

Piotr Muchowski: Review of *Urzeczeni Orientem. Listy Ananiasza Zajączkowskiego do Tadeusza Kowalskiego 1925–1948*. Pod redakcją Tadeusza Majdy. ‘Enchanted by Orient. Letters of Ananiasz Zajączkowski to Tadeusz Kowalski 1925–1948. Edited by Tadeusz Majda’, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Agade, 2013, 226 pages. ISBN 978-83-89111-63-2.

The publication includes an edition of letters written by Ananiasz Zajączkowski (1903–1970) to Tadeusz Kowalski (1889–1948), author of, *inter alia*, *Karaimische Texte im Dialekt von Troki* (Kraków 1929). Ananiasz Zajączkowski was a prominent Turkologist and editor of *Myśl Karaimska*. He was Tadeusz Kowalski’s student.

The book consists of a foreword (“Słowo Wstępne”; prepared by Tadeusz Majda), pp. 5–8, which includes a short biography of Ananiasz Zajączkowski and two lists of publications about Ananiasz Zajączkowski and Tadeusz Kowalski’s social, professional and research activities (the former on pp. 9–10, the latter on p. 11). From the editorial note (“Nota edytorska”, p. 12), we learn that Kowalski’s letters were burnt in a fire in Zajączkowski’s flat during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, and so was Zajączkowski’s collection of books and manuscripts. However, his letters to Tadeusz Kowalski were preserved and are currently kept at the archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków, under the reference number K III-4j.a. 178, j. III/19. The collection consists of 165 letters and postcards from 1925–1948 and one letter from July 1959. In the edition, the letters were numbered from I to III (letters on behalf of the Board of the Cultural-Educational Section of the Association of Karaites in Wilno, 1925) and from 1 to 162 (private letters). Photocopies of manuscripts have been attached to some of the edited letters. This includes letters no. 6 (including materials regarding the Karaite translation of Psalm 51, see pp. 28–38), 23 (p. 65), 70 (p. 121), 82 (p.131), 98 (p. 144–145); 107 (p. 155), 112 (p. 160), 144 (p. 200–1), 161 (p. 223); and a

letter to Zofia Kowalska (Tadeusz Kowalski's wife) from 1959 without a number (p. 226). Several photographs were included in the publication. They depict, *inter alia*, Zajączkowski's father, Achiezer Aleksander Zajączkowski, p. 20, his parents – Achiezer Zajączkowski and Kamilia Emilia Bezekowicz Zajączkowska, p. 21; Zajączkowski and Kowalski with his daughters, p. 159; a portrait of Izaak Zajączkowski, Ananiasz's brother, with children: Aleksander, Maria Emilia, Elżbieta Biana, Ananiasz with wife Nadzieja and daughter Elżbieta (pictures from 1942–1946), p. 174. The hand-written letters were typed (from the manuscripts) by Maria Emilia Zajączkowska-Łopatto, Zajączkowski's daughter. The introduction was written by Tadeusz Majda and Maria Emilia Zajączkowska-Łopatto. In the edition, some biographical and bibliographic data collected by Professor Edward Tryjarski, in connection with his project of editing Ananiasz Zajączkowski, Seraja Szapszał and Aleksander Mardkowicz's correspondence, were used (cf. p.5).

The first impression upon reading Ananiasz Zajączkowski's letters is their aesthetics and the beauty of the form and language. They are a masterpiece of epistolography. They are written in perfect Polish, captivating with their style, phraseology and the richness of the vocabulary. The reader is enthralled by the politeness and good manners which emanate from them.

In respect to the subject matter, the letters refer to Zajączkowski's professional activity for the most part and a lot of information from the life of the Karaite community and the community of Polish orientalists. We find echoes of Seraya Shapshal's activity, the events of World War II, relations with the Tatar community at that time, as well as the post-war reality in Poland under Communism, including Karaite migration after the change in the borders. It is especially important that the letters provide important knowledge about the circumstances in which *Myśl Karamiska* was founded, i.e. the financial problems the editors faced and their editorial policies. There are also useful mentions of the manuscripts in the hands of Karaites, e.g. that the whole collection from Łuck was brought to Poland after the war (letter no. 157 of 14 October 1946, p. 218). Below I provide some examples of data in the letters which show their cognitive value.

In the letter of 5 March 1925 (no. II), there is information on the demographic, linguistic and educational situation of the Karaites in Troki and Wilno:

“At present, the Board of the Section is unable to provide exact statistical data as there has been no census of the Karaite population. However, taking round numbers: in Troki – 500 persons, Wilno – 250 persons”. And further:

“In Troki all Karaites speak Karaitic as children go to the Polish public school, where they learn, among others, the Karaitic religion and also attend classes in a parish school every day in the afternoon hours, where they learn the Karaitic and biblical language. Parents speak Karaitic at home.”

In letters from the war period, there are mainly implicit accounts of the general situation and events. Such is the case in letter no. 121 of 25 October 1941, where we find brief information, somewhat disguised for fear of censorship, about the extermination of the Troki Jews [“Czufutów”] by the Germans and Lithuanians: “Czufutowie [Jews] were gathered on the island and carefully exterminated” (cf. p. 172). In letter no. 130, of 23rd December, there is mention of the ‘anthropological committee’ established by the Germans: “Among others, an ‘anthropological committee’ came from Riga to Wilno, which deals with the study of the Tatars in Wilno and Sorok-Tatars and Karaites in Wilno and Troki. Hence various speculations, gossip and, allegedly, concerns.”

The edition calls for one critical remark, namely regarding the Hebrew record and the translation of the author’s note to the transcription of the Karaitic text of a son by Shelomo ben Aharon (letter no. 19 of 25 September 1930, p. 58). The Hebrew text was copied erroneously, and the translation (attributed to Roman Marcinkowski from Warsaw University) is not good. The Hebrew text and the translation should be corrected in the following manner:

זה התקון מאיש חמודות
 החכם המעולה הפילוסוף
 המופלא הר“ר שלמה
 בוא שלום ינוח על מקמו
 בכהר“ר אהרן ז(ל)צ“ל

This is the *tiqqun* of the beloved man,
 eminent scholar, great philosopher,
 rav ribbi Shelomo,
 may he rest in peace in his place,
 son of the honourable rav ribbi Aharon, the righteous of blessed memory.

(the Hebrew text on the basis of AN PAN and PAU, reference no. K III – 4, j. II/3)

“Urzeczeni Orientem” is undoubtedly a publication of major importance, commendable and cognitively valuable. The publishers deserve a tribute.