Khazars and Karaïtes, Again

Dan D.Y. Shapira*

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 carrier 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

*Bar-Ilan University, Department of Near Eastern History.

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squares put it), with a movable Tent of Covenant and an altar as described in the Pentateuch, and the second stages, when the normative Rabbinite Judaism became widespread.1

The exact date of the Khazar conversion is disputable. Some scholars opted for the date of the conversion slightly after 863 CE or about 865,2 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 Qajan.3 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 "Madinat 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 ilâha illâ-LLâh wa Mâh râdûn ALLâh (instead of wa Muhammada rasûlû ALLâh) and a tamga, and were intended for circulation in the Caliphate and proclaimed the Biblical identity of the Khazars.4

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 18th century Yiddish cun Hebrew popular book printed at Amsterdam in 1771, named "The Remnant of Israel" (She'ireth Yisra'el).5 However, this late source frequently goes after


4 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. 127-128; ibid., "Creating Khazar Identity through Coins: The Special Issue Dihrons of 817/8", East Central Europe in the Early Middle Ages, ed. Florin Curtu (Ann Arbor, 2005), pp. 220-253. However, an analogy with the earlier Polish coins (12th 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.

5 P. 32: "כֹּה אָמַר בַּעֲרָבָה יְרֵמֹיאוֹן זִכְרַת ה' שָׁלֹם וְשֵׁרָה עֶדֶנָּם וַעֲצָצָם יְעַשְׂזוּ כֹּה אָמַר בַּעֲרָבָה יְרֵמֹיאוֹן זִכְרַת ה' שָׁלֹם וְשֵׁרָה עֶדֶנָּם וַעֲצָצָם יְעַשְׂזוּ כֹּה אָמַר בַּעֲרָבָה יְרֵמֹ... קַבִּיר אוֹתוֹ בֶּן אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִיו אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּה אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵלֶּh אָבִי אֵl

44 Karadeniz Araştırmaları, Sayı 13, (Bahar 2007).
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 19th century, this source made a considerable impact on the famous Russian historian, N. Karazin, 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 Karaitism, by Karaite missionaries, circa 1000 CE. The Khazar adoption of Karaitism was for him an unrelated matter, which made no impact on the Eten-Jewish Benei Miqra, who later became Karaites. In other words: according to Firkowicz, the Russian Karaites are Israelis of the First Temple Period; later they became Karaites (circa 1000 CE); Khazars were Karaites; Karaites Khazars are not connected to Turkic-speaking Russian Karaites. It was not A. Firkowicz, but rather Seray b. Mordelkhay Šapšal (1873, Bâbche-Sarhy, – 1961, Vilnius), who lived as Seraja Markovič Šapšal in Czarist Russia, as Thüreyâ Şapşaleğlu in the Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey, as Hâdîy Chan (=hacc bán) Seraja Szapszal (Polish and Karaim) in interwar Poland and as, again, Seraja - or Sergej - Markovič - - Špšal in the Soviet Union, who is charged for identification of the Khazars and Karaites.6 Szapszal’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 Szapszal as a student at the Saint-Petersburg University; in this work Szapszal calls Firkowicz “this overlying falsifier” (“složnigho isajiskih isakolovatel’skoi literature”, Khazarshi Almanakh 3 (Kharkov, 2004), p. 43, n. 24. According to Szapszal, in his Turkish article Qurm Qaran Türklend (1923), in the eighth century, a new religion named bondy miqra, i.e. the Karaites, split from the Children of Israel (benet Israēlēn). These bondy miqra, recognizing only the Holy Books (Killoh-miukaddese) in their original purity (ritōl-dē bi ṣefveti ne) and rejecting the Talmudic Oral Law (gerēni kehrur ṣedēdōni), were, for this very reason, like the Christians, an object of persecution by the Jews. Szapszal then describes in traditional Karaite colors the preaching of Anan ben David in the 8th century (p. 578). Szapszal emphasizes that Anan recognized Muhammad and Jesus as prophets sent to the Gentiles (p. 579); however, having mentioned Muslim (in fact, Hanafite) influence on Karaitism, Szapszal states that Early Christianity was not a great deal different from Karaitism, and only later on in its development, Christianity went astray and adopted characteristics which set up a clear boundary between it and Karaitism, like the adoption of the Trinity, icons, the abolition of circumcision, Jesus’ Sonship (Haṣreti ‘Imāni ‘an-nūl-Allah ṣedēdi), and the transfer of

sazat, 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 (ašen Türk ve İslâv akvâmina mansûb bêtâbin yâbanci kahiêli arasinda da neşir ve tâmânên ettiqer?) Whilst describing this imagined process he mentions the phantomous figure of Ishâq Sangârî (p. 585) whom he calls "the convertor 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 Izmit (Nicomedia) vilâyêti (p. 588). To prove Sangârî's Karaism, Szapaszaz mentions his grave in Chufut-Qalîch, without any reference to Firkowicz (p. 589), who "found" it in 1839.8 In our days, the theory connecting Khazars and Karaites has been argued for using the following arguments:

the Sabbath to Sunday. He even states that the ways of Christianity and Karaism separated only in the 8th 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. 550). To prove his case, Szapaszaz cites the Gospels (Mat 5:17, p. 579 n. 2).

Persecuted by the (Tâzûmidic) Jews on behalf of his faith, Anan left Baghdad and went to the Land of Israel (yezi Fâliştîn-e) and there, in Jerusalem, "the city sacred to three religions", as Szapaszaz put it, he established the first Karaite place of worship called kânâsâ ("kânâsâ namûth iik Kari' mabedini irda etmaqta"); the qiblah of this subterranean place of worship, stresses Szapaszaz, is towards the al-Aqsa Mosque (têtürzêmîn ingâ edêmîn olan mabedîn maberdî Sûlêman-alehisselâmîn maberdîne yêni mescid-Aksaye müteveccih olup Kara'llerin olûum îleym ilêlêhîlîî), trying to create the impression that the Karaites pray towards a Muslim shrine (p. 550, 552). 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, Szapaszaz 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. Y. Shapira, "A Jewish Pan-Turkist: Serafîa Szapaszaz (Şapaxoğlu) and his Work Gürm Osray Türkleri (1928) (Judaeo-Turkics XIII)", AOASH (58:4) 2005, pp. 349-360; M. Kizlov, "The Arrival of the Karaites (Karaism) 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.

8 In Firkowicz's version, these were the Karaite emissaries who converted to Karaism the local Jewish Bêndê Mîqî, Jews allegedly living in the Crimea in total isolation from the outside Jewish world for centuries!

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. Karaim 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 Kedark", 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 "Mosaist" circa 737; in the same 737, Marwân defeated the Khazars on the Volga and attacked Serir. It was in the time when Yudghan flourished, and about the date when Anan I ben David was born (lived under Mansur, 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 Arminiya married Xatun, 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. Turyg of Yosippon.
In the Arabic version of Yosippon their name *Furqiy* is rendered as *Khabar*, which was seen by Pritsak as the same name as one of the used in the Kiev Letter. 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 Hārūn ar-Rašīd (786-809) that Rabbinical Judaism installed, circa 800.10

On the Jewish Karaitic scale, this was the period of Binyamin al-Nehâwandi, Israil al-‘Ukbari, Musa al-Za’frani al-Tifilisi; however, it was stated that the first stage of the Khazar conversion one may ascribe to a Jewish group of the type of the Khazar Jews, Bombay Beni Israel, Ethiopian “Falasha” or Dagestani Mountain Jews.11 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’s theories on the partial conversion of the Children of the Scripture to Rabbinism?

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 533 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 Mech Kueak, was sent by Varaz-Trdat, the ruler of Albania, to North Caucasian Huns. Sogdians were active about that time in spreading Christianity and Manicheaism 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

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10 Two other names in the Kiev Letter, SWR-TJH and GWSIT, are said to contain an Altaic suffix (as was noted by Pritsak in 1982, in N. Golb & O. Pritsak, *Khazarian 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, *čaltay til*, taken to be "a word of uncertain origin" in O. Pritsak, “Das Karaitische”, *Philologiae Turcicae Fundamenta*, ed. min. Jean Deny et al., vol. I, Aquis Mattiacis apud Franciscum Steiner, Wiesbaden 1958, pp. 319-340, p. 319. Calc was derived, tentatively, from Tzur or Sül, a passage in Darband; on the other hand, the name of George Tzoulos (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, “Antroponimija i mezhetnicheskie konflikti narodov Vostochnoi Evropy v srednie veka”, imia - etnos - istoriya, Institut Etnografii, Moskow 1989, pp. 48-66).


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 18:21) 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 Volkan Bulghars 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.13

2. Çufut-Qal'eh/Cufut-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-19th 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-14th 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.14 Incidentally, the year the mosque

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12 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. Maran, "Karaite Hebrew", Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources, ed. M. Pollack, Brill, Leiden 2003, pp. 485-503, p. 487.

13 The Dispute tradition is referred to in the Rabbanite Tannâ deBîl Elîyahu, Polak 1944, pp. 394-5; in Ch. VII of the Slavonic Vita Constantinii, A. Polak (Kozariyvah, Tel Aviv 1944, pp. 152-3) identified the Rhostos, i.e., St. Cyril / Constantine of the Slavic composition, with the "faylasîf" 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.

was built a year of plague in the Crimean steppe, and the black plague passed through Xaffa 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 Mams the daughter of Elia from 1354; Hillel b. Moshe from 1356, and perhaps that of a lady called Parliaq from 1330 (or 1430). 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 Seljuk style. This fact, together with the Persian-Turkic names serves as an indication of the striking roots among the Turkic-speaking Muslims. The origin of the people buried – or of their ancestors - might have been Sulkhat. This does not mean that Jews could not have lived in Çufut-Qal'eh a few decades earlier, prior to the rule of Canbek, 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 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 Firkowitz could not ignore it and according to his late testimony he learned at the end of the 1830s that at 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 Karaita sage, presumably Yisiq 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: “Gecy ... Joseph, fils de Schabadat, 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. Kizlov apparently found this tomb, of an ancient shape, which still has the name Shabbetay on it and the date קָשֶׁב יִשְׁמָעֵל, that is,

3 The difference in the dates stems from uncertainty in one Hebrew letter - qof (=100) or resh (=200); these letters are similar.
5 For details, see Studies in a Karaita Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions, subchapter "Rows Description".
1464/5 or 1364/5. Another inscription found by M. Kizilov at the same time close to the former has the date י"עשת=1386/7 or י"עשת=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 Mr. Rosé and is written על שם אברם (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.”

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 Karaites sage, Mordechai Sultanski showed the Academician Koepen 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

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*See Studios 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”.  

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 Sulkhat, the former capital, to Qrjer (Çufut-Qal'eh) began with the Khan Toqtamış who became the Khan of the Golden Horde in 1371/2 and settled in Qrjer. A number of tombstones furnish testimony for this transition: Joseph b. Elia, died 1376; Sarah b. Abraham, died 1387; Esther b. Joseph, 1394; Toqtamış, cied 1413; and Toqtamış the elder, died 1429. Interestingly, the name of the Great Khan of that time who expanded the city of Qrjer, Toqtmış, 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.

Mamai, the governor of Sulkhat in 1374-5 who was not descended from Cingiz, quarreled with Toqtmış 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 Mamai 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 Toqtmış conquered Tabriz, 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 Tabriz. However, in 1395/6 Timur-Lang invaded the regions of the Horde, destroyed the capital, Saray-i Berke, and the large commercial city, Hacı-Tahrân, (Astrakhan), and caused Toqtmış to flee to Lithuania. As a result of the confusion in the Horde, Edige rose up against Toqtmış his father-in-

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19 See P. Keppe (Koeppen), Krymskij Sbornik: O drevenostjax južnogo berega Kryma i gor lavičeskij, Sankt- Peterburg 1837; A.F. von Haxthausen, Studien ueber die innern Zustände, des Volkesleben 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 Luck, the capital cities of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.20

Among the older tombstones belonging to this period are the following: Sarah b. Moshe from 1420; Sarah Ḥatun b. Yešu’ah from 1420; Elia b. Hillel from 1421; Sevegelin b. R. Levi from 1421; Mordechai from 1425; the elder Toxtams from 1429 (already mentioned); Elia b. Yešu’ah from 1431; and Yešu’ah b. Sadoq 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 (Cabor) mazārḫaḵi (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 Qarqar to Bâğçe-Saray at the beginning of the 16th century.21

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 periphery. 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

21 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.” The printed text is as follows:

הו מקום של מנוחה
אслоור בֵּית שלמה אואר
שמכה מרואשים ונטמר
בשרון יָלֵא חתימה
נפשת חרזים בצירור
והם לייעדו

“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: הָרִיךְ לָוָהוּ. It would appear that the date “of Matarcha” was not in the original version. As for the strange version הָרִיךְ לָוָהוּ, it is explained by the draft copy of Firkowicz’s book *Abnei Zikkaron*, written in his own hand, which was found by A. Fedorchuk. The date appears there as הָרִיךְ לָוָהוּ. It would seem

22 According to Firkowicz the Crimean Jews used three different eras for dating in the first centuries C.E.: 1) the era “from our exile” (יאירח) that began from the destruction of Samaria, that he calculated to 696 B.C.E.; 2) the ancient Crimean era “from creation” (יאירח) that is said to be 151 years longer than the normally used Jewish era “from the creation of the world” (יאירח), 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. The name of the third era comes from the name of an ancient city just across the Strait of Kerch, on the Caucasian side of It. Firkowicz identified Kerch 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) "גָּלוּת הָאֵל ... אֶשֶר בָּיְסֶפֶרֶד"; his identification of Matarcha with Taman is not correct.

that the inscription at the site combines the two versions, 'די"ך קולגנה' and
'די"ך קולגה', whilst the words "which is 385 of Matarcha" was added at a later
stage, perhaps only after Firkowicz had sawed off the original. The impor-
tant Russian Turcologist, A. A. Kunik was of the opinion that Firkowicz
improved" the former date (די"ך קולגנה) by changing the letter י to a ג. 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 Rabbani
tradition).24 This method of changing the letter י to the letter ג 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 Stack surmised that in addition to this Firkowicz also changed
the letter י into the letter ג, and thereby the original date was 1476. Thus,
the true date of this inscription was either "די"ך קולגנה or "די"ך קולגה", 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 Mengi-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 prob-
able that she belonged to the established Jewish community. The inscrip-
tion 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, Os-
setic-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

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

24 For details, see A. Kunik, "Können Hebräer in der Krim schon im 3ten Jahrhundert dün
rabbinischen Fürstennamen Tochtermensch geführt haben?", Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale de
Sciences de St.Pétersbourg, Vol. VII (San Petersbur, 1844), pp. 391-403; compare also A.A.
Kunik. Тексты й і Фиркович. Po povodu spora o dvuh iskazennykh javorejskih nadpisjakh i dvux
vyzvlyavnykh tekočeslenjak. Zapiski Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 27, Addenda (Priloženie),
Sank-Peterburg 1876.

Karadeniz Araştırmaları, Sayı 13, (Bahar 2007). 55
had been, there is an inscription from 1364, hence we cannot be certain about the correct date of the inscription on Esther’s tomb.25

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

3. The Majlis/Menjelis/Mandeglis/Medgelis Document is an allegedly early manuscript which was allegedly discovered by Avraham Firkowicz in the wall of the synagogue of Majlis in Dagestan in the Caucasus in 1840/1.27 In fact, this forged “document” is irrelevant for the suggested

25 For details, see Studies in A Karaite Community and Hebrew Tomb-Inscriptions, chapter “Historical Background”.
Khazar-Karaite connection, as it does not mention Karaites. It does mention a visit of the Kievan (Siyyob/Ciov) 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 Saint-Petersburg 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. 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 ɣ > ɣ); the name of Cambyses is German. However, Scythians are called by their Italian name (Silvum < Sciti), 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?).

4. Khazar language was undoubtedly Turkic, but scholars are divided whether it was of the Chuvash-Bulgarian 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 Bulgars and Chuvashes. 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 Ibrahimi’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-

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The source of inspiration for the forgerer was apparently a passage in Eliead the Daritz: "בזמן שושן שלום מבשר עם שלוםAMA ROV ORA דמיא אבריקוס מירוב[ד]" in Karadeniz Araştırmaları, Sayı 13, (Bahar 2007).
numerous (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 Karaites who came to the Crimea from Byzantium and Iran in the 13th century, ruled first by the Mongols, then by the Golden Horde, then by the Ottoman superpower, underwent there a rapid process of linguistic Turkification. This holds not only for the Karaites 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 (Çufut-Qal'eh) and Anatolian Turkish in the Ottoman vilayet of the Crimea (Mangup, Keffe [Theodosia/Feodosia], Gөzleve [Eupatoria/Jevpatoria]). Karaites newcomers, who arrived in the Crimea in the 14th-17th centuries, came from Byzantium/Ottoman Empire and from the Ulus of Hulagu/Safavid 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 Qıpçaq-Turkish language called 'Karait', which they had brought with them from the Golden Horde. 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-

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58 Karadeniz Araştırmaları, Sayı 13, (Bahar 2007).
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 Turkic dialects of the Karaim language. In fact, the otherness of the Northern Karaites was three-fold: Jewish, Jewish-sectarian, and Oriental-Turkic, with their Turkicness 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?

"Ovadiah"/"Oved Elohim Isaha 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.31 His few followers lived later in Damascus and were known as "Isniyah. 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 Pethahia'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'; it was slightly after Yudghan, under Abu-Ja'far al-Manṣūr (754-775), that Anan I ben David appeared.

Binyamin al-Nehâwandi, some of whose teachings can be traced to al-Maghâriyâh,32 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 880.33 In the 9th century, Jewish sectarian went to Jerusalem, not to the Gentile "barbarians".

Isma‘îl al-‘Ukbâri lived it the times of al-Mu‘taṣim Billâhi (834-842) and some of his teachings were probably influenced by Samaritans, as noted already by Qirqisani. Meşwiyyah al-‘Ukbâri after Isma‘îl al-‘Ukbâri lived at ‘Ukbâ, where his followers still lived in Qirqisani’s times. According to Judah Hâdassi, he was from Ba‘albek, a long away to get to Khazaria in 861.

Musa al-Za‘frâni lived in the generation of Binyamin al-Nehâwândi and Ismail al-‘Ukbâri (whose disciple he probably was), in the mid-9th century. He was known as Abu‘Imran al-Tâfirsî; born in Baghdad, he migrated to Tâfirsî, which was, according to Qirqisani, “an Armenian city”; Qirqisani found in Tâfirsî some of his followers in the 10th century. Musa al-Za‘frâni penned an Answer to the Questions of Hiwi al-Balkhî (who lived in Khorasan in the 9th century). In fact, Musa al-Za‘frâni’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 “Tâfirsîtes” are mentioned in Byzantium or in the Land of Israel. Malik al-Ramî lived in the Land of Israel and some of his teachings can be traced to Musa al-Za‘frâni Abu‘Imran al-Tâfirsî.

The decisive phase of the Karaite movement was in the second half of the 9th century, when Binyamin al-Nehâwândi and Daniel al-Qurnisi forged a union between various Karaite sects and the House of Anan II. 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-Dânnî, who was most probably a Khazar Jew, 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 Sapruṭ Letter and the point must be stressed that he was seen by Ibn Sapruṭ as coming from Khazaria. His name ha-Dânnî derives perhaps from the Alanic-Slavic name of the River Don, something like “Donskoy (Dânn is pronounced Don is Persian and Judeo-Tâfî). 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

36 I am thankful to the learned referent of this paper who noted that “some additional information on Dân = 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 Dân which is located between al-Khazar and al-Rûm. They war with another and with others’ (T. Lewicki, Žródła arabskie do dziejów słowiańskich, Wrocław 1996, Vol. II/1, pp. 42-43, 126-127). In any event, it is further evidence that ‘Dân’ was one of the ways of rendering ‘Don’.”
case of the traveler it is perhaps a result of fusion with Persian names containing -dād, like Xudāy-dād = Elnāthān, on the one hand (in this case, the name contains a Semitic and a Persian element), and the Alanic name Eldar/Elder.38 As the Rabbinical Judaism was installed in Khazaria only one generation before Eldad,38 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 “Karaite” hypothesis.

In Qirqisani’s times some sects were no more existing, like al-Maghāriya, Sthuhits 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 Mātwiya 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 Yīṣḥaq bar Ḥȧm  who went to Khazaria,39 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 Khazara. Qirqisani, however, noted that some people interpret Gen 9:27 as referring to the Khazar conversion (wa-akhirimu yaḥa’amin inna dhālika rāj’s ilā al-Khazari al-lādhiha tabaw-wadi),40 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.41 As noted, Qirqisani was a contemporary of Saadia Gaon, known, i.a., for his harsh rejection of anything Karaita;42 the aggressive

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37 Alanoal qaladar = kafaz” was borrowed into Mongol as aladar = slave, cf. V.I. Abaye, Oseelinsky jazyk i folklor, Moscow-Leningrad 1948, p. 86. Some Hebrew words are still traceable in Ossetic which is the modern form of Alano.
38 Circa 800, according to Dunlop (op.cit.), p. 170; circa 860s, according to C. Zuckerman.
41 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.
42 Salim b. Yeruhiin, mid-10th century, Jerusalem, wrote his Milhemoth Adonal against Saadia.

Karadeniz Araştırmaları, Sayı 13, (Bahar 2007).
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".\(^43\) Ankori calls Qirqisani's attitude hardly enthusiastic and manifesting the indifference with which Qirqisani viewed the Khazar conversion.\(^44\) 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."\(^45\)

6. It was suggested that the first definite evidence of Karaites in Southern Russia/Ukraine is about 1180, when R. Petaiah of Regensburg, traveling from Kiev, met *mîna* in the Land of Kedar.\(^46\)

"R. Petaiah passed through the country Togarma ... he left the high mountains of Anarat to the right and in the land of Kedar there are no Jews, but there are *Minim*. R. Petaiah 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,\(^47\)

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\(^44\) Yehez. b. Eli ha-Levi (Abu 'Ali al-Hassan ibn 'Ali al-Lawi al-Baṣṭ) 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, 28, see A. Herkavy, "Rus' i russkoe v' sredne-vekovoy evreyskoy literature", *Voxaud*, Sankt-Peterburg 1881-2. 1 (1882), p. 239ff; A. Pollak, *Kazariyya*, Tel Aviv 1944, p. 255; Ankori pp. 77-78; he also mentioned ʿAbd al-ʿAbbas 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. Yūsuf b. Avraham ha-Kohen ʿa-Roʿeh al-ʿAṣūr lived in Jerusalem circa 1020-1080. Yeḥudah Abu-ʿFaraj Fūrqān ibn Asad was his disciple.

\(^45\) Z. Ankori, *The Karaites of Byzantium*, New York-Jerusalem 1959, p. 79. On Karaita (non-) attitude to the Khazars, see also Ankori, pp. 64-70.

\(^46\) *Petaiah of Regensburg*, Sibiu, 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, clearly making a distinction between 'Eres Qêdâr and 'Eres Kazavia', the former must be Dašt-i Qiplâq and the steppe of southern Ukraine or of the northern Crimea, not Kazaria proper (or Ghazaria, how the Crimean Coast was known).

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. Hartavy considered this mînîm-group to be Ananites. 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. He suggested, however, 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 sectarian circles", 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 Chersonese, date from the early Mongol period,

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46 Hebrew non-Khazar sources designated Turkic speech by a pseudo-Biblical appellation derived from Genesis 25.13, were Qêdâr is one of the ancient Arabic (i.e., nomadic) tribes. This name was applied to Ponto-Caucasian Turks, apparently, Qipçaq-speakers, by Byzantine, Georgian and Jewish authors, and later this designation was adopted by Karaites of the Crimea, Halicz and Telcal / Troch / Troki for their Turkic "Karakim" language.
50 The Karaites of Byzantium, p. 61 and note 16.
51 Idem, p. 63. One may refer to the Jews of Hit in Iraq, who preserved many Karaites customs lost 500 years ago from amongst other Karaites, and, on the other hand, have developed their own customs.

Karadeniz Araştırmaları, Sayı 13, (Bahar 2007).
namely from 1278\textsuperscript{39}. Nevertheless, one should observe that these mînim 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 Karaitism 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 mînim were a kind of ignorant Jews living as semi-nomads in the steppe among the Gentiles,\textsuperscript{54} similar in character of their lenient and literal, at the same time, to Jewish observances to the Saharan be-\textit{huṣîm}.\textsuperscript{55}

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.

\textsuperscript{39} This is the date of the renowned Sulkhāt quarrel on the date of the New Moon, recorded by the Karaites \textit{Sepher haMîbhar}. Karaites began to migrate to the Crimea on the wake of the Fourth Crusade (1214), as was noted already by Ankori (p. 63), who observed that \textit{Estikh vhaKopher} was known to be found in a complete form in the Crimea in the times of Caleb Aphendopulo, while no complete text existed in Constantinople, where the work had been composed three centuries earlier (Ankori, P. 63 and note 18): in 1452, Caleb’s brother, Juda Ball, visited the Crimea, in the search of books, and came back. And in the medieval Jewish world, migration of books meant migration of people.

\textsuperscript{54} About the times of Petahia’s youth, another nomadic Jewish grouping from Khazaria joined the Hungarians: under 1154, \textit{Xvâlîs} Jews are mentioned among Hungarians by a Byzantine source (cf. A. Harkavy, \textit{Sepher haSlavim}, Vilna 1967, p. 192-4). Or were Xvâlîs an anachronistic designation for the same Kavars, mentioned in Hungarian sources as one of the invading tribes?