TITLE OF GOD RHMN – “THE MERCIFUL” FROM JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN ARABIC INSCRIPTION BEFORE THE RISE OF ISLAM. POLYTHEISTIC OR MONOTHEISTIC ORIGIN OF KORANIC الرَّحْمَن؟

Summary

Recited several times as part of the Muslim daily prayers baslama contains three definite nouns: Allah, رَحْمَان and رَحْمَت (bismi-llâhi r-raḥmân r-raḥîm). Especially the epithet الرَّحْمَان (Raḥmân – “the Merciful”), which is found in the Sabaean inscriptions in the form RHMN (Raḥmānān), has a relatively long history in the Middle East. The study of the pre-Islamic Arabic cultures provides the context of numerous religious interactions in the evolution of Raḥmān’s meaning. RHMN – used by Polytheistic Arabs, Jews and Christians – is constantly confirmed in inscriptions, particularly from the so-called “Late Sabaean Period” (after 380) that were associated with Monotheism. During that time Judaism and Christianity attempted to replace the traditional South Arabian religion. Muhammad might have borrowed this name from three sources, which were present in his milieu. RHMN – الرَّحْمَان understood by Jews and Christians as “Lord, the Merciful, Master of Heaven” was useful for Islam, the new Monotheistic religion. On the other hand, in South Arabia RHMN signified a Moon-god, whom Muhammad even occasionally confused with “Allah” or used as a substitute for “Allah”.

61 Na przykład zdaniem Helmer Ringgrena rdzeń r-h-m wyrażał też młodość i siłę życia w nawiązaniu do hebrajskiego rechem („Jono”). Por. H. Ringgren, Religions of the Ancient Near East, Philadelphia 1973, s. 142–143.

62 Nawet wydające się tak odległe, jak np. Rimmon / Rēmēnū znany jako Ragim w mezo-potamskich, semickich językach. Por. T. G. Pinches, The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, London 1906, s. IV.