

ISSN: 0213-2060

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14201/shhme392131152>

THE IMAGE OF A MUSLIM ARAB WOMAN IN MEDIEVAL RUS' LITERATURE*

Imagen de las mujeres árabes-musulmanas en la literatura rusa medieval

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Recibido: 2020-08-27

Revisado: 2020-10-08

Aceptado: 2020-11-13

RESUMEN: La información sobre la historia y la cultura de los árabes fue extraída principalmente por los autores rusos medievales de fuentes bizantinas traducidas al eslavo eclesiástico. La imagen la completaban las observaciones hechas por los habitantes de la Rus medieval durante contactos directos con los árabes (por ejemplo, durante viajes a Tierra Santa) o ideas sobre otros pueblos que profesaban el Islam, proyectadas en los parientes de Mahoma, cuyas costumbres podían haber sido conocidas por los autores rusos antiguos (entre otros turcos o mongoles/tártaros). El objetivo del artículo es analizar la imagen de las mujeres árabes que surge de las obras de la antigua Rusia. Nos interesan tanto las personas del círculo más cercano de Mahoma (incluida su primera esposa Chadijah o la hija del profeta Fátima) como figuras seleccionadas de mujeres musulmanas árabes de siglos posteriores. Nos plantearíamos también la cuestión de cómo los autores perciben y evalúan la posición de las mujeres árabes de los siglos VII-VIII; si, en su opinión, gozaban de menos independencia que sus hermanas cristiano-europeas, o eran miembros activos de sus comunidades, responsables, por ejemplo, de difundir la nueva religión monoteísta.

Palabras clave: literatura medieval; Rus medieval; Islam; árabes; historia de las mujeres.

ABSTRACT: Rus' medieval authors drew information about the history and culture of the Arabs mainly from Byzantine sources, translated into Church Slavonic. The image was supplemented by observations made by residents of medieval Rus' in the course of direct contacts with the Arabs (e.g. during their travels to the Holy Land) or ideas about

* This article has been written under the research project financed by the National Science Centre (Poland). Decision number: DEC-2016/23/B/HS3/01891 (*Muhammad and the Origin of Islam – Stereotypes, Knowledge and Notions in the Byzantine-Russian Culture*).

other Islamic peoples, whose customs could be known to old Rus' authors from personal experience (e.g. Turks or Mongols/Tatars), projected onto the brethren of Muhammad. The aim of this paper is to analyze the image of Arab women emerging from old Rus' works. We will be interested in people from Muhammad's closest surroundings (e.g. his first wife Khadija or Fatima, the daughter of the prophet), as well as selected figures of Muslim Arab women from later centuries. The question will also be raised as to how the authors of the examined texts perceive and evaluate the position of Arab women from the 7th-8th centuries: whether, in their opinion, they enjoyed less independence than their Christian European sisters, or, on the contrary, they were active members of their communities, responsible, for example, for the spread of the new monotheistic religion.

Keywords: medieval literature; medieval Rus'; Islam; Arabs; women's history.

SUMARIO: 0 Introduction. 1 Women from the environment of Muhammad. 2 Medieval Muslim Arab women. 3 Conclusions. 4 References.

0 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this article is to show the image of Muslim Arabian women from the time of emergence of Islam (7th-8th centuries) in medieval¹ Rus' literature. By this I mean the entirety of texts that were written in Rus', i.e., in vast areas of Eastern Europe (from the Black Sea coast in the south to the White Sea area in the north) from the second half of the 9th century until the end of the 16th century under the rule of representatives of one dynasty: the Rurikids and one Church province, under the authority of the Kiev Metropolitan (until 1299 residing in Kiev, from 1299 to 1325—in Vladimir on the Klyazma River, and from 1325—in Moscow)—until 1448 subordinate to the patriarch of Constantinople. Nevertheless, an equally important, if not more important than factors of a geographical-historical nature, indication whether a given work belongs to the literature of Rus' is the language: sometimes called Old Rus', but *de facto* an Eastern Slavic version of the Church Slavic language (used by the Orthodox Slavs in the Middle Ages in liturgy and many branches of literature).

Traditionally, Old Rus' literature is considered to have begun in mid-11th century, as it was at that time that the first known authors of Eastern Slavic origin were active, such as the Kiev Metropolitan Hilarion (*Sermon on Law and Grace*), Theodosius, Igumen

¹ With regard to cultures shaped under the influence of Eastern Christianity (Orthodoxy) and Byzantine civilization, the term «medieval» has a broader scope of meaning than in Western Europe. It is also used to describe the period after the fall of Constantinople (1453), in specialist literature known as the «post-Byzantine era». As a consequence, the phenomena that occurred in the literature of the Orthodox Slavs (inhabitants of Bulgaria, Serbia and Rus') in the 16th century—and sometimes also in the 17th century—are considered as part of the medieval culture of that area. It is usually assumed that the era came to an end when currents characteristic of Western Europe (e.g., Baroque) emerged in the above-mentioned literatures (as well as in the visual arts). What is more, it is necessary to take into account the specificity of the source material (manuscripts) from the studied area: works created in the 11th-13th centuries have been mostly preserved only in later copies, dated from the 14th-17th centuries.

of the Kiev-Pechersk Monastery, or the Bishop of Novgorod the Great, Luke Zhidiata (*Words for the Brothers*). Many more, including the Kiev Metropolitan Kliment Smoliatich, Bishop Cyril of Turov, Prince Vladimir Monomakh, or Igumen Daniel — author of an extensive account of his journey to the Holy Land — wrote their works in the 12th century. However, Old Rus' literature is more than just the works of those few authors whose identity we can at least approximately establish; instead, it is a huge body of mostly anonymous texts, written, edited and rewritten mainly by clergymen, representing such genres as: homiletics, hagiography, hymnography (liturgical poetry), works of dogmatic and polemic character (e.g., with followers of different religions, Christian denominations or heresies), stories from the life of the monks (so-called Patericons), travel descriptions (itineraries), historiographical texts (chronicles and chronographs), legal compilations. Usually most that is known about them is their place of origin. There were many writing centers in Rus'. In the earliest era (11th century) it was mainly the capital Kiev (seat of the Grand Prince and Metropolitan), as well as Novgorod the Great (here the «house of Sophia — the Wisdom of God», i.e. the court of the Bishop, and from 1165 — Archbishop of Novgorod, seems to have been a particularly important cultural center). In the 12th-13th centuries, along with the progressing political fragmentation of Rus', more or less lasting centers emerged, such as Halych, Vladimir-Volynskiy, Vladimir on the Klyazma, Rostov, Suzdal, Ryazan, Tver, Pskov. In the 14th century, they were joined by Moscow. This peculiar «regionalization» of Old Rus' literature was reinforced by Rus' dependence on the Mongols/Tatars, which lasted from 1237 to 1480 and took on a different character in different areas of the country².

However, in the minds of the Eastern Slavic authors, the political and cultural decentralization of Rus' and its dependence on the Mongols/Tatars, who followed a different religion, did not erase the sense of unity of the «Rus' land», nor the awareness that they belonged to the Byzantine-Orthodox civilization. From its very beginning, the Old Rus' literature did not develop in cultural isolation: the so-called translation literature — texts translated from other languages, especially Byzantine Greek — had a great impact on its form, ideology and themes. Those translations were made in Rus', but also, thanks to the availability of the common medium that was the Church Slavic language, they penetrated there from the Slavic countries in the Balkans (Bulgaria and Serbia) and the thriving, multi-ethnic monastic centers of the Eastern Church (Mount Athos, Constantinople). Historians of Old Rus' literature usually indicate two periods of increased transmission of cultural goods between the East and the South of the Slavic region. After the conquest of the first Bulgarian state by the Byzantines in 1018, some

² A detailed discussion of the specifics of medieval Rus' literature goes far beyond the framework of this article. In the above essay, I only tried to signal its most important features in order to outline the context for the issues I analyze in further parts of this text. Readers interested in Old Rus' literature are encouraged to consult its exhaustive (although limited only to the earliest period: before 1237), highly detailed compendium with plethora of bibliographic references: Podskalsky, Gerhard. *Christentum und theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus' (988-1237)*. München: C.H. Beck, 1982. The volume also provides information on previous editions of individual texts. It is worth remembering, however, that although many of the medieval Rus' works have already been published (many of them before 1918), there remains a vast number of unreleased and unexamined manuscripts.

of its inhabitants emigrated to Dnieper. This would later be repeated in the 14th-15th centuries, when many Southern Slavs (Serbs and Bulgarians), fleeing the threat of the Ottoman Turks, moved to the linguistically and culturally related Rus', carrying with them not just books, but also ideas.

Usually little is known about the authors of Slavic translations, except that the vast majority of them were clergymen. Most probably the oldest translations were made by the creators of the Church Slavic language and its alphabets (Glagolitic and Cyrillic): St. Constantine-Cyril and St. Methodius, as well as their students. Later translators are known by name usually when they were also authors of their own literary works, such as John the Exarch (turn of the 9th and 10th centuries, Bulgaria), St. Sava (early 13th century, Serbia), Gregory Tsamblak (Bulgarian by origin, Kiev Metropolitan in 1415-1420), Maximus the Greek (born Michael Trivolis, Byzantine, active in Rus' after 1518). Sometimes the name and identity of the author of the translation is recorded in a reference he included at the end/on the margin of his work, such as Isaiah, a Serbian monk from Mount Athos, who in 1371 completed the translation of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, or another Serbian monk, Anthony (secular name: Arsenius Baraš), author of the Slavic version of the life and works of St. Gregentius, Archbishop of the Himyarites (St. Gregory of Taphar). Nevertheless, most of those, who translated, edited, transcribed, abridged or expanded individual texts with interpolations will most likely remain unknown forever.

In this article I will deliberately not distinguish between the translation literature and original Slavic texts. This is justified by the specific nature of the source material, for which such a division would be something artificial. In the case of the Old Rus' discourse on Arabs and Islam, we deal with a certain *continuum*: compilation texts were created in Rus' on the basis of foreign works translated into Church Slavic, which, in turn, were a source of inspiration for native authors. At this point, it should also be emphasized that in the period of interest to us (11th-mid-16th centuries), it was Greek translations that were dominant in the area of *Slavia Orthodoxa*³. The way Muhammad and Islam were perceived was, therefore, shaped under the overwhelming influence of Byzantine authors — the works originally written in other languages usually found their way into the writings of Orthodox Slavs through their Greek translations. This applied both to Arabic texts (such as fragments of the *Quran*, *The Life of St. John of Damascus*), Syriac (e.g. *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*) and Latin (e.g. Riccoldo da Monte Croce's *Contra legem Sarracenorum*) ones⁴.

³ Ricardo Picchio introduced this term into scholarly literature. He proposed to divide the Slavs based not on geographical, but on religious-cultural criteria, isolating such areas as *Slavia Orthodoxa* (Byzantine-Orthodox Slavs, including Bulgarians, Serbs, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians) and *Slavia Latina* (Slavs whose culture was shaped under the overwhelming impact of Western European and Latin civilization, including Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenians). This classification is sometimes extended to include a third category: *Slavia Islamica* (Bosnians). Picchio, Ricardo. «Latinitas Slaviae Romanae». In Axer, Jerzy (ed.). *Między Slavia Latina i Slavia Orthodoxa*. Warszawa: Ośrodek Badań nad Tradycją Antyczną w Polsce i w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, 1995, pp. 11-18.

⁴ Batunsky, Mark. «Islam and Russian Mediaeval Culture». *Die Welt des Islams. New Series*, 1986, vol. 26.1/4, pp. 1-27; Bushkovitch, Paul. «Orthodoxy and Islam in Russia 988-1725». In Steindorff, Ludwig

At this point I would like to add one more explanation regarding the chronology: while the end of the Rus' Middle Ages is —as mentioned above— rather fluidly defined, in my analysis I have assumed the mid-16th century to be *terminus ante quem*, because then, along with the accession of the Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates (both being successors of the Mongol/Tatar Golden Horde, main military and civilizational opponent of the Medieval Rus') to the Moscow state, the perception of the followers of Islam by East Slavic authors changed fundamentally, and their interest in Muslim subjects grew, creating a completely new cultural dynamic⁵.

1 WOMEN FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OF MUHAMMAD

In Old Rus' literature, surprisingly much attention was devoted to women from the environment of the prophet Muhammad. For comparison: in the Old Rus' historiographic compilations, in the narrative on the history of the Eastern Roman Empire in the 3rd century, there is most likely no mention of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra (267-272), one of the most famous Arab rulers of the pre-Muslim period. Nor are the wives of Persian Shahs never mentioned by name: even Shapur II's wife (309-379), to whom a

(ed.). *Religion und Integration im Moskauer Russland. Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen 14-17. Jahrhundert*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, pp. 117-143; Максимов, Юрий В. *Византийские сочинения об исламе*. Москва: Православный Свято-Тихоновский гуманитарный университет, 2012. Interestingly, the prevalence of translations from Byzantine Greek is even more pronounced in the group of texts devoted to the polemics with Islam than in other categories. Over the course of our project we have isolated 39 works known in Rus', which mentioned the birth of Islam and/or Muhammad. Only nine of them can be considered as original Church Slavic texts, the remaining 30 are relics of translation literature. The vast majority of them (26) are Byzantine works, and the four texts mentioned above, which were originally written in other languages (Arabic, Syrian, and Latin), spread to *Slavia Orthodoxa* through Byzantine translations. The only anti-Muslim Latin treatise that became known in Rus' before mid-16th century was therefore *Contra legem Sarracenorum* by Riccoldo da Monte Croce (c. 1300). The basis of its Slavic translation was probably the earlier translation into Byzantine Greek by Demetrius Cydonius (c. 1360). Latin texts spread to Rus' in the second half of the 16th century, as a result of intensified contacts with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, thanks to such people as Prince Andrei Kurbski. Works on Muhammad and Islam, which were known in Rus', are discussed in: Brzowska, Zofia A., Leszka, Mirosław J., Wolińska, Teresa. *Muhammad and the Origin of Islam in the Byzantine-Slavic Literary Context. A Bibliographical History*. Łódź-Kraków: Lodz University Press-Jagiellonian University Press-Columbia University Press, 2020. This can be removed, because the book has been already published.

⁵ Batunsky, Mark. «Muscovy and Islam. Irreconcilable Strategy, Pragmatic Tactics». *Saeculum. Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte*, 1988, vol. 39, p. 77: «After all, in the era of the Reconquista (and Rus was like Spain at least in that it was a kind of bridge between the Moslem world and Christian West) arduous romantic calls for a “holy war”, above all, only fermented the process of formation of the Spanish nation. And since the Reconquista remained essentially a “territorial struggle” for political domination of kings over some particular regions in the Iberian peninsula, the pragmatic and mainly secular notion of a “just war” (*bellum justum*) generally prevailed, rather than an ideal of a “missionary war” (although the motive was religious in the first place). And in Spain, as well as in Russia in its confrontation with the Golden Horde, already turned Moslem, it could only be the question of “religious expansion of the Christian kingdom and Christian orthodoxy representing an essential pillar” of Spanish and Russian awakening national identities».

number of hagiographical texts known in Rus' attribute the defense of persecuted Christians, is a secondary and anonymous figure⁶.

Moreover, Slavic authors seem to be interested mainly in Muhammad's first wife, Khadija. This is related to an interesting disproportion, which is reflected in the way Muhammad's biography is presented in the Byzantine and Church Slavic literatures: these texts take into account most of the facts from the time when he was married to Khadija (595-622, the so-called «Mecca period»)⁷. The «Medina period» (622-632) is almost completely omitted, although Muhammad's private life at the time could provide Christian authors with the most material for polemic. For example: Theophanes⁸, author of one of the most reliable accounts of Muhammad in Byzantine historiography, interrupts the detailed story of the life of a Muslim prophet with a description of the spread of his teachings among Arab women and then men, initiated by Khadija's testimony, and concludes the subsequent events of his biography in what amounts to a single sentence, citing a wrong date of his death, AM 6122 (AD 629/630)⁹. Perhaps this is caused simply by a shortage of source material.

Khadija is nearly the main protagonist of Old Rus' stories about the life of a Muslim prophet. Narratives about Muhammad, usually with the telling title *On Bohmit the Heretic* (СѢ Бохмите еретичъ)¹⁰ are enmeshed in the following historiographical compilations: the *Troitsky Chronograph* (14th century)¹¹, the second version of the *Hellenic and*

⁶ Великие Минии Четьи, собранные всероссийским митрополитом Макарием. Сентябрь, дни 25-30. Санкт-Петербург: Типография Императорской Академии Наук, 1883, col. 2212-2217; Апрель, дни 1-8. Москва: Синодальная Типография, 1910, col. 123-124, 126-131.

⁷ WATT, William Montgomery. *Muhammad at Mecca*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953.

⁸ Theophanes the Confessor was born c. 760 in Constantinople and died in 818, exiled by the iconoclastic emperor Leo V (813-820) to the island of Samothrace. His *Chronographia* covers the period from 284 to 813 and continues the work by George Syncellus. The material follows an annual order. *Chronographia* is based on a number of sources, including those that have not survived to our times. These include works by Socrates Scholasticus, Sozomen, Theodoret, Theodore Lector, Priscus, Procopius of Caesarea, Agathias Scholasticus, John Malalas, John of Epiphania, Theophylact Simocatta, George of Pisidia, the so-called *Megas Chronographos*, *Constantinople Chronicles*: from 668-720 and iconophile after 720. It is worth noting that Theophanes drew from eastern sources (probably one of his sources was Syriac *Chronicle* by Theophilus of Edessa, translated into Greek in Palestine in the second half of the 8th century, which he used when working on fragments concerning the Arabs and the biography of Muhammad). Thomas, David, Roggema, Barbara (eds.). *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Vol. 1: 600-900*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009, pp. 426-436.

⁹ Mango, Cyril, Scott, Roger (eds.). *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History. AD 284-813*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, pp. 464-465.

¹⁰ Bohmit is a Church Slavic version of the name of Muhammad, typical of medieval Rus' sources. Brzozowska, Zofia A. «Mahmet, Muhumet, Moamed, Bohmit. Formy imienia Mahometa w średniowiecznych tekstach ruskich (XI-XVI w.) i ich pochodzenie. Mahmet, Muhumet, Moamed, Bohmit. Forms of the Name of Muhammad in the Medieval Russian Sources (11th-16th) and Their Origin». *Die Welt der Slaven. Sammelbände*, 2018, vol. 64, pp. 30-39.

¹¹ Творогов, Олег В. «Материалы к истории русских хронографов 3. Троицкий хронограф». *Труды Отдела древнерусской литературы*, 1989, vol. 42, pp. 336-338.

Roman Chronicle (15th century)¹², the *Rogozhsky Chronograph* (15th century)¹³, the *Rus' Chronograph of 1512*¹⁴, the *Resurrection Chronicle* (16th century)¹⁵ and the *Illuminated Chronicle of Tsar Ivan the Terrible* (16th century)¹⁶. Sometimes these stories, extracted from their original narrative context, can also be found in *miscellanea* manuscripts, e.g. National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg, Ms 728.1285 from the first quarter of the 15th century (fol. 105d-108a)¹⁷. In the late Middle Ages, texts on Muhammad begin to function outside the historiographic tradition as integral parts of an anonymous work whose thematic axis is the need to defend the doctrinal purity of Eastern Christianity. It can be found on the pages of Old Rus' Menaion Reader (*Четви-Минеи*) from the 15th-16th centuries: books that contain hagiographic texts, arranged in the order of the liturgical year — in the September volume, under the date of 14.09 (the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross)¹⁸. We also find it in the so-called Great Menaion Reader (*Великие Четви-Минеи*) of the metropolitan Macarius (1542-1563) — a monumental collection of the lives of the saints and other texts intended for personal reading, arranged according to the order of the liturgical year of the Eastern Church and collected in twelve volumes¹⁹.

These narratives are based mainly on the chronicle of George the Monk (Hamartolus)²⁰, translated into Church Slavic in Bulgaria towards the end of the 10th century or

¹² Творогов, Олег В. *Летописец Еллинский и Римский*. Санкт-Петербург: Издательство Дмитрий Буланин, 1999, vol. I, pp. 402-405.

¹³ Анисимова, Татьяна В. «Рогожский хронограф: текст». In Новикова, Ольга Л. (ed.). *Летописи и хроники. Новые исследования. 2009-2010*. Москва-Санкт-Петербург: Научное издательство Альянс-Архео, 2010, pp. 67-69.

¹⁴ *Русский хронограф. Хронограф редакции 1512 г.* Санкт-Петербург: Типография М.А. Александрова: 1911. Полное собрание русских летописей, 22.1, pp. 308-309.

¹⁵ *Летопись по Воскресенскому списку*. Санкт-Петербург: Типография Эдуарда Праца, 1856. Полное собрание русских летописей, 7, p. 249.

¹⁶ *Лицевой летописный свод XVI в. Всемирная история*. Москва: Издательство Актон, 2014, vol. 8, pp. 389-398.

¹⁷ Баранкова, Галина С., Савельева, Наталья В, Сапожникова, Ольга С. (eds.). *Антология памятников литературы домонгольского периода в рукописи XV в. Софийский сборник*. Москва-Санкт-Петербург: Научное издательство Альянс-Архео, 2013, pp. 24, 50, 278-283.

¹⁸ Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.666, fols. 53v-56v (end of the 15th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 113.590 (1451-1494); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.663, fols. 252v-257v (end of the 15th or the beginning of the 16th century); Moscow, State Historical Museum, Sin. 169, fols. 97v-100r (16th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 173.I.88, fols. 167v-171r (16th century). See: Brzowska, Zofia A. «Zapózyczona czy własna wizja dziejów powszechnych? Wpływ autorów bizantyńskich na świadomość historyczną Słowian Południowych i Wschodnich (na przykładzie opowieści o Mahomecie i Historii paulicjan Piotra z Sycylii)». In Brzowska, Zofia A., Leszka, Mirosław J., Marinow, Kirił, Wolińska, Teresa (eds.). *Widmo Mahometa, cień Samuela. Cesarstwo Bizantyńskie w relacji z przedstawicielami innych religii i kultur (VII-XV w.)*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2020, pp. 24-29.

¹⁹ Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, 728.1317, fols. 171c-172c (mid-16th century); Moscow, State Historical Museum, Sin. 986, fols. 336c-338a (mid-16th century); Moscow, State Historical Museum, Sin. 174, fols. 385b-386d (mid-16th century). Edition: *Великие Минеи Четви, собранные всероссийским митрополитом Макарием. Сентябрь, дни 14-24*. Санкт-Петербург: Типография Императорской Академии Наук, 1869, col. 735-738.

²⁰ Almost nothing is known about George the Monk (Hamartolus), author of *Chronicon syntomon*. He was probably a monk in one of the Constantinople monasteries. It is unclear when exactly his work was

at the beginning of the 11th century²¹. George the Monk was about two hundred years apart from the era when Muhammad taught and Arab followers of Islam launched their first attack on Byzantium, he used the accounts by earlier authors. Thus, strictly historiographical sequences describing the youth and first appearances of Muhammad and the invasion of the Arab armies in the eastern Byzantine Empire were compiled by him on the basis of a chronicle by Theophanes²². The most extensive part of the analyzed story is a kind of polemical text, presenting the most important dogmas of Islam and elements of ritualism/customs of Muslims. And this part of George the Monk's narrative is essentially dependent on earlier sources (e.g. the treatise *On Heresies* by John of Damascus)²³.

created. Researchers indicate that it was written under Michael III (842-867), in 846/847, before 867, after his death, or after 870. *Chronicon syntomon*, whose full title is *Chronicon syntomon collected, combined and interpreted from various chroniclers by George the Monk and Sinner*, belongs to the world history genre and covers the history from the creation of the world until 843 (the restoration of Orthodoxy after the second period of iconoclasm). As for the source basis, for the Byzantine period, which is of interest to us here, George used first of all *Epitome* by Theodore Lector, from the otherwise unknown epitome of *Chronographia* by Theophanes. The period 813-843 is considered to be his own work, based on documents and his own observations. Thomas and Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 729-733.

²¹ Edition of the original, Greek text: De Boor, Carl. (ed.). *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*. Leipzig: In Aedibus B.G. Teubneri, 1904, vol. II, pp. 697-706. Edition of the Church Slavonic translation: Истрин, Василий М. *Книги временные и образные Георгия Мниха. Хроника Георгия Амартола в древнем славянорусском переводе. Текст, исследование и словарь*, Петроград: Российская государственная академическая типография, 1920, vol. I, pp. 449-453.

²² Khoury, Adel-Theodore. *Les Theologiens byzantins et l'Islam. Textes et auteurs (VIII-XII s.)*. Louvain-Paris: Editions Nauwelaerts, 1969, pp. 181-182; Hoyland, Robert G. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It. A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1997, pp. 401-406, 452; Mango and Scott, *The Chronicle of Theophanes*, pp. XXXII-XXXIII, 464-470; Ziaka, Angeliki G. «Le regard que port la recherche grecque contemporaine sur la découverte de l'islam par le monde byzantin (VIII-XIV s.)». *Le Courrier du GERI. Recherches d'islamologie et de théologie musulmane*, 2002/2003, vol. 5/6, p. 127; Thomas and Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 305-306, 426-431, 729-731; Максимов, *Византийские сочинения*, pp. 65-66.

²³ John Damascene was probably born to a Christian family around 676 in Damascus. His father, Sergius Mansur, held the office of a logothete during the rule of caliph Muawiya (661-680). John was supposedly taught by the monk and philosopher named Cosmas, brought from Italy. Under his guidance, John received a classical education and studied the Bible. John knew the Arabic language and culture. After the death of his father, he managed the family estate and served at the court of the caliphs, first Abd al-Malik (685-705) and then Al-Walid I (705-715). After resigning from his post, John entered the Monastery of St. Sabas, located near Jerusalem. After emperor Leo III (717-741) introduced his iconoclastic policy, John vigorously engaged in opposing it. John died in the Monastery of St. Sabas before the year 753. He was the author of numerous works. The most important of them is the *Fount of Knowledge*. It consisted of three parts: *Capita pilosophica (Dialectica)*; *De haeresibus (On Heresies)* and *Expositio fidei (Explanation of the True Faith)*. The text of John Damascene, in which the theme of Islam appears, is *De haeresibus*. It was created after 743, but it is believed that some of its fragments had been written earlier. The first eighty chapters are almost a literal quotation of the characteristics of the heresies found in *Panarion* by Epiphanius of Salamis, while chapters 81-99 were presumably drawn from the works of several authors: Theodoret of Cyrus, Timothy of Constantinople, Sophronius of Jerusalem, and Leontius of Byzantium. It is believed that perhaps John possessed some unknown work, which included both Epiphanius' catalogue of heresies and the texts by the above-mentioned authors. The longest, 100th chapter, devoted to the Ishmaelite heresy, is recognized as the original work of John (though not by all scholars). It is one of the earliest characterizations of Islam, which came from the pen of a Christian, but one who was anchored in the Arab world. It contains nine free quotations from the *Quran*. Thomas and Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 295-301.

Quite a large fragment was taken from a comprehensive treatise by Michael Syncellus²⁴, an East Christian author with Arab roots, writing in Greek²⁵.

What image of Khadija do Old Rus' authors paint? First of all, they state that because Muhammad was poor in his youth, he had to work for a rich widow named Diganā (Дигана). They unanimously emphasize that she was his relative (in fact, according to the Muslim tradition — a cousin on his mother's side)²⁶. They do not hide the fact that Khadija was Muhammad's employer at that time. It was thanks to his work for her (running caravans to Egypt and Palestine) that he gained experience that helped him in his later mission as a religious reformer: in that area he came into contact with the followers of Judaism and Christianity²⁷. Some Old Rus' authors specify that those were supporters of non-orthodox variants of those religions: Arianism, Nestorianism and Monophysitism, and often add other heterodoxes, such as Manichaeans and Donatists²⁸. In contrast to the Muslim tradition, Slavic texts present the beginning of Muhammad's marriage with Khadija: the initiator of the relationship is Muhammad. He was supposed to outwit or even seduce Khadija (прельсти жену)²⁹. The fact that it was a woman who could come up with a marriage proposal does not seem to fit into the worldview of the Christian authors of the time³⁰.

²⁴ Michael Syncellus was born in Jerusalem circa 761/762. He was of Arab origin. At the age of 25, he became a monk in the monastery of St. Sabas. Noteworthy is the fact that the monastery where Michael lived was attacked by the Arabs several times. At the turn of the first and second decade of the 9th century, he was appointed *synkellos* of the Patriarch of Jerusalem. Circa 812/813, he was sent by the patriarch Thomas with letters to Pope Leo III. He never reached Rome. He stayed in Constantinople in the Chora monastery. As a defender of the cult of icons, he was imprisoned after 815 and banished from the city. He returned to Constantinople in 834. He died on 4 January 846. Michael Syncellus was a prolific author. He probably wrote a polemical text, presenting dogmas of Islam and elements of ritualism and religious customs of Muslims. Interestingly, he was able to use the Arabic tradition in his work, in addition to earlier Byzantine accounts (e.g. John of Damascus). He wove two free quotations from the *Quran* into his narration. The anti-Muslim polemical text by Michael Syncellus has not survived to our times in its entirety. Only those fragments that have been included in George the Monk's *Chronicon syntomon* have survived. Almost identical fragment can also be found in the third redaction of *Nomocanon in Fourteen Titles*, commissioned by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Tarasius (784-806). Thomas and Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 625-632.

²⁵ Khoury, *Les Theologiens*, pp. 181-182; Hunger, Herbert. *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner. Vol. 1. Philosophie, Rhetorik, Epistolographie, Geschichtsschreibung, Geographie*. München: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1978, p. 261; Thomas and Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 439-440, 632, 731; Максимов, *Византийские сочинения*, p. 66; Wolińska, Teresa. «Elity chrześcijańskie wobec islamu (VII-X w.)». *Vox Patrum*, 2015, vol. 64, pp. 544-545.

²⁶ Dziekan, Marek M. «Hadīġa, żona Proroka Muhammada w *Usd al-gaba fi ma' rifat as-sababa* 'Izz ad-Dina Ibn al-Atira i innych klasycznych źródłach arabskich». In Dziekan, Marek M., Kończak, Izabela (eds.). *Kobiety Bliskiego Wschodu*. Łódź: Ibidem, 2005, p. 21.

²⁷ *On Bohmit the Heretic*, 3, p. 30 [Brzozowska, *Zapozyczona czy własna wizja*].

²⁸ *The Tale of the Shameful Saracen Faith*, p. 59 [Летописный сборник, именуемый Патриаршею или Никоновскою летописью. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000. Полное собрание русских летописей, 9].

²⁹ *On Bohmit the Heretic*, 3, p. 30.

³⁰ Mernissi, Fatima. *The Veil and the Male Elite. A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*. New York: Basic Books, 1991, pp. 28, 116; Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam. Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1992, p. 42.

Khadija is also, in a sense, the initiator of Muhammad's revelations, or rather, of his lies that he experiences such revelations. Old Rus' authors state that Muhammad suffered from mental illness (perhaps: epilepsy). His attacks worried Khadija and made her feel upset: she was annoyed that although she was rich and high-born, she married such an inadequate man: not only poor, but also with a weak psyche. Muhammad explained to her, therefore, that he experiences revelations in which Archangel Gabriel visits him³¹. Sometimes another character appears in the narrative: a certain Arian who claims to be a monk (a splinter of the legend of Sergius Bahira)³², who influenced Muhammad and Khadija. Our heroine is also the unquestionable first propagator of Muhammad's teachings. Not only did she believe in the truth of his revelations, but she also began to preach them to other Arab women³³. They conveyed the revelation to men, which indirectly indicates that they had to be respected in the community at that time.

The breakthrough in Muhammad's life was, according to Old Rus' authors, the death of Khadija. This is because she made him her heir. Having inherited her wealth, but also her social position, he could devote himself to proclaiming a new religion in the whole «land of Yathrib»³⁴.

A different image of Khadija can be found in the polemical texts by Maximus the Greek (ca. 1470-1555), an educated Byzantine, who spent his youth in Italy and on Mount Athos, and then found his way to Rus'. He is the author of three texts written in Old Rus' that argue with Islam³⁵. As he says himself, he prepared himself for the work carefully and studied many sources (indeed, in his writings there are themes absent in other Slavic anti-Muslim works), but he will not mention everything in order not to

³¹ *On Bohmit the Heretic*, 3, p. 31.

³² Gerö, Stephen. «The Legend of the Monk Bahirā, the Cult of the Cross and Iconoclasm». In Canivet, Pierre, Rey-Coquais, Jean-Paul (eds.). *La Syrie de Byzance à l'Islam: VII^e-VIII^e siècles, Actes du Colloque international «De Byzance à l'Islam», Lyon-Maison de l'Orient Méditerranéen, Paris-Institut du Monde Arabe, 11-15 Septembre 1990*. Damas: Publications de l'Institut Français de Damas, 1992, pp. 47-57; Roggema, Barbara. *The Legend of Sergius Bahirā. Eastern Christians Apologies and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009; Bahkou, Abjar. «The Monk Encounters the Prophet. The Story of the Encounter between Monk Bahira and Muhammad as it is Recorded in the Syriac Manuscript of Mardain 259/2». *Cultural and Religious Studies*, 2015, vol. 3.6, pp. 349-357; Bahkou, Abjar. *The Story of the Encounter between Monk Bahira and Muhammad as it is Recorded in the Syriac Manuscript of Mardain 259/2: The Monk Encounters the Prophet*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2017.

³³ *On Bohmit the Heretic*, 4, p. 31. See: Mernissi, *The Veil*, p. 103; Ahmed, *Women*, pp. 42, 47-48; El Cheikh, Nadia Maria. *Women, Islam, and Abbasid identity*. Cambridge, MA-London: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 98-99, 101-103.

³⁴ *On Bohmit the Heretic*, 5, p. 31.

³⁵ Garzaniti, Marcello. «La riscoperta di Massimo il Greco e la ricezione dell' Umanesimo italiano in Russia». In Di Salvo, Maria, Moracci, Giovanna, Siedina, Giovanna (eds.). *Nel mondo degli Slavi. Incontri e dialoghi tra culture. Studi in onore di G. Brogi Bercoff*. Florence: Firenze University Press, 2008, vol. I, pp. 173-183; Bushkovitch, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 128-129; Savelyev, Denis. «Maximus the Greek». In Thomas, David, Chesworth, John (eds.). *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Vol. 7: Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America (1500-1600)*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015, pp. 135-140; Garzaniti, Marcello. «Michel Trivolis/Maxime Le Grec (env. 1470-1555/1556). Processus de modernisation et fin du Moyen âge en Russie». In Pieralli, Claudia, Delaunay, Claire, Priadko, Eugène (eds.). *Russia, Oriente slavo e Occidente europeo. Fratture e integrazioni nella storia e nella civiltà letteraria*. Florence: Firenze University Press, 2017, pp. 49-65.

dismay Christians³⁶. And so, in the treatise *A Revealing Word Against the Hagarene Aberration and Against the Filthy Dog Muhammad, Who Invented It* (Слово вбличительно на агараньскую прелесть и умысливишаго ея сквернаго џа Моамеџа) we can find a biographical sequence. We learn from it that Muhammad was an employee of a rich Ishmaelite (Arabian) in his youth. His employer's wife fell in love with him and, after her husband's death, made him her husband and heir to all their estates³⁷. Thus, the account by Maximus the Greek differs from earlier Byzantine and Rus' (and also Muslim!) descriptions of Muhammad's youth by a significant shift in emphasis: in his view, Khadija is not a financially independent person, owner of a large estate running her own business and at some point the prophet's employer, but only the wife of his employer, who could manage her husband's wealth after his death.

Other wives of Muhammad appear in Old Rus' texts much less frequently than Khadija. It is worth mentioning here the Byzantine rite of renunciation of Islam, composed in the second half of the 9th century. It was translated thrice into Church Slavic language. The first translation was done in Bulgaria during the reign of Simeon I the Great (893-927), as part of the *Nomocanon in Fourteen Titles*. In Rus', this text became known in the fourth decade of the 11th century. The second translation was done in Serbia, after 1219, within the *Nomocanon of St. Sava* and became popular in Rus' about 1270. In the 1380s, another Church Slavic translation of the ritual of abjuration of Islam was created, completely independent of earlier translations. The discussed work was translated in Rus', within the *Euchologion of the Great Church* — a Byzantine collection of texts used during liturgical rites in the Constantinopolitan Basilica of Hagia Sophia³⁸.

The rite contains a series of anathemas. A person converting from Islam to Christianity had to curse Muhammad, the most important advocates of his teachings, all the

³⁶ *A Revealing Word Against the Hagarene Aberration and Against the Filthy Dog Muhammad, Who Invented It*, p. 83 [Сочинения преподобного Максима Грека изданные при Казанской духовной академии. Казань: Типография Губернского Правления, 1894, vol. I, pp. 63-105].

³⁷ *A Revealing Word Against the Hagarene Aberration and Against the Filthy Dog Muhammad, Who Invented It*, p. 69.

³⁸ Editions: Montet, Edouard. «Rituel d'abjuration des musulmans dans l'Église grecque». *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1906, vol. 53, pp. 145-163 (Greek text); Benešević, Vladimir N., Šćapov, Jaroslav N. *Syntagma XIV titulorum sine scholiis secundum versionem Palaeo-Slovenicam, adjecto textu Graeco et vetustissimis codicibus manuscriptis exarato*. Serdicae: In Aedibus Academiae Scientiarum Bulgaricae, 1987, vol. II, pp. 135-147 (1st Church Slavic translation); Petrović, Miodrag M. (ed.). *Zakonopravilo or the Nomocanon of Saint Sava. The Ilovica Manuscript from 1262. Photoprint reproduction*. Gornji Milanovac: Dečje Novine, 1991, fol. 396b-398d; Gardović, Jovan. *Sarajevo Rudder Zakonopravilo of St. Sava from the 14th Century*. Dobrun: Dabar. Izdavačka kuća Mitropolije dabrobosanske, 2013, fol. 361b-364a (2nd Church Slavic translation); Яблоков, Андрей. *О происхождении чина присоединения мухаммеданъ къ православнои христіанскои вѣрѣ*, Казань: Типография Императорскаго Университета, 1881, pp. 21-28 (3rd Church Slavic translation). See also: Khoury, *Les Theologiens*, pp. 187-194; Sahas, Daniel J. «Ritual of Conversion from Islam to the Byzantine Church». *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 1991, vol. 36, pp. 57-69; Petrović, Miodrag M. *Saint Sava's Zakonopravilo on the Teachings of Muhammed*. Beograd: Novi dani, 1997; Rigo, A. «Ritual of abjuration». In Thomas, David, Roggema, Barbara (eds.). *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Vol. 1: 600-900*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009, pp. 821-824; Афанасьева, Татьяна И. «Славянская версия Евхология Великой церкви и ее греческий оригинал». *Труды Института русского языка им. В.В. Виноградова РАН*, 2015, vol. 5, pp. 9-43.

relevant dogmas and religious customs of Muslims and even the 'God of Muhammad'. Immediately after the anathema dedicated to the prophet, his son-in-law Ali and his associates and the Rightly Guided caliphs, an anathema concerning women from their circle was placed. The «first unclean wives of Muhammad» are cursed: Khadija, Aisha and Zaynab (проклиная Зализу и Аису и Зеинепу). Then his daughter, Fatima, is mentioned (Фатуману). Umm Kulthum also appears (Омкелфуну)³⁹. Interestingly, the author of the ritual considered her to be the wife of the prophet, while in reality she was, like Fatima, his daughter from his marriage to Khadija⁴⁰. The fact that this anathema was placed in such a prominent place of the analyzed rite may indicate that its creator was aware of the importance of wives and daughters of Muhammad in the shaping of the Islamic tradition⁴¹.

Old Rus' authors, like the Byzantine ones, often accuse Muhammad of immoral conduct. However, they usually do not provide any specific information about his private life after Khadija's death. They only emphasize that by his actions he sanctioned polygamy and sexual promiscuity of men in the Muslim world. An event from the prophet's life, which seems to be the most outrageous of Old Rus' authors, is his marriage to Zaynab⁴².

In the *Nikon Chronicle* (16th century) we can find the *Tale of the Shameful Saracen Faith* (Сказание о хулнѣи вѣрѣ Срациньствѣи) — a compilatory work, created in Rus' at the end of the 15th century⁴³. The anonymous author of the story «about the Saracen faith» quite mechanically combined three texts of Byzantine provenance, known in the 13th-century Church Slavonic translation: a chapter of John of Damascus' treatise *On Heresies* dedicated to Islam, a part of the polemical work by Michael Syncellus, and fragments of the ritual of abjuration of Islam. He probably based his work on one of the copies of the *Nomocanon of St. Sava* — the parts of the treatise *On Heresies* and the works of Michael Syncellus were interwoven with each other in exactly the same way as on the pages of the *Nomocanon of St. Sava*⁴⁴.

³⁹ *The Formula of Abjuration of Islam*, 3, p. 138 [Benešević and Šćapov, *Syntagma*].

⁴⁰ Dziekan, *Hadiža*, p. 15.

⁴¹ Ahmed, *Women*, p. 47; El Cheikh, *Women*, p. 98.

⁴² Muhammad, Tarek M. «The Byzantine Theologians on Muhammad and Zaynab b. Jahsh: Marriage or Adultery?». *Byzantinoslavica. Revue internationale des Etudes Byzantines*, 2009, vol. 67, pp. 139-160; Görke, Andreas. «Between History and Exegesis: the Origins and Transformation of the Story of Muhammad and Zaynab bt Ğaḥš». *Arabica*, 2018, vol. 65, pp. 31-63.

⁴³ *Летописный сборник, именуемый Патриаршею или Никоновскою летописью*. Москва: Языки русской культуры, 2000. Полное собрание русских летописей, 9, pp. 59-63. See also: Клосс, Борис М., *Никоновский свод и русские летописи XVI-XVII вв.* Москва: Издательство Наука, 1980, p. 171; Brzozowska, *Zarozyczona czy własna wizja*, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁴ The chapter of John of Damascus' treatise *On Heresies* dedicated to Islam was translated into Church Slavonic in Serbia after 1219, as an integral part of the *Nomocanon of St. Sava*. What is interesting, both in the Ilovitsa manuscript from 1262 (HAZU III c. 9, fol. 369d-373d), as well as in later copies, the text by John of Damascus is quite mechanically interwoven with the polemical work of Michael Syncellus (Petrović, *Zakonopravilo*, fol. 369d-373d; Gardović, *Sarajevo*, fol. 338b-341d; Miklas, Heinz. «Zur kirchenslavischen Überlieferung der Häresiengeschichte des Johannes von Damaskus». *Monumenta Linguae Slavicae*, 1981, vol. 15, pp. 338-343; Petrović, *Saint Sava's Zakonopravilo*, p. 7; Prodić, Slobodan. *Knjiga 'O jeresima' prepodobnog Jovana Damaskina kao 61. poglavje sarajevskog rukopisa 'Zakonopravila' svetog Save Srpskog*. Šibenik: Iстина,

The Tale of the Shameful Saracen Faith cites the following story, following John of Damascus: Muhammad had a companion named Zeyd, whose wife was the beautiful Zaynab. Muhammad desired her, so he told Zeyd that God had ordered him to send back his wife. When Zeyd obeyed him, several days later he found that God had ordered him to take Zaynab. So he took her for himself and began to commit adultery with her. In connection with this event, Muhammad even issued a special law that would allow the man to divorce and marry new wives without restriction⁴⁵.

At this point it is also worth asking whether the figure of Fatima appears in Old Rus' literature. As we remember, it is mentioned in the rite of renunciation of Islam⁴⁶. What is more, Afanasy Nikitin, a merchant from Tver who left behind an itinerary (*The Journey Beyond Three Seas — Хождение за три моря*), a description of a journey through the Middle East to India in 1468-1474⁴⁷, also indirectly refers to her. He mentions that he saw the place where Fatima's son was murdered, making, however, no direct mention of his mother: *There Shah Husain, son of Ali and grandson of Mohammed, was slain*⁴⁸.

Another interesting work is also the *Story of the Place of Medina, where, as they say, the tomb of the deceiver Muhammad is located* (Сказание о мѣстѣ Мидійскомѣ, идѣже глаголють гробу быти Магмета прелестника) — an account about the travel from Venice to the Middle East (to Egypt, Syria and Arabia) from AM 7001 (AD 1493), written by Louis of Rome (мужь Римлянинъ именемъ Людвикъ). This is an abridged version/paraphrase of an extensive description of the journey to the Middle East, by the Bologna native, Ludovico di Varthema (c. 1470-1517), first published in print in Rome in 1510 (*Itinerario de Ludouico de Varthema Bolognese*). It was included in the *Rus' Chronograph of 1617*. It contains, among other things, a description of Ludovico'

2016, pp. 9-14). At this point it is worth noting that the oldest Slavic translation of the work *On Heresies* was made in Bulgaria at the turn of the 9th and 10th centuries in the *Nomocanon in Fourteen Titles*. However, this translation did not contain the original chapter on Islam — instead the aforementioned text by Michael Syncellus was included. Benešević, Vladimir N. *Syntagma XIV titularum sine scholiis secundum versionem Palaeo-Slovenicam, adjecto textu Graeco e vetustissimis codicibus manuscriptis exarato*. Petropoli: Typis Academiae Scientiarum Imperialis Petropolitanae, 1906, vol. I, pp. 701-704; Bushkovitch, *Orthodoxy*, p. 125.

⁴⁵ *The Tale of the Shameful Saracen Faith*, p. 61. It is worth noting that the circumstances in which Muhammad and Zaynab were married are similarly described by Muslim authors (including At-Tabari), while the new law, established on that occasion by the Prophet, is mentioned only by John of Damascus. Interestingly, at that point in his text he paraphrases one of the verses of the *Quran* (Surah 2, 230), referring to divorce and remarriage, the so-called *muḥallil*. See: Mernissi, *The Veil*, p. 104; Muhammad, *The Byzantine Theologians*, p. 143; Görke, *Between History and Exegesis*, p. 51.

⁴⁶ *The Formula of Abjuration of Islam*, 3, p. 138.

⁴⁷ Lenhoff, Gail. «Beyond Three Seas: Afanasij Nikitin's Journey from Orthodoxy to Apostasy». *East European Quarterly*, 1979, vol. 13, pp. 432-447; Maxwell, Mary J. «Afanasii Nikitin: An Orthodox Russian's Spiritual Voyage in the Dar al-Islam, 1468-1475». *Journal of World History*, 2006, vol. 17.3, pp. 243-266; Shlapentokh, Dmitry. «Afanasiy Nikitin's Journey Beyond the Three Seas: An Orthodox Russian in Medieval India». *Acta Orientalia*, 2012, vol. 73, pp. 173-192.

⁴⁸ *Afanasy Nikitin's Journey Across Three Seas*, I, p. 337 [Zenkovsky, Serge A. (ed.). *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1974]. Afanasy Nikitin refers here to one of the most important events from the early Islamic period, which caused a split into the Sunni and Shiites, i.e. the murder of the grandson of the prophet, Al-Husayn ibn Ali, son of Fatima and Ali, together with his family during the battle at Karbala in 680.

stay in Medina. The author mentions that he saw books there in which the deeds of Muhammad and his companions were discussed — one of them was Ali, the prophet's son-in-law, the husband of his daughter Fatima⁴⁹.

The mother of Muhammad is mentioned in the unpublished story *On Muhammad, a Sorcerer and Heretic, Whom the Saracens Called a Prophet* (*О Магмете волхвъ и еретикъ, егоже Срацыны пророка нарицаху*), in the 17th-century Chronograph (Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, Ms FXVII.21, fol. 532-535). The author of this text claims that she was Jewish, circumcised Muhammad when he was a child and demonstrated various Jewish customs to him (fol. 532)⁵⁰.

2 MEDIEVAL MUSLIM ARAB WOMEN

It is much more difficult to find in a coherent portrait of a Muslim Arab woman in Old Rus' literature from a later period in which, after the prophet's death, followers of Islam invaded the eastern territories of the Byzantine Empire, occupying a number of important centers, such as Damascus and Jerusalem. An interesting figure is Tsaritsa Saida (царица Сеида), who appears on the pages of hagiographic texts dedicated to St. Michael of the monastery of Mar Saba. Her historical model was probably the wife of caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān ibn al-Hakam (685-705) of the Umayyad dynasty⁵¹.

The Martyrdom of St. Michael of the Monastery Mar Saba is a hagiographical text, written in Arabic in the 9th/10th century, which has survived to our days only in the Georgian version⁵². Later, its extensive fragment was incorporated into the *Life of St. Theodore of Edessa*, written in Greek before 1023⁵³. The Church Slavic translation of this source

⁴⁹ Поповъ, Андрей. *Изборникъ славянскихъ и русскихъ сочиненій и статей, внесенныхъ въ хронографы русской редакціи*. Москва: Типографія А.И. Мамонтова, 1869, p. 179. Cf. Percy Badger, George, Winter Jones, John (eds.). *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India, and Ethiopia, A.D. 1503 to 1508*. London: Hakluyt Society, 1863, pp. 26-31.

⁵⁰ The view about the Jewish origin of Muhammad's mother appeared in the Rus' literature only in the 16th-17th centuries and was most likely adapted from the Western European literature. This theme can be found, for example, in the work *Cosmographia universalis* by Sebastian Münster (1488-1552), originally published in German, in Basel in 1544. *Cosmographia. Beschreibung aller Lender durch Sebastianum Munsterum, in welcher begriffen Aller völkcker, Herrschafften, Stetten und namhafftiger flecken herkommen: Sitten, gebreüch, ordnung, glauben, secten und hantierung durch die gantze welt und fürnemlich Teütscher nation. Was auch besunders in jedem landt gefunden und darin geschehen sey. Alles mit figuren und schönen landt taflen erklet und für augen gestelt*. Basel: Henrichum, 1544, p. 616.

⁵¹ This identification is based primarily on the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of St. Michael of the Monastery Mar Sabas*, according to which the Caliph that ordered the execution of the young monk was Abd al-Malik, son of Marwān. Griffith, Sidney H. «Michael, the Martyr and Monk of Mar Sabas Monastery, at the Court of the Caliph 'Abd al-Malik. Christian Apologetics and Martyrology in the Early Islamic Period». *ARAM Periodical*, 1994, vol. 6, pp. 115-148.

⁵² Peteers, Paul. «La Passion de S. Michel le Sabaite». *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1930, vol. 48, pp. 65-99; Blanchard, Monica J. «The Georgian version of the martyrdom of St. Michael, monk of Mar Sabas monastery». *ARAM Periodical*, 1994, vol. 6, pp. 149-163.

⁵³ Edition of the original, Greek text: Помяловскій, Иван. *Житіе иже во святыхъ отца нашего Феодора архієпископа Едесскаго*. Санкт-Петербург: Типографія Императорской Академии Наук,

was created in the 14th century (at the latest) in the Balkans. The *Life of St. Theodore of Edessa* quickly reached Rus'. Several East Slavic copies of this work have survived to this day, and can be dated to the 14th-17th centuries⁵⁴. In the mid-16th century, this text was also included in the Great Menaion Reader by metropolitan Macarius: it was placed in the July volume, under the date 9.07⁵⁵. It is noteworthy that in the May volume of the same compilation, under the date of 23.05, there are two versions of a short hagiographic work dedicated to the monk Michael from the Monastery of St. Saba⁵⁶. This text, however, is not a Church Slavic translation of the *Martyrdom of St. Michael*, known from the Georgian version, but is, *de facto*, a re-edited abridgment of the sections of the *Life of St. Theodore of Edessa* that discuss the fate of the monk, sentenced to death by the caliph 'Abd al-Malik.

Considering that the old Rus' texts present the fate of the monk Michael in almost the same way as the Georgian version of his martyrdom that survived to our time, it can be assumed that the story about him formed quite early (9th-10th centuries) and was then disseminated in medieval literature in a form quite faithful to the original. In Rus' sources we read that one day a young monk Michael from the monastery of St. Saba was sent to Jerusalem to sell monastery products at the local market. Once in that city, he met a eunuch, a servant of the Arab Tsaritsa Saida, who brought him before her. Upon seeing Michael, the female ruler desired him and started to persuade him to have sex with her. In return, she promised to cure him of his ailments (if he was sick) and offered him material goods or release from captivity. At the same time, the reader may have the impression that Saida actually had the opportunity to fulfill all her declarations. As monk Michael remained unmoved by her attempts to woo him, she ordered her servants to beat him with clubs. Therefore, we can assume that according to the author of the text, she had her own people and the power to impose punishment. She then sent the young monk to her husband, telling him that Michael had insulted her. The Caliph began to

1892. See also: Thomas and Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations*, pp. 911-915; Thomas, David, Mallett, Alex (eds.). *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Vol. 2: 900-1050*. Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010, pp. 585-593.

⁵⁴ Moscow, Russian State Library, 173.I.45, fol. 1a-64b (14th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.36, fol. 1c-105b (14th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.687, fol. 289-430' (1444); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.752, fol. 2-125 (15th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 310.1081, fol. 103-193' (the last quarter of the 15th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.773, fol. 1-132' (16th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.776, fol. 1-141' (16th century); Moscow, Russian State Library, 304.I.779, fol. 60'-179' (1632). Interestingly, there are also richly illuminated manuscripts containing the full text of the life of St. Theodore, including: Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, 166.89 – from the end of the 16th or 17th century.

⁵⁵ Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, 728.1323, fol. 65a-86d; State Historical Museum, Sin. 996, fol. 89b-125b; State Historical Museum, Sin. 182, fol. 116c-164d.

⁵⁶ Saint Petersburg, Russian National Library, 728.1321, fol. 470a-b, 487b-c; State Historical Museum, Sin. 994, fol. 614a-b, 644b-d; State Historical Museum, Sin. 180, fol. 981b-d, 1024d-1025b. Edition: Weiher, Eckhard, Šmidt, S.O., Škurko, A.I. (eds.). *Die Grossen Lesemenäen des Metropoliten Makarij. Us-penskij Spisok. 9-23. Mai*. Freiburg: Weiher Verlag, 2009, pp. 1227, 1287-1288.

persuade the saint to convert to Islam, and then ordered him to be executed: he was to be beheaded with a sword⁵⁷.

What is interesting in the above-mentioned piece, the Caliph's wife does not feel the need to be faithful to her husband. Perhaps the stereotype of a Muslim Arab woman as a promiscuous, which is gradually forming in the imagination of Christian authors, can be seen here. The *Martyrdom of St. Michael of the Monastery of Mar Saba* is inscribed in a *topos* popular in the Old Rus' literature: a young man, 'our own', i.e. an orthodox Christian, is persuaded to commit sin by an older, wealthy woman, who is at the same time a foreigner and an infidel. Interestingly, in Old Rus' literature, a *Lashka*, i.e. a Polish-Catholic, often appears in this role⁵⁸. This theme was taken from the Old Testament story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Gen 39, 1-20).

The literary image of the Arab Tsaritsa Saida is worth juxtaposing with the image of Muslim women emerging from the *Tale of Bygone Years (Russian Primary Chronicle)*. The oldest Kiev chronicle, compiled in its present form in the second decade of the 12th century, contains a story about prince Vladimir the Great (978-1015) choosing religion for Rus', placed under the annual date AM 6494/AD 986. Among the missionaries who described various monotheistic religions to the Kiev prince, there were also Volga-Kama Bulgars, followers of Islam⁵⁹. The dominant element in the narrative on Islam in this part of the *Russian Primary Chronicle* is the sexual promiscuity between men and women, manifested in both earthly and eternal life. This kind of attitude is initially favored by Vladimir, but he becomes truly disgusted, when he learns that Muslim women are *de facto* bisexual (в совокупленья мужьска и женьска вкушаютъ)⁶⁰. Interestingly, the association of Islam with homosexuality also appears on the pages of other Old Rus' texts, e.g. in the *Palaea Interpretata*, created before the 14th century⁶¹.

⁵⁷ *Martyrdom of St. Michael of the Monastery Mar Saba*, pp. 1227, 1287-1288 [Weiher, Šmidt and Škurko, *Die Grossen Lesemenäen*].

⁵⁸ Cf. Obolensky, Dimitri, Heppell, Muriel (eds.). *The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 162-169.

⁵⁹ Podskalsky, *Christentum*, pp. 17-24, 184-185, 202-215; Bushkovitch, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 122-123; Андрейчева, Марианна Ю. *Образы иноверцев в Повести временных лет*. Санкт-Петербург: Издательство Нестор-История, 2019, pp. 91-112.

⁶⁰ Cross, Samuel H., Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Olgerd P. *The Russian Primary Chronicle. Laurentian Text*. Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953, pp. 97-98: «Then the Greeks sent to Vladimir a scholar, who spoke thus: «We have heard that the Bulgarians came and urged you to adopt their faith, which pollutes heaven and earth. They are accursed above all men, like Sodom and Gomorrah, upon which the Lord let fall burning stones, and which he buried and submerged. The day of destruction likewise awaits these men, on which the Lord will come to judge the earth, and to destroy all those who do evil and abomination. For they moisten their excrement, and pour the water into their mouths, and anoint their beards with it, remembering Mahomet. The women also perform this same abomination, and even worse ones.» Vladimir, upon hearing their statements, spat upon the earth, saying, «This is a vile thing»

⁶¹ The author of *Palaea Interpretata* mentions male homosexuality when describing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He states that «the unfortunate Hagarenes of the Muslim faith» commit the same offense as the dwellers of the biblical cities destroyed by God's wrath: man lays there with man, he washes around his anus, and then pours the same water over his head and chin. Камчатнов, Александр (ed.). *Палая толковая*. Москва: Согласие, 2002, pp. 182-183. See also: Bushkovitch, *Orthodoxy*, p. 123; Андрейчева, *Образы*, pp. 101-108; Skowronek, Małgorzata. «W obronie ortodoksji. Głosy antyheretyckie

3 CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the image of a Muslim Arab woman, recorded in Old Rus' literature is complex. There is no doubt that it was formed under the overwhelming influence of Byzantine texts, especially Eastern Christian polemic works, created on the territory of the empire in conditions of direct armed confrontation with the followers of Islam, and then translated into the Church Slavic language, for example the treatise *On Heresies* by John of Damascus, the anti-Muslim text by Michael Syncellus, the story of Muhammad and his teachings in the chronicle of George the Monk (Hamartolus), the liturgical renunciation of Islam, as well as — hagiographic texts, distributed in Rus' mainly within the Reading Menaion. The images from these texts were rarely verifiable by the Eastern Slavs through direct contacts with the Arabs (e.g. during their journey to the Middle East). They were much more often confronted with other people who professed Islam, e.g. the Volga-Kama Bulgars, and so they got used to perceiving Muslims through the prism of their culture and customs.

In the eyes of Old Rus' authors, Arab women are quite active individuals, enjoying considerable personal freedom and the right to dispose of their property independently. Moreover, women surrounding Muhammad, his wives and daughters (especially Khadija and Fatima) are important communicators of his teachings. It is difficult to say to what extent our sources are aware of the role that these characters actually played in spreading the prophet's revelations, and to what extent Christian authors seek to discredit Islam as a religion preached, in their opinion, mainly by women. Interestingly, Old Rus' authors do not emphasize the differences in the social status between Arab and Slavic women. The only sphere in which this difference is perceived and strongly emphasized by them is anything that relates to marriage. Thus, they stigmatize polygamy, the ease with which a man can dismiss his wife, and also the promiscuity of Muslims (both men and women). References to sexuality are also an important element of creating a stereotypical image of a Muslim woman. Such images were probably meant to have a particularly strong effect on the imagination of the readers of Old Rus' texts, arousing aversion to dissenters and building a clear opposition between the Byzantine-Orthodox world and the surrounding Others, i.e. Muslims.

i antymuzułmańskie w Palei – historia, typologia, tekstologia». In Brzozowska, Zofia A., Leszka, Mirosław J., Marinow, Kiril, Wolińska, Teresa (eds.). *Widmo Mahometa, cień Samuela. Cesarstwo Bizantyńskie w relacji z przedstawicielami innych religii i kultur (VII-XV w.)*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2020, pp. 231-245. The association of Islam with female homosexuality can also be found in some literary texts, created in Western Europe (France) during the Middle Ages, see: Amer, Sarah. *Crossing Borders. Love Between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, pp. 29-160.

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