

Tatar History and Civilisation, IRCICA – Organisation of the Islamic Conference, Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture, İstanbul 2010. “Sources and Studies on the History of Islamic Civilisation”, 21, 695 pp., ind., ill., maps.¹

The book under review, an atlas size hardback with a colorful dust cover, is a result of a joint effort by thirty five scholars from Tatarstan, representing seven institutes of the local Academy of Sciences, four faculties of the Kazan State University, the Russian Islamic University and the Parliament of Tatarstan. The head of this prestigious project was Dr. Halit Eren, director general of IRCICA in İstanbul, supported by the project advisors from Tatarstan, Prof. Mirkasim A. Usmanov and Dr. Rafael S. Khakimov. The editor of the original working version of the book in Russian was Dr. Damir Ishaqov, and it was translated into English by Dr. Ilnur I. Nadirov.

The book is divided into three parts, titled: I. *History* (pp. 33–345); II. *Social Structure and Economic Development of the Tatar Society* (pp. 347–471); III. *Culture* (pp. 473–678). They are preceded by a *Preface* by Dr. Halit Eren (pp. 13–15) and an *Introduction* by Dr. Damir Ishaqov, titled: *The Tatar World: Ethnos, Culture and Language* (pp. 17–31). Each of the three main parts of the book is accompanied by a separate annex of several dozen illustrations. The book closes with the *Conclusion* by Dr. Rafael S. Khakimov (pp. 679–682), followed by a fourth series of illustrations. At the end we also find the *Index* (pp. 691–695).

Part I includes ten chapters (in twenty one subchapters): 1. *The Pre-Islamic Period (up to the 10th Century)*; 2. *Penetration of Islam and Formation of the First Muslim State in Northern Eurasia (10th–13th Centuries)*; 3. *The Djočid Nation and Its Islamisation: Muslim Culture of the Golden Horde Period*; 4. *Turco-Tatar States in the 15th–16th Centuries*; 5. *Colonisation of the Tatar Society by the Russian State and its Consequences (16th–18th Centuries)*; 6. *The Influence of Colonial Policy on Russian Empire Tatars: From Decline to the Islamic Resurrection (18th–19th Centuries)*; 7. *Jadidism and Islamic Reformation Among the Tatars*; 8. *From an Ethno-Cultural to a Political Nation*; 9. *Islam Among the Tatars in the Soviet Period*; 10. *Post-Soviet Tatarstan and New Wave of Islamic Renaissance*.

Part II comprises six chapters (in thirteen subchapters): 1. *Traditional Tatar Economy: The Process of Modernization and Formation of New Economic Relations*; 2. *Social Structure and Social Mobility*; 3. *Family, Customs and Ceremonies*; 4. *Daily Life of the Tatar Society: Traditional Festivals and Ceremonies*; 5. *Muslim Tatar Community: Institutions and Functioning*; 6. *Political and Legal Conditions of the Tatar Muslim Community under the Russian Empire*.

Part III is composed of ten chapters (in seventeen subchapters): 1. *Tatar Language, Script, Calligraphy and Shamails*; 2. *Manuscripts and Written Heritage*; 3. *Literature*; 4. *Folklore*; 5. *Education*; 6. *Scientific Knowledge: National Academic Sciences of Tatarstan*; 7. *Arts and Crafts: Mechanical Crafts*; 8. *Architecture and Urban Planning*

¹ I thank Dr. Philip Matthews for his help in preparing this review.

of Tatarstan as the East-European Part of Muslim Civilisation; 9. Music and Theatre; 10. National Mass Media.

We should take a note of the term “national” repeated on several occasions. It is of particular importance since the book does not speak of the Russian culture and science on the territory of Tatarstan – contrary to the still well remembered Soviet practice aiming at the formation of a sort of a cultural and territorial *mélange*, in an attempt at creating one Soviet nation out of an artificial conglomerate of various ethnic, linguistic and national groups.

Even from this mere enumeration of chapter titles we can conceive an idea of how rich and diversified are the contents. The accumulated information of historical, cultural and social nature are of a truly encyclopedic character. In fact, this is a first ever published such comprehensive monograph of an Islamic civilization of Eastern Europe, that can only be compared with *The Legacy of Muslim Spain* in two opulent volumes, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Brill, Leiden 1997), referring to the opposite end of our continent.

The importance of this new work cannot be overestimated. The focus on Muslims in Europe shows at present a general tendency to concentrate mainly on Muslim immigrants in Western Europe, a phenomenon which undoubtedly raises a lot of interest in the public discourse and media, due to current political, economic and social problems that are connected with it. Much less attention is devoted to the living Islamic cultures of the Balkans (at least since the end of the last Balkan wars). Extinct Islamic cultures of the Iberian Peninsula and Southern Italy are mostly known to a handful of specialists and more sophisticated tourists. At the same time the history of Islam in easternmost part of Europe is mostly neglected (beside a limited circle of experts), with the exception perhaps for the Chechen wars in Northern Caucasus.

And it is here, in the Volga region, that the Islamic influences, culture and state organization appeared long before even this land was forcibly incorporated through Russian conquests in the 16th c. into an alien geographical and cultural entity that had been called Europe. Contrary to the Balkans, Italy and the Iberian zone it was not Islam which came to Europe – it was Europe which came to this particular part of the World of Islam after ca. 600 years of its existence and development.

The effect nowadays is multifold, just to mention that the biggest (quantitatively) nation of Europe, the Russian Federation, includes such proportion and number of Muslims that are much higher than that of any Western European country, and the second biggest Muslim city in Europe after İstanbul is Moscow (with probably ca. 2 million Muslims, the majority being Tatars).

Since the Middle Ages Tatars have had a bleak image in Europe. During many centuries they were mistakenly identified with the dangerously invading Mongol Empire and later on their name became a synonym of nomad brigands and robbers, mainly after the example of the Crimean raiders into Eastern and Central Europe. These views became deeply imbibed in general European perceptions. The “Tatar culture” was a sort of contradiction in itself, a paradoxical expression. Now we have the book that presents facts in a new light.

There is quite an extensive bibliography of studies on individual aspects of Tatar culture and history in Western languages, in greater part engraved in academic journals. A general reader, and a specialist likewise, only now receive a full monograph depicting all questions connected with the Tatars in a single volume, exceptionally rich in contents. In it certainly lies the strength of the book.

It is further very important to underline that the work was conceived within the Tatar milieu, elaborated by the Tatars themselves and presented to outside users in a language that is most understood in the world of today. One of main problems in the communication between researchers is sometimes the language bar and poor availability of printed documents. Oriental studies in the West had to a greater degree to rely on resources accumulated outside the area of interest, because those produced *in loco* were either not available at all, or were formulated in languages little known in the West. The same occurred in the national republics of the former Soviet Union, but in reverse direction. The result was that two branches of the same research field were developing in parallel to each other, with not much interchange.

Now we have received a volume written by authors basing their studies, research questions and conclusions on publications almost exclusively in Russian, with a few in Tatar and even fewer titles in Western languages. This offers new perspectives to the very wide English reading international audience (professionals, laymen, students, media people and armchair explorers) and a new insight into what in Tatarstan has been investigated and how it was treated. It creates an opportunity to compare what we have known about the Tatar world and what the Tatars like to say about themselves. It means a true enhancement of useful knowledge, even if foreign specialists might occasionally come to opinions differing from those of the authors.

Notwithstanding all apparent merits of the book we should point out certain editorial shortcomings.

As for the contents of the book, to say it in a very general way (a detailed review of such an encyclopedic work would require an effort comparable to its creation), it refers practically to the Kazan Tatars exclusively. The authors leave other Tatar nations on the margin of their interest and vision to the detriment of the book's completeness and without building a coherent multifaceted picture. This is contrary to its title which does not inform about such limitations. Readers of the book may feel therefore rightfully deceived, not finding inside the book the information promised by its title.

The bibliographical entries are only cited in individual articles and were not gathered in one place for easier reference. In result, we cannot make a sound judgment of the bibliographical comprehensiveness. There are occasional bibliographical errors; some titles were apparently translated into English without citing an original version; some titles are half-Russian and half-English (Mustafin etc., p. 368), some allegedly English books are virtually unknown to major Anglo-Saxon book libraries and depositories (Walidow etc., p. 248).

The transliteration used in the book is hesitating and inconsistent. The authors and editors could not decide on a single transliteration system: from Russian or from Tatar?

The sound ğ (of the Arabic alphabet) may be spelled either *dzh* or *dj* and sometimes *j*; *w* may replace *v*; *ch* may interchange with *č*, and *sh* with *š* or *s*. Long vowels and other diacritical marks in terms of Arabic and Persian origin are either indicated or (more frequently) not (occasionally both situations occur in one and the same word). *H* may be either *kh* or just *h*, the same for *h*. Even such a basic and historically important name like Dasht-i Qipčaq (also Desht-i Qipčaq) actually includes three spelling errors: a/e variability, an English digraph *sh* alongside international *č*, and missing length marker over *a* in the last syllable. A specialist will certainly find his way out, a layman will feel lost.

An index could be a solution, but it is not. First of all, it is highly selective. A random estimation indicates that more than 50% of names and important concepts from the book are missing from the index. The second point is that entries in the index do not always match with the orthographic variants in the text. Furthermore, since one and the same name may be spelled differently in various locations, we find in the index, for instance, two separate headwords: Batu Khan and Batu-Khan. A good, comprehensive index helps editors to keep control of a whole book, standardize orthography of cited names and terms and remove possible discrepancies. Here, unfortunately, it is not the case and a lot of information will escape the attention of readers simply because it cannot be found in the book without careful study of long passages.

Illustrations, although numerous and many of them quite attractive, seem however aleatory and are not coordinated with the text. There are indications to which chapter they refer, but, since the chapter indicators are missing from the respective pages, it is difficult to know which part of the story they are meant to elucidate. On p. 344 and 345 there are three photographs numbered 19, 20 and 21, showing three gentlemen named Akhtjamov, Alkin and Biglov, who follow the dress code of (roughly) the late 19th c. All of them are referred to chapter 4 and without any further explanation. If they are important enough to be placed in the portrait gallery, why have they no first names? The index does not mention them at all, and chapter 4 speaks about the Islamic Turco-Tatar states in the 15th–16th centuries. Who are they? Certainly not photographed personalities from those times...

Little maps, hardly legible, are freely intermingled with illustrations. They were directly copied from unspecified publications in Russian, but without adapting their legends and geographical names. They are completely incomprehensible to English speaking users.

Neither lists of the illustrations nor of the maps are available.

A lot of effort was put into the production of this monumental book and we are very grateful both to its authors and publishers. Nice printing, good quality paper, careful binding and an elegant dust cover are however high above the quality of the editorial work which will require much upgrading in a very desirable next edition of the book.

Bogusław R. Zagórski

Manosi Lahiri, *Mapping India*, Niyogi Books, New Delhi 2012, 320 pp., maps, bibliography, glossary, index.¹

The author of the book under review, Manosi Lahiri, PhD, is a professional geographer educated in Calcutta, Delhi and London, specialized in human geography and urbanization, but particularly praised in India for her contribution into development of GIS (Geographic Information Systems) technologies. Her interest in defining the shape, the extension and limits of her own country brought her to the study of old maps and to the observation in what ways they responded to the growing need of graphic expression of the Indian space-arranged cultural phenomena.

The book, which was intended as a history of India recounted through its maps, starts with a short account of the pre-European Indian cartography.

Maps from pre-Muslim times are near to non-existent in India. There might have been at least two reasons for that. Indian cosmographers concentrated their attention around imaginary representations based on mythical concepts rather than realistic pictures of land and sea. Another reason is a very technical one: any drawings or texts executed on materials of biological origin, like wood, leaves or cloth, could not survive long in humid conditions and would quickly disintegrate. If an overall number of manuscripts existing in India (many in private hands) at present is estimated at millions, it should be underlined that the overwhelming majority of them are copies from the last three hundred years or so. As far as the absence of maps is concerned, however, it should not be concluded that the Ancient Indians did not create a coherent mental image of their country of Bharat. Written evidence (Shankaracharya, 8th c.) indicates that spatial relations, although not preserved in a graphic form, constituted a part of living religious traditions connected with holy places and pilgrim routes leading to them.

The author does not limit her review of cartographic representations to the native products only. She discusses whatever was known of India in Western Antiquity (Ptolemy's *Cosmographia*), and in later times in the geographical and cartographical ideas of the Arabs (Al-Bīrūnī, 11th c.).

Islamic civilization brought paper to India and even though paper also is a product based on natural raw materials (various kinds of local plants were treated according to different techniques), its durability extended over much longer periods and allowed for a safer accumulation of recorded knowledge, mainly written texts. The Arabic tradition of mapmaking underwent little implantation and development on the Eastern fringes of the Islamic World and even though in the West it reached its apex with Al-Idrīsī (12th c.) it then went into decline there. Muslims, who introduced a general shocking change in India's civilization, brought about with them late Persian cartographical examples of Al-Qazwīnī (14th c.) and Ḥāfīz-i Ābrū (15th c.) which found some local continuation even in the 16th c.

¹ Distributed in Europe, Africa and the Middle East by Kodansha Europe Ltd., Greenwich, London SE10 8EY, U.K. I thank Dr. Philip Matthews for his help in preparing this review.

It was not until the 17th c. only that local Mughal cartography developed a new style under the influence of European ideas and models, although it should not be assumed that the use of maps was totally unknown to early Mughals. However, their cartographers had a very practical consideration in mind. Their products were mainly specific route sketches indicating the best directions to be taken by troops in case of military actions. Normally, maps were not used for administrative purposes nor for the delineation of the extent of the empire's sovereignty which seems to be one of major motivations underlying the development of European map work. Furthermore, the Muslim Indian cartography followed the decline along with that of the Arab/Islamic science of map-making in general. Even if some maps were made by local rulers, they depicted their own zones of influence and were not aimed or expected to show the whole of the Indian subcontinent and its correct spatial structure.

Alongside this, it must be remembered, civilizations of non-Muslim India perpetuated their own traditions of map-making, usually adjusted to the religious needs: graphic interpretation of sacred texts, their cosmography and symbolism.²

Then the author passes on to a more detailed review of the most famous maps drawn by European cartographers, depicting India in connection with the Western economic and political expansion which started 500 years ago.

The first European travelers, wanderers, explorers and traders, who arrived in India overland, brought back home with them all their acquired information, impressions and tales; all these elements mixed together served as a basis for constructing the first European cartographical representations of the Indian Subcontinent. When the sea routes became open to Europeans following the discoveries by Pedro de Covilhão and Vasco da Gama (late 15th c.), European explorers, Portuguese and others, started sending back home accounts and drawings of the routes they took and the ports they visited on the way to India and on the Indian Subcontinent itself. Map-making was in Europe of that time already a well developed science and art. The first modern maps of India, based on the travelers' reports coming from first-hand experience, were produced in European atelier. European marine charts, henceforth available for maritime expanses, earlier only known to Arabs, Persians, Indians and (to a lesser degree) Chinese, opened new horizons and perspectives. Explorers, who were also conquerors, made plans of their new establishments and maps of the areas of interest, gradually defining individual forms of India's sea-shores and welding them together into a contiguous coastline, and coming closer and closer to the correct shape of the Peninsula.

And thus it came about that the two traditions, an older local one, being an agglomerate of pre-Islamic and Islamic types, and a newer one, moulded after the European vision and techniques, met and coexisted over many centuries, with a markedly growing prevalence

² For a more detailed academic account of the traditional Indian cartography, both pre-Islamic and Islamic, prior to the European expansion, see J.B. Harley and David Woodward (eds.), *Cartography in the Traditional Islamic and South Asian Societies*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London 1992. "The History of Cartography", Volume two, Book one, as well as some other, more recent publications cited in the bibliography of the book under review.

of the latter one. The development line of that European tradition is the main subject of the book under review.

With Europeans arriving in large numbers to trade and conquer, new territories further inland came under scrutiny and were mapped. The British conquerors and occupiers surveyed the country introducing the first-ever systematic triangulation network there, and mapped India under their rule with the aim of delineating existing and possible borders, planning defense systems, fixing intelligence data in appropriate positions and assessing tributes and taxes levied on the indigenous population. Each generation of cartographers improved its scientific knowledge and instruments, and updated maps were becoming more and more detailed and accurate.

Maps were not only vehicles for austere information. Since their inception they were also meant to be pieces of visual art and the maps conceived in India did not escape that motivation. What could that mean? First of all, whenever possible the maps were decorated with colors and additional graphic elements, like ornate frames and calligraphic inscriptions. Above all, however, there were illustrations depicting sea monsters and various kinds of ships where open waters had to be shown. And on land all kinds of natural geographical features, local flora and fauna, populated places with subtle details, remarkable individual buildings like temples, monasteries, palaces or fortresses, and all kinds of representations of societal life: courtly scenes depicting rulers and their surrounding dependents, tribal warriors and regular soldiers of local and British armies, scenes of religious ceremonies, hunting and harvesting, images of simple people, priests and holy men of whatever character, sages and thugs, and many others. This invaluable wealth of historical and cultural information, which however could be occasionally deformed and placed out of context for the sake of symbolical and decorative use, still constitutes a mine of past details that are helpful in restoring local history, habits and customs that might have vanished by now. It gives evidence, sometimes the only available one, of material products of human creativity on earth that gave place since to subsequent urban developments and disappeared from people's memories.

The study of physical material on which maps were drawn supplies new information on peculiar artistic technologies. In this context one should pay special attention to the whole school of the early 18th c. traditional city maps painted on cloth. They charm the viewers with daring bright colors and rare detail, like a map of the Arabian Sea port of Surat, measuring 188 cm x 192 cm. with minute parallel descriptions in both Persian and Dhundhari (Jaipuri) languages.

Another rare specimen depicted and fragmentarily shown in the book is an early 19th c. map inscribed with Devanagari letters, a long band of heavy paper measuring 198 cm x 24.5 cm, showing the coast of Arabia and the Red Sea. Everything is unusual in this specimen drawn by an anonymous map-maker of Cutch. It's size and shape do not find close analogies. Portolans like this were not at all a part of the Indian tradition of map-making (and neither that of the far-reaching, daring and undertaking Arab merchants). It is known that sea maps as such were not used by Middle Eastern or Indian traditional sailors of the Western Indian Ocean (Arabs developed instead an art of mental maps, in

the form of rhymed descriptions of sea routes, so magnificently exemplified by works of Aḥmad Ibn Mājid, allegedly a sea-pilot of Vasco da Gama). And more – the coast lines, composed of contiguous series of concave bights and gulfs, occasionally adorned with silhouette drawings of natural features and buildings ashore, astonishingly remind us of the maps drawn by the Ottoman Turkish admiral and cartographer Piri Reis in the first half of the 16th c. What could be the connection between the two manifestations of map-making, so distant in space and time? It is yet to be discovered.

That sort of questions arise on almost every page of this book, rich in contents and lavishly illustrated with reproductions of whole and parts of maps.

It is noteworthy to observe that descriptions of the maps' sizes are all expressed in centimeters. However, map scales only repeat old denominations like 1 in = 8 mls or 1 in = 25 Br mls, or 1 inch = 23 lieues/leagues. In face of these enigmatic data (what is the difference between a mile, a league and a British mile in this particular context? These concepts are not even explained in the book's *Glossary*) most of the readers will remain perplex and helpless – because who can easily recalculate such figures into the universal metric system so as to compare them with different cartographic products of historical times and those generally available nowadays? The above mentioned *Glossary* of just 80 entries could be further developed for the benefit of readers, and likewise in the *Index* it would be desirable to include all names and terms actually mentioned or described in the book.

Despite these shortcomings that could be easily corrected in the next editions, every reader, either a simple book-lover, an amateur cartographer or a professional, will benefit from consulting the book which in such an interesting way guides users through intricacies of Indian political and cultural history, exemplified by maps.

Bogusław R. Zagórski

Jean-Charles Ducène, *Les tables géographiques du manuscrit du sultan rasūlide al-Malik al-Afḍal*. جداول اطوال البلدان وعروضها من جمع الملك الأفضل العباس الرسولي. Edition, traduction et commentaire, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, Helsinki 2013, 137+62 pp. (*Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemia Toimituksia / Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, Humasniora 365*).

Jean-Charles Ducène is one of outstanding researchers in the field of classical Arabic geographical literature, working at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris and at the Université Libre in Brussels. Till now he published two books, both in the field of the “humanistic geography”. First of them was an annotated translation of the work by Abū Ḥāmid al-Garnaṭī: *De Grenade à Bagdad. La relation de voyage d'Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (1080–1168) ou Al-mu'rib 'an ba'd 'adjâ'ib al-Maghrib (Exposition claire de quelques merveilles de l'Occident)*, Paris 2006, reviewed in „Rocznik Orientalistyczny”