

Thessaloniki, ca. 1800”), as well as providing detailed insights into the Ottoman–Greek trading diaspora, also illustrate the contrast between the Habsburg government, which in the eighteenth century took steps to encourage domestic trade and manufacturing, and the Ottoman government which did not. For those interested in the general question of the reception and application of the Tanzimat reforms, Mafalde Ade’s study (“Ottoman commercial law and its practice in Aleppo province (1850–1880)”), while dealing specifically with the trading activities of one family – the Fratelli-Poche of Aleppo – suggests that traders were reluctant to use the provisions of the new Commercial Code, at least with regard to the collection of debt. Mustafa Kabadayı’s contribution (“Mkrdich Cezarliyan or the sharp rise and sudden fall of an Ottoman entrepreneur”) explains the Ottoman government’s confiscation of Mkrdich’s vast assets in part through a very traditional wish to prevent any single individual acquiring enough wealth and influence to present a challenge to the authority of the government. However, he sees it also as part of a general move to abolish tax-farming – the source of much of Mkrdich’s wealth, as promised in the edict of 1839, and to undermine the role of the *sarrafs* of Galata. This became possible with the establishment of formal banking institutions and the access to new forms of credit after the mid-nineteenth century. The volume, in short, has much to say about trade and traders, while at the same time throwing light on much wider issues.

Colin Imber

SHIRIN AKINER:

Religious Language of a Belarussian Tatar Kitab. A Cultural Monument of Islam in Europe.

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Shirin Akiner’s first publications on the language and literature of the Lehistan Tatars date back to the 1970s, the same time as Meredith Owens and Alexander Nadson published their “The Byelorussian Tatars and their writings”, in the *Journal of Byelorussian Studies* 2/2, 1970, 141–76. At that time SSEES was her principal alma mater, and Akiner published her contribution to this field a few years later, “The vocabulary of a Byelorussian Kitab in the British Museum” – the work which is here published in its entirety – in the same journal, 3/1, 1973, 55–84 and “Oriental borrowings in the language of the Byelorussian Tatars” in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 56/2, 1978, 224–41. Since that time a number of major studies in this field, both books and articles, have been published in Belarus, Lithuania and Poland, where Tatar studies in general – particularly in the latter two countries – have been the counterpart to the cultural revival of the local Tatar communities. The British Library Kitab (BLK) is one of the documents of greatest interest to scholars and linguists, as well as to Tatars who are proud of their heritage and who come to London. More recently, this and other Tatar documents have been introduced to the Islamic world’s manuscript collections for study. For example, they are currently of interest to The Islamic Manuscript Association.

The BLK is undated, though examination of its watermark has shown its composition to be dated to 1831. It is akin to the Vilnius University Kitab

(Ms No. 391). It is a valuable record of the Belarusian language, with Polish as a secondary language, and is a source for Tatar borrowings of Ottoman Turkish loanwords that are themselves frequently borrowed from Arabic and Persian.

During her career in SOAS, Akiner's interests have been broadened and deepened through her research and publications related to Turkic and Central Asian studies and their respective communities. Hence, a long time has elapsed between her earliest Tatar publications and the volume here reviewed. One may say, without hesitation, that the entire publication, its content, and its production and the depth of her research are a superb climax to what she had published decades before. Her editor and co-editors are to be applauded for including it within their series of books on languages and cultures.

Part 3 is a very comprehensive assessment of the BLK. It includes a detailed description and analysis of the phonetics and phonology of Slav vocabulary. This detailed analysis embraces Polish, Old Church Slavonic, Ukrainian and Lithuanian. Akiner follows this with a detailed description of the Ottoman loanwords in the text and their phonetic and graphic characteristics. The section is completed by a survey of the main topics in the BLK: the night of the Miraj of the Prophet, the Islamic calendar, the fall of Adam and Eve, Jonah and the whale, Joseph, the Prophet David and stories that relate to Marjam. Wahb b. Munabbih is acknowledged within the BLK as the primary source for these stories, though Akiner considers a more likely Tatar source to have been the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*, by Rabghuzi (around 1310 AD). She introduces her evidence for this on page 400.

With regard to sources, the book is rich in material from popular traditions and from Tatar borrowings that originate in Christian literature (Catholic, Orthodox, Calvinist and Unitarian) and Akiner assesses the variety and their relative importance. She considers a probable acquaintance with Sufi practice of a popular kind, stressing the distinction between the amorphous nature of its character amongst the Tatars when compared, say, with what is to be found in Bosnia and Albanian communities where a handful of major brotherhoods, a few with 'Alīd sympathies, are to be found even today (pp. 59–60). She supports the opinion of S. Kryczyński in this field, citing *dhikr*, *zekir/zeker* rituals as representative examples of the meagre evidence.

Such reticence is commendable, and a welcome corrective to the extreme views expressed by Ataullah Bogdan Kopanski in his *Sabres of Two Easts* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1955), p. 61, "The majority of Muslims of Poland and Lithuania belonged to secret societies based on blood ties and *Sufi tariqats*. So-called *achretne pobratymstwo* (Polish-Tatar term of secret brotherhood) protected Polish Muslims from undesirable penetration. The secret *achretni* brothers introduced a new adept to their circle by ritualistic sprinkling of water on bared sabres or long knives and an oath on the Qur'ān". On the other hand, Michael Tarelko (quoted here) has discovered an example of Chamail in Belarus (in origin from Gomel district) which specifically mentions the Rijāl al-Ghayb (The men of the Divine Mystery), a term with Sufi roots, furthermore a Chamail from Slonim (dated 1890), and another from the British Library (dated 1828), illustrate a Dervish teber, the sword of Alī, Dhū'l-Faqār, and the Tree of Life. Elena Savicheva, in her conference paper (Manggha, Kraków, 2009), "The world and image in Tatar (of the Volga Region) printing shamail (corresponding to Chamail)" has stated: "The graphic language of Shamails developed of [sic] signs and symbols displaying the religious world of contemporary believers. That world developed from Sufi views, sights of the national Islam, the images of the Ark, the Tree, the Divine roll, the Garden, the Mirror, the Fortress, a Muslim headdress etc – were most likely metaphors allowing the spectator to understand the essence of

the Text". The later pages of the Chamail from Riga (Manuscript A222S, Oriental No. 28) introduce ecstatic *lahis* and *zikers* in Arabic, in the Sufi manner, together with Sufi expressions. Some are *shatḥīyyāt*, in which exclamations of absorption in Divinity are constantly repeated. However, there are found no expressions that indicate any marked influence from a specific Sufi brotherhood.

Akiner's volume is a benchmark study and, at times, complements impressive recent publications from Lithuania and Poland. This is especially so in its linguistic discoveries, literary analyses, and in its greater accessibility to a worldwide scholastic and student readership. It is further helped by the bonus of the CD of the complete text of the London Kitab, and, even more so, within its comprehensive introductory chapters and discussion of sources, and by the background to the genre within an Islamic and an Islamist's context. It is the only complete book in English currently in print about the contents of a truly representative work of Tatar literature. The Kitab, as a genre, is the peak expression of the substance and the literary artistry of Islamic Tatar literature in north-eastern Europe.

H. T. Norris

SOUTH ASIA

KATHLEEN M. O'CONNELL and JOSEPH T. O'CONNELL (eds):

Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon.

424 pp. Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 2009. Rs. 350. ISBN 978 81 7522 468 1.
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It is not possible in a short review to deal with all the articles in this collection, carefully and expertly edited by Kathleen M. O'Connell and Joseph T. O'Connell. The volume is published as we approach the 150th anniversary of the birth of Rabindranath Tagore.

I would like to begin with a discussion of Tagore's contribution to music: in the West, Tagore is known almost exclusively as a writer and thinker, but here Rezwana Choudhury Bannya gives the necessary theoretical insight into the development of Tagore's songwriting, from mixing Indian and European melodies, religious songs of "Naibedya" and "Kheya" and the emergence of a personal God in the "Gitanjali" period to dance dramas, all the while bringing something new. William Radice shows yet another side of his profound study of Tagore's creative life, seeking possible ways of bringing the poet's great musical heritage closer to the Western listener. And know his songs we should, as "No poet or composer other than Tagore was able to produce so endlessly and effortlessly words and melodies at the same time..." (p. 129). Radice's dissatisfaction with some aspects of the way Tagore's songs are performed by his compatriots seems to me justified. The music-related papers end with Suddhaseel Sen's thorough review of how often and to what extent the poems "Gitanjali" and "The Gardener" found reflection in Western music.

Knowing the enthusiasm with which Tagore was received in Germany, Martin Kämpchen surprises us by showing that "Gitanjali" reached German readers with greater difficulty than in most other countries, and that by no means all German intellectuals and writers were eager to meet Tagore. He is also convinced that