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## **THE KHAZARS AS 'SONS OF ABRAHAM'**

“...thy name shall be Abraham; for a father  
of many nations have I made thee”

(Gen. 17:5)

Not long ago, T. M. Kalinina published a study of one of the traditions circulating in the medieval Arab world regarding the genealogy of the Khazars [*Калинина, 2015, с. 104–112*], one of her many meticulous explorations of the Arabo-Persian sources on the Turkic world and the Khazars in particular. Arab notions about this topic were shaped by a number of Judeo-Christian Biblical and pre-Islamic Iranian genealogical traditions [*Калинина, 2005, с. 251–252; Калинина, 2016, с. 163*]. These genealogies, often serving as “prefaces” to ethnographic discussions in the medieval Arabo-Perso-Islamic literature of contemporary peoples in the Middle Ages were necessary in order to situate peoples or “nations” in what the authors and their readers viewed as a divinely ordered cosmos [*Калинина, 2016, с. 164*]. A central figure in any number of genealogical accounts was the patriarch Abraham. Although the historicity of Abraham has been challenged<sup>1</sup>, the Jewish and Muslim view of Abraham as the founding father of the kindred Jewish and Arab peoples, as well as of the religious systems derived from him has become an essential part of Judeo-Christian-Islamic belief systems. The present article, taking up some of the genealogical themes with which

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. [*McNutt, 1999, p. 41–42*], who terms the accounts of the Patriarchal period “later literary constructs,” [*Finkelstein, Silberman, 2001, p. 27–38*] and the overview of Dever, 2003 – and many others.

T. M. Kalinina has dealt, should be viewed as an extended footnote to her earlier admirable study.

One of the most striking aspects of Khazar history is the conversion of the Khazar elite and an as yet undetermined number of “Khazars” i.e. their core tribes, to Judaism<sup>2</sup>. Judaizing influences may have extended to subject or allied peoples of the Khazars, such as the Oğuz. The sons of Seljūk the eponymous founder of the Seljukid dynasty bore the Old Testament names Mikâ’il (Michael), Yûnus (Jonah), Mûsa (Moses) and Isrâ’îl (Israel), pointing perhaps – if the tales of Seljūk’s early service with the Khazar Qağan are historical – to Judaic (or Nestorian Christian) influences [*Cahen*, 1949, p. 41–42; *Dunlop*, 1954, p. 260–261]<sup>3</sup>. There are a number of accounts (Arabic and Hebrew) regarding the emergence or the conversion (or reversion) of the Khazars to Judaism. However, one of the earliest notices, if not the earliest notice in terms of when it was recorded, is found in the *Expositio in Matthaëum Evangelium* by Christian of Stavelot, very probably written before the conversion of the Balkan Bulğar ruler, Boris (r. 852–889) to Christianity (864). He notes that the Bulğars were in his time “becoming baptized” but the “Gazari” (Khazars) had “already been circumcised” and “profess the whole of Judaism” [*una gens quae...omnem Judaismum observant* – *Marquart*, 1961, s. 23; *Dunlop*, 1954, p. 121, n. 10; *Chekin*, 1997, p. 17–18; *Golden*, 2007, p. 139]. Al-Mas’ûdî (d. 956, but writing on this matter

<sup>2</sup> Conversions to Judaism while not the norm were not unknown in Antiquity and in the Middle Ages. The conversion of the Khazars was the most notable of these occurrences. Judaism has wavered on the issue of proselytization, often reflecting the political circumstances in which Diaspora Jewish communities found themselves [*Golden*, 1983, p. 132–134]. The question of the conversion has often become politicized [cf. *Shnirelman*, 2002] and most recently it has figured in the polemics of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a topic too extensive to take up here. Recently, several Israeli scholars have sought to deny the conversion entirely, dismissing it as a literary fabrication [cf. *Gil*, 2011, p. 429–441; *Stampfer*, 2013, p. 1–72] or, contrarily, to use it to de-Hebraicize/de-Judaize Ashkenazic Jewry (Sand, 2009). Neither of these viewpoints has found wide scholarly acceptance [cf. *Zuckerman*, 2011, p. 14–18 for a devastating critique of Gil’s claims and consequently those of Stampfer who largely follows the latter). On the historiography of the “Khazar Problem,” [see: *Ващенко*, 2006]. Poljak’s suggestion that the conversion to Judaism was preceded by a period of Manichaean influence in Khazaria, which became, in his view, a source for the spread to (Western) Europe of that religion [*Поляк*, 2001, c. 99–100] is without foundation.

<sup>3</sup> [*Hunter*, 1989, p. 157–162], suggests a series of Oğuz conversions to Christianity, starting in the mid-seventh century. Theories of the Judaization or Christianization of Oğuz groupings at this time remain speculative.

in the early 940s in his *Murûj adh-Dhahab wa Ma'âdin al-Jawhar* [“Meadows of Gold and Mines of Jewels”]) reported that the “king, his retinue (*ḥâšiyatuhu*) and the Khazars of his kind (*al-ḥazar min jinsihi*)<sup>4</sup> converted to Judaism (*tahawwada*) during the Caliphate of (Hârûn) al-Rašîd” [r. 786–809, *al-Mas'ûdî*, 1966–1979, vol. I, p. 212]. This was one of what were probably several stages in an ongoing process that may have already been initiated in the mid-eighth century and possibly slightly earlier [Golden, 2007, p. 151–156]. Thus, the Judaization of at least the Khazar elite/core groupings was already established in Arabo-Persian historico-geographical literature by the first half of the ninth-century and was also known to Western, Latin-writing authors of that time.

Interestingly, a contemporary of Christian of Stavelot, Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih [or Ḥurradâdhbih, ca. 820 or 826?–912/913?; Крачковский, 1957, т. IV, с. 148; van Donzel, Schmidt, 2010, s. 142] in his *Kitâb al-Masâlik wa'l-Mamâlik* [“Book of the Routes and Kingdoms”], a foundational treatise of the Arabo-Persian historico-geographical literature, which was written in two redactions, one in 846/847 and then a revised version in 885/886 [Göckenjan, Zimonyi, 2001, p. 29–31; Zade, 2011, p. 16–19; Silverstein, 2007, p. 64], makes no mention of Khazar Judaism or any other religious practices (Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih 355)<sup>5</sup>. Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih had direct access to the report of Sallâm the Interpreter. The Caliph al-Wâthiq

<sup>4</sup> The reference here to “Khazars of his kind” (*jins* “kind, type, variety, genus”) is to fellow-tribesmen or members of the same subgrouping of Khazars, i.e. the Khazar core; whereas *al-ḥazar* is a reference to all those who were politically “Khazars,” i.e. under the rule of the Khazars.

<sup>5</sup> Pritsak [Pritsak, 1978, p. 279] argued that a part of Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih’s text, otherwise missing, was preserved in Yâqût (d. 1229) and indicated that “only the Khazar king (*al-malik*) professed Judaism.” However, Yâqût [Yâqût, 1957, vol. II, p. 368] writes: “their king is a Jew. He is said to have a retinue (*ḥâšiyya*) of 4000 men. The Khazars comprise Muslims, Christians and among them are pagans (too). The smallest faction of them there [in Ätil] are the Jews, although their king is from them; the largest (grouping) of them are the Muslims and Christians, except that the king and his elite (*ḥâšsatuhu*) are Jews. The moral practices of the pagans prevail among them.” Although there is no doubt that Yâqût made use of Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih’s works, as did so many others, he was not always certain of its veracity in some sections [Zade, 2011, p. 18]. Yâqût’s geographical dictionary made extensive use of Tamîm b. Baḥr al-Muṭṭawî’î, Abu Dulaf Mis’ar b. al-Muhalhil and Ibn Faḍlân [Dunlop, 1971, p. 168–169]. Very much the same is said regarding the extent of Khazar Judaization by al-Iṣṭaḥrî writing ca. 930s-950s and Ibn Ḥawqal, his slightly younger contemporary [al-Iṣṭaḥrî, 1870, p. 220; Ibn Ḥawqal, 1992, p. 330] in virtually identical language. Both of them made use of al-Balḥî, Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih, al-Jâyhânî and others [Крачковский, 1957, т. IV, с. 194–210].

(r. 841–847) sent Sallâm, who may have been of Khazar origin and was said to know thirty languages, to seek the “barrier” or the “wall” that, according to legend, Alexander the Great had built in the north to separate Gog and Magog from the civilized world [*Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih*, 1889, p. 162–170]<sup>6</sup>. Sallâm passed through Khazaria, whose “king,” Ṭarḥân, hosted him and sent him off with five guides [*Donzel, Schmidt*, 2010, p. 124/125 (Arabic text and English translation)]. Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih was aware of the Jewish trading organization, the *Râdhâniyya*, whose representatives stopped at the Khazar city of Ḥamlîḥ [خَمْلِيح < Ḥanma-liḥ < \*Qanbalîq? – also written خَمْلِيح [Ḥamlîj], *Golden*, 1980, vol. I, p. 230–234] in their travels across Eurasia – they were subsequently supplanted by the Rus’ [*Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih*, 1889, p. 124, 153–155] – but makes no mention of the complex religious situation in the Khazar city with its mix of Muslim, Christian, Jewish and pagan inhabitants that later Muslim accounts, which were heavily indebted to Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih<sup>7</sup>, depict [*Golden*, 1983, p. 140–142]. The published version of Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih’s *Kitâb al-Masâlik wa’l-Mamâlik* is based on three incomplete and occasionally problematic manuscripts [*Крачковский*, 1957, т. IV, с. 148, 150; *Lewicki*, 1956–1988, v. I, s. 50–63; *Göckenjan and Zimonyi*, 2001, s. 29–31; *van Donzel and Schmidt*, 2010, s. 143–145]. References to the religious affiliations of the inhabitants of the city, if the *Kitâb al-Masâlik wa’l-Mamâlik* contained any, may have been lost.

An interesting indirect allusion to the conversion is found in brief discussions, often of a digressive nature, of genealogical questions regarding the “Turks,” i.e. Turkic peoples (and Khazars in particular<sup>8</sup>) undertaken by the leading Arabic-writing historians and geographers of the ninth to early tenth century. Chronologically, they date to the period in which the Khazar conversion had reached certain milestones. In particular, I have in mind three rather different works: the *Kitâb Ṭabaqât al-Kabîr* [“The Great Book of the Classes/Social Categories,” a biographical dictionary] of Ibn Sa’d [d. 844, see: *Калинина*, 2015, с. 105–106,

<sup>6</sup> Van Donzel, Schmidt [*van Donzel, Schmidt*, 2010, s. 121–144], also give the full text and suggest that Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih’s “interview” with Sallâm, which is recorded in his work, must have taken place not long after the latter’s return in 844/845. See also [*Крачковский*, 1957, т. IV, с. 137–141].

<sup>7</sup> These include: al-Ya’qûbî, Ibn al-Faqîh, Ibn Rusta, Ibn Ḥawqal, al-Muqaddasî, the Jâyhânî school and al-Mas’ûdî [*Крачковский*, 1957, т. IV, с. 150], among others.

<sup>8</sup> The Khazars are usually ranked among the Turkic peoples by the medieval Arab authors [*Калинина*, 2005, с. 251–258].

109<sup>9</sup>], Ibn al-Faḳīh, who wrote his *Kitâb al-Buldân* [“Book of the Countries”] ca. 903 [Крачковский, 1957, с. 156, 158–159; Lewicki, 1955–1988, v. II/1, s. 9–11; Khalidov, 2011; Калинина, 2015, с. 107<sup>10</sup>], a classic work of Muslim descriptive geography and his contemporary, the great historian, al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), whose *Ta’rīḥ al-rusul wa’l-mulûk* [“The History of the Prophets and Kings”] covers the period up to 915 [Dunlop, 1971, p. 88–90]<sup>11</sup>.

The details of all three accounts regarding this genealogical question are quite similar, but are inserted into their narratives in different ways. Ibn Sa’d places his version in his “Account of the Prophet Ismâ’il” and the other sons of Abraham (Ibn Sa’d, I: 1.7.10): Ismâ’il/Ishmael was born of Hajara/Hagar, a “Coptic woman” and his younger half-brother, Iṣḥâq/Isaac, of Sarah. Qanṭûrâ bint Maftûr, a woman of pure-blooded Arab origin (*al-‘arab al-‘âriba*<sup>12</sup>), who is introduced without comment,<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The *Kitâb Ṭabaqât al-Kabîr* was based on the works of the early historians al-Wâqidî (d. 823, Ibn Sa’d served as his secretary) and Hišâm ibn al-Kalbî (d. 819/820, a specialist on pre-Islamic Arab religion, matters of genealogy and geography [Крачковский, 1957, v. IV, с. 120–122]), and various compilations regarding some 4800 individuals who were transmitters of Islamic traditions (*ḥadīth*). It was not, strictly speaking a work of history or ethno-geography, but contained historical as well as biographical elements. Al-Ṭabarī used one of the versions of Ibn Sa’d’s work in his *History*, [see: Duri, 1983, p. 37–40, 52; Fück, 1986, p. 922–923; Donner, 1998, p. 136, 245–246].

<sup>10</sup> The dates of Ibn al-Faḳīh’s birth and death remain unknown.

<sup>11</sup> T. Khalidi [Khalidi, 1994, p. 78–79], noting that al-Ṭabarī was aware of the Biblical, Persian and Arabic traditions sought to bring “these histories into harmony by synchronization of chronologies.” The Biblical traditions were “amended,” when necessary, by “Islamic historical tradition.” In this relatively early stage of the development of Arabic historico-geographical literature, many of the authors were of Persian descent (e.g. Ibn Ḥurdâdhbih, Ibn al-Faḳīh and al-Ṭabarī) and not unacquainted with Persian historical traditions.

<sup>12</sup> The *‘arab al-‘âriba* were speakers of “the Muḍarî tongue,” and were given the name “pure-blooded Arabs” because “they were were born to this tongue” and not “Arabized” as were the descendants of Ismâ’il/Ishmael [Al-Ṭabarī, 1967–1977, vol. I, p. 204; Калинина, 2015, с. 105]. If one accepts the historicity of Abraham, his birthplace is reported as “Ur of the Chaldees” (perhaps in Mesopotamia or Assyria) and his – and hence Ismâ’il / Ishmael’s language – would have been either Eastern or some form of Northwestern Semitic, but not Arabic. From “Ur of the Chaldees” Abraham migrated to Canaan.

<sup>13</sup> In the next section (Ibn Sa’d I, 1.7.11) Qanṭûra is introduced as a Canaanite woman, who bore him four children (“Madha, Zimran, Sarhaj and Sabaq”) and mention is made of “Hajuna,” who was the mother of seven of his sons (“Nafis, Madyan, Kayshan, Sharukh, Umayyim, Lut and Yaqshan”) giving Abraham a total of thirteen sons. Al-Ṭabarī [Al-Ṭabarī, 1967–1977, v. I, p. 311], has a variant of this tradition, noting “Ḥajûr” (for “Hajûna”) and the five sons she bore Abraham (Kaysân, Šawarûḥ [Šarûḥ],

bore Abraham the sons Madan (Medan), Madyan (Midian), Yağšan [Yoğšan] (Jokshan), Zimran, Ishbak [Yişbaq] (Ašbaq/Yašaq) and Šuḥ (Shuah). This follows the Biblical account<sup>14</sup>. According to the tradition that Ibn Sa'd relates, those of the sons of Qanṭûrâ, whom Abraham sent off, as he was ordered to do by God, requested assistance from their father. Abraham gave them special words (names of God) that would produce rain in times of need. Then, without any preamble in the account, the Khazars are introduced. They came to the descendants of these sons living in Khurâsân and declared that the man "who taught you this name... must be the best of mankind or king... so they called their kings Khaqan" (Ibn Sa'd, I. 1.7.10)<sup>15</sup>. Ibn Sa'd offers this tale as an

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Amîn, Lûtân, Nâfis). Ibn al-Athîr (d. 1223) repeats a slightly truncated version, recording "Qatûrâ, daughter of Yağtân," a Canaanite woman who bore Abraham six children. Abraham then married "Ḥajûn, daughter of Abîr, but no mention of children is made [*Ibn al-Athîr*, 1965–1967, v. I, p. 123]. The variants of these names can all be explained on the basis of common scribal errors in their transmission in Arabic script.

<sup>14</sup> Qanṭûrâ is the Biblical Keturah (Heb. Qeṭûrah), whom Abraham married after the death of Sarah. Genesis [25:1–2] and Chronicles [1: 32–33] records her as giving birth to Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah (in Modern Arabic translations of the Bible the names are given as Zimrân, Yağšân, Madan, Midyân, Yişbâq and Šurḥâ) and lists their descendants. Other names (either children or descendants) are noted elsewhere. In some passages, Keturah's offspring are named "Ishmaelites" pointing to their Arab connections (see: [*Haran*, 1970, p. 236, 287–288, n. 34]) or the descent of some Arab tribes and Aramaeans from her [*Ahlström*, 1994, p. 393, n. 6]. The mid-seventh-century Syriac Nestorian Christian "Khuzistan Chronicle" [*Brock*, 2012] relates the tradition that the city of Madîna (Yathrib) derived its name from Midyan [*Hoyland*, 2001, p. 32]. Reflections of the notion that the Turks (including Khazars) stemmed from Keturah (Syr. Qeṭûra) are found in a variety of Syriac accounts (see: [*Dickens*, 2008, c. 198–200]). Maṭṭûr (مَططور) and its alternate form, Maqṭûr (مَقطور), are easily confused in Arabic script.

<sup>15</sup> This tradition is traced back to Hišâm ibn al-Kalbî (who also relates a tradition, which names "Khazar" as one of the sons of Isaac [*Живков*, 2011, c. 56] and is conveyed in the account of Tamîm b. Baḥr al-Muṭṭawwi's journey to the Toquz Oğuz/Uyğurs ca. 821, if not earlier [*Minorsky*, 1948, p. 282 (Arabic text), 285 (Eng. trans.), *Dunlop*, 1954, p. 13–14; *Крачковский*, 1957, т. IV, с. 137; *Silverstein*, 2007, p. 97–98; *Живков*, 2011, с. 42]; see also al-Jâḥiẓ (776–868), writing in the mid-ninth century, who proclaims, at length, the kinship of the Khurâsânians and the Turks and also associates the origins of the "Khurâsân Turks" with the descendants of Qanṭûra bint Maqṭûr (or Maqṭûn, see: *Şeşen*, 1967, s. 42–44, 59, 83, *Асадов*, 1993, с. 58–59, 72, 95; *Калинина*, 2015, с. 106–107; *Калинина*, 2016, с. 163] cf. also Ibn Ḥabîb's *Kitâb al-Muḥabbar* [*Şeşen*, 1967, s. 83, n. 214, *Leichtenstädter*, 1939, p. 2 placed his death in 345/859–860] and extending to Bar Hebraeus (d.1286). The latter in his abridged, Arabic version of his *Chronography*, notes Qanṭûrâ as the "daughter of the king of the Turks" [*Bar Hebraeus*, 1958, p. 14; *Калинина*, 2015, p. 109]. Interestingly, this connection is not mentioned in the *Chronography*, written in Syriac for a Christian audience.

explanation of the origin of the title of the Khazar rulers, undoubtedly well known to his readers, without further edification.

Ibn al-Faḡīh provides a somewhat fuller account, which he situates in a discussion of the Turkic peoples. In it, he indulges in a lengthy digression in the midst of his account of the Turkic peoples, regarding the magical rain stone (Turk. *yada taşı*) that the Turkic peoples were said to possess [*Inan*, 1954, s. 160–165; *Roux*, 1984, p. 51, 95–98]. He begins by noting that among the “wonders (*‘ajā’ib*) of the country of the Turks are little stones (*ḥaṣan*), which can invoke, when asked, rain, snow, cold etc.” Knowledge of these magical stones was well known among the “Turks” and it was the “private property” (*ḥāṣṣa*) of the king of the Toquz Oğuz [*Ibn al-Faḡīh*, 1996, p. 639]. His account contains a brief genealogical preface (with an appropriate list of authorities), concerning the Biblical Abraham (to whom special wisdom and powers were ascribed) and his progeny. In Ibn al-Faḡīh’s version, after Sarah’s death, Abraham married Qanṭūrâ bint Maḡṭûr who bore him five sons: Midyan, Madâyin, who is Madîn (مدین or Madyan, مدين), Nîsân, Aṣṭaq (or Iṣṭaq اشئق for اشئق [’šbq, i.e. Iṣḥaq]) and Saraj (the ms. may be read as سرج [Saraj], سوج [Sûj] or سوح [Sûḥ] etc. cf. شوح Šûḥ/Shuah above, [Кумеков, Кумекова, 2010, с. 219, facsimile of Mašhad ms. f. 171a]<sup>16</sup>. Abraham ordered that his sons Ismâ’îl [Ishmael], Iṣḥâq [Isaac], Midyan and Nîsân remain closely attached to him, while Madîn, Asṭaq and Saraj went forth from the family hearth. The sons who left the family homeland complained that they were being sent out to the wild, while the other brothers remained with him, but Abraham told them that he was ordered to do so. Nonetheless, he gave them a name, one of Allâh’s names, so that they could ask God for help against their enemies and could invoke rain “when you suffer from drought.” He informed these sons (of the name) and they set out and journeyed until they settled in Khurâsân. Here, with the help of that “name” they overcame all who were hostile to them. “News about them came to the attention of the Khazars, who are of the offspring of Japheth, son of Noah (Nûḥ). [The Khazars] came to them and entered into an alliance with them (*ḥâlafahum*), entered into marriages with them (*tazawwajû ilayhim*). Some of the Khazars stayed with them (the sons of Abraham) and the rest of them departed for their

<sup>16</sup> On the Mašhad ms. (see discussion in: [Асадов, 1993, с. 28–33; Калинина, 2015, с. 107]. For alternate readings of some of these names see: [Асадов, 1993, с. 49, 138–139, n. 86, 87–95].

(own) country.” [*Ibn al-Faqīh*, 1996, p. 639–640]<sup>17</sup>. Ibn al-Faqīh then returns to his discussion of the rain stone, relaying a lengthy account about it that stemmed from Bâlqîq, the son of the Yabġu (the supreme overlord of the Oġuz union), whose forefather had secured the stone [*Ibn al-Faqīh*, 1996, p. 640–643]<sup>18</sup>. Interestingly, the focus of the rain stone excursus has shifted from the Toquz Oġuz, the Uyġur-led tribal confederation with their center in Mongolia, overrun by the Qırġız in 840 (a relatively recent event for Ibn al-Faqīh), to the Oġuz of the Syr Darya-Aral Sea zone.

Ibn al-Faqīh’s genealogical foray is, in essence, a brief explanatory addendum to his rain stone tale, but it gives his readers an acceptable religious explanation deriving from popular beliefs pertaining to Abrahamic legends about the power of magical words (and objects). In the genealogical addendum, we are given more information: the Khazars learned of these sons of Abraham, formed an alliance with them, which they consolidated through marital unions. Some Khazars remained as part of this Abrahamic community, while others returned to their homeland (presumably with wives from their new allies). A tie of kinship by virtue of marriage with the line of Abraham is thus implied. No mention is made, however, of the origins of the Khazar Qaġanal title.

Al-Ṭabarî presents a very similar account. Early on in his massive *History*<sup>19</sup> he comments that the Turks, Khazars, Persians and other “kings of the non-Arabs” (*mulûk al-a‘âjim*) are descendants of Japheth, son of Noah [*al-Ṭabarî*, 1967–1977, vol. I, p. 205]. He expands the Japheth connection further deriving the “the Turks and Khazars” from Tîraš, one of the sons of Japheth, son of Noah [*al-Ṭabarî*, 1967–1977,

<sup>17</sup> Russian translations of this passage can also be found in [Асадов, 1993, с. 49 (based directly on the Mašhad ms.); Калинина, 2015, с. 107–108 (including a translation of this passage)]. Ibn al-Faqīh also lists Hišâm al-Kalbî as one of his sources see also: [Асадов, 1993, с. 137–138, n. 83].

<sup>18</sup> See: [Агаджанов, 1969, с. 122–125], for discussion of the tale and of Bâlqîq (\*Balqîq) b. Ḥabuuya (حَبْوِيَّة recte حَبْوِيَّة [Jabûyua = Jabġu/Yabġu, an Old Inner Asian title [Clouston, 1972, p. 873]). See there also for variants of this name: *Balkık* (“the rot in melons, vegetables, plants”) is found in Modern Turkish dialects [Çaġbayır, 2007, c. I, s. 454]. While such an apotropaic name is possible, it is unattested. The name *Balçiq* (lit. “mud,” [Clouston, 1972, p. 333]), of which this could be a corruption, is an attested name and one that is associated by some Ottoman historians with an ancestor of the House of Osman [Rásonyi, Baski, 2007, vol. I, p. 116].

<sup>19</sup> Al-Ṭabarî begins with Biblical and pre-Islamic Iranian historical traditions (see brief discussion in: [Новосельцев, 1990, с. 15]).

vol. I, p. 206]. This genealogical track was well known in Muslim sources<sup>20</sup>. Al-Ṭabarī, in another passage echoing Ibn Sa’d, refers to Qanṭûrâ as a Canaanite woman (*amrat min al-kan’âniyîn*) “Qaṭûrâ bint Yaḳṭan,” and notes her sons: Yaḳṣân, Zamrân Midiyân (or Madiyân/Madyân), Yasbaq (or Yasbâq), Sûḥ/Sawaḥ, Basar and their progeny. Mention of a Khazar connection is absent here [al-Ṭabarī, 1967–1977, vol. I, p. 309]<sup>21</sup>. However, in yet another recounting of Abraham’s offspring, al-Ṭabarī records a genealogical tradition clearly deriving from the same source as the one found in Ibn al-Faḳîḥ. Abraham’s sons were Ismâ’il/Ishmael, the eldest and the son of a Coptic woman, Hâjar/Hagar, Işḥâq/Isaac, son of Sarah and his sons from the “pure-blooded Arab woman” Qanṭûra bint Maqṭûr: Madan, Midiyân (or Madiyân/Madyân), Yaḳṣân, Zamrân, Asbaq (or Isbaq) and Sûḥ. Madan and Midiyân “lived in the land of Midiyân/Midian, which was called after him (Midiyân),” while the others moved about and complained to Abraham that they, unlike Ismâ’il and Işḥâq were forced to live in “strange and wild lands”. Abraham told them that he was ordered to do so, but informed them of one of the names of God which they could use when they needed water or assistance. Some of them settled in Khurâsân. Subsequently, the Khazars came to them, remarking that: “the one who instructed you in these (matters) is exceptional. He is the most admirable of people or the king of the Earth. They called their king “*ḥâqân*” [al-Ṭabarī, 1967–1977, vol. I, p. 310, 311], also citing Hişâm ibn al-Kalbî; see also: [Калинина, 2015, p. 105]. Again, we are not told when or why the Khazars made contact with them nor why they called their ruler Qaḡan, a title familiar to al-Ṭabarī’s readers.

In yet another section, this time in a passage taken from Persian traditions, al-Ṭabarī places the lands of the “Turks, Khazars and China” (*al-Şîn* also called *Şîn buġâ* to which neighboring districts were adjoined) under Ṭûj (Middle Iran. Tōz), the son of Afrîdûn, the dragon-slaying

<sup>20</sup> Cf. examples in: [Калинина, 2008, с. 251–252] (for Muslim and Christian authors writing in Arabic and authors writing in Persian). These were adopted in the Turko-Islamic tradition, e. g. [Kâşġarî, 1982–1985, vol. I, p. 83]: the Turks “trace back to Turk, son of Japheth, son of Noah” [Golden, 2015, p. 513, 537; Miquel, 2001, vol. II/1, p. 232]. [Dunlop, 1954, p. 12–13], briefly cites the “Japheth” accounts, whose Jewish origins he considered “obvious.” It continued into the thirteenth century (cf.: [Ibn al-Athîr, 1965–1967, vol. I, p. 80; Yâqût, 1957, vol. I, p. 367]) and beyond.

<sup>21</sup> Alternate readings of these names are given in another account cited by al-Ṭabarī: [al-Ṭabarī, 1967–1977, vol. I, p. 311].

mythic hero in Iranian legend [*al-Ṭabarī*, 1967–1977, vol. I, p. 214]<sup>22</sup>. Nothing is said about the Khazar qağanate.

While Ibn Saʿd, Ibn al-Faqīh and al-Ṭabarī, all going back to Hišām al-Kalbī, associate this tale and its wonder-working words with Abraham, other explanations of rain magic among the Turkic peoples are found in Arabo-Persian accounts. Gardīzī (writing ca. 1050) has a report on the legend of the rain stone, which he traces back to Japheth, the ancestor of the Turks, to whom, he says, it had been granted. He adds that there were conflicts over possession of the rain-stone between the Oğuz, Qarluqs and Khazars [*Gardīzī*, 1984, p. 546–547; *Агаджанов*, 1969, с. 125; *Калинина*, 2015, с. 108–109]<sup>23</sup>. Although Gardīzī wrote well after Ibn al-Faqīh, his data regarding the Turkic peoples and Central Eurasia came from considerably earlier historico-geographical accounts dating from the mid-eighth to mid-/late-ninth century [*Czeglédy*, 1973, p. 257–267] and hence mirrored views that were already circulating by the time Ibn Saʿd, Ibn al-Faqīh and al-Ṭabarī were writing. The magical rainmaking powers ascribed to Japheth and Abraham are essential links in the tale.

The theme connecting rain-making magic with a sacred word or prayer is also discussed by the unknown author of the *Mujmal al-Ta-wârīḥ* (mid-twelfth century, [Weber, Riedel, 2012]) drawing on a variety of sources, including those in the *Jayhânî* tradition, in his chapter on the “Turks”. He notes that Noah communicated to his son Japheth a special prayer that would produce water (or snow) when he needed it and Japheth/Yafith engraved it on a rock (*sang*), which he wore – clearly a reference to the *yada taši*. Yapheth had seven sons, according to the *Mujmal*, of whom “Āin” was the first, “Turk” the second and “Ḥazar” the third. Ḥazar settled on the banks of the river Ātil (اتیل) where he built the city of “Ḥazarân” in which he wintered. Summers were spent in the steppes with his flocks. “Rûs”, who was the fifth son of Japheth, was born of the same mother as Ḥazar [*Mujmal*, 1939, p. 97–101; *Ludwig*,

<sup>22</sup> [*Al-Masʿûdî*, 1966–1977, vol. II, p. 250–251], underscores this, taking issue, however, with the notion that the Turks derived from Ṭûj. Rather, Afrîdûn gave Ṭûj rule over them. See also: [*Dunlop*, 1954, p. 13].

<sup>23</sup> [*Klyashtornyj*, 2008, p. 389–390] places the struggle for the rain stone, possession of which was a symbol of authority, to the period preceding the emergence of the Uyğur state (744–840) and shortly thereafter, in the course of the 750s when groupings subordinate to the Uyğurs revolted against them and some were forced to flee westward.

1982, s. 361–364]<sup>24</sup>. The *Mujmal* [1939, p. 421] notes without comment that *ḥāqān* is the title of the ruler of the Khazars (as well as that of the rulers of Inner Čîn/Toquz Oğuz, Tibet and the Rūs).

It is clear that the theme of the Abrahamic and Arab descent via Qanṭûra bint Maqṭûr (or some variant of the name) of the “Turks of Khurâsân” was already established in Arab works of the ninth century and continued to be referenced in Arabic-language works into the thirteenth century. It is evident that Ibn Sa‘d, Ibn al-Faqîh and al-Ṭabarî drew on the same body of sources. Ibn al-Faqîh, it should be remembered, was one of the earliest Arab historians-geographers to take note of the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism, commenting that: “all of the Khazars are Jews, but they have been Judaized recently” [*Ibn al-Faqîh*, 1996, p. 593]. His remarks may be seen as pointing to what had, most probably, been an ongoing process of conversion dating from the latter half of the eighth century to the early ninth century evolving towards more normative rabbinical Judaism [*Golb, Pritsak*, 1982, p. 24–25; *Golden*, 2007(1), p. 123–162]. An important stage had been reached during the era of Hârûn al-Rašîd, as was noted by al-Mas‘ûdî (see above). The “Moses” coins, struck a generation later and only in one year, 223/837–838, along with two other Khazar coin types made in imitation of Sârnânîd coins, but with special writings (or a *tamğā*) associating them specifically with Khazaria, may have signified yet a further step in the development and expansion of Judaism in Khazaria [*Kovalev*, 2008, p. 220–251]. These latter stages of the Khazar conversion were not a distant, falling within the lifetime of Ibn Sa‘d and close to that of Ibn al-Faqîh.

The Khazar Hebrew documents present a somewhat different picture of the place of the Khazars in traditional genealogies. In the letter of the Kha-

<sup>24</sup> In the older tradition recorded by al-Ya‘qûbî (d. 897 or 905 [*Lewicki*, 1955–1988, vol. I, p. 243]), Japheth’s sons are listed as Jûmar (Gomer), Tûbal, Mâš, Mâšij (for Mâših) and Mâjûj (cf. Gen.10:2 – not all the Muslim names coincide with the Biblical names). Mâš’s sons are “Turk and Khazar.” Elsewhere, al-Ya‘qûbî notes that the sons of Japheth were given the lands of “Šîn, Hind, Sind, Turk, Ḥazar, Tubbat, Bulğar, Dailam, and that which borders Khurâsân and the sons of Japheth ruled in these (lands) in the time of Jamšîd” [*Lewicki*, 1955–1988, vol. I, p. 252–253, 271–272, n. 33–336; *al-Ya‘qûbî*, 1970, vol. I, p. 15–16, 20]. In: [*Ibn al-Athîr*, 1965–1967, vol. I, p. 80], “Ḥazar” and “Turk” are the sons of Tiraš (Tiras), the son of Yapheth. The description of the Khazar semi-nomadic economic system is strongly reminiscent of the description of that system as outlined in Joseph’s letter [*Кокочигов*, 1932, с. (Hebr.) 24, 25, (Russ.) 83, 85] and typical of states of nomad origin in the Eastern European steppes [*Györffy*, 1975].

zar ruler, Joseph<sup>25</sup>, written in Hebrew probably ca. 960 to Ḥasdai b. Šaprūt (d. ca. 970), a Jewish courtier and at times de facto foreign minister of the Spanish Umayyads ‘Abd al-Rahmān III (912–961) and his son al-Ḥakam II (961–976)<sup>26</sup>, the Khazar ruler (undoubtedly using a scribe knowledgeable in Hebrew, [Shapira, 1998–1999, p. 234, n.11]), informs Ḥasdai, that he is the “king of Togarmah” (lit. “the Togarmian king” *ha-meleḥ ha-togarmī*), adding in another passage, that they descend “from the sons of Yapheth, from the sons of his son, Togarmah”<sup>27</sup>, information which he found in the “books of our (fore)fathers” ([Кокоецов, 1932, Hebr. c. 19, 20, Russ. c. 72, 74 (short redaction), Hebr. c. 26, 27–28, Russ. c. 89, 91–92], which adds that “Ḥazar,” from whom they descended was the seventh son of Togarmah). Togarmah most probably denoted the “ancestor” of the Turkic peoples, a commonplace in medieval Jewish tradition [Karatay, 2015, s. 86]<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, the list of peoples noted as the sons of Togarmah, which Joseph found in “the books of our (fore)fathers,” includes the Avars<sup>29</sup>, Bul-

<sup>25</sup> It is not clear from the letter whether Joseph is the Qağan, who reigned as a talismanic holder of *qut* (“heavenly good fortune”) or the Qağan Beg/Šad/llig, who actually managed the affairs of state. On this Khazar variant of the dual-kingship, see: [Golden, 2007(1), p. 161–194]. Joseph’s regnal dates have been posited as ca. 920–960 [Golb, Pritsak, 1982, p. 137].

<sup>26</sup> On the diplomatic correspondence of Ḥasdai b. Šaprūt, see: [Golb, Pritsak, 1982, p. 75–95]. Ḥasdai b. Šaprūt learned of the Khazars from Iberian Jews who had visited the country and whose account of a “Jewish kingdom of Khazaria” in the east was confirmed by merchants from Khurāsān who had visited Spain [Dunlop, 1954, p. 134–135].

<sup>27</sup> Togarmah is the son of Gomer, son of Japheth. He is the brother of Ashkenaz and Riphath [Gen. 10:3, I Chron.1: 6]. Al-Ya’qūbī, in one of his genealogical excursions, notes *al-ḥazar* among the peoples descending from Thâğarma, who went to the north. He further comments that the Khazars conquered all of Armīniyya (the dating is uncertain and the ethnonym “Khazar” may have been used anachronistically here) and that their ruler was called *ḥāqān* and had a deputy (*wa lahu ḥalīfa*) who bore the still undeciphered name \*Yzīd ?lāš, perhaps a reference to the Khazar “king” who governed for the talismanic qağan by the time al-Ya’qūbī was writing [Golden, 1982, vol. I, p. 217–218; Golden, 2007(1), p. 162–163, 178; Lewicki, 1955–1988, vol. I, s. 254–255, *al-Ya’qūbī*, 1970, vol. I, p. 178], the latter has *انَاغورم* [Nâğûrmâ] for *ثَاغورما* [Thâğûrma], i.e. Togarmah). The provenance of the notice on the Khazar qağan and his “deputy” may go back to Hišām ibn al-Kalbī, whom we have already encountered as a source for Ibn Sa’d and others.

<sup>28</sup> In Armenian and Georgian traditions it could denote the Armenians and Georgians and other peoples of the Caucasus. In the Rus’ tradition, Japheth’s descendants were the northern and western peoples [Новосельцев, 1990, с. 94–95, примеч. 77].

<sup>29</sup> The ethno-linguistic identity of the Avars, who derived from the Rouran/Asian Avars whom the Ashina-led Türks overthrew in 552 and from whom they assumed the Qağanate, remains problematic (see: [Vovin, 2011, p. 27–36; Golden, 2013, p. 43–66]. Živkov interprets Joseph’s self-designation as “King of Togarmah” to be a reference to

ğars, Sabirs and Oğuz, all of whom were associated with the Turkic world or peoples dominated by the Türks, as well as other peoples whose ethnonyms are garbled in the Long and Short Redactions of the letter [Ковцов, 1932, с. 72, примеч. 1, с. 74, примеч. 2, с. 75]. Joseph’s claim to power over them was an ideological statement asserting Khazar overlordship in the western Eurasian steppes<sup>30</sup>. Unlike Ibn Sa’d and the “Cambridge Document” (see below), there is no mention of the title *qağān* or its origin among the Khazars.

The fragmentary “Cambridge Document,” written by a Khazar Jew<sup>31</sup> to Ḥasdai b. Šaprūt gives an account of the Khazar conversion, one that differs from the version presented by Joseph, along with a narrative of some recent military-political events involving Khazaria and its neighbors<sup>32</sup>. The beginning and conclusion of the text have not been preserved. In its opening, fragmentary sentence, the text (see: [Golb, Pritsak, 1982, p. 106–121]) for Hebrew text and English translation) notes “our fathers” (presumably Jews or a Judaized people) fleeing from (via?) Armenia “because of the yoke of idol-worshippers (*‘ovdei elilim*) came to “Qazaria” where they were received and subsequently “intermarried with the inhabitants,” learned their customs, participated in their wars and “became one people.” The land of the “idol-worshippers” is described as “without...writing”. It could hardly have been Armenia, which had officially converted to Christianity in the early fourth century (301 CE) and had developed its own alphabet by the early fifth century, the work of Mesrop Maštoc’ [Тер-Саркисянци, 2005, с. 136–139, 200–204]. The time and point of departure of these Jews remain problema-

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his Qağān status as ruler of the steppe peoples as well as the peoples of the Caucasus [Живков, 2010, с. 61–62]. Togarmah encompassed the latter peoples as well [Kupfer, Lewicki, 1956: s. 166].

<sup>30</sup> [Живков, 2010, с. 17, n.1, с. 54–61], notes related genealogies, e.g. the one found in the 10<sup>th</sup> century Hebrew *Book of Josippon* and discusses the various interpretations.

<sup>31</sup> Whether he was acting in an official capacity on behalf of his “master,” the Khazar ruler Joseph, is unclear [Golb, Pritsak, 1982, p. 94]. On the “Cambridge Document,” see the discussion in [Zuckerman, 1995], who dates the letter to 949 [Zuckerman, 1995, p. 240–241]. [Shapira, 2005, p. 504, 517, n. 7] dates it to ca. 954 or in any case, before Joseph’s letter.

<sup>32</sup> [Shapira, 2005, p. 504], argues that the Cambridge Document recounts the conversion in a “non-sophisticated version current among the ordinary Khazar Jews,” whereas Joseph’s Letter presents a “complicated royal version,” which sought “to distort or put into oblivion certain aspects of the Khazar conversion, while highlighting others”.

tic<sup>33</sup>. Their intermarriage “with the inhabitants” corresponds to Ibn al-Faqīh’s comments about “an alliance” with and marriages between the Khazars and Abraham’s alleged Khurāsānī progeny.

The Khazars, at this stage, according to the “Cambridge Document” were without a supreme ruler, but merely granted the power of “chief officer of the army” (*sar ševa*) to victorious military leaders. One such victorious “chief officer” (later in the text called “the great chief” *ha-sar ha-gadol*) was a non-observant Jew who through divine guidance and the encouragement of his observant wife “returned” to his ancestral (?) faith. When the Byzantines and Arabs expressed their anger that the Khazars “return[ed] to the faith of the Jews,” who are stateless and powerless, the “great officer” arranged for a religious disputation between representatives of the Abrahamic faiths to be held at the court<sup>34</sup>. In its aftermath the “officers of Qazaria” (most probably the *begs* are meant here) brought forth from a “cave in the plain of Tīzûl (לזיזת)”<sup>35</sup> “books of the Torah of Moses” following which the Jews living among the Khazars along with the “people of Qazaria” completely “returned” to Judaism” and were joined by Jews coming from Baghdad, Khurāsān and Byzantium. It was at this juncture that they “appointed over them one of the sages as judge, They call him in the language of (the Qazar[s]) *kgn* כגן...” a term that continues up to “this day” and the name of the “great officer” (a reference to the *Qağan Beg/Šad/ Yilig*), who

<sup>33</sup> [Zuckerman, 1995, p. 241] argues that the “idol-worshippers” from whom the Jews fled might well have been Christians, i.e. icon-worshippers and that the flight was in response to the Emperor Heraclius’s attempts (630–632) to bring about the conversion of Jews under Byzantine rule to Christianity [Karatay, 2015, s. 27], also places this event to ca. 630. Asadov suggests that the Hyrcanian/Jurjānian Jewish community was the source of the Jews that immigrated to Khazaria in this early period and subsequently played a role in their conversion [Asadov, 2016, p. 38].

<sup>34</sup> Such a religious disputation is also part of Joseph’s narrative of the conversion and figures in the conversion tales of a number of Central Eurasian peoples and was adopted by the Rus’ as well [DeWeese, 1994, p. 165, 170–172]. [Zuckerman, 1995, p. 244–245, 250] relying on the Slavonic *Life of Constantine*, dates the disputation to the summer of 861, and “the official introduction of Judaism in the Khazar state” immediately after it. In light of our other evidence (e. g. the testimony of al-Mas’ūdī and the “Moses coins”) this chronology seems late.

<sup>35</sup> In Joseph’s Letter this would appear to be Tdlw (ולדת), which has been interpreted as a garbling of the toponym Tarku [Кокоецов, 1932, с. Heb. 31, Russ. 100–101 и примеч. 3.; Golb, Pritsak, 1982, p. 128–129]. More likely is ולזת [tɜlɜ], \*גולזות [twɜlɜwɜ] \*Tūzlug < tūz «ровный, плоский» [ДТС, 1969, с. 602], i. e. “[land] of the plains” or גולרות [twɜlɜwɜ] Oğuric \*tūrlug? (cf. Čuv. *türemlēx* “равнина, ровное место”).

played a key role in the conversion, Bulan (from Joseph’s letter, not named here), whose name was changed to Sabriel [*Dunlop*, 1954, p. 158; *Golb, Pritsak*, 1982, p. 22, 27, 30, 103, 107–111; *Shapira*, 1998–1999, p. 230–241; *Zuckerman*, 1995, p. 251; *Петрухин*, 2014, p. 168], suggests inconsistencies here)<sup>36</sup>.

Interestingly, the author of the “Cambridge Document” adds at this juncture, that: “they say in our land that our fathers were of the tribe of Simeon, but we cannot insist on the truth of this matter” [*Golb, Pritsak*, 1982, p. 112–113]. The alleged descent from the ancient Hebrew tribe of Simeon may well have been a popular notion among Khazar Jews bolstering the notion of a “return” to full Jewish practice. The author of the “Cambridge Document” is quick to discount this idea, especially when addressing the learned Ḥasdai b. Šaprūt and his sophisticated circle. Nonetheless, the emphasis in the “Cambridge Document” is on a “return” not a conversion to Judaism. Indeed, the word “return” is even put into the communications of the “kings of the Byzantines” and the “kings of the Arabs.” Zuckerman explains this use of the verb “return” by invoking Halachic law according to which converts left their previous identity by virtue of conversion and were “new-born,” becoming fully part of the Jewish people [*Zuckerman*, 1995, p. 241–242]. This is an interesting ideological and theological point, however, becoming newly born is not tantamount to a “return.” Given the sparseness of our sources – and the contradictions of our two accounts – one can only speculate regarding the understanding of the Judaized Khazars (as opposed to Jews residing in Khazaria) of their place within the Jewish world. It may well be that the notion of a “return” was part of a historical myth that had a certain currency among some Judaized Khazars and that the author of the “Cambridge Document” was trying to convey this understanding

<sup>36</sup> The search for the elusive – and most probably invented – Yiṣḥâq Sangarî, whom later Jewish tradition credited with the conversion of Bulan, continues. He is first noted only in the thirteenth-century. [*Dunlop*, 1954, p. 121–125], allowed that he might have existed, but was very cautious. Shapira demonstrated that the inscription found on his alleged gravestone in the Crimea is a forgery [*Shapira*, 2002–2003, p. 223–260]. Attempts have also been made, most recently by J.T. Olsson, to present the conversion as a “coup d’état” by Bulan, which was buttressed by “his coronation as a Jewish monarch and the conversion of the Khagan” [*Olsson*, 2013, p. 495–526], a variant of similar notions put forward by [*Pritsak*, 1978, p. 272–280], among others). The linkage of the conversion with a coup or rebellion of dissatisfied tribal groupings has no foundation in our sources. It is based on surmise and conjecture. The internal political history of Khazaria remains largely opaque.

to Ḥasdai b. Šaprūt. It may have been one of several variants of the Judaization of the Khazars that were current in mid-tenth century Khazaria. Joseph's Letter, however, the more "official" document written by a head of state, does not speak of a return, but points rather to a process of conversion: "our fathers entered into the law (i. e. "religion") of Israel" (*nihnesû le-din yisrael*). This was a process initiated by Bulan, a "wise" king who convened a religious disputation in which Judaism triumphed. A second, possibly reformist stage was introduced by a "king" Obadiah, who "renewed" the state and strengthened religious practices [Кокочов, 1932, c. Heb. 20–23, Russ. c. 73, 75–80]. Whether this denoted a further advancement of normative Judaism (already seemingly in place under Bulan) or is merely a pious *topos* associated with a ruler who set the state right [Golden, 1983, p. 147–148; Zuckerman, 1995, p. 248–250], is unclear as is the date of Obadiah's reign [perhaps ca. 800, Golb, Pritsak, 1982, p. 22]<sup>37</sup>.

Joseph wrote in his capacity as the ruler of a powerful, imperial people. The Hebrew terminology that he uses to describe the conversion expresses the adoption of Judaism by the Khazars, but not their complete transformation into "righteous proselytes" who are viewed as full members of the Jewish people. Rather, they remain ethnically Khazars, "descendants of Togarma," successors and heirs of the Türk Empire, who have "entered" the Jewish religion (see the perceptive comments of [Рашковский, 2012–2013, c. 217–219; Петрухин, 2014, c. 162, 165, 168]). Nonetheless, they identified with their coreligionists and were prepared to be their champions (see below).

One should also bear in mind that Judaism, Islam and Christianity in Khazaria, were, undoubtedly, practiced in their "frontier" form with syncretistic elements. Paganism (most probably in its *Tengrist*, shamanistic form), as our sources note, remained strong. Although we have no indications that the Khazars were in contact with Jewish centers of learning, they were not entirely ignorant of events in the Jewish diaspora. Ibn Faḍlān, who was in Volga Bulḡaria (in 921–922), a vassal state of the Khazars at the time, makes the interesting observation that when the Khazar "king" learned in 310/922 that Muslims had destroyed a syna-

<sup>37</sup> Obadiah (Heb. 'Ovadyah "servant of God,") a name typically taken by converts, cf. the Arabic equivalent 'Abdallāh with the same meaning and purpose, is noted in Joseph's list of rulers who directly preceded him [Кокочов, 1932, c. Heb. 23–24, c. Russ. 80–81].

gogue in Dâr al-Bâbûnj, he was prepared to destroy the minaret (presumably of the Friday Mosque in Ätil) and kill the muezzins in retaliation. His hand was stayed only out of fear that in retaliation “every synagogue in the territory of Islam would be razed” [*Ibn Faḍlân*, 2014, p. [Arabic] 256, 258, p. [Eng.] 257, 259].

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Dieter Ludwig, following a lengthy analysis of the fragmentary data on the emergence of the Khazars, concluded that “oldest attestable locations (*belelgbaren Sitze*)” of the Khazars place them in propinquity to Khurâsân, where they probably belonged to the Hephthalite tribal union. From here, at the turn of the fifth-sixth century they migrated, “for unknown reasons,” towards the Caucasus [*Ludwig*, 1982, s. 24–66, esp. 62ff.]. The association of Khazar ethnogenesis with the Hephthalites and Khurâsân and its immediate vicinity remains a conjecture and Ludwig’s hypothesis has not found wide acceptance. Indeed, Khazar origins remain problematic. Many, if not all of the array of sources, often containing only sparse notices, that mention the Khazars before the mid-seventh-century are anachronistic (cf.: [*Zuckerman*, 2007, p. 401–404; *Shapira*, 2007, p. 307–352; *Калинина*, 2012–2013, с. 104; *Калинина*, 2014, с. 9–12] or, at best, open to a variety of interpretations<sup>38</sup>. We can point with relative certainty to the emergence of the Khazar Qaġanate sometime between the 630s-early 650s [*Golden*, 1980, vol. I, p. 50–51, 58; *Ludwig*, 1982, s. 134–135; *Новосельцев*, 1990, с. 85–91; *Ромашов*, 2000–2001, с. 300–304; and summation in: *Комар*, 2011–2012, с. 191–199] or perhaps even slightly later [ca. 670, *Zuckerman*,

<sup>38</sup> The same may be said of the equation of the Qasar people/tribe of the Toquz Oġuz (associated with the 鐵勒 Tiele of the Chinese sources) mentioned in the Uyġur runiform inscriptions (Terxin and Tes) with the Khazars (see the brief but interesting argumentation in [*Кляшторный*, 2005, с. 259–264] and from a slightly different perspective, [*Karatay*, 2015, s. 28–30], which is problematic. There is little doubt that the Khazars emerged from and may be considered a successor state or continuation of the Western Türk state, but based on a different, distinct grouping [see most recently, *Karatay*, 2015, s. 25–26, 49–59]. The early phases, it has been argued, may have been set in motion by the activities of İštâmi, the Yabġu Qaġan (d. 576), master of the western Türk lands and brother of Bumın, founder of the Türk Empire and by İštâmi’s son, Τοῦρξανθος (Németh, among others, suggested: \*Türk-šad, [*Németh*, 1991, old. 63]). Karatay would begin the “administrative history” of the Khazars as a frontier principality of the Western Türks at this time [*Karatay*, 2015, s. 24].

2007, p. 417]. While seeking Khazar origins in Khurâsân is questionable, connections with Khurâsân and its Jewish communities are not. “Khurâsân” encompassed eastern Iran and parts of Afghanistan, modern Turkmenistan and adjoining regions, e.g. western Uzbekistan [*Le Strange*, 1966, p. 382–432]. Qudama al-Jaʿafar (d. sometime between 922–948), an official of the Caliph al-Muqtafi [r. 902–908, *Крачковский*, 1955–1960, т. IV, с. 160–162] notes that: “the border of al-Ḥazar is from Arminiyyah to Ḥwârazm of Ḥurâsân” [*Qudama al-Jaʿafar*, 1889, p. 259]. Khazar borders, which undoubtedly shifted over time, may have approached Khwârazmian territories through the Oğuz tribes, who were allies and perhaps tributaries at various times<sup>39</sup>. Asadov has argued for the ongoing presence of the “Şûl” (= Čor/Čur) Turkic dynasty in Jurjân (Pers. Gorgân) from before the time of the Arab conquests to 835. Jurjân also had a long-standing Jewish community and he suggests a migration of Jurjânian Jews to Khazaria in the early seventh-century and a significant role for them in the conversion and accounts of traditions related to it [*Asadov*, 2016, p. 22–38].

The “Cambridge Document” directly states that with the “return” of the Khazars to Judaism, Jews from Baghdâd, Khurâsân (*kwrsn*<sup>40</sup>) and Byzantium came to Khazaria and “strengthened the men of the land,” assisting in the implementation of normative Judaism [*Golb, Pritsak*, 1982, p. 111–111]. Khurâsân’s Jewish settlements are attested as early as the fourth-century CE and are noted in the Umayyad and ‘Abbâsid eras [*Zand*, 2016; *Fischel, Netzer*, 2007, p. 118]. Al-Muqaddasî (d. 991), although writing well after the notice in Ibn Sa’d, reports that: “in it are many Jews, small numbers of Christians and (various) classes of Zoroastrians (*aṣnâf al-majûs*)” [*al-Muqaddasî*, 1987, p. 252]. Khurâsân was clearly far more familiar to the Khazar rulers than distant and “exotic” Umayyad Andalus/Spain of which Joseph, judging from his letter, does not appear to have been aware before Ḥasdai b. Šaprût’s attempts to

<sup>39</sup> [*Калинина*, 2015, с. 126], notes the uncertainties of this eastern frontier. Joseph, in his letter, reports that Khazar borders reach the Sea of Gorgân (Arabic Jurjân, was on the southeast of the Caspian [*Le Strange*, 1966, p. 376]) and that all those who live on its shores, “for a distance of one month’s travel, pay me tribute” (Short Redaction). The Long redaction adds that “from there the border (*ha-gvûl*) turns to the road of Khwârazm up to Gorgân” [*Кокоевцов*, 1932, с. Heb. 24, 31, с. Rus. 81–82, 98].

<sup>40</sup> This cannot be Kherson, which is noted in the “Cambridge Document” in what was probably its Khazar form: Šwršwn, Greek: Χερσόνησος, Rus’: Корсунь [*Golb, Pritsak*, 1982, p. 116–117, 138].

contact him. In short, a linking of Khazaria and Khurâsânian Jewry is attested and an exchange or influence of genealogical traditions cannot be excluded. Although the “Turks of Khurâsân,” an unclear category at best, are an unlikely sources for the transmission of Jewish folktales to the Khazars, the Jews of Khurâsân may well have been.

What makes the accounts of Ibn Sa’d, Ibn al-Faqîh and al-Ṭabarî so interesting is their attempt to link the Khazars directly with Abraham’s (Arab) descendants and to offer up explanations of the origins of the *qağanal* title among the Khazars that would be understandable in terms of genealogies acceptable to Arabo-Muslim notions of that era.

A.N. Poljak suggested that this explanation of the Khazar *qağanate* may have derived from a conjectured Arabo-Jewish “Cosmography” [Поляк, 2001, с. 82], composed or compiled after 732 and before 740, according to which the further reforms within and the evolution of Khazar Judaism transformed the Khazar *Qağan* from “a living god” in shamanism into “a living Biblical Abraham.” The Khazars, having learned of Abraham’s magical powers and knowledge from the Turks of Khurâsân, confounded the Hebrew term *ḥaḥam* (“wise man, rabbi” which they believed Abraham was called) with the Turkic *Qağan*. Kalinina rightly rejects this explanation [Поляк, 2001, с. 99; Калинина, 2015, с. 106]. The title *Qağan* was of considerable antiquity in Inner Asia. It was attested first in 265 CE, among the 鮮卑 Xianbei (\*Sārbi) 乞伏 Qifu (Late Han pronunciation: \*kʰiət buk, [Schuessler, 2009, p. 305 [30-1f], 113 [5–36a]]) grouping [Liu, 1989, 98]<sup>41</sup>. Ibn Sa’d’s comments on the origins of *qağanal* title among the Khazars are in consonance with the “Cambridge Document” and may have reflected the tales told among Jews living in Khazaria. The Khazar capital Ätil/Atil had a substantial Muslim population, along with Christians, Jews (the smallest in number) and pagans [al-Iṣṭahri, 1870, p. 220; DeWeese, 1994, p. 73–74] who could also have served as the source for the transmission of such ideas to the Muslim world.

Farda Asadov places this account within the early traditions current among the Arabs who were encountering Turkic peoples in the course of their expansion into the North Caucasus and beyond Khurâsân. The various traditions prophesied apocalyptic struggles [Асадов, 1993, с. 22–23]. Kalinina asks: why did the Arab sources connect the Khazars

<sup>41</sup> [Vovin, 2007; Vovin, 2011] has revived the argument that the title *Qağan* is of Yeneseic origin.

with the Arabs of Khurâsân? The tradition had become well established in Arabo-Persian Muslim historiography of deriving the Turks (including the Khazars, [Калинина, 2005, с. 252–256]) from the descendants of Japheth. This genealogical excursus may have sought to bring the three peoples (including the Khazars, once “fierce foes”) closer or at least situate them in familiar Qur’ânic (and Biblical) genealogical territory by establishing “kinship” ties with them [Калинина, 2015, с. 110], elsewhere she has dealt with these genealogical legends [Калинина, 2006, с. 183–193].

This account, clearly a pious legend, regardless of its Muslim provenance or transmission, provides a point of “contact” of the Khazars with the ancient Hebrews. This is a somewhat different version of the conversion tales. Indeed, Ibn Sa’d and al-Ṭabarî say nothing of the conversion and Ibn al-Faqîh mentions it only later. Rather, it points to a connection, through marital ties, with the “Sons of Abraham” and hence a connection, ipso facto, with the patriarch of Judaism. The belief in the connection of the Khazars with Abraham would have found the fertile ground among the Judaized Khazars. Aware of these accounts from Arabs and other Muslims in their midst and very likely Khurâsânian Jews, also present in Khazaria, it was perhaps in the Khazar milieu that a Khazar contact with the Abraham-Arab-derived “Turks of Khurâsân” and a hinted tale of the origin of the *qağanal* title, now given a seemingly Biblical pedigree, took root and was spread then, via Hišâm ibn al-Kalbî a contemporary of the conversion in the late eighth-early ninth century, to the Arab historians of the latter half of the ninth-early tenth century, Ibn Sa’d, Ibn al-Faqîh and al-Ṭabarî. Such a connection would have further bolstered the Khazars’ claim to equal status with the other major representatives of the Abrahamic religious tradition. In particular, it would have been significant to the Arab world with which the Khazars had become significant trading partners by the ninth century. The appearance of the *qağanal* title is hinted as having some connection with the sacral power derived from Abraham in the accounts of Ibn Sa’d and al-Ṭabarî and may, like the account of the conversion transmitted by the author of the “Cambridge Document” of the origin of the *qağanal* title, reflect notions that were popular among Khazar Jews, seeking to establish ties to (or parallels) with Biblical institutions and customs.

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### **The Khazars as 'Sons of Abraham'**

#### Summary

The accounts of Ibn Sa'd, Ibn al-Faqih and al-Ṭabarī, going back to Hišām ibn al-Kalbī (late eighth-early ninth century), a contemporary of one of the culminating stages in the conversion of the Khazars to Judaism, are pious legends put forward to claim a link of the Khazars directly to Abraham's (Arab) descendants in Khurāsān. Although these tales are Arabo-Muslim in origin, it is likely that a connection of the Khazars with Abraham would have found a receptive audience in a Judeo-Khazar milieu. The tale also hints at the origins of the *qa-ḡanal* title among the Khazars, giving it a Biblical pedigree and hence sacral authority that would be understandable and acceptable to the Arabo-Muslim world with which the Khazars had developed significant commercial ties.

**Keywords:** Khazars, conversion to Judaism, legends, Ibn Sa'd, Ibn al-Faqih, al-Ṭabarī, al-Kalbī, Abraham, Biblical pedigree.

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### **Хазары как «потомки Авраама»**

#### Резюме

Сообщения Ибн Са'да, Ибн ал-Факиха и ат-Табари, опирающиеся на сведения, почерпнутые из трудов Хишам ибн ал-Кальби (ум. ок. 819/820 г.), современника одного из кульминационных этапов принятия хазарами иудаизма, в сущности являются благочестивыми легендами, выдвинутыми для того, чтобы предъявить претензии на непосредственную, родственную связь хазар с (арабскими) потомками библейского Авраама. Несмотря на то, что эти легенды возводятся к мусульманским источникам, выдвинутая ими связь хазар с Авраамом нашла бы восприимчивую публику в иудейско-хазарской среде. Эти легенды также намекают на происхождение каганского титула у хазар, придавая ему библейскую родословную и тем самым сакральный авторитет, приемлемый арабско-мусульманскому миру, с которым Хазария развивала значительные к тому времени торговые связи.

**Ключевые слова:** хазары, иудаизация, легенды, Ибн Са'д, Ибн ал-Факих, ат-Табари, ал-Кальби, Авраам, иудейско-хазарская среда, библейская родословная.