

MEHMET AÇA

BIRTH TRADITIONS OF LITHUANIAN TATARS  
AND ANATOLIAN TURKS:  
A COMPARATIVE STUDY



## INTRODUCTION

The Tatars living in Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus are little-known Turkish communities in Turkey. Limited numbers of religious texts in Arabic letters, culture, traditions, and thinking systems of these Tatar groups, which are remainders of the Golden Horde, have been less studied by Turkologists in Turkey until today. Despite all the difficulties, Turkologists in Turkey have to study the religious texts in Arabic letters, culture, traditions and beliefs of the Tatar groups living in Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus.

The expertise area of the author of this paper is folklore. Thus, this study is focused on the traditional life and culture of Tatars living in Lithuania. In this study, some of the beliefs and practices related to birth, which were formed by Pre-Islamic belief facts the besides Islamic belief and are important in the traditional life of Lithuanian Tatars will be debated in comparison with the beliefs and practices of Anatolian Turks. Lithuanian Tatars are the descendants of Tatars who came to Lithuanian Princedom from the Crimea in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, it could be useful to compare the beliefs and practices of Lithuanian Tatars on birth with the practices and beliefs of other Tatar groups who lived together in the Golden Horde. Considering the length of the study, the comparison is going to be limited to Crimean Tatars. The study in the Lithuanian Tatars dimension has to be contented with the limited information in the studies written in Lithuanian, Polish, and Russian languages. The information in written sources is usually similar.

The main reference of this study, which makes a comparison between Anatolian Turks birth traditions and the beliefs and practices of Lithuanian Tatars developed around the birth and the children, is going to be “Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej”, published by Stanislaw Kryczynski in 1938 in Warszaw; also, two studies which mention traditional lives of Lithuanian Tatars and Polish Tatars,

written by Yakov Yakovlevich Grishin<sup>1</sup> and M. Marek Dziekan<sup>2</sup>, will be amongst our references<sup>3</sup>.

The comparisons in this paper are limited to “birth announcement”, “some of the beliefs and practices related to the child”, “name giving / name giving ceremony”, and “circumcision” (it is not possible to talk about circumcision practices in Lithuanian Tatars today).

## HELLO LIFE: BIRTH

Birth, the first of the turning points in life, is almost always regarded as a happy event. Every child that comes into the world is a source of happiness not just for its mother and father, but also for relatives, friends, and neighbors. The process of birth is governed by hundreds of customs, beliefs, and religious and magical rituals. There are many beliefs and practices related to childbirth and child. Birth means reproduction, fertility, and family happiness. Therefore, these beliefs and practices imply happiness, fertility, health, and longevity.

<sup>1</sup> Гришин Я. Польско-литовские татары: наследники Золотой Орды. Казань, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Dziekan M. M. History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 27–39.

<sup>3</sup> The religious texts in Arabic letters in Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus are also important for research on the traditional life of Lithuanian Tatars. For the folkloric elements in the religious texts in Arabic letters in Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus, see: Мишкинене Г. Фольклорное наследие литовских татар и его взаимодействие с фольклором других народов // Беларуско-руско-польскае супастаўляльнае мовазнаўства і літаратуразнаўтва. Матэрыялы IV Міжнароднай навуковай канферэнцыі 22–24 красавіка 1997 г. Віцебск, 1997. Ч. 2, г. 350–353.; Мишкинене Г. Легенды о сотворении мира в арабскоалфавитных рукописях литовских татар XVII в. // Totoriai bei karaimai Lietuvoje: praeitis ir dabartis. Vilnius, 1997 m. birželio 26–27 (conference paper); Мишкинене Г. Фольклорный материал на страницах славяноязычных арабскоалфавитных рукописей литовских татар // Senoji Lietuvos literatūra. Senosios raštijos ir tautosakos sąveika: kultūrinė Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės patirtis. Vilnius, 1998. Kn. 6, p. 138–159; Мишкинене Г. Фольклорное наследие литовских татар (на материале арабскоалфавитных рукописей) // Вывучэння і захавання культурнай спадчыны татарскага народа на Беларусі. Матэрыялы III-ей Міжнароднай навукова-практычнай канферэнцыі, прысвечанай 600-годдзю татарскага асідніцтва на землях Беларуско-Літоўскай дзяржавы, распачатага пры Вітаўце Вялікім, 27–28 сакавіка 1997 г. Мінск, 1999, г. 123–131; Miškiņienė G., Statkiene N. Kaynak Eserlere ve Anket Sonuclarına Göre Litvanya Tatarlarının Ölüm Törenleri ve Bazı Dil Malzemeleri // Dilleri ve Kültürleri Yok Olma Tehlikesine Maruz Türk Toplulukları 4. Uluslararası Türkiyat Araştırmaları Sempozyumu Bildirileri. Editörler M. Erdal, Y. Koç, M. Cengiz. Ankara, 2013, s. 353–362.

## BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT, VISITING THE CHILD AND MOTHER (MATERNITY)

The birth is a significant event in Lithuanian Tatars who are Sunni and Hanafi<sup>4</sup>. Although a significant event, the birth, which is named “nifas” by Lithuanian Tatars, is not being celebrated with magnificent ceremonies like in other Muslim societies<sup>5</sup>.

The birth of a child is the source of happiness in Tatar families. There are many beliefs and practices related to birth and to child. A child means fertility and happiness for the family. Neighbours should be informed about the birth. Therefore, the child's father runs to the neighbours with bread and salt in his hands and informs them about the birth and asks them to visit the mother. Neighbours visit the mother and her baby with bread and salt in their hands<sup>6</sup>. The salt and bread that the father holds, like those the neighbours visiting the house in which a baby was born delivered hold in their hands, symbolize reproduction and fertility.

Birth announcement has an important place also in the birth traditions of the Anatolian Turks. In Anatolian Turks, after the birth, the child's father (house owner) sends a carafe of sherbet to his acquaintances. If the baby is a girl, the lid of the carafe is left open. If the baby is a boy, the lid of the carafe is closed and a red ribbon is tied to the carafe's upper neck<sup>7</sup>. As shown in the examples above, the sex of the child is announced with some symbols. In Anatolia, the boy's father sacrifices, plants a fig tree, cooks halva (“oğlan helvası”) and sends this halva to the acquaintances and relatives<sup>8</sup>.

The neighbours visiting the house where a baby was born with salt and bread in their hands in Lithuanian Tatars occur among Anatolian Turks as “loğusa görme” (visit the maternity), “mübarek olsun gitme” (go to congratulate), “gözü aydına gitme” (go to congratulate) and “çocuk görme” (go to see the baby). All these visitings start after the

<sup>4</sup> For the religious life of Tatars living in Lithuania and Poland today, see *Гришин Я.* Польско-литовские татары: наследники Золотой Орды. Казань, 1995, с. 67–68; *Nalborczyk A. S.* Islam in Poland: the Past and the Present // *Islamochristiana*. 2006, No. 32, p. 225–238; *Nalborczyk A. S.* Muslim Women in Poland and Lithuania. Tatar Tradition, Religious Practice, *hijab* and Marriage // *Gender and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*. Ed. by E. Adamiak, M. Chrzastowska, Ch. Methuen, S. Sobkowiak. Poznań, 2009, p. 53–68; *Nalborczyk A. S.* *Grodź S.* Poland // *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*. Ed. by J. S. Nielsen, S. Akgönül, A. Alibašić, B. Maréchal, Ch. Moe. Leiden-Boston, 2010. Vol. 2, p. 401–411; etc.

<sup>5</sup> *Dziekan M. M.* History and Culture of Polish Tatars // *Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam*. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Kryczyski S.* Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // *Rocznik Tatarów Polskich*. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 241.

<sup>7</sup> *Acıpayamlı O.* Türkiye'de Doğumla İlgili Adet ve İnanmaların Etnolojik Etüdü. Ankara, 1974, s. 61.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 60.

third day of the birth and last to the fortieth day<sup>9</sup>. The people who go to see the mother and the baby take presents for them. The presents vary depending on the financial status of the visitors. Presents given to the baby are usually children's clothes, "kırk gömleği", "çeyrek altın" (quarter gold) and "nazar boncuğu" (amulet). The presents given to the mother are usually milk, yogurt, pudding, halva, baklava (a kind of dumpling), towels, and costume fabric. "Lohusa şerbeti" (maternity sherbet) or "şurup" (syrup) are served to visitors<sup>10</sup>.

#### SOME OF BELIEFS AND PRACTICES RELATED TO THE CHILD

According to Kryczyski and Dziekan who cited from him, the newborn baby could be taken out firstly on Thursday in Lithuanian Tatars<sup>11</sup>. Kryczyński and Dziekan don't provide detailed information about this practice. Therefore, it is not possible to make detailed comments about it. Thursday, on which the newborn baby was taken out, is the day before Friday which is fortunate and sacred for Muslim Turks. Thursday is a sacred day for Muslim Turks, as is also Friday.

In Anatolian Turks, mother and baby are not allowed out for forty days after birth. If necessary, they are allowed to go out after taking several precautions. The tradition which pays attention to not getting a baby younger than 40 days and mother together recommends some precautions when there is a necessity of them to go out. Some of the precautions are as follows: to hang coal and bread on the newborn and the puerpera, to make a dog eat that bread, the puerpera to recite "Bismillah" before passing the doorsill, to spill sherbet to the place the newborn was taken from, puerperas who run into each other to give hugs, to stand back to back and to trade pins (needle), bread, yarns, etc<sup>12</sup>.

In Lithuanian Tatars' traditional life, clipping newborns' nails until they are one year old is not allowed<sup>13</sup>. Kryczyński and Dziekan did not give information about other practices related to nail trimming. We can also see the reflections of nail clipping

<sup>9</sup> Örnek S. V. *Türk Halk Bilimi*. Ankara, 1995, s. 160.

<sup>10</sup> *Acıpayamlı O. Türkiye'de Doğumla İlgili Adet ve İnanmaların Etnolojik Etüdü*. Ankara, 1974, s. 72.

<sup>11</sup> *Kryczyski S. Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 241; Dziekan M. M. History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 35.*

<sup>12</sup> *Acıpayamlı O. Türkiye'de Doğumla İlgili Adet ve İnanmaların Etnolojik Etüdü*. Ankara, 1974, s. 87–90; *Büyükokutan A. Muğla Yöresi Kadın Merkezli Geleneksel Uygulamalar ve İşlevleri*. Konya, 2012, s. 271–273.

<sup>13</sup> *Kryczyski S. Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 241; Dziekan M. M. History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 35.*

traditions of Lithuanian Tatars amongst Anatolian Turks. In Anatolian Turks, the first nail clipping and the first haircut happen at particular times accompanied by rituals. In “Tahtacılar” (a group of Turkmen) in Mersin, a newborn’s nails are clipped after 40 days, six months or one year after the birth. The underlying thought of clipping nails in that particular times prevent the baby from becoming a thief after he grows up<sup>14</sup>. In other words, it is believed that babies whose nails are cut before the age of one year would be thieves. The nails cut before forty days are played by Satan<sup>15</sup>. The babies whose nails are cut before six months are to be ominous<sup>16</sup>. In the Umurbey village of Mudanya (a district of Bursa), the nails of the newborn are first clipped on Tuesdays or Fridays. Tuesday brings health, while Friday brings wealth<sup>17</sup>. In Tekirdag, the newborn’s nails are clipped after six months. The baby’s hand is inserted into his father’s pocket. If the baby takes a lot of coins out of his fathers’s pocket, it is believed that the baby will be rich<sup>18</sup>. In Erzurum, it is believed that clipping nails or giving haircut before a year causes the newborn to lose sleep. Again, in Erzurum, nails are clipped on Fridays during the knell by a nail clipper taken from a wealthy family. It is believed that the newborn is going to be wealthy this way<sup>19</sup>. In Diyarbakir, the nails of the children are not cut in the first four months. Early nail trimming causes bad luck<sup>20</sup>.

Another avoidance in Lithuanian Tatars’ birth traditions is not to pass something over the newborn<sup>21</sup>. Neither of the researchers did not comment on the reasons for this avoidance. It is possible to learn the reasons of this avoidance from Anatolian Turks, because the same avoidance is also commonly seen in Anatolian Turks. Passing something over the newborn causes preventing the newborn to grow up or to grow taller<sup>22</sup>. If somebody jumps over the newborn, he has to jump over the newborn back

<sup>14</sup> Çıblak N. Mersin Tahtacıları, Halkbilimi Araştırmaları. Ankara, 2005, s. 180.

<sup>15</sup> Yaşar H. Balıkesir ve Yöresinde Çocuk Folkloru Ürünleri Üzerine Derlemeler ve İncelemeler. Balıkesir University, Balıkesir, 2008, s. 113 (master’s thesis).

<sup>16</sup> Öztelli C. Zilêde Doğum ve Adetleri-VII // Türk Folklor Araştırmaları. 1953. S. 2 (44), s. 693.

<sup>17</sup> Kandemir B. Umurbey Köyü Derleme Çalışması. Balıkesir University Faculty of Arts and Science, Department of Turkish Language and Literature. Balıkesir, 1997, s. 27 (graduation thesis).

<sup>18</sup> Artun E. Tekirdağ Halk Kültüründe Geçiş Dönemleri-Doğum, Evlenme, Ölüm // Türk Dünyası İncelemeleri Dergisi. İzmir, 1998. S. 9–10, s. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Sezen L. Erzurum Folkloru. Erzurum, 2007, s. 73.

<sup>20</sup> Altunboğa A. B. Diyarbakır Folklorundan Kesitler. İstanbul, 1999, s. 100.

<sup>21</sup> Kryczysński S. Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 242; Dziekan M. M. History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górac-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Aça M. Balıkesir Yöresi Doğum Sonrası İnanış ve Uygulamaları. İstanbul, 2005, s. 67, 68; Büyükokutan M. A. Muğla Yöresi Kadın Merkezli Geleneksel Uygulamalar ve İşlevleri. Konya, 2012, s. 270.

again to take it back<sup>23</sup>. In Anatolian Turks, not only over the newborn but also jumping over the cradle is forbidden for the same reason.

Some other avoidances in Lithuanian Tatars' birth traditions are avoiding a newborn to look in the mirror and not to swing the empty cradle<sup>24</sup>. These avoidances are also common in Anatolian Turks. In Anatolia, a newborn is not allowed to look in the mirror because he might become squint-eyed or lose his mind<sup>25</sup>. Swinging an empty cradle is an important taboo in Anatolia. The baby is going to have a headache or belly ache if the empty cradle was swung<sup>26</sup>.

#### NAME GIVING / NAME GIVING CEREMONY

Name-giving is extremely important for a baby, to the family and society. In traditional societies, a newborn baby is named with a religious ceremony. Name-giving is not an ordinary event. It is carried out by celebrating and blessing<sup>27</sup>. The name-giving ceremony means acceptance of the newborn into society. Therefore, it attracts attention also to the social dimension of the name which usually has an individual meaning. From birth to maturation, the baby who is believed to have links with the assumed unknown world where he came from is going to be an inseparable part of the world of mature people (the world of mature people is composed of family and society) after he was given a name. The child who was given a name is part of his family and society.

According to references informing about the traditional life of Lithuanian Tatars, a baby is usually named at the family home. The name-giving ceremony, which is called Azan, is arranged usually in the afternoon. An imam<sup>28</sup> and two witnesses also attend the ceremony, besides the guests invited by the mother. The obstetrician or the best friend of the mother brings the baby on a pillow after bath and put him on the table which has also two candles, Quran, bread, salt, water, honey, and cheese on it. "Niyet" (a special prayer) is said by the imam. The Imam repeats the child's name into his ear three times

<sup>23</sup> *Büyükokutan M. A.* Muğla Yöresi Kadın Merkezli Geleneksel Uygulamalar ve İşlevleri. Konya, 2012, s. 270.

<sup>24</sup> *Kryczyski S.* Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 242; *Dziekan, M. M.* History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> *Büyükokutan M. A.* Muğla Yöresi Kadın Merkezli Geleneksel Uygulamalar ve İşlevleri. Konya, 2012, s. 270.

<sup>26</sup> *Aça M.* Balıkesir Yöresi Doğum Sonrası İnanış ve Uygulamaları. İstanbul, 2005, s. 67.

<sup>27</sup> *Örnek S. V.* Türk Halk Bilimi. Ankara, 1995, s. 149.

<sup>28</sup> The imam leads Islamic worship services, but may also take on a larger role in providing community support and spiritual advice.

and tells him not to forget it until the Day of Judgement. Later, the Imam holds the child's index finger and repeats "Sahahada"<sup>29</sup> seven times. The imam recites the Azan<sup>30</sup> into the child's right ear and recites "kammiet" (kamet) into his left ear. The ritual ends with a special prayer. After the Azan, the mullah takes a handkerchief from the mother, and all the guests are served first a honey vanilla syrup for healing purposes and then tea, meatballs, white cheese. Then they sit and have a chat<sup>31</sup>.

The table which has two candles, Quran, bread, salt, water, honey and cheese on it as seen in Lithuanian Tatars' name-giving traditions, cannot be seen in Anatolian Turks' name-giving traditions. It is possible to connect the table and some of the objects on the table with the effects of Slavic traditions. The bread and salt on the table symbolize abundance and fertility such as the bread and salt in the hands of the father who announces the birth. The salt in the hands of the father and of the people who are visiting the mother and the newborn symbolize the friendship and association amongst the individuals forming society.

There are also similarities between Lithuanian Tatars and Crimean Tatars in the name-giving tradition. As Yakub Kerim, who is known for the studies of history and social life of Crimean Tatars' pre-exile, indicates, in the Crimea, attendants of rural mosques were not strived with only religious things and teaching children. They also ensured villagers to live their life according to the Muslim Canonical laws. When a baby was born in a village, they also registered his/her name in a special registry notebook in the mosque.

In Pre-exile years in Kuru-Uzen, Küçük-Uzen, and Ulu-Uzen villages of the Crimea, the neighbours would not visit the house for forty days after a baby had been born in that house. After childbirth (40 days), the baby's father would invite the Imam to the house for the name-giving. The Imam would read the relevant parts of the Quran, and he would take the baby in his arms simultaneously. At the end of the ritual, the Imam would whisper the name that the family wanted first in his/her right (three times) and then in the left ear (three times)<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> The shahada is the name of the Islamic creed. It is the declaration of belief in the oneness of God (tawhid) and acceptance of Muhammad as God's prophet. The declaration in its shortest form reads: "Lā ilāha illā l-Lāh, Muhammadur rasūlu l-Lāh" (There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God).

<sup>30</sup> Azan is a call for prayer for Muslims and not a prayer. Azan indicates a particular prayer time.

<sup>31</sup> Kryczyski S. Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 242; Гришин Я. Польско-литовские татары: наследники Золотой Орды. Казань, 1995, с. 68–69; Dziekan M. M. History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 31–32.

<sup>32</sup> Kerim Y. Küçük-Uzen Tarih, Etnoğrafya. Akmescit, 2006, s. 35; Kerim Y. Ulu-Uzen ve Ulu-Uzenliler.

The name is given in the family house, except for some special situations, in Anatolian Turks also. In some areas, name-giving ceremonies are held in the morning. The person who is going to name the baby goes to the family house directly after the morning prayer instead of going home. The name is given before the sunrise. The name is usually given at Mondays and Fridays. Tuesdays and Saturdays are not preferred<sup>33</sup>.

The name-giving ceremonies of Anatolian Turks are similar to those of Lithuanian Tatars. The main elements in name-giving ceremonies are reciting the Azan into the right ear with a faint sound and telling the name of the baby loudly afterwards. In families in which Islamic traditions are cherished, “telling the name into the ear three times”, “reciting the Azan into the right ear” and “heading to Kiblah (South)” form the name-giving ceremony. These Islamic practices are enriched with best wishes and words of praise which are said for the child.

The name which will be given to the baby could be selected before or after the birth, but the present Turkey families usually select the name before the birth. The determined name is usually given in the day the baby is born. The Turkish belief system and, on the other hand, law of Islam are effective in giving a name to a baby as soon as it was born. According to Turkish belief system, the baby has to be named before putting it in its cradle. If not, it is believed that it could be stolen or changed by the demons. Also, according to the Law of Islam, the baby must be named in seven days after the birth<sup>34</sup>.

In the places where the traditional life is carried on in Turkey, the baby is named by family elders (the grandparents), obstetricians and people with religious identities (imam, hafiz, muezzin), but in places where the traditional life has been abandoned, the mother and the father come forward.

In patriarchal environments, the grandparents giving name to a baby are the parents of the baby's father. It is not right to explain the name-giving tradition only by preferences or manners of the traditional or modern environments. According to Article 339 of the Turkish Civil Code, the baby's mother and father have the right to name the baby.

Akmescit, 2009, s. 107–108; Kerim Y. Kuru-Uzen Zamanlar, İnsanlar, Takdirler. Akmescit, 2011, s. 138–139.

<sup>33</sup> *Acıpayamlı O. Türk Kültüründe 'Ad Verme Folkloru'nun Morfolojik ve Fonksiyonel Yönlerden İncelenmesi // Milletlerarası Türk Halk Kültürü Kongresi Bildirileri, IV. Cilt Gelenek, Görenek ve İnançlar.* Ankara, 1992, s. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 5.

The Hodja, the mufti or a respected person known as religious and asked to name the baby recites the Azan and says its name to the baby's ear three times and makes "wishes of fortune and good luck". The meals are eaten, and presents like a towel, money, sugar, etc. are given. In some places, even the Mawlid<sup>35</sup> is to be read<sup>36</sup>.

#### A FORGOTTEN TRADITION IN LITHUANIAN TATARS: CIRCUMCISION

Not being "a religious obligation" in Muslim societies, circumcision, which must be performed and which makes men isolated or condemned when not applied, has been almost given up by Lithuanian Tatars<sup>37</sup>. However, it has been one of the foremost elements of traditional life in the past. It is quite difficult to find information about the circumcision traditions of Lithuanian Tatars in actual resources, because it has been given up. Also, the existing information belongs to the past of the tradition which does not get into details.

Circumcision is called "siunniet" by Tatars. Even seen as one of distinctive traditions in Muslim societies, it is not obligatory. It is only recommended. In the Lithuanian Tatars' past, when they tried to sustain their national identity with Islam, circumcision of male children was given very much importance<sup>38</sup>. In 1930s when S. Kryczyński wrote "Tatarzy Litewscy", circumcision, which was usually performed in May, was performed by the "siunniedzeye" (circumciser). In the period when S. Kryczyński wrote his study, he stated that he heard opinions from W. Niemiezy that circumcision should be performed and that he heard W. Niemiezy to bring experts to Iwia (in Poland) from an old hospital in Vilnius<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> "The Mawlid" is a Turkish epic describing the birth of the Prophet Muhammed. This Turkish epic is read with melody in birth, marriage, and death ceremonies. Reading the Mawlid is a religious ritual or practice in Anatolia. The mawlid "Vesiletu'n-necat" written by Suleyman Chelebi is the most commonly read mawlid in Turkey as it is a very beautiful poem.

<sup>36</sup> Örnek S. V. Türk Halk Bilimi. Ankara, 1995, s. 149; Acıpayamlı O. Türk Kültüründe 'Ad Verme Folkloru'nun Morfolojik ve Fonksiyonel Yönlerden İncelenmesi // Milletlerarası Türk Halk Kültürü Kongresi Bildirileri, IV. Cilt Gelenek, Görenek ve İnançlar. Ankara, 1992, s. 7–8.

<sup>37</sup> Kryczyński S. Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 242; Гришин Я. Польско-литовские татары: наследники Золотой Орды. Казань, 1995, с. 69; Dziekan M. M. History and Culture of Polish Tatars // Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe. Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Ed. by K. Górak-Sosnowska. Warszawa, 2011, p. 32.

<sup>38</sup> Kryczyński S. Tatarzy litewscy. Próba monografii historyczno-etnograficznej // Rocznik Tatarów Polskich. 1999/2000. T. V, s. 242.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., s. 242.

The tradition of circumcision was cherished among other Muslim Tatar groups like in Turks of Turkey. In Kuru-Uzen, Küçük-Uzen, and Ulu-Uzen villages of the Crimea, the ceremony of circumcision is called “Sünnet Dügünü” (Circumcision Wedding). As in other Muslim societies, in the Crimean Tatars circumcision means the boys’ joining in Islam ummah. About circumcision traditions of the Crimean Tatars from the past to the exile years, the following information could be given according to old studies of Yakub Kerim.

Parents begin preparing for the circumcision wedding after the baby boy has been born. In the past, after boys were 5–7 years old, it was a tradition of every family to invite relatives and villagers to a dinner. For the young parents, this ceremony was the first test among the village society for their acceptance.

If a family had two baby boys on the trot when the older one is 7 years old and the younger one is 5 years old, there would be a common circumcision wedding.

When the boy is 3–4 years old, his father starts to feed a bull intended for the circumcision wedding. The math is that when the boy is eligible for circumcision, the bull is going to be two years old. Therefore, the bull weighs 400–500 kg, and it would be enough for guests.

In old times, the town crier would invite people to the ceremony in the Kuru-Uzen and Ulu-Uzen villages. He would invite as follows: “Folks, tomorrow so and so person has a circumcision wedding for his boy, and you are all welcome!”. This announcement would be done three times (in the morning, at noon, and in the evening) by touring the streets of the village to make sure everyone heard it.

On the ceremony day, musicians start playing, and men of the village come to the wedding place one by one or all together. The Imam and the circumciser arrive at a defined time.

The boy is put in the room prepared for the day. His father and ancestors go into the room with him. They amuse the boy and teach him to be brave. After that, they lay him on the bed, the Imam prays, and the circumcisor does his work.

After the circumcision, the Imam and the circumcisor go out of the room and give the good news to the guests. After that, men go to the boy’s room and flatter him by saying: “Masallah, you are a Muslim gallant now” and give him some money. If the boy cries or whines, they leave the money on his pillow. Then they congratulate the parents by saying: “Your goodness may go well”. The parents reply: “Allah bless, may your turn come next.” Later, guests are invited to eat, and the circumcision wedding starts.

Girls usually do not attend these ceremonies; women bring tips to parents. These tips consist mostly of desserts and child outfits. In the past, women were not allowed

to get near the boy. Close relatives donated worthy things or animals as sheep and a calf.

The circumcision wedding lasts three days. In these days, everyone in the village finds an opportunity to go to the ceremony place, to eat, listen to music, and dance. If someone does not attend this wedding without an excuse, the hosts of the wedding get angry with him/her and say: "Could not you find at least half an hour to attend my son's circumcision wedding?" Sometimes this anger takes a long time, and with some villagers they might fall out.

Today, Crimean Tatars mostly apply to specialist doctors for circumcision<sup>40</sup>.

The circumcision tradition is still being sustained alive by Anatolian Turks. Anatolian Turks who have their male children circumcised have not determined the rule for the age for circumcision. Social, cultural, and economic structures of the families are effective in defining the circumcision age. Families care for their children to be circumcised until they are 14–15 years old. In the recent years, especially urban families started to have their male children circumcise in hospitals after birth. Circumcision periods are determined by the educational activities of children and the economic occupations of the families. Circumcision is mostly performed in spring, summer, and autumn. The most preferred season for the people who work at gardening and animal husbandry is autumn. Circumcision, which in the past was performed on Thursday (the day before the sacred day Friday), nowadays is being performed at city centres on Saturdays and Sundays<sup>41</sup>.

In traditional societies, circumcision is performed as a ceremony with music and entertainment when guests are served rice and meat cooked in boilers. Also, some families with low income have their children circumcised without a circumcision ceremony. In this type of circumcisions, the "Mawlid" can be read on demand. Participants of the circumcision ceremonies, which are indoor or outdoor in cities and outdoor in villages, bring presents for the child and also attach a quarter gold coin to the pillow as a present. These quarter gold coins cover an important part of the expenses of families for the circumcision.

## CONCLUSION

As it could be understood from the limited available sources of information, birth traditions of Lithuanian Tatars and Anatolian Turks are similar in many aspects. This

<sup>40</sup> *Kerim Y. Ulu-Uzen ve Ulu-Uzenliler*. Akmesit, 2009, s. 207–208; *Kerim Y. Kuru-Uzen Zamanlar, İnsanlar, Takdirler*. Akmesit, 2011, s. 204–205.

<sup>41</sup> *Örnek S. V. Türk Halk Bilimi*. Ankara, 1995, s. 174–175.

superficial study, which is built on limited information from several sources, could only display a few of these similarities which are natural between traditions of these two societies which have the same roots and religions. Certainly, it is possible to talk also about differences. Which could be explained by history, geography, political power, relations with foreign societies and the power of the tradition. The change and differentiation in the traditions of Lithuanian Tatars who have been living with Slavic-rooted Christian societies for centuries should be considered normal in this context. One of the most remarkable examples of traditional change in Lithuanian Tatars influenced by Christian societies is their indifference to the circumcision like in Tatars in the Crimea, Kazan and Dobrudja and other Muslim-Turkish communities. The table and the objects on the table, coming forward during the name-giving ceremony, are possible to consider as a Slavic influence on Lithuanian Tatars who invited imams to a name-giving ceremony.

The findings and interpretations based on limited information should be improved by the new researches. New researches should consider also oral sources along with written and historical ones. For this purpose, researchers from Turkey, who can pass the language barrier, should go to the regions where Lithuanian Tatars live, and interview the oral sources directly. A comprehensive search of oral and written sources is going to help us understand cultural change and transformation beside reaching much actual information about the traditional life of Lithuanian Tatars.