyrogenitos' remark that Kiev had still another name – *Sambatas* (*De administrando imperio*, ed. G. G. Litavrin and A. P. Novoselcov, *Ob upravlenii imperiej*, Moscow, 1989, pp. 44-45. The word *Kyj* is supposed to go back to the name of Kiev's eponym, but if it was so, the word should still be in the 9th century *qid* and not *qiy*).

²² ŠQD p. 68. On tabu connected with the hare see N. I. Vorobeč and G. M. Xusamutdinov, eds., *Tatary srednego Povolžja i Priural'ja* (Moscow, 1967), p. 350.

Modern is also a Chuvash loanword for Turki *idug* 'blessed' = *joreg*²³ < Čuv. *jěřex* 'harmful demons'.

Also some names, not known in 'Turki', have clearly modern Tatar forms: *шүрәле* (i.e. *šüreli*) 'wood-goblin'²⁴.

One of the heroes, *Alamir*, who is supposed to be the representation of Alexander the Great of the legend, is named in ŠQD with the title *sultan*²⁵; the latter acquired its meaning in the Islamic world only with the elevation of the Great Seljuks in second half of the 11th c.²⁶ It means, that the Bulgar author, working in 864-882, could not have yet used that title.

The title of the Bulgarian ruler is styled in the ŠQD (p. 68) as *bal-tavar*. That word, completely unknown in Tatar and Chuvash, has an artificial origin. It was created by Russian Arabist Christian Martin Frähn in the discovery of a manuscript of Ibn Faḍlān's account²⁷. But the discovery of a manuscript of Ibn Faḍlān's *Risāle* in Meshhed by A. Zeki Validi Togan, and his publication in 1939, has proved that this strange word has to be read with the initial y- as *yltvar*²⁸, i.e. *yil-tavar*,

²³ ŠQD p. 52 *et passim*. On *jěřex* see V. G. Jegorov *Ėtimologičeskij slovar' čuvaškogo jazyka* (Čeboksary, 1964), p. 80.

²⁴ ŠQD p. 31 *et passim*. Concerning Tatar *šüreli* see Martti Räsänen, *Versuch eines etymologischen Wörterbuchs der Türkssprachen* (Helsinki, 1969), p. 450.

²⁵ ŠQD pp. 40, 74. The equation *Alamir* = Alexander the Great is given by Nurutdinov in his Glossary p. 61 (without documentation).

²⁶ See J. H. Kramers, 'Sultān' in *Enzyklopädie des Islam*, vol. 4 (Leiden-Leipzig, 1934), pp. 587-590.

²⁷ C. M. Fraehn, *Ibn-Foslan's und anderer Araber Berichte über die Russen älteren Zeit* (St Petersburg, 1823).

²⁸ A. Zeki Validi Togan, *Ibn Faḍlān's Reisebericht* (Leipzig, 1939), pp. 105-106. A. Kovalivs'kyj in his edition of 1939 (his name was omitted, and the work appeared only under the name of its editor, I. Ju. Kračkovskij) still followed Fraehn (*Putešestvie Ibn-Fadlana na Volgu* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1939), p. 38, fn. 8). The second edition of Kovalivs'kyj's translation published in 1956 in Xarkiv (this time under the author's name) seems to be unknown in Kazan, judging to the quotation of Ibn Faḍlān in Nurutdinov's article in *Xronika 2000*, vol. 1 (Kiev, 1992), p. 74. In his second edition Kovalivs'kyj accepted the correct reading of Togan and writes *jyltyvar*

and that this word corresponds to the Old Turkic (runic script) title *il-teber*. From this one can see that the Old Bulgarian title *baltavar* did exist only in the scholarly literature between 1825 and 1939, and certainly was unknown in Volga Bulgaria in 864-882.

In 1800 the famous Old Rus poetic work "The Igor Tale" was first published by its discoverer Prince A. I. Musin-Puškin. The editor of *ŠQD* F. Nurutdinov pointed out that there are some similarities between *ŠQD* and "The Igor Tale"²⁹, such as the appearance of singer *Bojan*³⁰ of the *Tatran* (*Tat-iran*) clan³¹.

I could add here still the 'Far Eastern' people *xin*³²: *xin-ova* in the "Igor Tale" and *xin-y* in *ŠQD* and (*Alp*)*Xursa*, son of Sun (= *X̄rs-* in the "Igor Tale")³³. Andrej N. Popov published in 1866 the so-called "List of the Bulgarian Princes". There appears the ruling clan *Dulo*. The same prominent role is played by the *Dulo* in the *ŠQD*³⁴. It seems that the name of another royal Bulgarian clan in the *ŠQD*, namely *Jurmi* goes back to *Jermi* of the "List"³⁵.

IV

Now few words about the *dastan* itself.

It starts with the "Bulgarian version" of the Genesis and their theogony. *Tangri*, also called *Allah*, created first the beings called *alp džin*'s³⁶ (from Arabic *ġinn*) or even *div*'s (Iranian, as in the *Igor Tale*).

(*Kniga Axmeda Ibn-Fadlana o ego putešestvii na Volgu v 921-922 gg.* (Xarkiv, 1956), p. 121. See also his footnote 16 on p. 160.

²⁹ F. Nurutdinov in *Xronika 2000*, vol. 1, p. 73.

³⁰ *ŠQD*, esp. p. 9.

³¹ *ŠQD*, pp. 58, 59, 64, 72, 75.

³² *ŠQD*, pp. 26, 30, 34. See K. H. Menges, *Vostočnye èlementy v "Slove o polku Igoreve"* (Leningrad, 1979), pp. 168-170.

³³ *ŠQD*, p. 5. See also Menges, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-208.

³⁴ *ŠQD*, esp. p. 26. On *Dulo* see O. Pritsak, *Die bulgarische Fürstenliste* (Wiesbaden, 1955), pp. 62-64.

³⁵ *ŠQD*, pp. 23, 33. On this clan see Pritsak, *op. cit.*, pp. 38.

³⁶ In Kazan Tatar the word has the form of *alyp* and has the meaning: 'giant', see *Tatarsko-russkij slovar'* (Moscow, 1962), p. 38.

In Nigmatullin's rendition of *ŠQD* some of the *alp*'s have their Turkic names, the other appear in Russian form, e.g. (Turkic): *Alp Albasty*, *Alp*

First were created the so-called Older *alp*'s: the sun and the moon, later also younger *alp*'s, like sun's son *Alp Xusra*. Soon a struggle started between the two *alp*-groups. As a result, *Tangri* ordered that hence the *alp*'s should not reproduce themselves, but instead human beings. The latter were governed by their leaders called *elbir*³⁷. While the struggle continued, *Tangri* sent the Muslim saints (esp. *Gali* /= 'Alī) to settle matters. This is the only Muslim element in the *ŠQD*.

Alp Bajan, born as a star (he was the son of the *alp*'s of Sun and Moon) was governing the human clan *Imen*³⁸, later also called *Dulo*.

The quest for wives of three members of the *Imen/Dulo* clan headed by *At* (called also *Atile*³⁹ and *Audan*), their successful struggle with the harmful *alp*'s (*joregs*), their final victory and their "Landnahme" first in the Dniepr region and later in what became their Volga Bulgar home – is the main theme of the epics. Nurutdinov adds at the end of his edition a glossary of Old Bulgarian words which occur in the poem *Šan qzy dastany* (pp. 81-89).

The majority of items are personal names, titles and geographic names. Their explanations cannot be verified by any known source.

But Nurutdinov explains – on the another place⁴⁰ – that he was using for his comments a still unavailable to scholarship collection of

Artyš, *Alp Baradž*, *Alp Buri*, *Alp Boj Terek*, *Alp Džil*, *Alp Kujan*, etc.; (Russian): *Alp Medved'* ('Bear'), *Alp Solovej* ('Nightgale'), *Alp Baran* ('Ram'). The female *alp*'s have the generic word *bi* (< *begi*) added: *Alp-bi*, e.g. *Alp-bi Čak-čak*, *Alp-bi Bojgala*, *Alp-bi Vydra* (Russian 'Odder'), *Alp-bi Myš* (Russian 'Mouse').

³⁷ The term *elbir* cannot be verified in Kazan Tatar or in any other literary Turkic language. But see in Turkish: *Tarama sözlüğü*, vol. 3 (Ankara, 1967): *elbir etmek / eylemek*: el birliği yapmak, ittifak etmek (14th-17th c., pp. 1420-1421); *Derleme sözlüğü*, vol. 5 (Ankara 1972), *elbir* 'Dargın olan iki kişinin arasını bulan...' (p. 1704). See also in Karakalpak: *elbire* 'to sympathize with' (N. A. Baskakov, *Karakalpaksko-russkij slovar'*, Moscow, 1958), p. 189.

³⁸ In Kazan-Tatar *imen* (*imän*) has the meaning 'oak'.

³⁹ According to *ŠQD* (p. 76) the Volga territory of the hero *At* was called *At ili* 'the realm of *At*', but later he (*At*) himself received the name of his land. See also the "Glossary", p. 82.

⁴⁰ Farxat Nurutdinov "Dolja i zaklyk davnoji poemy", *Xronika 2000* (Ukrainian edition), vol. 1 (Kiev, 1992), pp. 67-74; id. "Sud'ba i pryzyv

Old Bulgarian chronicles under the title "History of *Ġaʿfar*", which like *Šan qyzy dastany* was saved only by Ibrahim Nigmatullin's Russian rendering. The "History of *Ġaʿfar*" was – according to him – compiled in A.D. 1680.

A scholarly commented edition of the "History of *Ġaʿfar*" should be the foremost task of our Bulgarian-Tatar colleges.

V

Why people would forge a literary work? In 1760-1762 it was for James Macpherson (1736-1796) an urge to create for his ballade a doom laden ("romantic" as he understood it) atmosphere, verified by an old (third century A.D.) authority.

Václav Hanka (1791-1881) had a patriotic aim: all Slavic historic peoples had their heroic lays but the Czechs had none. So in 1817-1819 he forged his two "ancient" manuscripts (*Rukopis Králevédvorský* and *Rukopis Zelenohorský*) to satisfy the Czech national pride and honor.

If one thinks that such mystification would be limited to the Romanticism – it would be naïve.

Not so long ago, between 1953 and 1959, a group of Russian emigrants living in Europe and California fabricated a large "pre-Christian" Old Russian epic poem *Vles kniga* ("Book of /god/ Vles") which supposedly came down to us carved on wooden blocs from at least the 9th c. The magic of works which in a kind of a supernatural way are at once available to mankind, even if the official scholarship is not able to see it, produces a kind of mass hysteria. Hence it was necessary in 1990 that an eminent Slavicist and textologist Oleg V. Tvorogov published a long dissertation in the most prestigious Russian Slavic yearbook⁴¹, where he having analysed all available "source material" had proven beyond any doubt that the "Vles Kniga" was a modern forgery, very cleverly disguised, but, fortunately for the scholarship, executed by people with a very limited knowledge of Old Slavic.

drevnej poëmy" *Xronika 2000* (Russian edition), vol. 1 (Kiev, 1992), pp. 67-74.

⁴¹ O. V. Tvorogov, "Vlesova kniga", *Trudy Otdela Drevnerusskoj literatury*, vol 43 (Leningrad, 1990), pp. 170-254.

When in 1991 I first was given a copy of *ŠQD* I very eagerly started reading it, hoping to enrich my knowledge of the Old Bulgarian creativity, which has been subject of my studies for decades. Unfortunately, what I found was a mass of mystic and "historic" names, terms and events which could not be verified by any known source.

Now that I was asked to contribute to a Festschrift for my colleague Professor Stanisław Stachowski with interest in mystic things, I decided to use the opportunity and to initiate an inquiry in something which is either a revolutionary event in the early cultural history of Turkdom, or – as I suggest – just a Bulgar-Tatar Ossian.