

## Khazars and Karaites, Again

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Professor Omeljan Pritsak (1919-2006) will be ever remembered by all scholars of ancient and medieval Turkic Studies, by all interested by interaction between the steppe nomads and the settled world, and, of course, by students of ancient Rus' and Ukraine. Khazars, this last Turkic steppe empire in Western Eurasia before the Golden Horde, were always one of his favorite subjects of study; probably, they even pushed young Pritsak to pursue his career as an Orientalist. Omeljan Pritsak's many contributions to the Khazar studies will forever be regarded by scholars as milestones in the field.

The Khazars were a confederation of tribes and polities, who build an empire extending east and west of the lower course of the Volga, from the mid-seventh to the late tenth centuries. It was frequently stated that their aspiration to achieve an equal imperial standing with their Muslim and Christian neighbors, relations with whom were rather strained, prompted the Khazar ruler, part of the clan nobility and apparently also of common people, to adopt Judaism around dates such different as 740 or 861/2. Having based themselves on the legendary data given in Hebrew Khazar documents, many scholars believed that there have been two stages of Khazar conversion to Judaism, namely the first stage, when a vague form of Judaism/Monotheism was adopted (or, "restored", as the Khazar Hebrew

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sources put it), with a movable Tent of Covenant and an altar as described in the Pentateuch, and the second stages, when the normative Rabbanite Judaism became widespread.<sup>1</sup>

The exact date of the Khazar conversion is disputable. Some scholars opted for the date of the conversion slightly after 863 CE or about 865,<sup>2</sup> while Zuckerman connected recently the Khazar conversion directly with the failure of the Byzantine mission (861) led by the Thessalonica-born brother Cyril and Methodius to the Qağan.<sup>3</sup> Now we have an indication of earlier spread of Judaism in Khazaria: in 2002, a coin from the Viking "Spillings Hoard" of Gotland, Sweden was identified as having been minted by Jewish Khazars. The coin is an imitation of Arabic coinage and contains the fictitious mintmark "Madīnat as-Salām 779-80". Numismatists conclude that it was actually minted in 837 or 838 in Khazaria. These Khazar dirhams bear the Arabic inscription *la Ilāha illā-LLāh wa Mūsā rasūlu ALLāh* (instead of *wa Muḥammada rasūlu ALLāh*) and a *tamḡa*, and were intended for circulation in the Caliphate and proclaimed the Biblical identity of the Khazars.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, many authors, including some modern Karaite authors, still maintain that it was the Karaite version of Judaism that has been adopted (some of them ascribe the Karaite conversion to the never existing "first stage"). The theory of Khazars' Karaite Judaism is not new; as far as I know, it was first formulated in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Yiddish cum Hebrew popular book printed at Amsterdam in 1771, named "The Remnant of Israel" (She'erith Yisra'el).<sup>5</sup> However, this late source frequently goes after

<sup>1</sup> Compare D. D.Y. Shapira, "Judaization of Central Asian Traditions as Reflected in the so-called Jewish-Khazar Correspondence, with Two Excurses: A. Judah Halevy's Quotes; B. Eldad Ha-Dani; and With An Addendum", *Khazars*, ed. by V. Petrukhin, W. Moskovich, A. Fedorchuk, A. Kulik, D. Shapira (*Jews and Slavs*, Vol. 16), Gesharim, Jerusalem & Moscow 2005, pp. 503-521.

<sup>2</sup> J. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und ostasiatische Streifzüge. Ethnologische und historisch-topographische Studien zur Geschichte des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts (ca. 840-940)*, Leipzig 1903, p. 23) or about 865 (G. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, New Haven 1943, p. 351); Dunlop tended to accept a date after 860 (D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton 1954, p. 115).

<sup>3</sup> C. Zuckerman, "On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus' Oleg and Igor", *Revue des études Byzantines* 53 (1995), pp. 237-270.

<sup>4</sup> R.K. Kovalev, "What Does Historical Numismatics Suggest About the Monetary History of Khazaria in the Ninth Century? - Question Revisited", *Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi*, 13 (2004), pp. 97-129; *ibid.*, "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dirhams of 837/8", *East Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Florin Curta (Ann Arbor, 2005), pp. 220-253. However, an analogy with the earlier Polish coins (12<sup>th</sup> century) bearing inscriptions in Hebrew may lead to suggest that the fact that the coins bore Jewish inscriptions tells about the identity of the minters, not necessarily of that of the rulers.

<sup>5</sup> P. 32: כוזר היה בנו של תוגרמה ואחר המבול שהיה העולם חרב בנה עיר אצל הנהר וואלגא וקרא שמה אל כוזר והעם אשר היו קרובים אליו נתחברו אל עם כוזר ונקראו ג'ון כוזרים, מן זאגט דש ער [כוזר] קאם ב"י דען באך וואלגא דא האט ער איין שטאט געבואט די הט ער נאך זיין נאמן געהישן אלכוזר דש פאלק דש גאהנט דא ב"י וואויטן און די צפון זייט פון די קאשפישע זע ... דער קינג וואר אין ערשטן מער גיינט צו דיא לערנונג פון די קראיים ביז דאש אין דער ר' יהודה אל נגרי תאט צו פאר שטיין געעבן דש ער דאש רעכטי גלאב ניט איז זיא האט ער גנומן דיא לערנונג מן אונר חכמים

assertions made by Protestant millenarists and other Lost-Tribes-hunters. Placating the Khazars as Karaites has served, until a certain epoch in Jewish history, to unload the potential for political and religious activism; this is exactly for this potential why the Khazars - and the Karaites - emerged as relevant, on the Jewish agenda, in the proto-Zionist and Zionist period.

Nevertheless, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, this source made a considerable impact on the famous Russian historian, N. Karamzin, and through his writings, on the Karaite book collector and community activist, Avraham Firkowicz, who became one of the main advocates of the Karaite-Khazar theory. According to him, the Khazars adopted the Karaite version of Judaism; still, scholars should take notice that even Firkowicz's views on the subject were apt to be changed in the course of his life; moreover, Firkowicz *never* stated that the Russian Karaites of his days are physical descendants of the Khazars; Firkowicz maintained the view that the predecessors of the Russian Karaites were genetically Jewish, keeping the "original Old Testament's religion", called by him *Benei Miqra*, to be converted to Karaism, by Karaite missionaries, circa 1000 CE. The *Khazar* adoption of Karaism was for him an unrelated matter, which made no impact on the Eteo-Jewish *Benei Miqra*, who later became Karaites. In other words: according to Firkowicz, the Russian Karaites are Israelites of the First Temple Period; later they became Karaites (circa 1000 CE); Khazars were Karaites; Karaite Khazars are not connected to Turkic-speaking Russian Karaites. It was not A. Firkowicz, but rather Serayah b. Mordekhay Šapšal (1873, Bâhçe-Sarây. - 1961, Vilnius), who lived as Seraja Markovič Šapšal in Czarist Russia, as *Thüreyyâ Şapşaloğlu* in the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, as Hadzy Chan (= *bacı hân*) Seraja Szapszał (Polish and Karaim) in interwar Poland and as, again, Seraja - or Sergej - Markovič - - Šapšal in the Soviet Union, who is charged for identification of the Khazars and Karaites.<sup>6</sup> Szap-

<sup>6</sup> Szapszał's view of Firkowicz was generally negative. Mikhail Kizilov kindly informed me that he has found in an archive a seminar paper on Firkowicz written by Szapszał as a student at the Saint-Petersburg University; in this work Szapszał calls Firkowicz "this overlying falsifier" ("etot izolgavšijsja fał'sifikator" cf. M. Kizilov & D. Mikhailova. "Khazary i Khazarskii kaganat v evropeiskikh natsionalisticheskikh ideologiyakh i politicheski orientirovannoi nauchno-issledovatel'skoi literature", *Khazarskii Al'manakh* 3 (Khar'kov, 2004), p. 43, n. 24. According to Szapszał, in his Turkish article *Qırım Qaray Türkleri* (1928), in the eighth century, a new religion named *benéy miqrâ*, i.e. the Karaites, split from the Children of Israel (*beni Isrâ'ilden*). These *benéy miqrâ*, recognizing only the Holy Books (*kütüb-i mukaddese*) in their original purity (*iptidâ'i safveti ile*) and rejecting the Talmudic Oral Law (*şefâhî kânûnları tanımadıkları*), were, for this very reason, like the Christians, an object of persecution by the Jews. Szapszał then describes in traditional Karaite colors the preaching of Anan ben David in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (p. 578). Szapszał emphasizes that Anan recognized Muhammad and Jesus as prophets sent to the Gentiles (pp. 578-9); however, having mentioned Muslim (in fact, Hanafite) influence on Karaism, Szapszał states that Early Christianity was not a great deal different from Karaism, and only later on in its development, Christianity went astray and adopted characteristics which set up a clear boundary between it and Karaism, like the adoption of the Trinity, icons, the abolition of circumcision, Jesus' Sonship (*Hazret-i 'İsânın ibnü-Allâh olduđu*), and the transfer of

szaf, in a way echoing A. Firkowicz, regards Crimean Karaite history as completely unconnected to general Karaite-Jewish history. Thus, the Karaite missionaries came to the savage Türkic and Slavic tribes and converted them to Karaism (*aslen Türk ve Islâv akvâmına mansûb besbütiin yabancı kabâ'il arasında da neşir ve tâmîm ettiler*).<sup>7</sup> Whilst describing this imagined process he mentions the phantomous figure of Ishâq Sangârî (p. 585) whom he calls "the converter of the Khazars to Karaism". He explains that the Khazar king, Bulan, gave Ishâq Sangârî his title, which might mean in Hebrew something like "defender", deriving at the same time the title "Sangârî" from the river Sakarya in the Iznit (Nicomaedia) *vilâyet* (p. 588). To prove Sangârî's Karaism, Szapszal mentions his grave in Chufût-Qalèeh, without any reference to Firkowicz (p. 589), who "found" it in 1839.<sup>8</sup> In our days, the theory connecting Khazars and Karaites has been argued for using the following arguments:

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the Sabbath to Sunday. He even states that the ways of Christianity and Karaism separated only in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, due to the Christian deviation from the true Biblical path. He, furthermore, claims that Anan's teachings can be traced to those of Jesus, and that Anan ben David ordered his following to avoid intermarriage and any dealings with the Jews (p. 579), thereby establishing a completely separate religion (p. 580). To prove his case, Szapszal cites the Gospels (Mat 5:17, p. 579 n. 2).

Persecuted by the (Talmudic) Jews on behalf of his faith, Anan left Baghdad and went to the Land of Israel (*arz-i Filistin-e*) and there, in Jerusalem, "the city sacred to three religions", as Szapszal put it, he established the first Karaite place of worship called *kenâse* ("*kenâse*" *nâmılı ilk Karaî mabedini inşâ etmiştir*); the *qiblah* of this subterranean place of worship, stresses Szapszal, is towards the al-Aqsa Mosque (*tahtüzzemîn inşâ edilmiş olan mabedin mehrâbı Süleimân-aleihisselâmin mabedine yâni mescid-Aksâyê müteveccih olup Karaîlerin eleyvîm ibâdetgâhîdir*), trying to create the impression that the Karaites pray towards a Muslim shrine (p. 580, 582). The truth is quite different, of course – the Karaites, like other Jews, pray towards the Temple Mount, where the Temple once stood and where two important mosques are now to be found. While describing the cave-like inner parts of this synagogue, Szapszal states that, like the first Christians, the Karaites sought, by building their shrine like a cave, to avoid persecution, presumably by Jews. However, in the subsequent description of the inside features of this synagogue there are the Muslim parallels that are stressed by him, to the extent that he states that an outsider cannot distinguish it from a mosque or from Muslim prayer, and a Qur'anic passage is quoted as the scriptural basis - besides Exodus 3:5 - for a certain Karaite observance (taking shoes off in the synagogue, which is in fact common to almost all Oriental Jews). For details, see D. D.Y. Shapira, "A Jewish Pan-Turkist: Seraya Szapszal (Şapşaloğlu) and his Work *Qırım Qaray Türkleri* (1928) (Judæo-Türkica XIII)", *AOASH* (58:4) 2005, pp. 349-380; M. Kizilov, "The Arrival of the Karaites (Karaims) to Poland and Lithuania: A Survey of Sources and Critical Analysis of Existing Theories", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2003/2004), pp. 29-45.

<sup>7</sup> In Firkowicz' version, these were the Karaite emissaries who converted to Karaism the local Jewish *Benêy Miqrâ*, Jews allegedly living in the Crimea in total isolation from the outside Jewish world for centuries!

<sup>8</sup> Cf. D. Shapira, "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern, and Avraham Firkowicz: Notes on Two Forged Inscriptions", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (2002-2003), pp. 223-260; a Russian version in: *Materialy po Arxeologii, Istorii i Etnografii Tavrii* 10 (Simferopol' 2003), pp. 535-555; "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz: The History of Two Forged Inscriptions," *Paralleli* תורת הקבלה, 2-3 (Moscow 2003); pp. 363-388 [a slightly different Russian version].

1. There were two stages in the Khazars' conversion, the first one being into the Karaite or Karaite-like Judaism.

2. Çufut-Qal'eh/Chufut-Kale in the Crimea is the site where epigraphic evidence exists for an unbreakable linkage between the Khazars and the Karaites.

3. The Majlis/Menjelis/Mandeglis/Medgelis Document testifies for a Karaite-Khazar connection.

4. The Crimean Karaites speak a Turkic dialect called "Karaim", similar to those of their neighbors, which they later brought with them to Vohlynia-Galicia and Lithuania.

5. Karaism originated partly in Iran, near the borders of the Khazar empire at the time (or very soon after) part of the Khazars converted to Judaism. Some early contacts could have been established then.

6. Petahia of Regensburg described around 1180 Jewish sectarians who do not lighten Sabbath candles, nor had heard of the Talmud in the "Land of Kedar", apparently where Russian Karaites are to be found much later.

1. So who were the Jews who converted the Khazars? It was believed that Judaism was first introduced in Khazaria before 721; some Khazars were said to be "Mosaistes" circa 737; in the same 737, Marwân defeated the Khazars on the Volga and attacked Serir. It was in the time when Yudghan *floruit*, and about the date when Anan I ben David was born (lived under Mansûr, who ruled between 754-775).

As the consequence of Marwân's pressure, the Qağan converted to Islam, but left in as quickly as the Arabs left Khazaria. In any case, in 743, Marwân quitted Transcaucasia, and some scholars tried to explain why the religious Dispute took place, allegedly, *circa 740, after* Marwân's retreat; in the Khalifate, it was the epoch of prosecutions of the Jews, followed by the Abbasid revolution in 752. In 760 the Arab governor of Arminiyya married Xâtûn, a Khazar princess, a hardly possibly event if the princess was Jewish. Her death served as the pretext for the Khazar raids in 762-4: in 762 the Khazars invaded Transcaucasia and seized Tiflis. Abu- 'Imran al-Tiflisi was not yet born in Baghdad (*circa 850*). In 780, Khazars were reluctant to aid the Qartlian prince Nerse against the Arabs, while in 786 they supported Leon of Abxazia, a Christian grandson of the Qağan, against the Byzantines. Back in Khazaria, the Beg is said to have usurped the power *circa 830* and, as a consequence, the Kavar tribes are said to have been revolted. The revolt was unsuccessful, and they were forced to migrate westward as well; after these events, the Qağan became only a sacral figure, similarly to Japanese emperors under the Shoguns. The Kavars joined proto-Hungarians, called by Constantine Porphyrogenetos *Tourkoi*, cf. *Twrqy* of Yosippon.

In the Arabic version of Yosippon their name *Twrqy* is rendered as *Kiabar*, which was seen by Pritsak as the same name as one of the used in the Kiev Letter.<sup>9</sup> According to Omelian Pritsak, it implies that about this period some Kavars were as Jewish as the Khazar tribe of the Beg. The Beg's rise to power is said to be connected to introducing of Rabbanite Judaism, and many scholars agree that it was during the rule of Hârûn ar-Rašîd (786-809) that Rabbinical Judaism installed, circa 800.<sup>10</sup>

On the Jewish Karaite scale, this was the period of Binyamin al-Nehâwandi, Ismail al-'Ukbari, Musa al-Za'frani al-Tiflisi; however, it was stated that the first stage of the Khazar conversion one may ascribe to a Jewish group of the type of the Khaybar Jews, Bombay Beni Israel, Ethiopic "Falasha" or Dagestani Mountain Jews.<sup>11</sup> It would be interesting to check who was the first to make use of the concept of "the reform of Bulan" and "two stages of the Khazar Judaization": was it a product of Firkowicz' theories on the partial conversion of the Children of the Scripture to Rabbanism?

It is not impossible that the conversion was the aim of a missionary Jewish group; we know about similar missions sent by Armenians to the North Caucasus. In 535 or 537, an Armenian mission of the Bishop Kardost baptized many North Caucasian Huns and a writing System for their Hunnic speech was developed. In 681, Israel, bishop of Mec Kueank', was sent by Varaz-Trdat, the ruler of Albania, to North Caucasian Huns. Sogdians were active about that time in spreading Christianity and Manichaeism among pagan or Buddhist Turks. About 860, St. Cyril was sent from Byzantium to Khazaria with the same mission. The work of creating the Slavic literary language, the so-called Old Church Slavonic, was initiated by both Patriarch Photius and Pope Nicholas I, aiming "to elevate the former slaves of the

<sup>9</sup> Two other names in the Kievan Letter, SWR-TH and GWSTT, are said to contain an Altaic suffix (as was noted by Pritsak in 1982, in N. Golb & O. Pritsak, *Khazaran Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*, Ithaca, New York 1982); he suggested that the same suffix contains also the name by which the Crimean Karaites called their old Karaim language, *çaltay tili*, taken to be "a word of uncertain origin" in O. Pritsak, "Das Karaimische", *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamentae, ediderunt Jean Deny et al.*, vol. I, Aquis Mattiacis apud Franciscum Steiner, Wiesbaden 1959, pp. 318-340, p. 318. *Çal-* was derived, tentatively, from Tzur or Sûl, a passage in Darband; on the other hand, the name of George Tzoulios (mentioned as a Khazar ruler in Crimea under 1016 in Cedrenus, cf. D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton, 1954, pp. 251-2) was derived from it. However, it was shown that these two names in the Kiev Letter are Slavic (see A.M. Torpusman, "Antroponimiya i mezhetniceskie kontakty narodev Vostochnoi Evropy v srednie veka", *Imia - etnos - istoriya*, Institut Etnografii, Moscow 1989, pp. 48-66).

<sup>10</sup> According to D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton 1954, p. 170.

<sup>11</sup> Prior to their contacts with Rabbanites and Karaites in the first half of the last century; however, see D. D.Y. Shapira, "Kak nabljudatel' transformiruet nabljudаемyj objekt: A. Firkovič na Kavkaze v 1840 g. i v 1849-1850 gg. i ego vlijanie na gorskix jevreev" ["How an Observer Changes the Observed: Avraham Firkowicz in the Caucasus, 1840-41 and 1849-50, and His Impact on the Mountain Jews"], *Judaica Rossica*, IV (Moscow 2006), pp. 8-30.

Avars, the Slavs, and to give their barbaric tongue the status of a sacred language, alongside Hebrew, Greek and Latin", with purpose to fill the geopolitical vacuum left by the dissolution the Turko-Iranian realm of the Avars in Pannonia, by Christianization of the Slavs. Cyril undertook a voyage to the Crimea then belonging to Khazaria to learn Hebrew and Syriac, as this was the only place in Eastern Europe where both training in the art of translating and the opportunity to learn Hebrew was available, as Omeljan Pritsak put it. However, this assertion seems to be reconsidered.

The Dispute (an extremely rare Hebrew root QNS used, based on an interpretation of Job 18.2<sup>12</sup>) was connected by the Khazar king Joseph to findings of books in a cave; if the dispute tradition was literary convention, but not a real historical fact, it is not impossible that both tradition, that of the dispute and that of books found in a cave, have merged. The Dispute tradition must be taken in its Eastern European setting: in 986, Muslim Volgan Bulgars sent an embassy to the Rus' Kagan Volodymer forcing him to embrace Islam, and the Rus' historical tradition, having been based perhaps on a Khazar one, ascribed to Volodymer's time a dispute in which a Rabbi, an Imam and a priest participated.<sup>13</sup>

2. Çufut-Qal'eh/Chufut-Kale in the Crimea was believed to be a site where Hebrew tombstones ran from the year 6 CE through the Khazar period till the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and even later. However, the tombstones before the Khazar period are irrelevant; moreover, all the inscription before 1240 are forged, as is evident from the most recent researches; it means, that there is no tombstones from the Khazar period. In the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century Çufut-Qal'eh, called Kirkel in Latin sources, was the capital of the small Tatar principality. In 1342 it is mentioned as not belonging to the Golden Horde. The Islamization of the region had only begun and in 1346 Khan Canibek built a mosque in the city.<sup>14</sup> Incidentally, the year the mosque

<sup>12</sup> In the Karaite tradition of Hebrew this *hapax* was understood as "proof", and a verb was formed by them from this root, "to prove"; see A. Maman, "Karaite Hebrew", *Karaite Judaism. A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed. M. Pollack, Brill, Leiden 2003, pp. 485-503, p. 487.

<sup>13</sup> The Dispute tradition is referred to in the Rabbanite *Tannâ deBêi Elfyâhu*, Polak 1944, pp. 294-5; in Ch. VIII of the Slavonic *Vita Constantini*; A. Polak (*Kozariyyah*, Tel Aviv 1944, pp. 152-3) identified the *filosof*, i.e., St. Cyril / Constantine of the Slavic composition, with the *faḥlasûf* of Judah Halevy. The Dispute tradition was known not only to the Spanish-Jewish Judah Halevy but also to the Spanish Muslim al-Bakri *circa* 1094, cf. D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton 1954, p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> On the early Islamic period, see B. Spuler, *Die Goldene Horde. Die Mongolen in Rubland 1223-1502*, Leipzig 1943; A.G. Gertzen, "Archeological Excavations of Karaite Settlements in the Crimea", *Proceedings of the 11th World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 184-189 [cf. =A.G. Gercen, "Arxeologičeskie issledovanija karaimskix pamjatnikov v Krymu", *Materials in Archeology, History and Ethnography of Tauria*, 6 (Simferopol' 1998), pp. 744-751]; A.G. Gercen i Ju.M. Mogaričev, *Krepost' dragocennostej. Kyrk-Or. Çufut-Kale*, Simferopol'

was built was a year of plague in the Crimean steppe, and the black plague passed through Kaffa to Europe, causing there the Black Death pogroms. Our earliest Jewish tombstones in Çufut-Qal'eh date from this period. Among them is that of Manuṣ the daughter of Elia from 1354; Hillel b. Moshe from 1356, and perhaps that of a lady called Parlaq from 1330 (or 1430?).<sup>15</sup> The names indicate that the interred were affiliated with the Turkic cultural sphere, yet there is no information as to whether they were Rabbanites or Karaites. One of these tombstones, as well as a few nearby, but without dates, is fashioned in Selcûk style.<sup>16</sup> This fact, together with the Persian-Turkic names serves as an indication of the striking of roots among the Turkic-speaking Muslims. The origin of the people buried – or of their ancestors – might have been Sulkhât. This does not mean that Jews could not have lived in Çufut-Qal'eh a few decades earlier, prior to the rule of Canibek, but there is no decisive evidence for this. Relating to this is the fact that in 1795 the Crimean Karaites claimed in a written request to Count Zubov, the *favorite* of Catherine the Great, not to be discriminated against with respect to the other Jews<sup>17</sup> since their forefathers had come to the Crimea around 450 years earlier. This takes us back to about 1350 CE. One need not doubt the general authenticity of this tradition, since this testimony appeared a number of decades prior to the rewriting of the history of the Crimean Karaites that began to spread at the end of the 1830s. This tradition was so well established and accepted that even Abraham Firkowicz could not ignore it and according to his late testimony he learned at the end of the 1830s that in Çufut-Qal'eh there is “a tombstone with an inscription of 500 years old or more”, that is, around the years 1340.

Already in 1803 a Karaite sage, presumably Yiṣḥaq b. Shelomo, showed the Frenchman, J. De Reuilly the oldest tombstone, in his opinion, of a Joseph b. Shabbetay. The tombstone was almost entirely covered in earth, therefore De Reuilly's translator, M. Fazzardi, only succeeded in reading a few words: “Cecy ... Joseph, fils de Schabatai, le Tombeau ... 5204.” This date is equivalent to 1444/5. This would indeed appear to be one of the oldest tombstones although it is no longer extant today. In the winter 2001/2 M. Kizilov apparently found this tomb, of an ancient shape, which still has the name Shabbetay on it and the date הַקֶּכ"ד or הַרַכ"ד, that is,

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1993; A.G. Gercen i Ju.M. Mogaričev, Çufut-Kale - iudejskaja krepost', *Evrei Kryma*, Simferopol' & Jerusalem 1997, pp. 23-32.

<sup>15</sup> The difference in the dates stems from uncertainty in one Hebrew letter – *qof* (=100) or *resh* (=200); these letters are similar.

<sup>16</sup> For details, see *Studies in a Karaite Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions*, subchapter “Rows Description”.

<sup>17</sup> On this incident, cf. Ph. Miller, *Karaite Separatism in XIXth Century Russia. Joseph Lutzki's “Epistle of Israel's Deliverance”*, Cincinnati 1993, *Introduction*.



1464/5 or 1364/5. Another inscription found by M. Kizilov at the same time close to the former has the date ה'קמ"ו=1386/7 or ה'רמ"ו=1486/7. It may have been that it was the very same tombstone that was seen some twenty years later and is described, with errors and some variations, by the English Hebraist and missionary, Henderson, in 1821-2. In accordance with Henderson's request, his Karaite guide showed him the oldest tomb that was highly esteemed by the town's residents. After Henderson had cleaned the tombstone of moss he copied the inscription and published it in his book, accompanied by an English translation that does not quite correspond with the Hebrew source. Apparently there are some errors or simply misprints. Whilst Henderson states the year as 1364, according to his reading it should be 1244! The tomb is of יוסף בן דוד גען בשנת חמש אלפים וד' (sic!), translated by Henderson as "The Grave of Geez, Joseph Ben David. In the year Five thousand and Four. That is, according to the Christian era, the year 1364."<sup>18</sup>

As already said, in the 1820s local Karaites would tell travelers, including the Russian diplomat and playwright, A. Gribojedov, that their ancestors had come to the Crimea with the Mongols. This would appear to be behind the claim circulating in the 1830s that there were tombstones Çufut-Qal'eh and in Mangup from the second half of the 13th century: the Karaites were apparently attempting to support their claim to have arrived together with the Mongols and the Tatars. It is noteworthy that the motif that the Karaites deserve all the rights granted to the Tatars gained speed in the Karaite diplomatic efforts of that generation in the Crimea. In 1833, the Karaite sage, Mordechai Sultanski showed the Academician Koeppen tombstones from the years 1249 and 1253 in Çufut-Qal'eh, whilst in Mangup, according to Sultanski, the oldest tombstone is from 1274. However, in 1837 the Karaites asserted in the ears of the Russian traveler, Demidov, a couple of years before the first expedition by Firkowicz and Beim, that some of the inscriptions in the Hebrew alphabet were engraved four hundred years ago, that is, in the 15-16th century, which sounds more reasonable. The testimony provided by August von Haxthausen in 1843 is most important. It was recorded from a conversation with Shelomo Beim three years after the first efforts by Firkowicz and Beim in the cemetery of Çufut-Qal'eh. It was during this work that, according to Firkowicz, tombs had been discovered from the Khazar period. During von Haxthausen's visit to Çufut-Qal'eh Beim showed him some of the most ancient tombs. One of them was, according to Beim, from 1249 (apparently this is the same tomb that was mentioned by M. Sultanski!), that is, later than the tombs that

<sup>18</sup> See *Studies in a Karaite Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions*, Appendix "Travelers Descriptions" (by M. Kizilov).

Firkowicz claimed to have found *together* with Beim three years earlier. Von Haxthausen also noted that in the estimate of Karaite leaders Firkowicz was known for his tendency to "make the dates of the tombstones older".<sup>19</sup>

It does not seem however that the tombstone from 1249 that Sultanski showed Koeppen (and Beim to von Haxthausen) is authentic, indicating thus that the work of deception and antiquation had already begun a few years before the famed activities of Firkowicz.

However, a mass migration of Jews (and Armenians) from Sulkhât, the former capital, to Qırqyer (Çufut-Qal'eh) began with the Khan Toqtamış who became the Khan of the Golden Horde in 1371/2 and settled in Qırqyer. A number of tombstones furnish testimony for this transition: Joseph b. Elia, died 1376; Sarah b. Abraham, died 1387; Esther b. Joseph, 1394; Toqtamış, died 1413; and Toqtamış the elder, died 1429. Interestingly, the name of the Great Khan of that time who expanded the city of Qırqyer, Toqtamış, became popular among the local Jews at the end of the 14th century. This was presumably because he treated the Jews (and Armenians) well and brought them to his new capital.

Mamaï, the governor of Sulkhât in 1374-5 who was not descended from Cingiz, quarreled with Toqtamış and claimed for himself the Khanate of the Golden Horde. Yet, he and his Genoese allies were defeated by a coalition of the Horde legalists, with the Grand Prince Dimitrij Donskoj of Muscovy at the head, at the battle of Kulikovo Polje in 1380, and Mamaï fled to the Crimea where he was subsequently murdered. These events were accompanied by massive population movements and the migration of Tatars, Armenians, and apparently also Jews to the Crimea and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the winter of 1385/6 Toqtamış conquered Tabrîz, a large Turkic-speaking commercial city in South Azerbaijan/North Iran known for its large Armenian and Jewish population. He took many captives, including a number of artisans and craftsmen, and brought them to his encampment on the slopes of the Volga. It is noteworthy that the provenance of many Crimean families of Jews and Armenians and similarly of the manuscripts (copied prior to 1385) owned by them, is from Tabrîz. However, in 1395/6 Timur-Lang invaded the regions of the Horde, destroyed the capital, Sarây-i Berke, and the large commercial city, Hacı-Tarhân, (Astrakhan), and caused Toqtamış to flee to Lithuania. As a result of the confusion in the Horde, Edige rose up against Toqtamış his father-in-

<sup>19</sup> See P. Keppen (Koeppen), *Krymskij Sbornik: O drevnostjax južnogo berega Kryma i gor tavičeskix*, Sankt-Peterburg 1837; A.F. von Haxthausen, *Studien ueber die innern Zustände, das Volksleben und insbesondere die ländlichen Einrichtungen Russlands*, II, Hannover 1847; *Studies in a Karaite Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions*, Appendix "Travelers Descriptions" (by M. Kizilov).

law in 1397, and began one of the epic Steppe wars in which Timur-Lang and Lithuania were also involved. There are some vague Karaite and Armenian traditions that connect their arrival to the Crimea in general and particularly to Çufut-Qal' eh from the Volga region with the events of the wars between Toqtamış, Mamai, and Timur-Lang. It seems that there was a large concentration of Karaites in the cities of the Great Horde and the slopes of the Volga. Some of the Karaite, Armenian and Tatar refugees reached the Crimea, others escaped to Troki and Łuck, the capital cities of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.<sup>20</sup>

Among the older tombstones belonging to this period are the following: Sarah b. Moshe from 1420; Sarah Hatun b. Yešu' ah from 1420; Elia b. Hillel from 1421; Severgelin b. R. Levi from 1421; Mordechai from 1425; the elder Toxtamış from 1429 (already mentioned); Elia b. Yešu' ah from 1431; and Yešu' ah b. Şadoq Levi from 1443. The questionable ones are that of Parlaq, 1430? (1330?) and that of Joseph b. Elia, 1476? (1376?). All the tombstones mentioned so far are to be found in the centre of the Çufut-Qal' eh graveyard. At the beginning of the 19th century the local Karaites avoided burial in that section and termed it *Diabur (Cabur) mazârliğı*, (the graves of the giants/aliens). This may have been on account of the fact that those buried there preceded the generation of the large waves of new immigrants that had come from Istanbul and Edirne in the wake of the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul and the capture of the peninsula by the Ottomans, and the transfer of the Tartar capital from Qırqyer to Bâhçe-Sarây at the beginning of the 16th century.<sup>21</sup>

Whatever the case may be, the presence of Jews in Çufut-Qal' eh is not to be doubted for the period of the mid-14th/mid-15th century. It was then that the city became the capital of a powerful state entity thereby inheriting the position of Sulkhat whose Jewish population began to dwindle. At this time the city grew considerably and the "new wall" was built on the perimeter. The Jews and Armenians lived in the new city between the middle and the new wall, but the synagogue that had been built in the 15th century, was in the old city close to the middle wall. This indicates that the construction of the synagogue preceded the expansion of the Jewish settlement into the new suburb between the middle wall and the "new wall".

It is to that same veteran native community that there belongs the tombstone of Esther b. Shelomo (*Abnei Zikkaron*, N. 37). This tombstone is unique in many respects. First of all, it is the only inscription, in the printed

<sup>20</sup> See G. Akhiezer & D. Shapira, "Karaites in Lithuania and in Volhynia-Galicia until the 18th Century", *Pe'amim* 89 (2001), pp. 19-60 [Hebrew].

<sup>21</sup> For details, see *Studies in a Karaite Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions*.

version of *Abnei Zikkaron*, to include a double method of dating. It dates according to the customary calendar, called by Firkowicz "the era of Matarcha", and according to what he described as "the ancient Jewish Crimean era":<sup>22</sup> The printed text is as follows:

זזה מצבה של קבורת  
אסתר בת שלמה אשר  
שמתה מראשותי שנפטר  
בשנת ת'קל"ד תהא  
נפשה צרורה בצרור  
החיים ליצירה

היא ש'פ'ה' למטרכי

"And this is the tomb of the interred, Esther b. Shelomo, to whom I have placed her monument, who passed away in the year 536. May her soul be bound in the bond of life, according to [the era of] the creation, which is 385 of Matarcha".

According to Firkowicz the tombstone dates to 625 CE. He sawed off the original and brought it to the Asiatic Museum in Sankt-Peterburg where it got lost. He however had prepared a copy upon the tombstone (in fact he erred inscribing the inscription on the wrong tomb on the site, some 10 meters from the correct tomb). The important thing is that in the copy of the inscription on the site there is no mention of the words "which is 385 of Matarcha", yet the regular date appears in an impossible manner: ת'ק'ק'ל"ד. It would appear that the date "of Matarcha" was not in the original version. As for the strange version ת'ק'ק'ל"ד, it is explained by the draft copy of Firkowicz's book, *Abnei Zikkaron*, written in his own hand, which was found by A. Fedorchuk.<sup>23</sup> The date appears there as ת'ר'ל"ו. It would seem

<sup>22</sup> According to Firkowicz the Crimean Jews used three different eras for dating in the first centuries C.E.: 1) the era "from our exile" (לגלותנו) that began from the destruction of Samaria, that he calculated to 696 B.C.E.; 2) the ancient Crimean era "from creation" (ליצירה); this era is said to be 151 years longer than the normally used Jewish era "from the creation of the world" (מבריאת העולם), which was said by Firkowicz to be known in the Crimea as: 3) "the era of Matarcha". This last era, which is in fact the current Jewish era, gradually replaced the ancient Crimean era ליצירה. The name of the third era comes from the name of an ancient city just across the Strait of Kerč, on the Caucasian side of it. Firkowicz identified Kerč as the Hellenistic city of Bosforos, which he in turn identified with the biblical name, Sepharad, on the basis of the phrase in the Book of Obadiah (I, 20) "galut ha-*el* ... *asher biseфарad*"; his identification of Matarcha with Taman' is not correct.

<sup>23</sup> A. Fedorchuk, "iz istorii diskussi o proisxoždenii karaimov (v seredine XIX - načale XX v.)", *Pervaja Molodežnaja Konferencija SNG po iudaike. Sbornik materialov*, Moscow 1997, pp. 47-52; *idem.*, "Novye dannye o sobiratel'skoj dejatel'nosti A.S. Firkoviča (epigrafičeskij aspekt)", *Evrejskaja Istorija. Materialy Šestoy Meždunarodnoj Meždisciplinarnoj Konferencii po iudaike*, Vol. 2, Moscow 1999, pp. 43-55; *idem.*, "New Findings Relating to Hebrew Epigraphic Sources

that the inscription at the site combines the two versions, 'ת'ק'ל"ד and 'ת'ר'ל"ו, whilst the words "which is 385 of Matarcha" was added at a later stage, perhaps only after Firkowicz had sawed off the original. The important Russian Turcologist, A. A. Kunik was of the opinion that Firkowicz "improved" the former date ('ת'ק'ל"ו) by changing the letter ה to a ת. In this way he changed the date from 1376 to 536 CE (due to the difference of 151 years between the "ancient Crimean era to the creation" and the Rabbanite tradition).<sup>24</sup> This method of changing the letter ה to the letter ת is the most common method that Firkowicz employs to make the inscriptions older by 600 years as he moves them back to the previous Hebrew millennium. Harkavy and Strack surmised that in addition to this Firkowicz also changed the letter ר into the letter ק, and thereby the original date was 1476. Thus, the true date of this inscription was either ה'ר'ל"ו or ה'ק'ל"ו, that is, 1476 or 1376. The year 1475 was the beginning of the Ottoman conquest of the Crimea, however, Çufut-Qal'eh did not fall into the hands of Mengli-Girây until 1478. When Esther died, let us say in 1476, anarchy prevailed in the city and the region. The year when Esther died and the years shortly before were not conducive to migration to Çufut-Qal'eh, so it is therefore probable that she belonged to the established Jewish community. The inscription on her tombstone includes two grammatical gender-related mistakes in the Hebrew. Therefore it is likely that the mother tongue of the person who engraved, or composed the inscription was not a language that includes gender distinctions. Among the possible languages are, for example, Ossetic-Alanic, Georgian, Persian, and the Turkic languages; however Greek, which was the language of the Karaites from Constantinople and Mangup, would not be a possibility, nor would the Slavic and Romance languages, nor, indeed, any of the Semitic tongues. Turkic is the most likely candidate from this list. Hence, the language spoken by the Jews prior to the massive migration from Istanbul at the beginning of the Ottoman era was apparently Tatar. This would also explain why the new immigrants from Istanbul who were undoubtedly Greek speakers, had to assimilate linguistically into the veteran local Jewish community – for it was simply already well established! However, near the burial plot where the original version of the inscription

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from the Crimea", a lecture read at the 13<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies (Jerusalem 2001).

<sup>24</sup> For details, see A. Kunik, "Können Hebräer in der Krim schon im 3ten Jahrhundert den tatarischen Fürstennamen Tochtamysch geführt haben?", *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale de Sciences de St.Petersbourg*, Vol. VII (Sankt-Peterburg 1864), pp. 391-403; compare also A.A. Kunik, *Toxtamyš i Firkovič. Po povodu spora o dvux iskažennyx jevrejskix nadpisjax i dvux vymyšlennyx létoisčeslenijax*, Zapiski Imperatorskoj Akademii Nauk, 27, Addenda (Priloženie), Sankt-Peterburg 1876.

had been, there is an inscription from 1364, hence we cannot be certain about the correct date of the inscription on Esther's tomb.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1997-2006 a series of Ukrainian-Russian-Israeli expedition worked at the site of the Çufut-Qal'eh cemetery, and by now a complete corpus of the tomb inscriptions has been digitalized. The complete evidence demonstrates that there is no Khazar-Karaite connection at this site. So, this evidence is irrelevant for the Khazar-Karaite connection.<sup>26</sup>

3. The Majlis/Menjelis/Mandeglis/Medgelis Document is an *allegedly* early manuscript which was *allegedly* discovered by Avraham Firkovicz in the wall of the synagogue of Majlis in Daghestan in the Caucasus in 1840/1.<sup>27</sup> In fact, this forged "document" is irrelevant for the suggested

<sup>25</sup> For details, see *Studies in A Karaite Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions*, chapter "Historical Background".

<sup>26</sup> D. Shapira, "Miscellanea Judaeo-Turkica: Four Judeo-Turkic Notes (Judaeo-Turkica IV)," *Sh. Shaked Festschrift (Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 27, 2001-2002)*, pp. 475-496; *ibid.*, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul (1830-1832): Paving the Way for Turkic Nationalism*, KaraM Publishing Co, Ankara 2003; *ibid.*, "Nynešneje sostojanije pripisok rukopisej Pervoj Kolekcii Firkoviča," *Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Jewish Studies*, Part 1, Moscow 2004, pp. 102-130 [Russian] / "The Present State of Some Colophons and Marginalia on the Bible Manuscripts in the First Firkowicz Collection," *SEFER International Conference*, Vol. 1, Moscow 2004, pp. 102-130 [Russian]; *ibid.*, "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern, and Avraham Firkowicz: Notes on Two Forged Inscriptions," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (2002-2003), pp. 223-260; a Russian version in: *Materialy po Arxeologii, Istorii i Etnografii Tavrii* 10 (Simferopol' 2003), pp. 535-555; "Yitshaq Sangari, Sangarit, Bezalel Stern and Avraham Firkowicz: The History of Two Forged Inscriptions," *Parallelii* 2/2-3 (Moscow 2003); pp. 363-388 [a slightly different Russian version]; *ibid.*, "Beginnings of the Karaites of the Crimea Prior to the Early Sixteenth century" (with contributions by M. Ezer, A. Fedortchouk, M. Kizilov), *A Guide to Karaite Studies: An Introduction to the Literary Sources of Medieval and Modern Karaite Judaism*, ed. M. Polliack, Leiden Brill 2003, pp. 709-728; *Studies in a Karaite Community: Report of the Ben-Zvi Institute Expedition to the Jewish-Qaraite Cemetery of Çufut-Qa'eh (the Crimea). A Collection of Papers*, edited by Dan Shapira, Ben-Zvi Institute, Jerusalem 2007; A. Fedortchouk & D. D.Y. Shapira (eds.), *A Catalogue of Çufut-Qal'eh Inscription*, [forthcoming].

<sup>27</sup> The "document", which includes an enlarged copy of the first one, was allegedly copied at Menjelis in 5273 / 1513 CE by Yešu'ah ben Eliyah; published in *Zion* 1 (1840), p. 140; *Orient* 1842, p. 221; in a Tatar booklet in Constantinople in 1844; S. Pinsker, *Liqqutey Qadmoniyoth*, Vienna 1860, p. xlii; D. Chwolson, *Die Achtzehn hebräische Grabinschriften aus der Krim*, (Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des sciences de St.-Petersbourg, VIIe série, IX, No 7), St-Petersburg 1865, pp. 54-61, 124-124; the Russian translation of the same, D.A. Xvol'son, *Vosemnadcat' jevrejskix' nadpisej iz' Kryma*, Sankt-Peterburg 1866, p. 69; *haMaggid* 10. p. 25; 5 by Y. Gurland, *Ginzei Yisrael*, Sankt Peterburg 1864-68; A. Harkavy & H.L. Strack, *Catalog der hebräischen Bibelhandschriften der kais. Öffentlichen Bibliothek in St.Petersburg*, Sankt-Peterburg 1875, pp. 53ff., 175-181; H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, Vol. V:4, p. 547; and now by T. Harviainen, "The epigraph of the Derbent Torah and the Madjalis scroll discovered by Abraham Firkovich in 1840", *Studia Orientalia* 95 (2003), pp. 55-78.

It is related to the so-called "Derbend document", which was allegedly composed by Yehudah b. Moše haNaqdan, in the year 1300 *le-Galuth Šomeron*, published in *Zion* 1 (1840), p. 135; *Orient* 1842, p. 162; E.-M. Pinner, *Prospectus der Odessaer Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altherthümer gehörenden ältesten hebräischen und Rabbinischen Manuscripte*, Odessa 1845, p. 6; A. Harkavy & H.L. Strack, *Catalog der hebräischen Bibelhandschriften der kais. Öffentlichen Bibliothek in St.Petersburg*, Sankt-Peterburg 1875, pp. 9ff., p. 175; E. Deinard, *Ma'asey Eben-Rešeph*, Warsaw 1875, p. 5. See now D. D.Y. Shapira, "Remarks on Avraham Firkowicz and

Khazar-Karaite connection, as it does not mention Karaites. It does mention a visit of the Kievan (Šiyvob/Čiov) ambassador to the Crimean Khazar ruler, David ha-Nasi, to consult him about which religion to adopt. Scholars claimed that it was a forgery; it had been said to disappear *circa* 1876 from the Sankt-Peterburg library of which Avraham Harkavy was in charge. Recently, the "document" was rediscovered, by V.V. Lebedev, in the same library, from which it was supposed to have disappeared.

A decade or so ago, V.L. Vikhnovich assumed that there is at least a nucleus of historical truth in the story told in the document.<sup>28</sup> However, Firkowicz made an amplification of the same story in another colophon of the year 986, the so-called "Derbend Document"; my own comparison of the Document with texts published in 1845 by Carmoly (drawn upon the Khazar Correspondence and also claimed to be forged) suggests that there is some degree of interdependence between the Majlis Document and Carmoly texts; a comparative study into the biographies of Carmoly and Firkowicz is a must of Khazar studies. There is no doubt that the Majlis Document as it is now is a mid-19th century forgery: the word for Kiev is a Karaim-Turkic form phonetically (with *k* > *č*); the name of Cambyses is German. However, Scythians are called by their Italian name (*Šyřym* < *Scitti*), but as this form was used in medieval Jewish texts; and the Majlis document makes a Hebrew pun on this name, one probably has to assume that Firkowicz used some sources, genuine or forged (Carmoly?).<sup>29</sup>

4. Khazar language was undoubtedly Turkic, but scholars are divided whether it was of the Chuvash-Bulghar type (as indicated by al-Istakhri and Ibn Hauqal) or of the Common Turkic type. The Hungarian scholars tend to view the Khazar language as connected to Bulghar and Chuvash. There is only one Oghuric word in the known Khazar lexicon (*Sarkel*), while another word (*tudum*) is distinctively not (Oghuric *turum*). The bulk of the Khazar lexica known so far do not support the theory according to which their language was Oghuric. However, it can be assumed that the original language of the Eteo-Khazars, a comparatively small tribal minority, *could* had have been Oghuric, but later they could have switched to Common Turkic (or, even to a non-Turkic language, as can be grasped from Ya'qub ibn Ibrahim's remark that the Khazars who come to Prague speak Slavic, etc.). Examples of a ruling tribe switching to the language of their subjects are nu-

the Hebrew *Mejelis 'Document'*" AOASH 59:2 (2006), pp. 131-180; on details of Firkowicz's biography, see now D. D.Y. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz and his Books. A Biography of a Maverick Conformist Jew in Czarist Russia*, forthcoming [Hebrew].

<sup>28</sup> Vsevolod L. Vikhnovich, "From the Jordan to the Dniepr", *Jewish Studies*, 31 (1991), pp. 15-24.

<sup>29</sup> The source of inspiration for the forgerer was apparently a passage in Eldad the Danite: וּפְלִי אֶלְדָּד לְשַׁבֵּן יִשְׁשַׁר שְׁהֵם שׁוֹטְטִים בְּהָרִים עַל שֵׁפֶת הַיָּם וְהֵם בְּקֶצֶה אֶרֶץ פְּרוֹס וּמְדִי [אלדד] לשבט יששכר שהם שוטטים בהרים על שפת הים והם בקצה ארץ פרס ומדי.

merous (Franks, Danubian Bulgars, Scandinavian Rus', Mongols in the Turkic world, etc.). Nevertheless, our knowledge of the Khazar linguistic situation is far from being adequate. In addition, it is by no means certain that the bulk of Khazar Jews were Turkic-speaking, for the Khazar Empire has been a multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic entity.

The Karaite emigrants who came to the Crimea from Byzantium and Iran in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, ruled first by the Mongols, then by the Golden Horde, then by the Ottoman superpower, underwent there a rapid process of linguistic Türkification. This holds not only for the Karaite émigrés, but for *all* of the multi-ethnic population of the Crimea – for Greeks, Alans, Goths, Armenians and even the Genoese. As a result, they began to speak Tatar in the vassal Crimean Khanate (Çufüt-Qal'eh) and Anatolian Turkish in the Ottoman *vilâyet* of the Crimea (Mangup, Keffe [Theodosia/Feodosija], Gözleve [Eupatoria/Jevpatorija]. Karaite newcomers, who arrived in the Crimea in the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, came from Byzantium/Ottoman Empire and from the *Ulus* of Hülagü/Sefevid Iran; they became Turkic-speaking as well.

At the same time the Lithuanian and Polish Karaites, who stemmed from the Golden Horde, spoke in the archaic Qıpçâq-Türkic language called 'Karaim', which they had brought with them from the Golden Horde.<sup>30</sup> In the period between the late 15th century - mid-18th century, the Eastern-European Karaites were divided between the Crimean Khanate, vassal to the Ottoman Empire, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (later: Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, or Rzeczpospolita). Both communities were exposed to different cultural traditions and external influences: those in the Crimea, who formed the majority and the economic elite of the local Jewish population, tended to integrate into the Crimean-Tatar and Ottoman society to the extent of picking up the Türkic languages of their Muslim (and Chris-

<sup>30</sup> On the Karaites' arrival in Galicia and Lithuania, see, now G. Akhiezer & D. Shapira, "Karaites in Lithuania and in Volhynia-Galicia until the 18th Century", *Pe'amim* 89 (2001), pp. 19-60 [Hebrew]; M. Kizilov, "The Arrival of the Karaites (Karaims) to Poland and Lithuania: A Survey of Sources and Critical Analysis of Existing Theories", *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi* 12 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2003/2004), pp. 29-45. On the Karaite Türkic languages etc., see D. Shapira, "The Turkic Languages and Literatures of the Eastern European Karaites", in M. Pollack (ed.), *A Guide to Karaite Studies: An Introduction to the Literary Sources of Medieval and Modern Karaite Judaism*, ed. M. Pollack, Leiden Brill 2003, pp. 657-707; on the crucial periods in the Karaite Türkic self-awareness, see D. Shapira, *Avraham Firkowicz in Istanbul (1830-1832): Paving the Way for Turkic Nationalism*, KaraM Publishing Co, Ankara 2003. For all these aspects and for a new evaluation of the material provided by A. Firkowicz, see D. Shapira "The Present State of Some Colophons and Marginalia on the Bible Manuscripts in the First Firkowicz Collection," *SEFER International Conference*, Vol. 1, Moscow 2004, pp. 102-130 [Russian], and *idem.*, "'Remarks on Avraham Firkowicz and the Hebrew *Mejelis* 'Document'" *AOASH* 59:2 (2006), pp. 131-180). For the Karaim language, see T. Kowalski, *Karaimsche Texte im Dialekt von Troki*, Krakow 1929; K.M. Musaev, *Grammatika karaimskogo jazyka. Fonetika i morfologija*, Moscow 1964; P.B. Golden, *Khazar Studies*, Budapest 1980, 2 vols.



tian) neighbors, while those in the Northern (Polish-Lithuanian) communities lived in a double ghetto - being both Jews and a dissident Jewish minority preserving their archaic Türkic dialects of the Karaim language. In fact, the otherness of the Northern Karaites was three-fold: Jewish, Jewish-sectarian, and Oriental-Türkic, with their Türkicness enabling them to preserve their dissident religious legacy against any encroachment from the Ashkenazic-Rabbanite Jewish majority.

The Karaim language of the Northern Karaites was not brought northward from the Crimea and there is no specific inter-Turkic relationship between the Karaim and the Tatar Language of the Crimean Karaites, on the one hand, and the Turkic Khazar speech, on the other.

5. Was there "Karaism" to have been adopted during the formative period of Khazar Judaism, either in 740, or in 800, or in 861 CE?

‘Ovadiyah/‘Oved Elohim Ishaq Abu-‘Isa al-Isfahani, of Nisibis by birth, who lived under ‘AbdulMalik Marwan (685-705), pretended to be a prophet and revolted against a local sultan.<sup>31</sup> His few followers lived later in Damascus and were known as ‘Isuniyah. He took up some Rabbanite observances, including the 18 Benedictions and *Shema*‘, and kept Rabbis in great esteem. This could have been sounded as like Petahia's *minim*, after he visited them and instructed, but the tremendous gap of time and place make it, of course, impossible.

Yudghanites were followers of a disciple of Abu-‘Isa, who thus lived in the first half of the 8th century (circa 740, in Isfahan), and he, too, pretended to be a prophet; his followers kept him as Messiah, *al-Râ‘î*; it was slightly after Yudghan, under Abu-Ja‘far al-Manşur (754-775), that Anan I ben David appeared.

Binyamin al-Nehâwandi, some of whose teachings can be traced to al-Maghâriyah,<sup>32</sup> lived in the first half of the 9th century (830); at his old age Anan II became prominent.

Daniel al-Damaghani al-Qumisi, who lived in the 9th century, was a disciple of al-Nehâwandi; he was from Tabaristan and passed away in Jerusalem, where he settled in Jerusalem about 880.<sup>33</sup> In the 9th century, Jewish sectarians went to Jerusalem, not to the Gentile "barbarians".

<sup>31</sup> See on him Y. Erder, "The Doctrine of Abū Isâ al-Isfahâni and its Sources", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 20 (1996), pp. 162-199.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. A. Harkavy, in his Russian translation of Kirkisani, Sankt Peterburg 1894, p. 267 and note 2.

<sup>33</sup> H. Ben-Shammai, "Fragments of Daniel al-Qumisi Commentary on the Book of Daniel as a Historical Source", *Shalem* 3 (1981), pp. 295-307, p. 305.

Isma' il al-'Ukbari lived in the times of al-Mu' taşim Billahi (834-842) and some of his teachings were probably influenced by Samaritans, as noted already by Qirqisani. Meşwiyah al-'Ukbari after Isma' il al-'Ukbari lived at 'Ukbar, where his followers still lived in Qirqisani's times. According to Judah Hadassi, he was from Ba' albek, a long way to get to Khazaria in 861.

Musa al-Za' frani lived in the generation of Binyamin al-Nehâwandi and Ismail al-'Ukbari (whose disciple he probably was), in the mid-9th century. He was known as Abu-'Imran al-Tiflisi; born in Baghdad, he migrated to Tiflis, which was, according to Qirqisani, "an Armenian city"; Qirqisani found in Tiflis some of his followers in the 10th century. Musa al-Za' frani penned an *Answer to the Questions* of Hiwi al-Balkhi (who lived in Khorasan in the 9th century). In fact, Musa al-Za' frani's disciples seem to be the ideal candidates to be transmitters of "non-orthodox" Jewish teachings to Khazaria, but we know nothing about any traces of this sect in Khazaria or in the Crimea. On the contrary, the "Tiflisites" are mentioned in Byzantium or in the Land of Israel. Malik al-Ramli lived in the Land of Israel and some of his teachings can be traced to Musa al-Za' frani Abu-'Imran al-Tiflisi.

The decisive phase of the Karaite movement was in the second half of the 9th century, when Binyamin al-Nehâwandi and Daniel al-Qumisi forged a union between various Karaite sects and the House of Anan II.<sup>34</sup> Thus there was simply no "Karaism" in existence to be transplanted in Khazaria. Some date about the character of the Khazar Judaism circa 880 can be drawn from Eldad ha-Dânî, who was most probably a Khazar Jew,<sup>35</sup> who visited *Rabbanite* communities in North Africa and Spain and died in Morocco. Having never claimed to be a "sectarian" or "Karaite", it is he who is quoted in Ibn Šapruṭ Letter and the point must be stressed that he was seen by Ibn Šapruṭ as coming from Khazaria. His name ha-Dânî derives perhaps from the Alanic-Slavic name of the River Don, something like \*Donskoy (*Dân* is pronounced *Don* in Persian and Judeo-Tâṭî).<sup>36</sup> The name Eldad was attested, under the last generations, only once in the Pentateuch and in the case of the traveler in question himself. Although the name is Biblical, in the

<sup>34</sup> M. Gil, "The Origins of the Karaites", *Karaite Judaism*, ed. M. Pollack, Brill, Leiden 2003, pp. 73-118, pp. 113.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. D.M. Dunlop, *The History of the Jewish Khazars*, Princeton 1954, p. 141.

<sup>36</sup> I am thankful to the learned referent of this paper who noted that "some additional information on Dôn = Don (a familiar change in Iranian) can also be found in the Mashad MS of Ibn al-Fadlân. In his comments on the 'cities of the Turks', Ibn al-Fadlân mentions the city Dâni which is located 'between al-Khazar and al-Rûm. They war with another and with others' (T. Lewicki, *Źródła arabskie do dziejów słowiańszczyzny*, Wrocław 1956, Vol. II/1, pp. 42-43, 126-127). In any event, it is further evidence that 'Dâni' was one of the ways of rendering 'Don'".

case of the traveler it is perhaps a result of fusion with Persian names containing *-dâd*, like *Xudâyâdâd* = *Elnâthân*, on the one hand (in this case, the name contains a Semitic and a Persian elements), and the Alanic name Eldar/Elder.<sup>37</sup> As the Rabbinical Judaism was installed in Khazaria only one generation before Eldad,<sup>38</sup> Eldad's name, together with his though strange, but basically Rabbinical *Halakha*, indicate the transitional state of the Judaism in Khazaria in the mid-9th century. This Hebrew/North-Caucasian/Steppe-Eurasian fusion can explain other strange features of Hebrew-Khazar legacy, without taking refuge in a "Karaites" hypothesis.

In Qirqisani's times some sects were no more existing, like al-Maghâriya, Sadduceans and the followers of Isma'il al-'Ukbari, and there were only some 20 of the followers of Abu-'Isa in Damascus, few Yudghanites were found in Isfahan; followers of Abu-'Imran were found in Tiflis, those of Malik al-Ramli in the Land of Israel, and in 'Ukbar some disciples of Mašwiyah still were found. In Qirqisani's account, there is no mention of these or those sectarians or of the Karaites among the Khazars, about whose conversion to Judaism he, nevertheless, knew well. Unlike his contemporary, Saadia Gaon in 929, who mentioned one Yišhaq bar Avraham who went to Khazaria,<sup>39</sup> apparently, a Rabbanite, Qirqisani, who wrote in 930-940 (the date "937" appears in his writings), never mentioned any Jews, Karaites or not, who went to Khazaria. Qirqisani, however, noted that some people interpret Gen 9:27 as referring to the Khazar conversion (*wa-akbirûn yaz'amun inna dhâlika râjî' ilâ al-Khazari al-lâdhîna tabaw-wadâ*).<sup>40</sup> Ankori (p. 68), noted that Qirqisani "was writing at a time when Khazaria had become the haven for Jewish refugees coming from both Muslim countries and Byzantium", when Romanus Lecapenus forced Jews to baptize.<sup>41</sup> As noted, Qirqisani was a contemporary of Saadia Gaon, known, *i.a.*, for his harsh rejection of anything Karaites;<sup>42</sup> the aggressive

<sup>37</sup> Alanian *æaldar* = *knjaz'* was borrowed into Mongol as *aldar* = *slava*, cf. V.I. Abayev, *Ossetinskij jazyk i fol'klor*, Moscow-Leningrad 1949, p. 85. Some Hebrew words are still traceable in Ossetic which is the modern form of Alanic.

<sup>38</sup> Circa 800, according to Dunlop (*op.cit.*), p. 170; circa 860s, according to C. Zuckerman.

<sup>39</sup> A. Harkavy, "Karäische Deutung des Wortes ממזר", *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, 31 (1882), pp. 170-172, p. 170; A. Harkavy, רב סעדיה גאון על דברי הכוזרים", *Semitic Studies in Memory of Rev. Dr. Alexander Kohut*, ed. by George Alexander Kohut, Berlin 1897, pp. 244-247, pp. 244, 246; A. Polak, *Kozariyah*, Tel Aviv 1944, p. 130.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Harkavy in his Russian edition of Qirqisani, Sankt Peterburg 1894, p. 250 n. 1; Landau, *Zion*, VIII (1942-43), p. 96; Z. Ankori, *The Karaites of Byzantium*, New York-Jerusalem 1959, p. 67 and n. 30.

<sup>41</sup> In my opinion, many Jews who fled Byzantium to escape Romanus' persecutions, quietly returned after Constantine Porphyrogenete abolished the persecutions. This coincided with the fall of Khazaria.

<sup>42</sup> Salmon b. Yeruhim, mid-10th century, Jerusalem, wrote his *Milhemoth Adonai* against Saadia.

Karaite missionary activity reached its peak exactly in the early 10th century, when Jewish Khazaria was at its height, and the indifference of the Karaite authors to Khazaria "indicates an implicit acknowledgement of the non-Karaite status tenth-century Khazaria".<sup>43</sup> Ankori calls Qirqisani's attitude hardly enthusiastic and manifesting the indifference with which Qirqisani viewed the Khazar conversion.<sup>44</sup> Avraham Ibn Daud and other Rabbanite authors also mentioned the Khazars in the context of their Rabbanite affiliation. The fact is that there is an almost complete lack of interest in the Khazars in contemporary Karaite records. Z. Ankori has written:

"In neither of these records can an allusion to an allegedly Karaite persuasion of the Khazar people be detected. Not even at the peak of messianic excitement was an attempt made to equate the expected Khazar saviors with the forces of Karaism. Such a situation would not only be inconceivable if there were any truth to the allegation of the Khazars' affiliation with the Karaite synagogue, but it actually stands in glaring contrast to the historic alliance of sectarianism and messianism in the early centuries of Jewish experience under Islam. Hence the relevant lesson which evolves from a survey of the early Karaite literature with reference to Khazaria is this: tenth and eleventh century Karaism in the East, and even more so in Byzantium, was completely unaware of any special Karaite affinity with Khazaria ... Against this background the derogatory remarks of some Karaite authors regarding the Khazars - remarks whose defamatory nature has no peer in Rabbanite literature - gain even more significance".<sup>45</sup>

6. It was suggested that the first definite evidence of Karaites in Southern Russia/Ukraine is about 1180, when R. Petahiah of Regensburg, traveling from Kiev, met *minim* in the Land of Kedar:<sup>46</sup>

"R. Petahia passed through the country Togarma ... he left the high mountains of Ararat to the right and in the land of Kedar there are no Jews, but there are *Minim*. R. Petahia said to them: 'Why do you not believe in the words of the Masters?'. They answered: 'Our fathers have taught us to cut on the eve of the Sabbath all the bread to be eaten during the Sabbath,

<sup>43</sup> Z. Ankori, *The Karaites of Byzantium*, New York-Jerusalem 1959, p. 70.

<sup>44</sup> Yefeth b. Eli ha-Levi (Abu 'Ali al-Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Lâwi al-Başri) was born in Jerusalem and flourished in the second half of the 10th century. He ascribed "he whom the Lord loveth" of Isaiah 48:14 to the Khazars. See Ankori, p. 77; there are other references to the Khazars in his writing - on Jeremiah 50:21,25, see A. Harkavy, "Rus' i russkoe v' sredne-vekovoj evrejskoj literature", *Vosxod*, Sankt-Peterburg 1881-2. I (1882), p. 239ff; A. Poliak, *Kazarıyya*, Tel Aviv 1944, p. 295; Ankori, pp. 77-78; he also mentioned Bâb al-Abwâb that is so well fortified that the King of Israel, i.e., the Khazar king, could not pass, see Ankori, *op.cit.*, p. 77-78. Yûsuf b. Avraham ha-Kohen ha-Ro'eh al-Başir lived in Jerusalem circa 1020-1080. Yeşû'ah b. Yehudah Abu-l-Farâj Furqân ibn Asad was his disciple.

<sup>45</sup> Z. Ankori, *The Karaites of Byzantium*, New York-Jerusalem 1959, p. 79. On Karaite (non-) attitude to the Khazars, see also Ankori, pp. 64-76.

<sup>46</sup> *Petahia of Regensburg. Sibuv*, Altona 1770, 2; Gruenhut, Jerusalem, 1904.

and to eat it in darkness, and to sit in our place all day long and not to pray, except for reading psalms'. And when R. Petahia told them that they would like our prayer and our benediction of the meal they told him "We have never heard what the Talmud is".

The word *mînîm* means in Hebrew "heretics", having been used, in the Mishna period, for Judeo-Christians specifically, or later, sometimes, for Karaites. Petahia's route is far from clear and his text has been badly edited by – as it seems – R. Yehudah Hassid of Ashkenaz, who was interested in Karaism and fiercely opposed to it. The text uses *lešôn Qêdâr* for the Turkic speech of the nomads of Ukrainian steppe,<sup>47</sup> clearly making a distinction between '*Ereš Qêdâr* and '*Ereš Kazaria*',<sup>48</sup> the former must be *Dašt-i Qipčâq* and the steppe of southern Ukraine or of the northern Crimea, not Khazaria proper (or *Ghazaria*, how the Crimean Coast was known).<sup>49</sup>

Many authors who wrote on the subject of the *mînîm* Jews met by R. Petahiah there, identified them bluntly as Karaites, as they knew no Talmud, etc., while my own impression is that we encounter here a non-Karaite (and probably, non-Rabbanite) Jewish grouping, similar in its religious character to the early 19th century Mountaineer Jews, who by then had been uncertain about the status of the Talmud. Harkavy considered this *mînîm*-group to be *Ananites*.<sup>50</sup> However, Ankori, though noting that their way of life "was unmistakably Karaite", observed, nevertheless, similarities with the observances of the al-Nehâwandi school of the 9th century.<sup>51</sup> He suggested that these *mînîm* "may well have been the sons of twelfth-century (*sic!* Dsh) immigrants, stemming from Islamic countries or from the Empire where these traditions were still prevailing in some pietistic circles",<sup>52</sup> and in the next passages Ankori expressed his view that "they themselves [these *mînîm*; DSh] may have possibly been the earliest Karaite settlers in the region" (for the first known settlements of the Karaites and Rabbanite Jews in the Crimea, except Chersones, date from the early Mongol period,

<sup>47</sup> Hebrew non-Khazarian sources designated Turkic speech by a pseudo-Biblical appellation derived from Genesis 25.13, where Qêdâr is one of the ancient Arabic (i.e., nomadic) tribes. This name was applied to Ponto-Caucasian Türks, apparently, Qipčâq-speakers, by Byzantine, Georgian and Jewish authors, and later this designation was adopted by Karaites of the Crimea, Halicz and Trokai / Troch / Troki for their Turkic "Karaïmic" language.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Grünhut, *Sibbuv R. Petahia*, Jerusalem 1904, p. 3:7-8.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. R. Freund, *Karaites and Dejudaeization. A Historical Review of an Endogenous and Exogenous Paradigm*, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis. Stockholm Studies in Comparative Religion No. 30, 1991, p. 34.

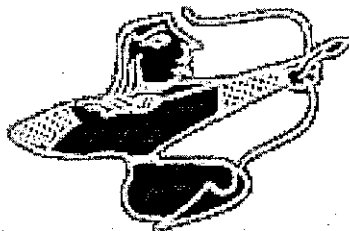
<sup>50</sup> A.Ja. Garkavi, "Karaïmy", *Énciklopedičeskij slovar' Brokgauza i Éfrona*, 14 (Sankt-Peterburg 1895), pp. 426-431.

<sup>51</sup> *The Karaites of Byzantium*, p. 61 and note 16.

<sup>52</sup> *Idem*, p. 62. One may refer to the Jews of Hit in Iraq, who preserved many Karaite customs lost 500 years ago from amongst other Karaites, and, on the other hand, have developed their own customs.

namely from 1278<sup>53</sup>). Nevertheless, one should observe that these *mînîm* knew Hebrew; otherwise it is impossible to explain how they could have communicated with R. Petahia and follow his instructions regarding Jewish prayer. Their easy relinquishment of their former practices also speak against their being Karaites: in fact, traditional Karaism cannot exist but in a Rabbanite environment and the differences between both trends in Judaism can be understood only in a context of juxtaposition, not in that of ignorance. My own impression is that Petahia's *mînîm* were a kind of ignorant Jews living as semi-nomads in the steppe among the Gentiles,<sup>54</sup> similar in character of their lenient and literal, at the same time, to Jewish observances to the Saharan *ba-ḥūṣîm*.<sup>55</sup>

Now we can state, that there is no relationship between the Khazars and the Karaites of Eastern Europe and the Crimea that could have been substantiated by solid documentation of any sort. The Khazar-Karaite speculation should be abandoned for ever and ever.



<sup>53</sup> This is the date of the renowned Sulkhat quarrel on the date of the New Moon, recorded by the Karaite *Sepher haMibhar*. Karaites began to migrate to the Crimea on the wake of the Fourth Crusade (1204), as was noted already by Ankori (p. 63), who observed that *Eshkol haKopher* was known to be found in a complete form in the Crimea in the times of Caleb Apendopulo, while no complete text existed in Constantinople, where the work had been composed three centuries earlier (Ankori, P. 63 and note 18); in 1495, Caleb's brother, Juda Bali, visited the Crimea, in the search of books, and came back. And in the medieval Jewish world, migration of books meant migration of people.

<sup>54</sup> About the times of Petahia's youth, another nomadic Jewish grouping from Khazaria joined the Hungarians: under 1154, \**Xvâlis* Jews are mentioned among Hungarians by a Byzantine source (cf. A. Harkavy, *Sephat haSlavim*, Vilna 1867, p. 132-4). Or were *Xvâlis* an anachronic designation for the same Kavars, mentioned in Hungarian sources as one of the invading tribes?

<sup>55</sup> On whom see H.Z. Hirschberg, "The Problem of the Judaized Berbers", *Journal of African History* 4.3 (1963), pp. 313-33.